

ETBU students organize Bible-reading marathon

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MARSHALL—East Texas Baptist University students organized an on-campus, around-the-clock marathon to read through the entire Bible publicly.

Students, faculty and staff volunteered 20 minutes at a time to read through the Bible, 24 hours a day, beginning Feb. 11 and concluding Feb. 16.



Devin Cummings, East Texas Baptist

University Centennial Hall Resident Director, reads from the Bible during a public reading of the entire Bible on campus. (Photo / Tom Webster) "Our prayer as a class in this campuswide event was that it would add significant meaning to our Spiritual Emphasis Week while marking the beginning of this Lenten season," said Tom Webster, dean of the ETBU School of

Communications and Performance Arts.

Webster teaches the “Worship of God” course, where the idea originated during a class discussion about the role worship in everyday life and the role of Scripture in worship.

“In class one day, we were discussing how God’s word is powerful by itself and how it doesn’t need to be accompanied with music or with a sermon to be powerful, said Adam Vinson, a sophomore from Palestine.

Volunteers read the Bible aloud from the patio in front of the Ornelas Student Center. The class provided a Bible, lectern and sound system for the public readers.

Cassidy Hlavaty, a sophomore from Henderson, began the marathon by reading from the opening of Genesis beginning at 12:40 p.m. Feb. 11. She also read an additional long stretch, from 3:40 a.m. to 6 a.m. Feb. 15.

“This time, especially the early morning hours, gave me time to self-evaluate my relationship with Christ as well as to feel his presence,” she said. “I realized that we never stop growing with the Lord, and there is always something new we can learn and realize about him.”

Vinson likewise noted how meaningful the Bible-reading experience was to him.

“I read a lot of the Bible I had never read before,” he acknowledged. “While reading through the book of Job, I experienced the Holy Spirit connecting me with Job. I began to feel the emotions that Job felt, and I connected to everyone in the story.”

In a conversation with ETBU Chaplain Scott Bryant, the students learned their Bible-reading marathon actually was the second such event on campus. When Baker Auditorium was dedicated in the early 1990s,

students read through the entire Bible. However, the latest marathon was the first around-the-clock event.

"Having an event like this provides a unique way for the students, and the faculty, and staff here at ETBU to come together as a community of believers and proclaim the word of God aloud all day long, which is why I think it is important to participate in it," said Karson Kent, ETBU campus services assistant.



Debbie Rogers, director of campus services at ETBU, participates in the public reading of the Bible on campus. (Photo / Mike Midkiff) Kent read the Bible, following co-worker Debbie Rogers, director of campus services.

"I love the fact that ETBU takes every opportunity available to share God's message," Rogers said. "Reading aloud the word of God spurs my heart to be more like Christ."

The event proved to be a powerful experience, not only for those who read, but also for students who stopped to hear the public reading of Scripture, Webster noted.

"The ones who listened to the readings at various times heard bold and authoritative proclamations of the text," he said, recalling when student Tabatha Contreras read the concluding chapter of Revelation, completing the event.

"The moment was palpable, as Tabatha was overcome with the emotion as she firmly but tearfully completed the reading," Webster said.