

Major Stories in the Bible

- Creation – Genesis 1
- The Fall (Adam and Eve) – Genesis 3
- Noah and the Flood – Genesis 6
- The Tower of Babel – Genesis 11
- The Call of Abram – Genesis 12
- Abraham tested – Genesis 22
- Isaac and Rebekah – Genesis 24
- Jacob and Esau – Genesis 25
- Joseph sold by his brothers – Genesis 37
- Joseph in Egypt – Genesis 39
- Israel in slavery in Egypt – Exodus 1
- The birth of Moses – Exodus 2
- Moses and the Burning Bush – Exodus 3
- The Ten Plagues – Exodus 7
- God rescues Israel from Egypt – Exodus 12
- God gives the Ten Commandments – Exodus 20
- Israel enters the Promised Land (Joshua) – Joshua 1
- Israel ruled by judges (Gideon, Deborah, Samson, etc.) – Judges 1
- Israel gets its first king (Saul) – 1 Samuel 9
- David is anointed king – 1 Samuel 16
- David and Goliath – 1 Samuel 17
- David becomes king – 2 Samuel 5
- Solomon becomes king – 1 Kings 1
- Israel is divided: Israel and Judah – 1 Kings 12
- Kings rule (mostly bad) for 345 years – 1 Kings 13 and following
- Exile, part 1: Israel (the northern half), conquered by Assyria – 2 Kings 17
- Exile, part 2: Judah (the southern half), conquered by Babylon – 2 Kings 25
- Daniel and the Lions' Den – Daniel 6
- Israelites return to Israel to rebuild the demolished land & temple – Ezra 1
- The completion of the new temple – Ezra 6
- Jesus is born – Matthew 1 and Luke 2
- Baptism of Jesus – Matthew 3; Mark 1; & Luke 3
- Temptation of Jesus – Matthew 4; Mark 1; & Luke 4
- Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5
- Jesus Affirms he is the Son of God – John 9
- The Triumphal Entry – Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; & John 12
- The Last Supper – Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; & John 13
- Jesus' Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion – Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; & John 18
- Jesus' Resurrection – Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; & John 20
- Jesus Ascends to Heaven – Acts 1
- The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost – Acts 2
- The Church's first martyr – Acts 6
- Saul's Conversion – Acts 9

Bible 101

How to navigate and understand the Bible
by Pr. Michael Taylor

While some see the Bible as just “some book”, I see the Bible as THE Book. It is a revelation of God and His will for humanity. It is the story of God's efforts to seek and save the lost in the past, present, and future. I've heard it turned into an acronym: “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth”. It is absolutely essential to regularly read & study your Bible as a part of your walk with God.

However, I'll admit that the first time I opened my Bible, I was one of those people who just thought the Bible was just another book. It was yet another holy book, a collection of outdated fables and fairy tales. I had no idea what was in it, except for the handful of major stories that have spread beyond Christianity (such as Adam/Eve, Noah, David & Goliath, and Jesus on the Cross). And I had no idea where to find any of those things once I did start reading it.

This guide is the absolute basics of the Bible - the who, what, when, where, and why. By the time you're done, you should be able to: look up a verse, have a basic idea of what is going on, and be ready to apply it to your walk with God. Future lessons will help you study it for information and read it in a way that strengthens your relationship with God; this guide is truly just the “101”.

Looking Up Stuff in the Bible

In order to explain what's in the Bible, we need to first make sure you know how to find it. Bible references are given in a standard format:

(Book of the Bible) (Chapter):(Verse).

Perhaps the best-known reference is “John 3:16”, which means “Gospel of John, the 3rd chapter, and the 16th verse”. We don't just say to look at a particular page, because every publication of the Bible uses a slightly different layout. Referring to the book, chapter, and verse is the one standard way to make sure everyone can go to the same place.

Be glad that you live in the 21st century! While the book names have basically existed as long as the books themselves, chapter divisions weren't added until the 13th century (more than 1200 years after Jesus!) and verses weren't added until about 500 years ago. So when Jesus read from a particular passage, all He could do was grab “Isaiah” and start skimming until He hit the right verse.

Who

Now that we are all on the same page about what page we should be on (haha), the first thing we need to know is the author of the Bible. It would be correct to say that it has 1 Author and many authors. Ultimately, the Bible itself is a book given by God Himself. And God Himself wrote the words in at least 1 place (the 10 Commandments). But the majority of the Bible is a team effort. Paul describes it like this: "All Scripture is given by _____ of God.." (2 Timothy 3:16). Peter agrees, explaining the process in more detail. He wrote, "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the _____." (2 Peter 1:21)

There is something important to realize about this: the Bible clearly teaches that while God is the source of the message, the messages come through humanity. This is called "thought inspiration", and essentially means that the Holy Spirit impressed a message upon some person for them to write down and share with others in their own words. This is why we find some slight variations among similar stories; each of the 4 Gospels covers a slightly different aspect of Jesus's life and ministry because each of the 4 authors comes from a different perspective and emphasized different details. There is a wide range of backgrounds and approaches from the roughly 40 different authors who contributed to the Bible in some way, from Moses (who was raised in an Egyptian palace) to the fisherman-turned-apostle John.

What

These variations in language aren't just due to differences in personality in the authors. The Bible is a mixture of a variety of types of writing; there are historical stories, songs, prophetic sermons, poetry, letters, visions, and several other types of literature. These different writing styles are often grouped together:

OT History (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther)

Wisdom & Poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations)

Prophecy (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

NT History (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts)

Epistles/Letters (Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, James)

Prophecy (Revelation)

When

As I mentioned before, there were roughly 40 different authors who contributed to the Bible. What I didn't mention is that the gap between the earliest author and the latest author is almost 1,600 years! If we were to go back in time to 1,600 years ago from today, we'd end up more than a thousand years before Columbus made his famous trip across the Atlantic. And while they didn't experience some of the same breakthroughs in technology that we see decade after decade, there was still tremendous changes for God's people in that time period. They learned how to build new and stronger things and buildings, realized better ways to deal with one another, and discovered new methods for dealing with food and water that transformed society in unbelievable ways.

The most important impact of time on the Bible, however, was in its language. In Moses's time, ancient Hebrew was the language of God's people. This was such an early version of Hebrew that they didn't even include vowels in the words when they wrote them! Almost all of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. By the time of Jesus and His disciples, however, the land had been conquered by a few different nations before settling into the Roman Empire. By that time, the language of the people had changed to Greek (which was the language of the New Testament).

Where

The majority of the Bible's stories happened and/or were written in the Middle East (specifically Israel). God's people occasionally interacted with the rising and falling kingdoms around them (like Egypt and Babylon), and other nations sometimes came into their land (like Greece and Rome), but the events of the Bible typically took place in and around Israel...until the book of Acts and beyond. In the book of Acts, we see God's people take a different approach to sharing God's messages. Rather than staying still (in Jerusalem, for example), the early Christian church was told to get up and go. Preachers (like Peter and Paul) travelled to new countries all around the Mediterranean Sea and planted churches. They also sent letters to those churches (called "epistles").

Why

God inspired a handful of men to use various types of literature over the course of 1,600 years and across 3 continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe) because He had something important to tell us. What is that message He has for us? The Bible is God's love letter to humanity. He loves us, and He's hoping we feel the same way about Him. And that is a message that is as important and relatable to us today as it was when and where it was first written.