

Preface

NO, I DIDN'T REWRITE THE BIBLE. This is the same old four Gospels—Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John—laid out in a way that hopefully makes them easier to read. Bibles have gotten so cluttered up with chapter and verse numbers, footnotes, cross-references, charts, maps, drawings, columns, sections, and sidebars that it's hard to actually read the text straight through like a normal book. Besides that, the Bible is a big book. It's all important, but the Gospels are the *most* important. It should be easy for people to read the most important part of the Bible.

The *New English Bible* (NEB; Oxford/Cambridge, 1970) was my main inspiration. I found it in a used-book shop in college, and fell in love with it because it's so easy to read. All of the text is in one column, and the chapter and verse numbers are in the margin instead of inline in the text. There are section headings every so often, but other than that there are very few distractions. My friends and I would read it out loud to each other. If you pass the book around the room and each take a turn reading, it takes an hour or two to get through one of the Gospels. Unfortunately, the NEB isn't in print anymore. Also, it was published as a full Bible or the New Testament, but not just the Gospels.

Years later I led a Bible study group, and while in college we *read* whole books at a time, in our Bible study we *discussed* whole books at a time. We might read as much as a page or two at once, but it

was up to each person to read that week's book of the Bible on their own before the meeting.

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TYPOGRAPHY—This is my first time typesetting a book, so I thought it best to try to imitate a classic: the NEB. I referred often to Robert Bringhurst’s *The Elements of Typographical Style* (v3.2, Hartley & Marks, 2008) to understand the NEB’s technique.



The Gospels introduced something into human affairs that it is important to come to terms with, and the best way to do that is to actually read them. I hope that this edition helps you to read the Gospels, both on your own and with others.

Lastly, I’d like to thank Jessica Whitacre, Leah Whitacre, Miriam Whitacre, Rod Whitacre, Steven Brown, Craig McClean, Kirk Botula, Ed Schroth, Edward Tufte, Chris Mulligan, Ben Butler, David Yun, Jeremy Keiper, J. Mark Bertrand (and the commenters on his *Bible Design Blog*), Tom Henry, Tom Pangburn, and Byron Borger for providing feedback on earlier versions of this book.

—Chad Whitacre
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