

Bible Reading Plan

Reading the Bible, even just the New Testament, can seem a daunting and confusing task for the newcomer. This is not a reading plan on how to power through the bible in one year, or in any other time period. This is a reading plan for those new to reading their Bible who want to read and understand, not just check off the task of having done it. If you will follow this reading plan and read through the listed books of the Bible in this order and at your own pace I think you will find that things will tie together better, flow better, hold your attention and interest better, be more meaningful and easier to remember. This reading plan does not include every book of the Bible, but it does include most of them, and enough that you will be better informed than 99.9% of the people out there.

I recommend either the New King James Version. The wording is somewhat more contemporary than the original King James Version, but it retains all the accuracy of the original King James, and goes it one better. The original King James followed a strict word for word translation. For instance if the Greek word was "bowel" the original King James translated it as "bowel". In many instances the Greek word for "bowel" is more meaningfully translated as "heart", since the Greeks at that time thought of the bowels as the center of all emotions, just as we speak of the "heart" today. The New King James would translate that word as "heart" in those instances. This is just one example, and is called "functional equivalence". The result is a translation that conveys the meaning of the original Greek much better. The Holman Christian Standard is also an excellent choice for adults.

Bible Reading Plan - New Testament

- First read Mark - New Testament Book 2: The shortest, earliest, simplest of the Gospels, written by Mark, travelling companion to the apostle Peter.
- Next read Matthew - New Testament Book 1: The most instructive of the Gospels, written by the apostle Matthew and cram packed with the teachings, parables, and miracles of Jesus. Written from a Jewish perspective to convince the Jews that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah from God.
- Next read Luke - New Testament Book 3: The most direct of the Gospels, written by Luke, the travelling companion to the apostle Paul, written from the perspective of a historian.
- Next read Acts - New Testament Book 5: A continuation of Luke written by the same author to record the events following the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The best record we have of the early Church.
- Next read John - New Testament Book 4: The latest of all the Gospels. Written by the apostle John. An explanation of Jesus as God's Messiah to the non-Jewish first century Christians in terms that they would understand.
- Next read James - just a few books before Revelation: A very early explanation of the teachings of Jesus by His earthly brother James (see Matthew 13:55) and leader of the first century Christian Church in Jerusalem (see Acts 15:13-22).
- Next read Jude - just a few books before Revelation: An early explanation of the teachings of Jesus by another of His earthly brothers, Judas (see also Matthew 13:55).
- Next read first and second Peter - just a few books before Revelation: An early explanation of the teachings of Jesus by the apostle Peter.
- Next read first, second, and third John - just a few books before Revelation: An explanation of the teachings of Jesus by the very aged apostle John, the apostle whom Jesus loved.

Next read Hebrews: an open letter by an unknown author instructing all of the 12 tribes of the Nation of Israel in the teachings of Jesus.

Next read Romans: an open letter by an unknown author instructing the non-Jews of the Roman Empire in the teachings of Jesus.

Next read the epistles (letters) of Paul to the congregations in Asia Minor (now Turkey) and Greece that he established: first and second Corinthians (written to the congregation at Corinth located on the Isthmus of Corinth, the narrow stretch of land that joins the Peloponnese Peninsula to the mainland of Greece near the southern tip of Greece); Galatians (written to the congregations in the region of Galatia consisting of most of modern day Turkey); Next read Ephesians (written to the congregation at Ephesus, today an archaeological site in Turkey near the Mediterranean seaport town of Kuşadası); Philippians (written to the congregation at Philippi on the Aegean coast of northern Greece); Colossians (written to the congregation at Colossae in modern day Turkey about 125 miles east of Ephesus); first and second Thessalonians (written to the congregation at Thessalonica, on the site of the modern day city of Thessaloniki Greece). These are letters dealing with the challenges faced by the first century Church, most of which are still relevant today.

Next read what are known as the pastoral epistles (letters) of Paul; first and second Timothy, Titus, Philemon. These are letters of encouragement and instruction to first century church leaders and are still relevant today.

I recommend skipping Revelation until after you have read the Old Testament prophets, since they form the knowledge base from which Revelation was written.

Bible Reading Plan - Old Testament Histories

The history of the Nation of Israel is (or should be) important to all Christians. As Paul teaches us (the gentile Christians) in the New Testament, we have been "grafted in". We are now a part of, drawing our sustenance from, the historical Nation of Israel. The New Testament says nothing about us "replacing" the Nation of Israel. Paul teaches that we have been "grafted in". We are a living part of, indistinguishable from, the historical Nation of Israel.

First read Genesis chapters 1-3: The Creation, original temptation, original sin

Then read Genesis chapters 4-7: Pre-Flood History

Next read Genesis chapters 8-30: Post-Flood to the first 11 tribes of Jacob (Israel)

Next read Genesis chapters 31-35: the final (12th) tribe of Jacob (Israel)

Next read Genesis chapters 36-41: Jacob's son Joseph in Egypt

Next read Genesis chapters 42-46: Jacob's family of 66 moves to Egypt

Next read Genesis chapters 47-50: Jacob's family lives peaceably in Egypt

Next read Exodus: Israel's tribulations in Egypt and exodus from Egypt

Next read Joshua: Israel's conquest and occupation of the promised land

Next read Judges: the days of the righteous judges in Israel

Next read first Samuel: the days of Saul, the first King of Israel, and of Samuel, God's prophet to both Saul and David

Next read second Samuel: the reign of David, the second King of Israel who united the 12 tribes into the cohesive Nation of Israel

Next read first Kings chapters 1-11: the reign of Solomon, David's son, the third King of Israel

Next read first Kings chapters 12-22: the revolt and disintegration of the cohesive nation of Israel into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah following the death of Solomon

Next read second Kings: the captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in Assyria and the captivity of the Southern Kingdom of Judah in Babylon

Next read Ezra: the re-population of Judah and Jerusalem and the re-building of Solomon's temple following the Babylonian captivity

Next read Nehemiah: the re-building of Jerusalem and its fortifications following the Babylonian captivity

Next read Ruth: because of her devotion and righteousness Ruth becomes matriarch of the family that ultimately includes David, Solomon, Jesse, and Jesus the Christ.

Finally read Esther: because of her dedication and righteousness Esther saves the Jewish nation from annihilation.

Then go on to read the Old Testament books of prophecy (major then minor)

Bible Reading Plan - Old Testament Major Prophets

No serious study of bible prophecy can begin without a solid grounding in the old testament prophecies. The most important of these are the major prophets.

First read Daniel - about the middle of the Old Testament: Young Daniel displays faith and prophesies to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, after the Southern Kingdom of Judah is taken captive. Basically an outline of then future world history.

Next read the major prophet Isaiah - 4 books before Daniel. Isaiah prophesies to the Southern Kingdom of Judah about many things, including their need for repentance, the coming of their Messiah, Jesus the Christ, and the end of this age.

Next read the major prophet Jeremiah - 3 books before Daniel. Jeremiah prophesies to the Southern Kingdom of Judah just before their fall to Babylon about many things, including their impending captivity.

Next read the major prophet Ezekiel - just before Daniel. Ezekiel prophesies to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the fifth year of their captivity in Babylon.

Next read the minor prophet Zechariah - 11 books after Daniel. Zechariah prophesies in Jerusalem regarding the coming of the Messiah and exhorting the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the Temple from about 520 to 487 B.C.

Bible Reading Plan - Old Testament Minor Prophets

First read Joel - 2 books after Daniel. Joel prophesies to the Southern Kingdom of Judah about the coming Day of the Lord and warns them to repent around about 800 B.C.

Next read Hosea - the book between Daniel and Joel. Hosea prophesies to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and warns them to repent from about 785 to 725 B.C.

Next read Micah - 6 books after Daniel. Micah prophesies in the Southern Kingdom of Judah about the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel from about 752 to 700 B.C.

Next read Zephaniah - 9 books after Daniel. Zephaniah prophesies in Jerusalem warning the Southern Kingdom of Judah to repent from about 630 to 625 B.C.

Next read Habakkuk - 8 books after Daniel. Habakkuk prophesies in the Southern Kingdom of Judah on the overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom using Hebrew poetic structure about 626 B.C.

Next read Amos - 3 books after Daniel. Amos prophesies to the Northern Kingdom of Israel about the judgment of Israel and national accountability for national sins about 787 B.C.

Next read Obadiah - 4 books after Daniel. Obadiah prophesies on the doom of Edom, the descendants of Esau, because of their actions toward their brother Jacob (Israel) using Hebrew poetic structure some time between 900 B. C. and 586 B.C.

Next read Jonah - 5 books after Daniel. Jonah attempts to flee from God's commission to prophesy to the people of Nineveh, but is dragged back to complete that mission of proclaiming God's love for the spiritually lost to the Assyrian city of Nineveh on the site of the modern day city of Mosul in Iraq. He prophesies from about 793 to 752 B.C.

Next read Nahum - 7 books after Daniel. Nahum prophesies in Jerusalem on the doom of Edom using Hebrew poetic structure about 715 B.C.

Next read Haggai - 10 books after Daniel. Haggai prophesies in Jerusalem following Judah's return from Babylonian captivity exhorting the Jews to complete the rebuilding of the Temple from about 520 to 518 B.C.

Next read Malachi - the last book of the old testament. Malachi prophesies regarding the graciousness of God in putting up with the human condition about 400 B.C.

Then go back to the New Testament and read Revelation: the last book of the bible - end time prophecy from a New Testament perspective.

Bible Reading Plan - Wisdom Books

After you have finished reading all of these, then read the books of wisdom and praise. This by no means implies that these are any less important, just that in the logical order that I am trying to present here, something had to come last.

First read the Old Testament book of Psalms: psalms (songs) of praise mostly by David.

Next read the Old Testament book of Proverbs: proverbs of wisdom mostly by Solomon.

Next read the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes: reflections of the aged Solomon on his life.

Next read the Old Testament book Song of Solomon: a love sonnet about two lovers, Solomon and his Shulamite maiden.

Next read the Old Testament book of Job: Generally accepted to be the oldest book in the bible, written even before Genesis. The wisdom of trusting God presented by Job.

Bible Reading Plan - Conclusion

After you have finished reading all of these, then go back and read the remaining books to complete your reading of the entire Bible. This does not mean that these are unimportant, just that in the logical order that I am trying to present here, something had to come last.

First read the Old Testament book of Leviticus: A recap of the commandments, civil and ceremonial laws given to Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Next read the Old Testament book of Numbers: A recap from Moses at Mt. Sinai, through the 40 years in the wilderness, to the fields of Moab preparing to enter the promised land of Canaan.

Next read the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy: A recap of the Exodus and the Laws.

Next read the Old Testament book of Lamentations: poetical lamentations over the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the suffering of the residents of Jerusalem.

Finally read the Old Testament books of first and second Chronicles: the last book in the original Hebrew scriptures. A recap of the genealogies from Adam to David and the history from King David to the edict of Cyrus allowing the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple