

# Understanding Your Bible

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(Target publication date, Fall 2020)

## The Old Testament

Today, the first 17 books tell the story of the *people* of God. The middle 5 books are the *poetry* and song lyrics of the people of God. And the last 17 books are *prophecies* to the people of God.

### **17 People stories, 5 Poems and 17 Prophets:**

**Genesis:** (*Getting Started*): The beginning of everything.

**Exodus:** (*Exit Egypt*): God’s people leave Egypt.

**Leviticus:** (*Laws*): God gives the Jewish people laws and ceremonies to help them obey Him.

**Numbers:** (*Numbering*): The Jewish people are numbered.

**Deuteronomy:** (*Do-over*): God reminds the people of His laws and ceremonies.

**Joshua:** (*Journey*): The Jewish people take over a new land.

**Judges:** (*Justice*): The Jewish people have judges as rulers.

**Ruth:** (*Romance*): A pretty lady finds an awesome husband. A story of romance, character and integrity.

**1st and 2nd Samuel:** (*Starting Kings*): Israel moves from judges as rulers to the first 3 kings of Israel (Saul, David and Solomon): Stories of spies, adultery, murder and civil war.

**1st and 2nd Kings:** (*Kingdom’s Fall*): The rise and fall of the kingdom in 3 parts until the surviving people are taken into captivity in Babylon.

**1st and 2nd Chronicles:** *Come Again?* A re-telling and summary of the history of the southern Kingdom of Judah. Many things are repeated from Samuel and Kings but from a different point of view.

**Ezra:** (*Enter Again*) The people of Judah return from captivity in Babylon.

**Nehemiah:** (*Nail together*) Nehemiah leads the survivors returning from Babylon to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

**Esther:** (*Escape*) A brave lady saves her people from being totally destroyed. A thrilling tale of intrigue, romance, spies in a palace and the attempted murder of an entire race of people.

**Job:** (*in a Jam*) The story of the tragic and heroic life of a man named Job. Job wrestles with the big question “why do bad things happen to good people?”

**Psalms:** (*Songs*) Song lyrics and poems telling about the greatness of God and the way to live a fulfilling life.

**Proverbs:** (*Practical*) Practical sayings about how the world works and how to deal with everything from an angry boss to a difficult child.

**Ecclesiastes:** (*Explanation*) A man wrestles with making sense out of life. He ends up deciding that only trusting in God and doing things God’s ways makes any sense.

**The Song of Solomon:** (*Sparks*) A love song in poetry between a young groom and his beautiful bride.

**Isaiah:** (*Insights*) Future predictions, warnings to people for how they’re living and promises of comfort and hope for people facing hard times. Isaiah is a powerful book of prophecy.

**Jeremiah:** (*Just Jerry*) God’s spokesman to the southern Kingdom of Judah just before they fell in battle. Jeremiah stood alone against people who hated God’s ways.

**Lamentations:** (*Lament*) Poetry about the awful destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

**Ezekiel:** (*Examples*) Messages of warning and hope from both before and after the fall of the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

**Daniel:** (*Dependable*) The story of a courageous young man and his friends who stood up for right against the evil of their day. Daniel also records predictions of future events he received from God in dreams.

**Hosea:** (*Husband*) The tragic story of a wife cheating on her husband and his efforts to bring her back that illustrates how God feels when people ignore Him.

**Joel:** (*Jump back to God*) A prophet uses natural disasters as illustrations that people need to turn back to God.

**Amos:** (*Alert Israel*) A warning to the northern Kingdom of Israel to live right and serve God or else bad times were coming.

**Obadiah:** (*Overthrow of Edom*) The shortest Old Testament book (only 21 verses) warning the neighbors of Judah in a land called “Edom” about God’s coming justice.

**Jonah:** (*Journey in the whale*) Jonah was a prophet, called by God to preach about serving God to the people of the city of Nineveh. Jonah tried to run from the call of God, was punished for his disobedience and later returned to do what God told him to do in the first place.

**Micah:** (*Make it right*) A warning to the people of the southern kingdom of Judah about their need to live right and serve God.

**Nahum:** (*Nixing Nineveh*) A prediction of the coming destruction of the Assyrian city of Nineveh.

**Habakkuk:** (*How come God?*) why do bad things happen to “good” people? Habakkuk wanted to know – and God answered.

**Zephaniah:** (*Zero in on what’s right*) God explains that warning is followed by punishment but turning around from doing things wrong leads to God’s blessing – and this is true for every nation on earth.

**Haggai:** (*Halt?*) The 2<sup>nd</sup> shortest book in the Old Testament asks the people why they’ve stopped working on rebuilding the temple of God. When they restart the work, God promises to be with them.

**Zechariah:** (*Zip to the end*) Many predictions of a coming Savior for the world and what will happen in the “end-times”.

**Malachi:** (*Make it right*) If you want to experience God’s favor, you just have to do things in life God’s way. Malachi teaches us this truth and predicts more about the coming savior of the world.

**The New Testament:** tells about the life of Jesus and His followers.

The first 4 books of the N T are biographies of the life of Jesus and his friends. These are called “the gospels”, a word which simply means “good news.”

The next book is a biography of the first followers of Jesus telling how they spread the “good news” about Jesus throughout the ancient Roman world.

**The second half of the N T is a group of letters explaining what Jesus said and did: There are 13 letters written by Paul and 9 letters written by other apostles:**

- *4 and 1 begin the New, then 9 then 4 then 9 it’s through...*

**Matthew:** (*Meticulous Matt*) The story of Jesus Christ written to tell religious Jews about His life.

**Mark:** (*Mark, Get Set, Go...*) This book is the shortest biography of Jesus, written for a non-Jewish audience at a very fast reading pace.

**Luke:** (*Linking Jesus to people*) Luke is a book about the life of Jesus written by a non-Jewish doctor and historian. The book focuses on Jesus as He related to everyone.

**John:** (*Jesus' Spiritual Words*) Jesus said many very profound and spiritual things which John wrote down after Matthew, Mark and Luke had been written.

**Acts:** (*Acts of the preachers*) Luke, who wrote the book of Luke, also wrote a history of the followers of Jesus from just after Jesus rose from the dead up until about 60 A.D. This is an action packed book full of shipwrecks, riots, trials, acts of heroism and betrayal.

**Romans:** (*Roll up the Old, bring in the New*) This letter was written by Paul (one of the early churches greatest leaders) to Christians living in Rome. He explained in this book how the old Jewish law was finished up by Jesus, how everyone needs Jesus to be made right with God and how we accept Jesus by trust and faith alone.

**1st Corinthians:** (*1st, Core Church Concepts*) Paul writes to the Christians living in the city of Corinth. He explains how the local church should operate, how people should act in the church, in marriage and towards the poor and explains how important it is for Christians to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

**2nd Corinthians:** (*2nd, Corinthian Caution*) Paul writes to the Christians in the city of Corinth a second time. In this letter he warns the people about false teachings that can harm them.

**Galatians:** (*Guidance*) Paul writes to the Christians in an area of the Roman Empire called "Galatia". In this letter he explains why he is qualified to be a leader for the Christian church and why certain teachings floating around were wrong.

**Ephesians:** (*Everyone's Equal*) Ephesus was an important commercial city in the 1st century. Paul wrote this letter to Christians in Ephesus encouraging them to truly care for each other. This was a time of great racism and Paul taught that everyone was from the same race – the human race.

**Philippians:** (*Peace People - Please*) The Christians from the city of Philippi had sent a wonderful financial gift to help Paul and he sent this letter to say "thank you." He also encouraged the people to avoid rivalries and personal ambitions that would keep us from being a peaceful people.

**Colossians:** (*Christ Came To Care*) Paul wrote this letter to the Asian city of Colosse to explain how Jesus is God in human form and how we need to grow up as Christians and become more like Jesus in how we live.

**1st Thessalonians:** (*1st, Take it seriously*) The city of Thessalonica was a Roman port city on the Aegean Sea. Paul wrote to Christians in this city to encourage them because they were being

treated very badly by the authorities. He also warned these Christians (and us) about religious hypocrites who are only in church for the money and how Christians cannot afford to quit living for God or become lazy.

**2nd Thessalonians:** (*2nd, Teaching Truth*) Paul writes a second time to Christians in Thessalonica. He had heard some good things about these folks and how they were standing strong for Jesus in tough circumstances. But he also was concerned about some false teaching that was causing confusion so he wrote this letter to help clear things up.

**1st Timothy:** (*1st, Tell People Tim!*) Timothy was a young pastor. Paul wrote to him to help him understand how to lead a Christian church, what teachings were important for Timothy to focus on, how to pick other leaders and how to deal with widows and elderly people.

**2nd Timothy:** (*2nd, Tough Tests for Tim*) This is the last letter Paul wrote before he was killed in Rome in 67 A.D. In this letter, Paul encourages Timothy to be faithful, stand strong during hard times and preach the truth without compromise.

**Titus:** (*Test Your Leaders*) Titus was a pastor on the Island of Crete in the Mediterranean sea who had once worked with Paul. This letter from Paul helps Titus understand how to pick leaders in his church, how to spot false teachers and what it really means to live a Godly life.

**Philemon:** (*Find Your Way Home*) This is a very short and personal letter from Paul to a man names Philemon about his runaway slave Onesimus. Paul wants Philemon to treat Onesimus kindly and this short letter tells us also that there is no difference between the rich and poor as far as God is concerned.

**Hebrews:** (*Hall of Faith*) This book is written to Christians and explains how Jesus is both God and man. It also tells us how we have to live our lives trusting God by faith just as the great men and women of God did before us.

**James:** (*Just Control Yourself*) This book was written by the half-brother of Jesus Christ. It is a very fiery book telling Christians to stand with confidence, to resist temptation, be compassionate, take care what we say and live with patience and prayer.

**1st Peter:** (*1st, Put On Some Patience*) Peter was Jesus' best friend here on earth. He writes this letter to Christians telling us to how to deal with tough times, how to honor God in how we live and how to be responsible toward each other in life.

**2nd Peter:** (*2nd, Point Out the Problems*) Peter writes again to Christians reminding us of what it means to be a Christian and how to spot false teachers. He encourages us to stay strong when people are against us and promises that Jesus is coming again.

**1st John:** (*1st, Just Love Each Other*) John was one of Jesus' friends on earth. He writes this short letter to encourage Christians to love each other as children of God.

**2nd John:** (2nd, (*Just Practice What You Preach*) This tiny letter from John can fit on one piece of paper. It is a simple letter teaching people to practice and protect the truth about Jesus carefully.

**3rd John:** (3rd, *Just Be Kind*) This is a recommendation letter from John for a man named Gaius. The church he was going to was being influenced by a wealthy man who wasn't acting as he should toward others. John sent this letter to encourage people how they should treat each other.

**Jude:** (*Jude: "Just Stand Strong"*) Jude was another half-brother of Jesus. He wrote this very short note to warn other Christians about falling away from the faith and how to avoid falling away.

**Revelation:** (*Revealing His Return*) This book is written by John who also wrote a biography of Jesus and three short letters. Much of the book is a recording of a dream John had that is full of symbols and wild pictures. It warns churches to teach the truth and love the less fortunate in the world. Some people think the rest of the book predicts the end of the world. Others think the book is predicting events that happened in 70 A.D. Either way, it explains that Jesus will ultimately return and rule over all the earth.