

# The Bible

## What is the significance of God's Holy Scripture?

**Curious About...**the Bible? Great! Here is some information. This has been put together so you can understand what God thinks about the Bible. You'll also have a chance to dig into the Bible for yourself!

### Definitions

*Bible:* The term "bible" refers to a collection of writings that are considered authoritative for a group of people. The Holy Bible, God's Word, or the Scriptures are made up of Old and New Testaments written about God, the history of His people, the story of salvation, and teachings to His Church.

*Old Testament:* The Old Testament is the first section of the Bible. It is comprised of 39 books that tell the history of the Jewish people and their relationship with God before the birth of Christ. Today, Jews refer to the Old Testament as the Hebrew Bible.

*New Testament:* The New Testament is the second major division of the Bible and consists of 27 books. It consists of the Gospels (four books that describe the life of Jesus Christ), the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of Paul and other early Christian leaders, and the book of Revelation.

**Written by Men, Inspired by God:** Christians believe the Bible was "God-breathed," which means it was written by human hands but divinely inspired by God in the minds of men. Although the books of the Bible were composed by those men, Christians affirm the men's written words have been guided by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Bible is God's direct message to His followers, which is why it is held with such importance in Christianity.

**What's in the Old Testament?** The first five books of the Old Testament, also called the Torah (Tore-uh), describe the creation of the Earth and the early history of God's chosen people, the Israelites. The next section continues the history of the Israelites and their rise and fall as a Kingdom. Then, there are five books known as the "wisdom literature," which include the books of Psalms and Proverbs. Finally, there is a series of 17 books written by Jewish prophets who, among other

things, prophesied about the coming of Jesus, known to the Hebrews as the Messiah.

**What's in the New Testament?** The Gospels, which are the first four books of the New Testament, tell of Jesus' birth, teachings, death, and resurrection. Each Gospel offers a different perspective on Jesus' life from the viewpoint of four different people. After the Gospels is a book called the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the history of the early Christian church. Then, there are a series of epistles, or letters written by Paul, and other early Christian leaders, about various important issues in Christianity. The final book in the New Testament is called Revelation and tells of God's plans for the end of our current age and the second coming of Christ.

**Why Study the Whole Bible?** For Christians, it's important to study the entire Bible and not just the New Testament (or the Gospels). The Bible is a written account of God's history of the world, and we can't fully understand Jesus's sacrifice on the cross without knowing about the events before it.

**Where Do I Start?** If you do not have a Bible, most Bible-teaching, Bible-believing churches would be happy to give you one for free. A lot of people try to read the Bible from cover to cover, but not many make it all the way through. Once you have a Bible, a good place to start is with the Gospel of Mark. Read about the life and teachings of Jesus, and then check out Philipians. Once you've finished that, ask someone who's been a Christian for a while for advice on what to read next. A Christian bookstore can advise you, too.

There are lots of versions of the Bible available, but pick one that's easy to read:

- Contemporary English Version,
- New American Standard,
- Living Translation.