

The Celebration of Midway

You have successfully completed 50% of the *One Year Chronological Bible* and *Study Guide*. Take a few minutes to pat yourself on the back, give yourself a hug, shake your hand, and do a little dance!

You have read 750 pages of the Bible for 184 days, that equates to 20-25 chapters a week for 26 weeks, covering 23 books, even some difficult ones like *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, *Deuteronomy*, *Job*, and *Amos*. That deserves a high five, a fist bump, a Big Gulp, a donut, and an ice cream cone! Just not all at once.

The Challenges of Midway

Way to go! I'm proud of you. Now, seriously, stop and consider what you've done. You now know what it will take to finish. Here are the predictions I made to our small group at the beginning of the year. See if they are true for you.

1. The excitement of starting something new will wear off soon, and the reality of this difficult challenge will sober you quickly. It will not be easy.
2. This challenge will demand more of you than you've ever demanded of yourself before, spiritually speaking.
3. You may fall behind at times, but the deciding factor is what you do when you fall behind. Do you give up or get going?
4. This undertaking will severely test your discipline and determination.
5. Remember, this is the Bible. It's not the easiest book in the world to read.

The Categories of Midway

Before you begin the second half of this arduous journey, I would suggest that you sit down, take a deep breath, and think about some things.

First, do a short self-assessment of where you are compared to where you are supposed to be. My guess is that you fall into one of three categories.

1. You are caught up and clicking along right on schedule. You are learning by leaps and bounds, and you are enjoying every minute of this pilgrimage.
2. You are behind schedule or are barely surviving. You are hanging on for dear life, enduring the "torture," going through the motions but not getting anything out of the journey.
3. You have stopped for a breather or you have dropped out of the race. The challenge is too much for you at this point in your life, and you don't think you can make it.

I have encouragement for you, no matter which category you are in.

First, if you are caught up and clicking along... wow, great job! However, beware of pride. Humble yourself before the Lord and keep doing what you're doing. Pray that God will protect your time to the very end. The hardest and best parts are ahead. If you are partnering with someone else, do what you can to encourage and assist them.

Second, if you are barely surviving, whatever you do, don't give up. Quitting is just what our enemy wants you to do. Keep hanging on. Don't try to understand it all. Just try to get the big picture for now; there is time to get into the details later.

If you are reading with a group and you are behind schedule, don't quit. Either determine to catch up (if you are not far behind) or skip ahead to where the group is and come back another time to read what you missed. Don't let what you've missed already keep you from what you could get by staying with the group.

If you are reading alone and are behind schedule, don't sweat it. Read at your own pace. Ignore the pressure of keeping to a calendar. It is more important that you finish the race than to keep a pace.

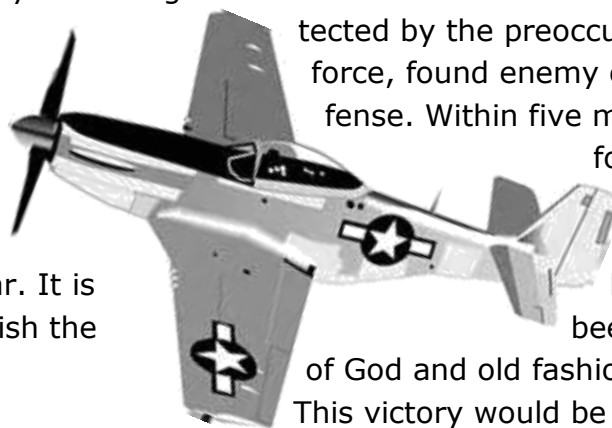
Finally, if you have stopped or dropped, now is the perfect time to pick back up again, with the fall of Israel. Start fresh with the nation of Judah. You can make up what you missed later.

The Courage of Midway

I love history, and I love to study World War II. Prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the Japanese navy planned to seize control of the Pacific Ocean. To disable the American fleet at Hawaii was the most important step in completing their task. Though they destroyed everything on that evil Sunday, the Japanese were disappointed to find that the American carriers were away for drills. Those carriers were America's only hope for defending the home front and for taking the war to Japan.

American decoders intercepted Japanese plans to take the base at Midway, a tiny island half way between Hawaii and Japan. The American carriers made the 1000-mile long trek in June, 1942, to ambush their enemy.

The three American carriers were successful in surprising the Japanese, but their initial attack was a disaster. Over 80% of our torpedo pilots were shot down, and not one torpedo struck an enemy carrier; when it appeared that all hope was lost, the tide turned. American dive bombers, undetected by the preoccupied Japanese air force, found enemy carriers without defense. Within five minutes, three out of



four of them had exploded and sunk to the ocean floor. The Battle of Midway had been won by the help of God and old fashioned American grit. This victory would be the turning point of the war, for American naval forces would now advance on Japan with little interference.

The Casualties of Midway

Although the U.S. sacrificed dozens of brave fighter pilots, their courage, in the face of hardship, provided the opportunity for American triumph. For the enemy suffered thousands of casualties, the loss of its navy, and defeat in war. My question to you, midway through this difficult challenge, is who will be the casualty? Will it be you or will it be the enemy? Will you surrender to the challenge? Will you put your hands up and give in to the pressure? Or will you, by the grace of God, summon the grit and determination necessary to finish the task of completing the *One Year Chronological Bible* and *Study Guide*?