

The Bible 101: An Introduction, or Refresher

Welcome to a 4-part online project offered by St. Peter's Church Faith Formation! Although designed for families of children receiving their first Bible, anyone can use these sessions to get to know, or simply revisit, the written word of God.



What is the Bible?

The Bible is the written word of God. It shows us real examples of God's work in our world—how he created it, how he interacts with people, and how people interact with God. The Bible shows us that God's universal message of love, redemption, and renewal is present through all time.

God uses many people to tell his story, which happens in many different times and places. The Bible is divine (of God) and human at the same time—it is inspired by God but written in and about our world. God, and the authors he inspired, uses narratives (stories); dialogues between people; proverbs (pieces of advice); parables (like Jesus told); songs; history (what has happened); and prophecy (what will happen) to tell all the stories of the Bible.

The Bible is...

- a guide for living life to the fullest—like a roadmap for a journey.
- a storehouse of exciting stories: Noah's ark, Jonah and the fish, Daniel and the lion's den, David and Goliath, the parables of Jesus. These stories tell us about the triumphs and failures of ordinary people like us.
- a refuge in times of trouble. When we have times of pain, sickness, sadness, or mourning, the Bible brings us strength and comfort because it reminds us God is always with us.
- a treasury of insight into who we are. We are people, just like the people in the Bible. God made us, he loves us, and he gives us a purpose.
- a sourcebook for everyday living. The Bible gives us rules, suggestions, and guidelines for knowing right from wrong. We are always free to make our own choices, though, and the Bible also reminds us that God forgives us when we mess up.

FUN FACTS:

- The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- The Bible was written over the course of 16 centuries, from about 1400 BC to about 95 AD.
- About 40 different people contributed to writing the different books of the Bible
- There are 66 Books in the Bible, divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- The Bible is the best-selling book of all time, with over 5 billion copies sold.
- There are hundreds of translations of the Bible into English alone.

How to find a Bible passage:

- Bible verses are written like this one:
 - Genesis 7:1-5
- The first part is the book of the Bible
 - There are 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. There is a table of contents at the beginning to help find the book, if you want to use it
- The second part (the first number) is the chapter of the book
 - The Book of Psalms has the most chapters (150)
 - Five books (Obadiah, Philemon, 2 & 3 John, and Jude) have only a single chapter
- The last number (or set of numbers) is the verse(s)
 - These are marked by small numbers next to the words.



Try It!

Look up the following Bible passages for practice.

1 Samuel 17:1-51

Exodus 2:1-10

Psalms 23:1-6

Jonah 1:1 – 4:11

Luke 10:25-37

Matthew 28:1-15

Acts 2:1-4

When Should I Read the Bible?

We can read the Bible anytime! You can read the Bible at home—choose a verse or two to read before dinner or at bedtime. You can also read the Bible on special occasions, when you are feeling particularly thankful and happy, or when you are angry or upset. God uses the Bible to speak to us at all times.



We also read the Bible each week at church. Most Sundays, we read four different Bible lessons: one story from the Old Testament, one Psalm, one story from the New Testament, and one story from the Gospels (the first four books of the New Testament).

There are two different schedules, or lectionaries, we use to select the readings. One is a 3-year cycle of readings, beginning on p. 889 of the Book of Common Prayer. We are finishing up Year C right now—we go back to Year A in a few weeks on Advent I. There is also a Daily Office (p. 934 in the BCP) that is a 2-year cycle. You can use these lectionaries to find a passage, or simply make your way through a chapter or book at your own pace!

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