

The logo features a large, bold, white letter 'E' on a black rectangular background. To its right is a red circle containing the number '100' in white. A small registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the bottom right of the red circle.

E100®

THE ESSENTIAL SECRET

*How To Get Your Entire Church
Reading and Enjoying God's Word*

SCRIPTURE UNION

By Whitney T. Kuniholm | President, Scripture Union/USA

The Essential Secret

*How To Get Your Entire Church
Reading and Enjoying God's Word*

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*H*ow do you get “average Christians” to establish and maintain a habit of regular of Bible reading? At first glance, that may seem like a rather mundane religious question; aren't there more important issues for Christian leaders to address at this critical time in history? Perhaps. But I'm convinced that correctly answering that simple question is one of the most significant challenges and opportunities for the Western Church today. Because the real issue behind the question is not just the renewal of a personal spiritual discipline. Rather, it's the renewal of the Church itself.

So what I'd like to do is take a new look at the old issue of Bible reading. And let me say, I think I know something about you: *you want the people under your spiritual care to read the Bible*. Not only that, you've tried all kinds of strategies for encouraging them to do so, and nothing seems to work. No matter what you do, only a committed few, the same few, ever read God's Word on a regular basis.

I've discovered it doesn't have to be that way; it really is possible to help average Christians establish and enjoy the Bible reading habit. I'm the President of [Scripture Union](#) and over the past few years we've developed a Bible reading program

“ I've discovered...it really is possible to help average Christians establish and enjoy the Bible reading habit. ”

called *The Essential 100 Challenge* (E100®). To date, over 1,200,000 individuals and 5,000 churches, in 17 countries and 10 languages, have participated in the program. We're now partnering with the American Bible Society and others to expand it even further. Honestly, we're amazed at how fast it's growing.

I want to share what we've learned from our experience with the E100®; in essence, I want to give you our “secret sauce.” My hope is that you'll add some of what we've discovered to your ministry so that more of your people will begin reading and enjoying God's Word.

A Methodology Gap

A key question Christian leaders must face at the beginning of the 21st Century is this: why is it, that in spite of our best efforts, Bible reading continues to decline? Of course, there are many reasons, like the general decline in literacy, the pace of life today and the subtle spiritual opposition we face whenever we try to grow in our faith.

“We’re telling church-goers they ought to read the Bible, but we’re not pointing them to effective methods for doing so.”

But I believe the main unaddressed reason is a *methodology gap*, that is, we’re telling church-goers they ought to read the Bible, but we’re not pointing them to effective methods for doing so. In recent decades the Christian community has put far more effort into packaging and marketing the Bible than providing “post-purchase support” for its users. What the Church urgently needs, then, is more effective Bible reading methodologies.

Case Study: The E100®

That's why in 2001, Scripture Union created a Bible reading program called *The Essential 100 Challenge* (E100®) based on a carefully selected list of short passages—50 Old Testament and 50 New Testament. They were organized into 20 key topics (5 readings each), so a reader quickly got an overview of God's Word.

Then, through market research, we discovered that a full 39% of the American population—as many as 82 million adults—identified themselves as being “unsatisfied” with their current level of Bible engagement. Although Bible reading *overall* is declining, our research uncovered a large group who wish to read the Bible more frequently. A key objective of the E100®, then, was to motivate more of these to give Bible reading a try.



Research on the E100®

Bible Overview. More than nine out of ten pastors said the E100® did an “excellent” job of helping their congregants “get a good overview of the Bible.”

Barna Study

We also wanted the E100® to achieve another outcome: habit-formation. Therefore, we reviewed all behavioral psychology studies that might apply to Bible reading. We also studied how other industries, such as fitness, smoking cessation and dieting, have used behavioral principles. Finally, we incorporated the best practices into the E100®. From that point on, the program began to grow rapidly.

The Essential Architecture

One of the most interesting discoveries we made was that as we integrated personal habit-formation principles, the E100® became a more effective corporate Bible reading program. Based on that observation, we've isolated seven factors that make the program successful in a local church; we call them "the essential architecture" of an effective church-wide Bible reading program. Although these principles came from our E100® experience, we believe they apply to any church-wide Bible reading effort.

- 1. Take Spiritual Leadership.** Getting people to read the Bible regularly is a challenge. However, whenever a pastor, minister or priest publicly stated, "I am personally committing to reading the E100® passages and I invite the congregation to join me," the program took off. It was even stronger when other leaders (elders, vestry, group leaders) made a similar commitment. The critical first step to any effective church-wide program is leaders who say, "Follow me!"
- 2. Make it a community experience.** Bible reading is considered a *personal* spiritual discipline, but that makes it difficult for many to maintain. In the E100® we observed that when a significant number of people focused on the same passages together over



Research on the E100®

Increased Bible Reading. Church members across all stages of their spiritual journey more than doubled their daily Bible reading after completing the E100®.

REVEAL Study

time, it created a “motivational updraft” for Bible engagement. Congregants read the passages individually, talked about the passages in groups, and heard the passages preached on in church. The E100® demonstrated that “community-based Bible reading” is more effective than the “Lone Ranger” approach.

3. Use habit-formation principles. We looked at a lot of research, but in the end, the principles that seemed most effective were: a) setting achievable goals, b) making a personal plan of action, c) using a pre-determined schedule, d) tracking one’s progress, and e) having the “soft accountability” of reading the E100® with another person or group.



Research on the E100®

Habit Formation. Four of five pastors said the E100® was “excellent” at “making reading the Bible a regular habit” among their congregants.

Barna Study

4. Affirm a variety of devotional methods. Pastors often promote the early morning quiet time as the “best” devotional method. It may be, but many congregants are too busy or too tired for Bible reading at the crack of dawn. That’s why it’s important to understand that each person has a unique “devotional temperament,” a combination of learning styles, Bible knowledge and specific needs in different stages of life. Often participants found creative ways to work the E100® into their daily schedules, thus enhancing its effectiveness.

- 5. Have a flexible format.** While churches have much in common, they also have unique concerns. There are vast differences, for example, between liturgical and non-liturgical churches. The E100® proved effective because it was flexible in several small but significant features, including its undated syllabus, adaptability to any part of the Church Year, and usability with any Bible translation.
- 6. Follow a unifying theme.** Instead of randomly taking “a daily dose of Scripture,” people are more likely to stick with Bible reading if they follow an over-arching topic or theme. With the E100®, it was “the big story of the Bible.” Not only did this motivate more people to participate, but also it enabled a pastor to preach his/her way through the E100®, thereby reinforcing the program.
- 7. Offer a follow-up plan...from the beginning.** The biggest concern pastors had with the E100® was the lack of follow up: “What happens on day 101?” We addressed that by linking the E100® to Scripture Union’s 4-year through-the-Bible program, *Discovery*. The initial feedback taught us that a vital component of an effective church-wide Bible reading program is providing follow up resources from the start.



Research on the E100®

Consistent Bible Reading. Almost three-quarters of congregants said the E100® increased their desire to read the Bible more consistently.

Barna Study

A Bigger Vision of Bible Engagement

So there you have it, our “secret sauce.” But there's one more observation I want to share, and I believe it's the most important. When people begin reading and applying God's Word together, a spiritual power is unleashed that can dramatically transform individual lives and entire churches.

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I call that power “Bible reading revival” and I find examples in the Scriptures themselves (Deut. 31:9-13; 2 Chron. 34:14-32; Neh. 8:1-18), and in thousands of churches who have implemented the E100®.

So a bigger vision of Bible engagement is not just that more individual Christians will form a Bible reading habit. That's a critical first step. A bigger vision is that more groups of Christians, of all denominations, will begin reading and living God's Word together, and as a result, the Church will be renewed and relevant for a new generation. Only when

Bible reading revival is spreading in the pews will Christians have the spiritual credibility to invite an increasingly resistant and secular world to “join us” in meeting the Living God who has revealed Himself in the pages of Holy Scripture.

Because ultimately, true Bible engagement is real God engagement, and that’s the essential secret to transforming individuals, churches and the culture at large.



E100 Action Step

To help your church take The Essential 100 Challenge,
go to www.E100Challenge.com.



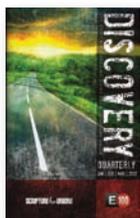
Whitney T. Kuniholm is President of Scripture Union/USA. He has written several Bible-related books, is a frequent contributor to Scripture Union’s quarterly Bible guide *Encounter with God*, and has a blog: www.EssentialBibleBlog.com. He also speaks at churches and Christian conferences.

More Bible Engagement Ideas. Much of the content in this e-book originally appeared in an article in the Winter 2012 issue of *Uncover Magazine*, published by the [American Bible Society](http://www.AmericanBibleSociety.com). *Uncover* is a quarterly publication for church and ministry leaders who seek to mobilize their congregations to engage God’s Word.



More Bible Reading Help

Scripture Union has publications and programs to help you meet God every day in the Bible and prayer. To order, simply call, write...or go online.



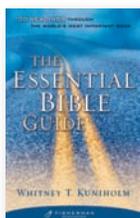
Discovery, the E100® follow-up Guide for individuals and groups. Built on the same Pray, Read, Reflect, Apply, Pray method as this E100 Challenge Guide. Quarterly. \$25 per year.

Encounter with God, for experienced Bible readers. Through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice in five years. Quarterly. \$25 per year.



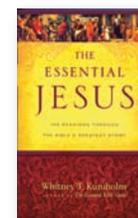
The Essential 100 Challenge, enables people to get the big picture of the Bible without getting bogged down. For more information: www.E100Challenge.com.

The Essential Jesus Challenge, follows God's story of salvation, which culminated in Jesus, through 25 Old and 75 New Testament passages. www.EssentialJesusChallenge.com.



The Essential Bible Guide, by Whitney T. Kuniholm, takes you through 50 Old Testament and 50 New Testament passages so you get the big picture of the Bible without getting bogged down. \$13.99

The Essential Jesus, by Whitney T. Kuniholm, follows God's plan of salvation through the Bible in 100 short readings from both the Old and New Testaments. \$12.99



To order, call 1-800-621-LAMP (5267), go to www.ScriptureUnion.org, or write to **Scripture Union**, P.O. Box 215, Valley Forge, PA 19481-0215

About Scripture Union

Scripture Union is an interdenominational Christian ministry, founded in 1867, with a twofold mission:

- Helping people of all ages meet God in the Bible and prayer
- Reaching children with God's Good News

Scripture Union publishes daily Bible reading guides for individuals and groups, *Discovery*® and *Encounter with God*®, and has two Bible reading programs for churches and groups, *The Essential 100 Challenge* and *The Essential Jesus Challenge*. SU also conducts Bible-based programs for at-risk children including *SuperKids*® summer missions and *PrimeTime*® after school programs.

Scripture Union is Charter Member of the *Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability* and has national ministries in 130 countries around the world.



What Christian Leaders Say

Billy Graham – “I am totally, completely and forever a Scripture Union man.”

Luis Palau – “Scripture Union made me realize the importance of the word of God.”

John Stott – “Scripture Union taught me the discipline of daily Bible reading.”

N. T. Wright – “I wouldn’t be the person I am today without . . . Scripture Union.”

Jill Briscoe – “I heartily endorse this ministry.”

Charles W. Colson – “I am encouraged by the E100. Many will be helped by the choice of texts.”

Doug Fields – “E100 is an easy-to-use Bible reading plan that people love, because they actually complete it.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO: WWW.SCRIPTUREUNION.ORG



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