

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.

The Old Testament & the New Testament

The Bible contains 66 books in two testaments, which means something that serves as a sign or evidence of something. In this case, both the Old and the New Testament show us the same God of mercy and love. A testament also refers to a covenant, or an agreement between two people. So, the Old Testament refers to God's agreement with the people of Israel. He agrees to bless and protect him if they worship only him (an agreement they have trouble keeping!). Then Jesus arrives, and updates the old agreement with a new one: he is our savior, the Son of God: the New Testament.



The Old Testament has books from before the time of Jesus, although we can see that Jesus as the Son of God is foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament. The New Testament tells the stories of Jesus's life, and the acts of his apostles, or followers, as they established the new church after Jesus ascends to heaven. Both books are the word of God, and both books give us examples of how to follow God.

The Old Testament

Parts of the Old Testament go back over 3000 years, so that's pretty old! Most of the Old Testament books were communicated orally, then written down by many different people. Moses is the primary author of the first five books (also known as the Torah). David is associated with the Psalms, but others contributed to that book of prayers as well. King Solomon, David's son, inspired or wrote much of the Bible's "wisdom literature," such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Some of the books are oracles, or prophecies, from prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos—many of these were shouted from street corners or pronounced in royal courts, then written down. There are stories of war, peace, famine, plenty, and all sorts of troubles and blessings.

The New Testament

The New Testament was written in the few decades following Jesus's time on earth, so it's now 2000 years old. These are the stories, teachings, and letters from the early Christian church. These books are full of encouragement, advice, and even a few warnings! The Gospels, which are the first four books of the New Testament, are four versions of the story of Jesus's life—a few details may vary, but the essence is the same: that he is the Son of God sent here to forgive our sins. The New Testament also contains letters from the apostles Paul and Peter to various places and communities in the early church. These letters were meant to be read aloud in a community of believers, as we do each week in worship!

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An Old Covenant and a New Covenant

The Old Covenant, or agreement, was between God and the people of Israel. He freed them from slavery in Egypt and makes Israel his chosen people. He offers them the Ten Commandments and other rules to follow in return for leading them to the Promised Land. In return, he requires that they worship no God but him.



The New Covenant begins when God sends Jesus into the world. He performed miracles, died, and rose again as the perfect and final sacrifice to wash away our sins and to fulfill the old covenant. The New Covenant has two commandments instead of ten: love your Lord with all your heart and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. In return, God promises us salvation from sin and eternal life with God.

The Old Covenant Foretells the New Covenant

The Old Testament frequently foreshadows the new covenant between God and his people, which is described in the New Testament. Jesus also refers several times to events in the Old Testament, and says that his life fulfills many of the prophecies, or predictions about the future, written there.

Read the Old Testament passages on the left and try to match them to the New Testament fulfillments on the right!

Old Testament Prophecy...

1. "When Israel was a child, I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son." Hosea 11:1
2. "Abraham answered, 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' And the two of them went on together." Genesis 22:8
3. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6
4. "I will bless those who bless you (Abram), and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you." Genesis 12:3

...New Testament Fulfillment

- A. "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')." Matthew 1:23
- B. "Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up! Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.'" Matthew 2:13
- C. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29
- D. "The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!'" John 1:29