

# 03

Know  
How to Read  
Your Bible

*“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.”*

Psalm 19:7, ESV

## What is the Bible?

There is a misconception that the Bible is a book, but actually, it's not. The Bible is a library made up of 66 books. This collection of history, songs, prophecies, and poems was written over a span of 1,500 years on three different continents in three different languages by 40 unique authors who held varying levels of education and careers. When viewed as a whole, the cohesiveness is quite beautiful. More than that, the manner in which it has come together is something out of this world.

*Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

The original Greek language this passage was written in gives the image of a boat being pushed along the sea by the dance between the wind and its sails. This is how the Bible was formed. It is the Word of God, but in the process, He also used the experiences, personalities, and writing styles of each author. Its composition was a divine dance where God took the lead to get the exact result He intended. If we are willing to yield to what He reveals to us in the Bible, we can experience tremendous change.

*Read Hebrews 4:12*

You see, the Bible isn't just a book, nor is it merely a library of well written thoughts about God. It is His living Word. It has the ability to pierce deep into our hearts and change us from the inside out.

## Structure

Next, let's take some time to talk about the structure of the Bible. It is divided into two sections known as testaments, the old and the new.

# The Old Testament

The Old Testament is comprised of 39 books made up of historical account, poetry and song, and prophecy.

DEUTERONOMY
NUMBERS
LEVITICUS
EXODUS
GENESIS

The Law

ESTHER
NEHEMIAH
EZRA
2 CHRONICLES
1 CHRONICLES
2 KINGS
1 KINGS
2 SAMUEL
1 SAMUEL
RUTH
JUDGES
JOSHUA

History

LAMENTATIONS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON
PROVERBS
PSALMS
JOB

Wisdom

DANIEL
EZEKIEL
JEREMIAH
ISAIAH

Major Prophets

MALACHI
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZEPHANIAH
HABAKKUK
NAHUM
MICAH
JONAH
OBADIAH
AMOS
JOEL
HOSEA

Minor Prophets

## **The Law - 5 books**

These 5 books are attributed to Moses. They begin with the book of Genesis. The word Genesis means “beginning”, and that is exactly what we see as we read page one. We see the answers to humanity’s biggest questions laid out before us. Where did we come from? Why do we struggle? What is our purpose?

All of those questions are answered as we are introduced to the God who created us. He is holy. He is powerful. He is compassionate towards us, even in our sin.

## **History - 12 books**

Throughout the historical books of the Old Testament we see this dance between sinful humanity and a holy God played out. As the people of God multiply, we get a sense of how deep the roots of sin go and how much sin blinds us to knowing God.

We see stories of families, individuals, kings, prophets, and priests responding in different ways to God. Some embrace His loving compassion. Some respond with indifference.

## **Wisdom - 6 books**

Gathered in the middle of the Old Testament are six books known as the wisdom literature. These books punctuate the struggle and celebration of God’s people that we see in the historical books. Across their pages spread the emotions and frustrations of living in a world that is marked by sin while trying to follow a holy God.

Much of the wisdom literature is woven into the timeline of the history parts of the Bible. King David composes psalms of regret and celebration. Many of the proverbs are written by King Solomon. The prophet Jeremiah expresses his mixture of sorrow and hope in Lamentations.

## Prophecy - 16 books

Like the wisdom literature books, the prophets' messages are woven into the rest of the Old Testament. They spoke to the leaders of God's people on behalf of God. They brought truth into government policies, justice issues, and worship practices. They sewed together a message of both judgement and hope; judgement that was due for sin, and hope that a brighter day would come.

The prophets are typically broken into two groups: major prophets and minor prophets. This has nothing to do with their impact or importance. The major and minor categories simply denote their size as a book.

For a more in-depth look at the Old Testament and how it ultimately points to hope in Jesus check out *Revealed*, a 10-week study produced by North Way.

# The New Testament

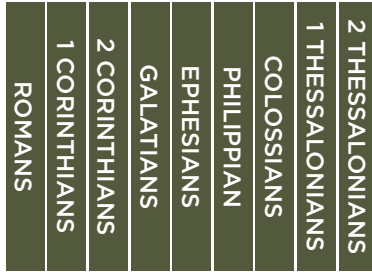
The New Testament is comprised of 27 books made up of historical accounts, letters (also known as epistles), and prophecy.



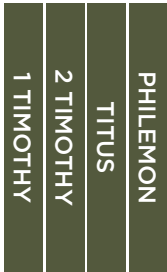
The Gospels



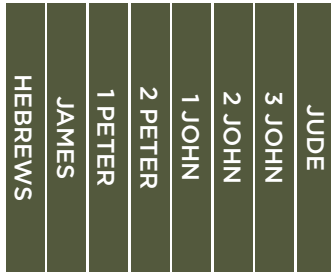
History



Letters to Churches



Letters to  
Individuals



General Letters



Prophecy

## History - 5 books

The history part of the New Testament is primarily comprised of the Gospels. The word “gospel” means “good news”. These four accounts of Jesus’ birth, life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection tell the story of God’s plan of redemption in Jesus. It is in the Gospels that we hear Jesus’ teachings, see His miracles, and witness His sacrifice for us.

The Gospel author Luke continues his account in the book of Acts. Acts begins where the Gospels leave off. Jesus ascends to heaven and empowers His followers to go throughout the earth and share the good news. This new movement gets a slow start at first, but when God sends His Holy Spirit...things get really exciting!

## Letters - 21 books

The majority of the New Testament consists of letters. Many of the letters are written by a man named Paul. Paul was chosen by Jesus to share the good news with the Gentile world (those who were not Jewish). As Paul planted churches he would often write back to them to help them learn to walk in this new manner of life.

Paul was not the only author of these letters. Jesus’ close followers like John, James, and Peter also wrote letters. The letters serve to both correct and encourage their recipients.

## Prophecy - 1 book

There is one book of prophecy in the New Testament. Actually it’s kind of a hybrid. It’s both a letter and a prophecy. The book of Revelation was written by John, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples. It is written in a style of literature known as “apocalyptic”, which is a bit foreign for us today. It uses imagery, metaphors, and warnings to communicate a message. John’s central message in Revelation is that Jesus is in control.

# How to Read the Bible

All of these books might seem like a lot to swallow, and you're wondering where to start. Don't be anxious! If you commit to spending time with God in His Word daily, you will begin to understand how even though the Bible is a library of a multitude of books, it was ultimately written by One author.

Here are couple tips before you start:

1. First, take a moment to pray. Ask God to guide you. It's His Word. He wants you to spend time in it.
2. Second, be patient. You may not understand some of the things you read. That's ok. Don't feel ashamed to ask questions of others who follow Jesus.
3. Third, it's better to take small bites. The goal is not to get through the Bible but to allow the Bible to get through you. Take a verse that you like and memorize it. Meditate on it. Let it sink in deeply.

If you are looking for a good place to start the **gospel of John** is wonderful. It's only 21 chapters long. If you take a chapter a day in the next 21 days, you will have a better picture of who Jesus is.



# Questions to Consider

- What is your experience reading the Bible?
- Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word? Why or why not?
- How does believing that the Bible is God's Word impact how we approach reading it?
- According to Hebrews 4:12, how can yielding to the Bible's "living and active" nature cause change in your life?
- What are your hesitations when it comes to approaching God's Word? Write them down and commit to praying through them.
- The Bible tells us that all Scripture is "God-breathed." Do you believe that the Bible is God's words to you? Do you accept that it is without error? Why or why not?

## Next Session

We've mentioned the Holy Spirit a few times over these last sessions. Next time we will talk about what it means to experience the Holy Spirit in your life. To prepare for our next time together go ahead and dig into John. If you get to **John 16** you will see Jesus speaking about the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives.