

THE BIBLE

Holy Scripture, The Word of God

The autobiography of
God and instruction
manual for bearing His
image.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching,
rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so
that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped
for every good work.*

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Bible Basics

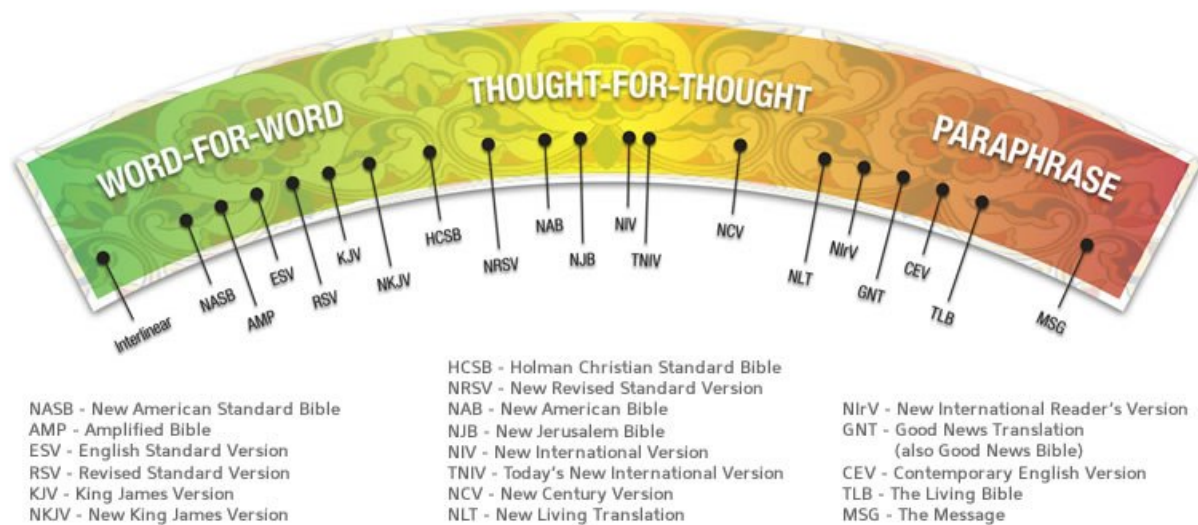
Bible Translations

The Bible we have today was originally written in ancient Hebrew and Greek, which do not translate naturally into modern English. Therefore most translations are a mixture of two forms of translation.

Literal - attempts to translate word for word, which can be more exact but difficult to read. Some Greek or Hebrew words simply cannot be accurately translated with a single English word.

Paraphrase or Dynamic – attempts to translate the meaning of the text and make it easier to read. This is useful but can also be subject to translator theological bias.

Best practice is to read multiple translations.



Bible Basics

Old Testament vs. New Testament

Testament means Covenant. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties.

The two main covenants God made with humanity deal with how sinful people can be made right with God.

The Old Covenant refers to the covenant God made with Israel through Moses after rescuing them from Egypt. The OT tells the story of Israel living under that covenant.

The New Covenant refers to the covenant God made with all people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The NT tells the story of Jesus and the early days of the church.

The New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant, but it does not replace it. For example, the sacrificial system was done away with, but the moral law still applies.

Chronologically there is a 400 year gap between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament.

The Contents of the Bible

The bible is one story comprised of multiple books.

The books were authored by God but written by various human agents at different times in history between about 1500 BC and 90 AD.

In the bible, the books are not arranged in strictly chronological order, but are grouped together in sections by category and genre.

Books of the Bible

OLD TESTAMENT

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

GENRE: Historical Narrative, Law

AUTHOR: Moses

KNOWN AS: The Law, The Law of Moses, The Pentateuch, The Torah

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

GENRE: Historical Narrative

AUTHORS: Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Others

Arranged in chronological order.

Kings and Chronicles cover the same period from different perspectives.

JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONG OF SOLOMON

GENRE: Poetry, Wisdom Literature

AUTHORS: Job, David, Solomon, Others

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
EZEKIEL
DANIEL

GENRE: Prophecy (also contains historical narrative)

AUTHORS: The prophets the books are named for.

*Jeremiah wrote Lamentations.

KNOWN AS: The Major Prophets (due to their long length)

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

GENRE: Prophecy (also contains historical narrative)

AUTHORS: The prophets the books are named for.

KNOWN AS: The Minor Prophets (due to their short length)

NOTE: All of the prophets lived and prophesied throughout the time covered in Kings and Chronicles.

Books of the Bible

NEW TESTAMENT

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN

GENRE: Historical Narrative

AUTHORS: Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John

KNOWN AS: The Gospels

ACTS

GENRE: Historical Narrative

AUTHOR: Luke

ROMANS
1 CORINTHIANS
2 CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
1 THESSALONIANS
2 THESSALONIANS

GENRE: Epistles (Paul's Letters)

AUTHOR: Paul

These letters were written to the churches of specific cities, but were also meant for wider distribution.

1 TIMOTHY
2 TIMOTHY
TITUS
PHILEMON

GENRE: Epistles (Pastoral Letters)

AUTHOR: Paul

These letters were written to specific people.

HEBREWS
JAMES
1 PETER
2 PETER
1 JOHN
2 JOHN
3 JOHN
JUDE

GENRE: Epistles (General Letters)

AUTHORS: James, Peter, John, & Jude (Hebrews' author is unknown)

These letters were written to all believers.

REVELATION

GENRE: Prophecy, Apocalyptic Literature

AUTHOR: John

How to Approach God's Word

a.k.a.

How to Read the Bible

There are two fundamental attributes that we must ascribe to God's Word for it to be of any use:

1. It is Totally Trustworthy
 - Inerrant – There are no errors, mistakes, or contradictions. (in the original languages)
 - Infallible – It is never wrong.
 - Ref: Psalm 12:6, 19:7
2. It is Absolutely Authoritative
 - It has the first and final say on all matters pertaining to human existence.
 - Ref: Hebrews 4:12-13

How do we come to those attributes?

They are based on the bible being the literal words of God.

All Scripture is God-breathed... (2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV))

If it is truly God-breathed - then it must be totally trustworthy because God Himself is never wrong and makes no mistakes.

If it is truly God-breathed - then it must be absolutely authoritative because there is no higher authority than God.

But there is a big question that every believer must wrestle with at some point:

How can I be sure that the Bible we have today actually is what God originally breathed?

There are two ways to answer that question, but only one of them works:

Man's Way aka The Wrong Way

Man tries to prove it with physical evidence and human reason.

We appeal to:

- Thousands of manuscripts that show the textual reliability of the New Testament.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls that show the accuracy of the Old Testament.
- The many archaeological finds that confirm the stories in the Bible.
- The arguments of Christian philosophers, historians, and apologists.

All that stuff is good, but the fact of the matter is:

Human beings cannot prove a thing about God, one way or the other.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-29

*God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him
through human wisdom...
[so that] no one can ever boast in the presence of God.
(1 Corinthians 1:21 & 29)*

God's Way aka The Right Way

We have to approach God and His Word on HIS terms, not ours.

Read Exodus 3:7-12

*God answered, "I will be with you. And this is your sign that I am the one
who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you
will worship God at this very mountain."
(Exodus 3:12)*

Man's way is that we want to know before we trust and obey.

God's way is that we trust and obey and then we will know.

Man's way begins with man who tries to build a tower of proofs up to God.

God's way begins with God who comes down and reveals Himself to us.

Man's way is the way of reason.

God's way is the way of faith.

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for
and assurance about what we do not see.
(Hebrews 11:1)*

When it comes to the Bible, we who have the Holy Spirit inside of us indeed hope that the words we have today really are God's words. Because if they are not, we are hopelessly lost with no way of knowing what is actually true.

The way of faith concerning the Bible being God's Word:

We are confident in the hope that the same God we believe created the universe with a word can also ensure His autobiography is published correctly, even if we cannot figure out how He did either.

Faith is the ultimate mindset God requires us to have when approaching His Word.

*Without faith it is impossible to please God,
because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists
and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
(Hebrews 11:6)*

The Geek behind "earnestly seek" is a single word that emphasizes the personal intent of the seeker. It is a seeking that is only as valuable as the motive that drives it.

God rewards those who seek Him with the right motive of faith and obedience.

Read John 7:12-17

*So Jesus told them, "My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me. Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own."
(John 7:16-17)*

If in your heart, you truly and sincerely want to know God and do what He says, then when you hear His actual words - they will resonate with His Spirit inside of you and you will know they are His.

The Bottom Line

How a believer should read the Bible is similar to how you watch a science fiction movie - with suspended disbelief.

Read it as if it really is God's literal words - even if you are not totally convinced of it yet.

And the promise of God is that as you earnestly seek Him with faith, He will reward you with the greatest treasure of all - the intimate knowledge of Himself.

*This is what the Lord says:
"Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom,
or the powerful boast in their power,
or the rich boast in their riches.
But those who wish to boast
should boast in this alone:
that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord
who demonstrates unfailing love
and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth,
and that I delight in these things.
I, the Lord, have spoken!
(Jeremiah 9:23-24)*

Some other notable Scripture references about the Word of God:

- Psalm 1
- Psalm 19
- Proverbs 30:5-6
- Isaiah 11:8-11
- Isaiah 40:8
- Matthew 24:35
- John 8:31-32
- John 12:47-50
- John 17:17
- James 1:22

OT Story Reading Guide

| Book | Read | Summary/Outline |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| GENESIS ~4,000 BC to 1800 BC | ALL | God creates the <u>world</u> and raises up the nation of <u>Israel</u> for Himself. Creation The Fall Noah and the Flood Tower of Babel <u>Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob</u> (Israel) Joseph's rise to power Israel moves to Egypt |
| EXODUS 1800 BC to 1445 BC | 1 - 20, 40 | God rescues Israel from slavery in Egypt and enters into a <u>covenant</u> relationship with them. Israel's growth and enslavement Birth of <u>Moses</u> The burning bush The ten plagues on Egypt First <u>Passover</u> Parting of the Red Sea Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments Construction of the Ark of the Covenant and <u>Tabernacle</u> |
| LEVITICUS 1445 BC | 16 - 26 | God gives Israel instructions on how to worship Him. Day of <u>Atonement</u> Various Laws Priestly duties Appointed Festivals The land sabbaths Rewards for obedience and punishments for disobedience. |
| NUMBERS 1445 BC to 1407 BC | 11 - 14, 16 - 17, 20 - 22, 27, 33 | Israel fails to trust and obey God, and wanders in the wilderness for 40 years. Spying out the promised land, but refusing to go Sentenced to wander for 40 years Moses strikes the rock and is banned from the promised land Some initial conquest Balaam's talking donkey Joshua succeeds Moses as leader |

OT Story Reading Guide

| Book | Read | Summary/Outline |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| DEUTERONOMY 1407 BC to 1406 BC | 1 - 2, 28 - 34 | Moses repeats the Law to the remaining people after the 40 years of wandering, before they go into the Promised Land. Wanderings in the wilderness Division of the land Moses forbidden to cross the Jordan Renewal of the <u>Covenant</u> Moses' last words and death |
| JOSHUA <u>1406</u> BC to <u>1375</u> BC | 1-12, 24 | Joshua leads Israel to conquer the Promised Land, then parcels out territories to the twelve tribes. Joshua becomes the leader <u>Rahab</u> and the spies Fall of <u>Jericho</u> The Gibeonite deception The sun stands still Land dispersion Death of Joshua |
| JUDGES <u>1375</u> BC to <u>1075</u> BC | 1 - 8, 13 - 16, 19 - 21 | Israel enters a cycle of turning from God, falling into captivity, calling out to God, and being rescued by leaders (judges) that God raises up. <u>Deborah</u> <u>Gideon</u> <u>Samson</u> A Levite and his concubine |
| RUTH <u>1140</u> BC to <u>1040</u> BC | ALL | Two widows lose everything, and find hope in Israel - which leads to the birth of the future King David. Story occurs late in the time of the Judges. Ruth & Naomi Boaz |
| 1 SAMUEL 1100 BC to <u>1010</u> BC | ALL | Israel demands a king who turns out to be quite a disappointment. Samuel becomes a prophet <u>Saul</u> becomes King God rejects Saul David anointed as King David kills Goliath David runs from Saul Saul is killed in battle |

OT Story Reading Guide

| Book | Read | Summary/Outline |
|--|------|--|
| 2 SAMUEL <u>1010 BC</u> to <u>970 BC</u> | ALL | David becomes King of Israel and has some ups and downs. David makes <u>Jerusalem</u> his capital The Ark is brought to Jerusalem David and <u>Bathsheba</u> Solomon is born Absalom's rebellion and death |
| 1 KINGS <u>970 BC</u> to <u>853 BC</u> | ALL | The kingdom of Israel has a time of peace and prosperity under King Solomon, but afterward splits, and the two lines of kings turn away from God. Last days and death of King David Solomon asks for <u>wisdom</u> Building of the <u>Temple</u> and Solomon's Palace Solomon's death The kingdom divided into <u>Israel</u> and <u>Judah</u> <u>Elijah</u> the prophet Evil King Ahab and Jezebel |
| 2 KINGS <u>852 BC</u> to <u>586 BC</u> | ALL | Both kingdoms ignore God and His prophets, until they both fall captive to other world empires. <u>Elisha</u> succeeds Elijah as prophet String of good and wicked kings Israel taken captive by <u>Babylon</u> Siege and fall of Jerusalem (Judah) |
| EZRA <u>537 BC</u> to <u>456 BC</u> | ALL | At the end of the captivity, the Israelites rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and a scribe named Ezra teaches the people to once again obey God's laws. The proclamation of <u>Cyrus</u> The Exiles return and rebuild the temple Ezra's reforms |
| NEHEMIAH <u>445 BC</u> to <u>432 BC</u> | ALL | The city of Jerusalem is in bad shape, so Nehemiah rebuilds the wall around the city. Artaxerxes sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem The walls are built Israelites <u>recommit</u> to the Covenant law |

OT Story BONUS Reading

These books/stories are not really part of the main storyline, but are worth reading.

| Book | Read | Summary/Outline |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| JOB Before 2100 BC | 1 - 3, 38 - 42 | Satan attacks a righteous man named Job, and Job and his friends argue about why terrible things are happening to him, then God has some things to say about it. This story is believed to have happened before the Tower of Babel |
| JONAH 760 BC | ALL | A disobedient prophet runs from God, is swallowed by a great fish, and then preaches God's message to the city of Nineveh. This happened during the time of the Kings. |
| DANIEL 605 BC to 539 BC | ALL | Daniel becomes a high-ranking wise man in the Babylonian and Persian empires, and has prophetic visions concerning Israel's future. Daniel was one of the first taken captive and lived through all 70 years of it Daniel and the lion's den The fiery furnace The writing on the wall Various dreams and prophetic visions |
| ESTHER 483 BC to 472 BC | ALL | Someone hatches a genocidal plot to bring about Israel's extinction, and Esther must face the emperor to ask for help. Happens late in the time of captivity Esther (a Jew) becomes queen of Persia Haman tricks the Emperor into exterminating the Jews Esther risks her life to confront the king about it |
| PSALMS | ALL | Poetry and prayers from the man after God's own heart. It is best to read one or two Psalms each day like a dessert rather than the main course. |
| PROVERBS | ALL | Words of wisdom from the wisest man who ever lived. A chapter of Proverbs a day keeps Murphy away. |
| ECCLESIASTES | 1 - 5, 12 | Solomon makes some observations about the meaning of life. Things haven't changed all that much. |

SUMMARY OF THE PROPHETS

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------|--|
| ISAIAH | 739 - 701 BC | God sends the prophet Isaiah to warn Israel of future judgment — but also to tell them about a coming king and servant who will “bear the sins of many.” |
| JEREMIAH | 627 - 586 BC | God sends a prophet to warn Israel about the coming Babylonian captivity, but the people don’t take the news very well. |
| LAMENTATIONS | 586 BC | A collection of dirges lamenting the fall of Jerusalem after the Babylonian attacks. |
| EZEKIEL | 593 - 573 BC | God chooses a man to speak for Him to Israel, to tell them the error of their ways and teach them justice: Ezekiel. |
| HOSEA | 753 BC | Hosea is told to marry a prostitute who leaves him, and he must bring her back: a picture of God’s relationship with Israel. |
| JOEL | 835 BC | God sends a plague of locusts to Judge Israel, but his judgment on the surrounding nations is coming, too. |
| AMOS | 766 BC | A shepherd named Amos preaches against the injustice of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. |
| OBADIAH | 853 BC | Obadiah warns the neighboring nation of Edom that they will be judged for plundering Jerusalem. |
| MICAH | 735 BC | Micah confronts the leaders of Israel and Judah regarding their injustice, and prophecies that one day the Lord himself will rule in perfect justice. |
| NAHUM | 697 BC | Nahum foretells of God’s judgment on Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. |
| HABAKKUK | 625 BC | Habakkuk pleads with God to stop the injustice and violence in Judah, but is surprised to find that God will use the even more violent Babylonians to do so. |
| ZEPHANIAH | 638 BC | God warns that he will judge Israel and the surrounding nations, but also that he will restore them in peace and justice. |
| HAGGAI | 520 BC | The people have abandoned the work of restoring God’s temple in Jerusalem, and so Haggai takes them to task. |
| ZECHARIAH | 520 BC | The prophet Zechariah calls Israel to return to God, and records prophetic visions that show what’s happening behind the scenes. |
| MALACHI | 430 BC | God has been faithful to Israel, but they continue to live disconnected from him—so God sends Malachi to call them out. |

The 400 Year Gap

Also known as "The Silent Years" and "The Intertestamental Period"

Significant world events occurred during the 400 years after Malachi that set the stage for the coming of the Son of God and the explosion of His Church.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 605 BC | Beginning of Babylonian captivity. |
| 539 BC | Babylon conquered by Cyrus of Persia. |
| 538 BC | Cyrus allows the Jews to return to their homeland but they are still subjects of Persia. |
| 515 BC | Ezra finishes the Temple in Jerusalem. |
| 444 BC | Nehemiah rebuilds the wall around Jerusalem. |
| 430 BC | Malachi is the last prophet of the OT. |
| END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT | |
| 331 BC | <u>Alexander the Great</u> and the Greeks conquer Persia and take over control of Palestine. |
| 323 BC | Alexander the Great dies. Grecian empire is divided. |
| 280 BC | The <u>Seleucids</u> govern Palestine. |
| 200's BC | The Hebrew Bible is translated into Greek. Known as the <u>Septuagint</u> . |
| 167 BC | Antiochus Epiphanes outlaws the Jewish religion and desecrates the <u>Temple</u> . |
| 165 BC | Judas <u>Maccabeus</u> and the people of Israel unite to overthrow Seleucid domination of their land and rededicate the Temple. |
| 100's BC | Formation of the religious/political groups called the <u>Pharisees</u> and <u>Sadducees</u> . |
| 63 BC | Judea becomes subect to the <u>Roman</u> Empire. |
| 37 BC | Herod the Great apointed governor of Judea. |
| BEGINNING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT | |
| 4 BC | Jesus is born. |

Short Summary of the 400 year gap for the Jews: The Jews continued to disobey God and remained under the rule of foreign empires until they had had enough. Then, about 2/3 of the way through, they revolted and started following God's ways in earnest. But that earnestness had turned into self-righteousness by the time Jesus showed up on the scene.

The Gospels - The Story of Jesus

The Gospels are four accounts from four different authors, each with a slightly different perspective and focus. That is why they are not identical, but they do not contradict. That is why some parts of the story you find in all of them, and some parts you only find in one, two, or three of them.

Of the authors, Matthew, Mark, and John were eyewitnesses of their stories. Luke was a historian who researched his story by talking to eyewitnesses.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels because they are very similar to each other. John's was written after these were in circulation and does not include most of the same stories, and adds things the others left out.

| | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 5 BC | Birth of Jesus | Matthew 1, Mark 1, Luke 2, John 1 |
| 5 BC | Escape to Egypt | Matthew 2 |
| 4 BC | Return to Nazareth | Matthew 2 |
| 8 AD | The Boy Jesus at the Temple | Luke 2 |
| 26 AD | Baptism of Jesus | Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3 |
| 27 AD | Temptation of Jesus | Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 4 |
| 27 AD | Jesus Calls his First Disciples | Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 5, John 2 |
| 27 AD | Jesus Turns Water Into Wine | John 2 |
| 27 AD | Jesus Teaches Nicodemus | John 3 |
| 27 AD | Jesus and the Woman at the Well | John 4 |
| 27 AD | Sermon on the Mount | Matthew 5 - 7 |
| 28 AD | Jesus Heals a Lame Man at a Pool | John 5 |
| 28 AD | Jesus Speaks Many Parables | Matthew 13, Mark 4, Luke 8 |
| 28 AD | Jesus Heals a Demoniac | Matthew 8, Mark 5, Luke 8 |
| 28 AD | Jesus Heals a Paralytic | Matthew 9 |
| 29 AD | Jesus Sends out His Twelve Disciples | Matthew 10, Mark 6 |
| 29 AD | Jesus Feeds the 5,000 | Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6 |
| 29 AD | Jesus Walks on Water | John 6 |
| 29 AD | The Transfiguration | Matthew 17, |
| 29 AD | Jesus Sends Out the Seventy-two | Luke 10 |
| 30 AD | Jesus Raises Lazarus | John 11 |
| 30 AD | The Triumphal Entry | Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, John 12 |
| 30 AD | The Last Supper | Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 13 |
| 30 AD | Jesus' Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion | Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18-19 |
| 30 AD | Jesus' Resurrection | Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21 |
| 30 AD | Jesus' Ascension | Acts 1 |

Acts - The Story of the Holy Spirit

Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke.

| | | |
|-------|--|-------------------|
| 30 AD | The Holy Spirit arrives on Pentecost | Acts 2 |
| 30 AD | Peter Heals and Preaches | Acts 3 |
| 30 AD | Peter and John Arrested and Released | Acts 4 |
| 30 AD | Believers Share All | Acts 4 |
| 30 AD | Deaths of Ananias and Sapphira | Acts 5 |
| 30 AD | Apostles Preach and Heal | Acts 5 |
| 31 AD | Stephen is the first Martyr | Acts 6 - 7 |
| 31 AD | Saul Persecutes the Church | Acts 8 |
| 31 AD | Philip and the Ethiopian | Acts 8 |
| 34 AD | Saul's Conversion | Acts 9 |
| 37 AD | Peter Preaches to the Gentiles | Acts 10, 11 |
| 42 AD | Barnabas Sent to Antioch | Acts 11 |
| 42 AD | Peter Led from Prison by the Angel | Acts 12 |
| 48 AD | Paul's First Missionary Journey | Acts 13 |
| 48 AD | The Council at Jerusalem | Acts 15 |
| 49 AD | Paul's Second Missionary Journey | Acts 15 |
| 55 AD | Paul's Third Missionary Journey | Acts 18 |
| 59 AD | Paul Returns to Jerusalem | Acts 21 - 23 |
| 60 AD | Paul imprisoned in Caesarea | Acts 24 |
| 62 AD | Paul Before Festus | Acts 25 |
| 62 AD | Paul Before Agrippa | Acts 26 |
| 62 AD | Paul Sails for Rome | Acts 27 |
| 62 AD | The Shipwreck | Acts 27 |
| 62 AD | Paul Preaches at Rome | Acts 28 |
| 66 AD | Peter and Paul are executed in Rome | |
| 70 AD | The Jewish Temple is Destroyed | |
| ~ | All of the Apostles except John are martyred | |
| 95 AD | John's Revelation on Patmos | Revelation 1 - 22 |

The Letters - Our Instruction Manual

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| ROMANS | Paul summarizes how the gospel of Jesus works in a letter to the churches at Rome, where he plans to visit. |
| 1 CORINTHIANS | Paul writes a disciplinary letter to a fractured church in Corinth, and answers some questions that they've had about how Christians should behave. |
| 2 CORINTHIANS | Paul writes a letter of reconciliation to the church at Corinth, and clears up some concerns that they have. |
| GALATIANS | Paul hears that the Galatian churches have been lead to think that salvation comes from the law of Moses, and writes a (rather heated) letter telling them where the false teachers have it wrong. |
| EPHESIANS | Paul writes to the church at Ephesus about how to walk in grace, peace, and love. |
| PHILIPPIANS | An encouraging letter to the church of Philippi from Paul, telling them how to have joy in Christ. |
| COLOSSIANS | Paul writes the church at Colossae a letter about who they are in Christ, and how to walk in Christ. |
| 1 THESSALONIANS | Paul has heard a good report on the church at Thessalonica, and encourages them to "excel still more" in faith, hope, and love. |
| 2 THESSALONIANS | Paul instructs the Thessalonians on how to stand firm until the coming of Jesus. |
| 1 TIMOTHY | Paul gives his protégé Timothy instruction on how to lead a church with sound teaching and a godly example. |
| 2 TIMOTHY | Paul is nearing the end of his life, and encourages Timothy to continue preaching the word. |
| TITUS | Paul advises Titus on how to lead orderly, counter-cultural churches on the island of Crete. |
| PHILEMON | Paul strongly recommends that Philemon accept his runaway slave as a brother, not a slave. |
| HEBREWS | A letter encouraging Christians to cling to Christ despite persecution, because he is greater. |
| JAMES | A letter telling Christians to live in ways that demonstrate their faith in action. |
| 1 PETER | Peter writes to Christians who are being persecuted, encouraging them to testify to the truth and live accordingly. |
| 2 PETER | Peter writes a letter reminding Christians about the truth of Jesus, and warning them that false teachers will come. |
| 1 JOHN | John writes a letter to Christians about keeping Jesus' commands, loving one another, and important things they should know. |
| 2 JOHN | A very brief letter about walking in truth, love, and obedience. |
| 3 JOHN | An even shorter letter about Christian fellowship. |
| JUDE | A letter encouraging Christians to contend for the faith, even though ungodly persons have crept in unnoticed. |

Bible Reading Best Practices

Read from it every day.

Upon first reading the narrative of the Bible (OT Story, Gospels, & Acts), read through it somewhat quickly like reading a novel, so you can get the main story in your head.

After the first reading, start over and work through it slowly, going through the OT and the NT simultaneously and including a bit of Psalms and/or Proverbs every day.

Take advantage of reading plans in YouVersion, and do them with someone so you can discuss the material and hold each other accountable.

Take advantage of the many audio versions of the Bible. Listen to it during your commute or while cleaning your house, etc.

Keep a journal of what you learn and questions you have.

Here are some good questions to ask the Holy Spirit every time you read:

1. What is this telling me about God?
2. What is this telling me about me and my relationship with God?
3. Based on this, what do I need to change in my life to better bear God's image?

Remember when reading that this whole thing is a story about God, not about people. God is the main character and people are the supporting cast. This will help with many of the "Why?" questions that will inevitably come up.

Remember that the culture of the people in the stories is not like ours. Don't judge them based on our modern American ways. Instead learn their culture so you can understand them better.

Remember that none of this book was written TO YOU personally. Pay attention to who is speaking/writing and to whom they are speaking/writing to.

Remember that truth is revealed by God. Open your mind, heart, and soul to Him as you read and you will experience what it means for the Word of God to be alive and active!

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:2

How to Pray a.k.a. The Truth About Prayer

THE MOST IMPORTANT PURPOSE OF PRAYER

The purpose of prayer:

1. It is to build our intimacy with God.
 - It is to allow God to change us.
 - **Prayer is not an easy way of getting what we want; it's the only way of becoming what God wants us to be.**
 - Ref: Hebrews 14:6
 - "Thy Kingdom come,"

THE PURPOSE OF QUIET TIME ALONE WITH GOD

The purpose of a time of daily quiet time alone in prayer and communion with God is:

1. So God can readjust our heart;
 - **God's desire is daily intimacy with Him where we allow Him to readjust our attitude and bring our will in line with the will of God.**
 - Ref: Psalm 37:4-5
 - Time alone with God establishes a forum where God searches *our* hearts.
2. So God can give us wisdom and constant direction;
 - Ref: James 1:5
2. So God can provide us comfort and strength when we're going through difficult times.

THE BASICS OF TRUE PRAYER = WHAT AND HOW TO PRAY

A basic acronym for anyone learning or struggling with what or how to pray is: A.C.T.S.

'A' stands for ADORATION or ACCLAMATION.

- This type of prayer is prayer that GLORIFIES God and GIVES PRAISE to God.
- This means to pray with GOD'S GLORY as your motive.
- Ref. John 14:13-14

'C' stands for CONFESSION.

- We need to pray with clean hands and a pure heart.
- Ref. Ps. 24:3a
- Ref. Ps. 24:3b, 5
- Sin creates a wall of separation in our relationship with God.
- Ref. Ps. 139:23-24

'T' stands for THANKFULNESS or THANKSGIVING.

- GOD DESIRES THAT OUR TRUE THANKFULNESS BE FOCUSED ON BLESSINGS IN OUR LIVES WHICH ARE SPIRITUAL
- WE SHOULD COME TO GOD GIVING THANKS FOR:
 - 1- FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS;
 - 2- SEEING HIM AT WORK BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT IN OUR LIVES, AND
 - 3- GOD AT WORK SPIRITUALLY IN THE LIVES OF THOSE APART FROM GOD, IN OUR LOVED ONES AND IN OUR CHURCH FAMILY.
- Ref. Col. 1:3
- Ref. 2 Thes. 2:13

'S' stands for SEEKING

- Ref. James 5:13-16
- Ref. John 16:24
- Ref. Rev. 5:7-8
- An effective pray-er is a person who HAS LEARNED TO PRAY SEEKING GOD'S WILL – ON GOD'S TERMS.

WHAT IS REAL PRAYER?

REAL Prayer is our daily continuous spiritual atmosphere.

Prayer is the very spiritual air that we breathe.

Real prayer is abiding in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

I Thessalonians 5:17: “pray without ceasing.”

**TRUE GODLY PRAYER IS A –
CONTINUOUS STATE OF BEING!**