

**BEFORE YOU  
READ**



**& PRAY**

# GETTING STARTED READING THE BIBLE

The Bible is made up of 66 books. While all of these books may have different stories, styles and language, they all point to one subject, Jesus. The subject of the entire Bible is Jesus.

For many, the Bible can be intimidating to start reading. *Where should you start? How fast should you be reading? What if you don't understand it? What if you don't like to read?* These are common questions. When you find yourself asking these questions, remain calm! There is nothing wrong with you! This guide is meant to help answer some of these questions.

## WHERE SHOULD YOU START?

Here is a list of the order to begin reading your Bible.

### 1) JOHN

The book of John is one of the four Gospels. (The other three being Matthew, Mark and Luke.) The Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John who was one of Jesus' disciples. John actually walked with Jesus. John wrote this book to those who were new to Christianity. It is written in story form and is easy to begin with.

### 2) MARK

Mark is the shortest of the four Gospels. The author of this book seems to go from story to story very quickly and is a good book to read because it reinforces what you have read in John, yet moves quickly.

### 3) LUKE

The Gospel of Luke was written by Luke, a companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke was a physician and was not one of Jesus' twelve disciples. However, Luke interviewed the people who were Jesus' closest companions and wrote this book with a lot of detail. The Gospel of Luke is the first of two books written for Theophilus, a man who knew Luke but was not yet a believer in Jesus. The second book written by Luke is Acts. After reading John, Mark, and Luke, you should have a firm grasp on Jesus' life on Earth.

### 4) ACTS

The book of Acts is the "sequel" to the book of Luke. Again, Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to his friend, Theophilus. The book of Acts is the history of how the church grew after Jesus ascended to Heaven. It traces the steps of the twelve Apostles as they spread from Jerusalem into other nations and also tells the story of the Apostle Paul and his journeys.

### 5) ROMANS - PHILEMON

These 13 books are written by the Apostle Paul. All of them are letters. They are called Epistles. Here are who each Epistle, or letter, was written to.

**ROMANS:** written to the church in Rome

**1 & 2 CORINTHIANS:** written to the church in Corinth

**GALATIANS:** written to the church in Galatia

**EPHESIANS:** written to the church in Ephesus

**PHILIPPIANS:** written to the church in Philippi

**COLOSSIANS:** written to the church in Colossae

**1 & 2 THESSALONIANS:** written to the church in Thessalonica

**1 & 2 TIMOTHY:** written to a young pastor named Timothy

**TITUS:** written to a young pastor named Titus

**PHILEMON:** written to a slave-owner, named Philemon, whose slave, Onesimus, ran away to travel with the Apostle Paul. Paul sent this letter with Onesimus back to Philemon and asked Philemon to show mercy to Onesimus by setting him free and appealed to Onesimus to believe in Jesus.

## WHERE SHOULD YOU START? CONT'D

### 6) GENESIS

By now, you have read most of the New Testament. You have a firm grasp on who Jesus is and a foundation of how the church began and grew. You also have an understanding of what God expects of a Christian. Now, it is time to go back to the beginning, the VERY beginning. Genesis starts with the creation of the world and ends with the nation of Israel, Jacob's family, moving to Israel.

### 7) EXODUS

The nation of Israel, who you saw formed in the book of Genesis, became enslaved by the Egyptians. Exodus tells how God called Moses to lead them out of Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land. **WARNING:** This is the first book you may have trouble with because Exodus discusses various laws that God gave His people. Be brave, trudge through! It is worth it!

### 8) HEBREWS

After reading the first two books of the Old Testament, Genesis and Exodus, return to the New Testament for a book that ties the Old Testament and the New Testament together very well. We do not know who the author of the book of Hebrews is. However, this book outlines the basics of the Christian faith. Let it serve as a glue for all of the books you have read up to this point.

### 9) EVERYTHING ELSE (EXCEPT REVELATION)

By now you have read 20 books of the Bible! There are 46 left for you to read. At this point, read anything that you like. However, it is strongly suggested that you read Revelation last. The reason for this is that Revelation is a very complex book that can confuse and at times burn out a young Christian. Read the other 45 books of the Bible first, then dive into Revelation.

### 10) REVELATION

Revelation is written by the Apostle John, the same author of the first book you read, the Gospel of John. Revelation is about the end of time and the return of Jesus to judge the world, collect His church and punish Satan and all those who do not believe in Jesus. After finishing this book, don't stop reading! Keep reading through the Scriptures. Every time you do, you will learn something new!

## HOW FAST SHOULD YOU READ?

The answer to this question depends on you. If you are a person that can read a novel in one sitting, you probably will be able to read a chapter or several chapters of Scripture at once.

However, you might be a slow reader or maybe it is hard for you to process what you read if you read too much in one sitting. In this case, read until you learn something you did not know or you read a verse that impacts you significantly.

The point is as long as you are reading your Bible every day, do not worry about the pace you are reading. There may be times that you are blazing through book after book, but then there may be times that the Holy Spirit is really speaking to you and you want to read slower in order to soak in each verse. The point is *quality*, not quantity.

## WHAT IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT?

The Bible was not written in English...most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. Because of this, all of the Bibles that we have in English have been translated or paraphrased from the original languages.

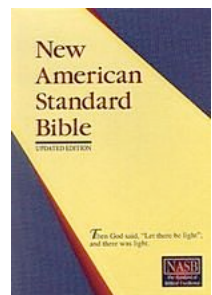
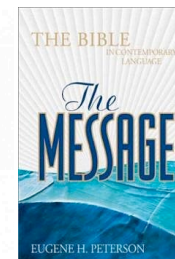
The wonderful thing about this is that English translations have followed the trends of our language. With the constant evolution of the English language, new translations are published frequently. Thus, if one translation does not work for you, another may. When looking to purchase a Bible, go to a Christian bookstore and read through several verses and see which one you understand best. Below are a few of the popular English Bible translations.

NIV

NEW  
INTERNATIONAL  
VERSION



NLT  
The Truth Made  
CLEAR™





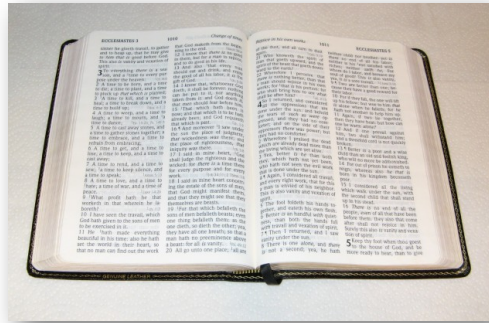
# WHAT IF YOU DON'T LIKE TO READ?

Generally in the age we live in, dominated by websites, text messages and social media, we read a lot more than we give ourselves credit for. According to an article by *The Huffington Post*,

“Adults in the United States will spend more than five hours each day on ‘nonvoice mobile activities,’ including Internet use on phones and tablets...”

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/01/tv-digital-devices\\_n\\_3691196.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/08/01/tv-digital-devices_n_3691196.html)


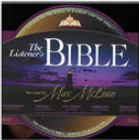
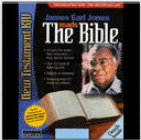
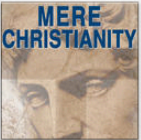


In our digital culture, many find it hard to sit down and read a book that has black text on white pages with no photos or videos. BUT, the Bible, just like every other publication in our culture has found its way to digital formats also!



## iPhone Apps

					
<b>Bible</b> Reference	<b>Bible+</b> Reference	<b>Holy Bible</b> Reference	<b>The Holy Bible - King James... Books</b>	<b>Bible.is</b> Reference	<b>Bible!</b> Reference
Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Download

## Audiobooks

					
<b>NKJV Voice Only Audio Bible (Unabridged)</b> Thomas Nelson, Inc.	<b>The Listener's Bible NIV: The Complete...</b> Various Artists	<b>James Earl Jones Reads the Bible: The...</b> Topics Entertainment	<b>Mere Christianity</b> C. S. Lewis	<b>Proverbs: the Bible Experience...</b> Inspired By Media Gr...	<b>Johnny Cash Reading the Complete New...</b> Thomas Nelson, Inc.
\$9.95	\$29.95	\$9.95	\$14.95	\$3.95	\$15.95

# “IF IT’S FREE IT’S FOR ME!!!”

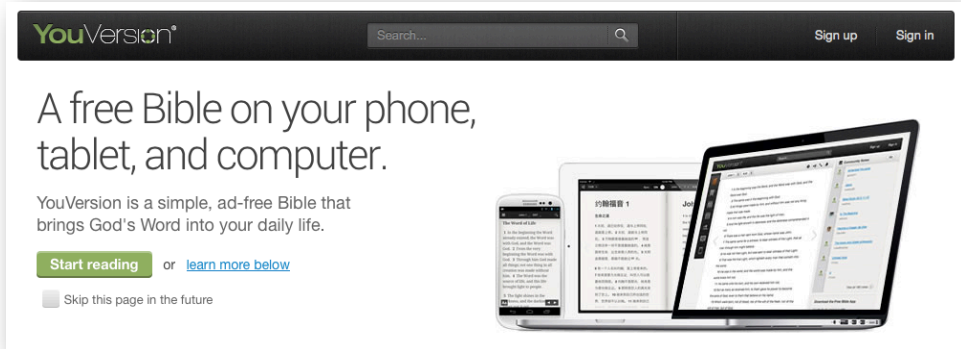
Using the internet to read the Bible should be approached with caution. However, I have found three sources that I use often and are solid and more importantly **100% FREE!**



**Crosswalk.com** is a free website that has multiple versions of the Bible, Bible study tools, devotional materials as well as articles on current events. This is a dynamic website that I highly recommend.



**Blueletterbible.org** is possibly the best Bible resource on the net. Not only is their website packed with every study tool imaginable, but their app for iPhone is what I use for my personal devotions.



**YouVersion** is another very popular tablet and smartphone Bible app. This one, unlike Blue Letter Bible, is available for Android, too.

# HOW THE BIBLE IS SET UP

The 66 books in the Bible are not set up chronologically. This is why many people who start reading the Bible from the beginning stall mid-way through. A key to finding a reading strategy that works for you is understanding how your Bible is set up.

The Bible is set up in sections. Each section is then ordered either chronologically or largest book to smallest book. Each section of the Bible serves an overall purpose. In other words, the books of the Bible are ordered in a way that shows their particular purpose, not their order in Biblical history.

## THE PENTATEUCH

GENESIS, EXODUS, LEVITICUS, NUMBERS & DEUTERONOMY

These books are, for the most part, arranged chronologically. “Penta” meaning “five” and “teuch” meaning “scroll case or vessel” refers to the first five books of the Old Testament. These are also called the Books of the Law. These five books trace the account of God’s people from the Creation of Adam all the way to when the Israelites reach the Promised Land. These five books contain the Law of Moses. Most Jews in Jesus’ day would have had these five books memorized verbatim. The Israelite people were commanded to live by the laws in these books.

## THE BOOKS OF HISTORY

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

These books are arranged chronologically and cover the history of the nation of Israel from the death of Moses until Israel is exiled into Babylon. Joshua, Judges and Ruth are set before Israel had an earthly king. 1 & 2 Samuel cover the ascension and fall of Saul as Israel’s earthly king and the anointing and ascension of David as king of Israel as well as his son, Solomon. 1 & 2 Kings as well as 1 & 2 Chronicles house the histories of the kings of Israel as well as the kings of Judah, after the nation of Israel split into 2 kingdoms. Ezra tells about Israel returning to the God’s Law after it had forgotten. Nehemiah and Esther both give histories of when Israel was exiled in Babylon.

## THE BOOKS OF POETRY

JOB, PSALMS, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES & SONG OF SONGS

These books are arranged with Job being first, because it is believed to be the oldest book in the Bible. After that, the books are ordered largest to smallest. Job tells the story of the man, Job, and all of his tests that God allowed him to be put through. It is in this section because the discussions in the book between Job and his friends are poetry. Psalms is a collection of songs from ancient Israel. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs are all poetic writings by King Solomon.

## THE MAJOR PROPHETS

ISAIAH, JEREMIAH & EZEKIEL

These books are arranged largest to shortest and bear the name of their authors. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were prophets in Israel during the time period of Kings and Chronicles. Each carries a particular message for Israel to repent of its sins and turn to God. Unfortunately, Israel does not heed the message of these prophets and is thus exiled to Babylon. Being that these books contain prophecy, do not be intimidated by their odd language. These are important books even today.

## THE MINOR PROPHETS

DANIEL, HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABBAKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH & MALACHI

These books are arranged largest to shortest and, like the major prophets, bear the name of their authors. All of these books contain the prophecies of men before and during Israel’s exile. They contain warnings and promises of God’s wrath and God’s grace. Do not discount these tiny books, though their subjects are at times obscure, God paints beautiful pictures of Himself and His passion for His people through the minor prophets.



# HOW THE BIBLE IS SET UP CONT'D

## THE GOSPELS

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE & JOHN

Unlike the other sections, these books are arranged in no particular order. “Gospel” means “good news.” The Gospels make up the first four books of the New Testament and are written four hundred years after the Old Testament. Each book tells the history of Jesus’ life on Earth which Christians call “the good news.” However, each Gospel is written from a different perspective and addresses a different audience. It is beneficial to read all four to gain a firm understanding of Jesus’ life.

## CHURCH HISTORY

ACTS

The book of Acts stands in a section by itself because it is the book that contains the history of the church after Jesus ascended to Heaven. It shows the Gospel message spreading from the Jews (God’s chosen people in the Old Testament) to the Gentile nations (the peoples not chosen by God in the Old Testament.) Acts shows how the Holy Spirit arrived at Pentecost in Jerusalem and from their the church of God was born. Acts also tells about the conversion of Saul, who was re-named Paul, and his journeys to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles.

## PAULEAN EPISTLES

ROMANS, 1 & 2 CORINTHIANS, GALATIANS, EPHESISANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, 1 & 2 THESSALONIANS, 1 & 2 TIMOTHY, TITUS & PHILEMON

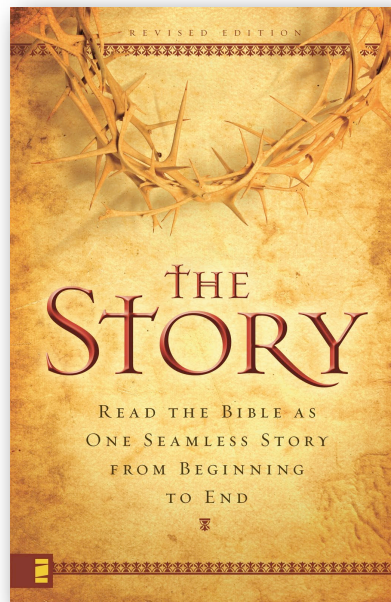
These books are arranged largest to smallest. “Epistle” means “letter.” After Paul’s conversion, he travelled widely through the known ancient world to spread the Gospel. He kept in contact with the churches he had visited by writing letters. These letters contain valuable truths of what God expects of His followers. The Apostle Paul is an important author in the Bible because he connects Old Testament Law with the New Covenant that Jesus brought when He came to Earth.

## VARIOUS EPISTLES

HEBREWS, JAMES, 1 & 2 PETER, 1, 2 & 3 JOHN, JUDE & REVELATION

These books are arranged largest to smallest. The New Testament of the Bible concludes with letters by authors other than the Apostle Paul. The author of Hebrews did not identify themselves, and to this day, we do not know who wrote it. James, Peter, John and Jude wrote the next letters after Hebrews. James is believed to have been one of Jesus’ brothers. Peter was one of the twelve disciples and Jude was a follower of Jesus, though not one of the twelve. First, Second and Third John and Revelation are all authored by John, who was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. Revelation is the record of what John saw in a vision and was commanded to write down concerning Jesus’ second coming to Earth.

## IS THERE A WAY TO READ THE BIBLE LIKE A NOVEL?



Zondervan has published a book entitled *The Story*. It is the text of the Bible arranged in chapters instead of books and it reads like a “seamless story, from beginning to end.”

*The Story* is available at Christian bookstores as well as online booksellers like Amazon.



# THE BIBLE: AN ALL-YOU-CAN-EAT MEAL



At first when you read your Bible, you will find that some verses, books or sections interest you. You will also find that some verses, books or sections bore, confuse or put you to sleep. So, what should you do?

Think of the Bible like an all-you-can-eat buffet. Some like beets, some don't. Some like steak, others do not. When you take your plate to the buffet, you typically choose foods that you like. Sometimes you get adventurous and try something new. When you eat your plate, you choose your favorites and also the things you will not eat again. When returning for seconds, you typically will choose again the things you liked the first time, and avoid the foods you disliked.

As you begin to read, approach the Bible the same way. If you find a particular section is boring, skip it, read something else. You have a lifetime to read, re-read and study the Bible. **YOU WILL NOT GET IT ALL THE FIRST TIME!**



# NOTES