

early church leaders, mostly by Paul. These letters contain a great deal of good advice from early church leaders to new Christian congregations, so they are a good source of Christian teaching on a variety of subjects.

When do I read the OT?

Once you have read at least one of the Gospels, Acts and one or two of the letters you can start to read the OT. There is a lot of history in the OT, so why not read these books in this order. Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Ezra & Nehemiah. That will give you a good view of the History of Israel from Creation to about 500BC. There is also a fair amount of poetry and proverb in the OT, so why not have a look at Psalms, Proverbs & Song of Songs, Much of the rest of the OT is Prophecy, although there is some Law. The prophets are all placed at the end of the OT after Song of Songs. The remaining books between Exodus & Joshua are all books of the Law.

What is a Prophecy?

Prophets are people to whom God gives a special message that he wants his people to hear. Sometimes it might be about things that have still to happen, but it could be about anything God wants to say. Many of those prophets that appear in the OT were working around 590 -

540BC when Israel was in captivity. The purpose of these writings is to encourage the people of Israel, to correct their errors and to bring them back to God. There are some really beautiful passages of prophecy especially in Isaiah.

Don't forget if you can't find anything, that every bible has an index at the beginning!

An Order for reading the Bible?

A Gospel—*Matthew, Mark Luke & John Acts*

Epistles—*Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, Peter, John & Jude.*

OT History—*Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Ezra & Nehemiah.*

Poetry etc.—*Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*

Prophecy—*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi & Revelation.*

Law—*Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*

More History—*Chronicles & Esther*

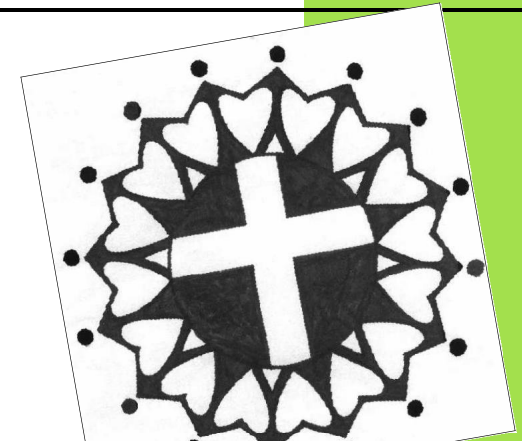
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Reading the Bible for beginners



St Denys, Lisvane

1. *Why read the Bible?*
2. *What to read?*

1. Why read the Bible ?

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a library of 66 books divided into two sections called 'Testaments'. The Old Testament (OT) contains books written mostly 6 centuries before Jesus was born and the New Testament (NT) contains books written mostly after Jesus died and rose again. There are 39 books in the OT and 27 books in the NT.

What is in the OT ?

The OT is part of the Bible which Christians share with the historic faith of the ancient Israelite people, the Jews. Many of the stories in the OT are also found in the Qur'an, the sacred scriptures of Islam. The first five books are known as the Torah and these contain the biblical account of the creation of the world, together with the beginning of the nation of Israel. Much of the Torah is about the law of God which governs the life and religion of the Israelite people, including the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). The rest of the OT contains historic accounts, poetry, novels, and prophecy. Prophecy is when God uses a particular person to speak or write particular things that He wants His people to hear.

What is in the NT?

The NT is that part of the bible which deals with

Jesus and what Jesus has done for us. It only belongs to Christians, although there are stories from the NT that appear in the Qur'an. The first four books of the NT are called Gospels and they contain an account of Jesus life and ministry. The fifth Book, Acts, is an account of how the apostles spread the message of Jesus and how the early church grew. Apart from the last book of the NT all the other books are letters from apostles to early church congregations explaining what it is that Christians are to believe about Jesus. The last book is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament.

So why read it ?

We believe that all of the writers of the Bible were inspired by God to write what they did because this is information that God wants us to have. It is the story of God's generous forgiveness of his people which reaches its climax in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross at Calvary (John 19). The Bible tells us that we can receive God's forgiveness and live in right relationship (righteousness) with him when we accept the forgiveness that He offers us in Jesus. Reading the Bible helps us to learn more about God and what he has done for us. As we learn more about God, so our relationship with Him is deepened and so our love for Him grows.

2. What to read ?

Where to start?

The logical place to start reading any book is at the beginning, but this may not be a good place to start reading the Bible. For Christians the most important person in the Bible is Jesus, and we believe that the whole of the bible must be read in the light of Jesus life and teaching. Therefore the best thing to do is to start with the stories of Jesus in the Gospels

What is a Gospel?

The word 'Gospel' means *Good News*. The shortest Gospel is the Gospel of Mark. It's also the oldest of the four gospels and so is a good place to start.

After you have read one or more of the Gospels you should read the Acts of the Apostles (Acts). This is an account of the early church and how it grew. It also shows how God works in our lives through the Holy Spirit. Once you know something about Jesus and the early church you need to read some of the teaching of the early church. Much of this is in the Epistles.

What is an Epistle?

The epistles are letters written by some of the