

Navigating the Bible

Turn to the *Table of Contents* in the front of your Bible.

Notice that the Bible has two main sections: the Old and New Testaments (*testament* means a *covenant* or *agreement* between God and mankind).

- The Old Testament (O.T.) spans from the account of creation to about 400 years before Christ. The books of the Old Testament are arranged by *type* of literature – not chronologically.
 - Genesis through Deuteronomy are the five books written by Moses. They are also referred to as the *Law* or the *Pentateuch*.
 - Joshua through Esther comprise the twelve *historical* books of the O.T.
 - Job through Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) represent the five *poetic* books of the O.T.
 - Isaiah through Daniel we call the five *major prophets* of the Bible – *major* in the sense of the length of the book, not importance.
 - Hosea through Malachi are the twelve *minor prophets* – *minor* in terms of length, not importance.
- The New Testament (N.T.) spans from Jesus' birth to nearly the end of the first century A.D. The N.T. is laid out as follows:
 - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the four *Gospel* accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.
 - Acts records the beginning and expansion of the church after Jesus' ascension to God the Father. Acts is the shortened title for "The Acts of the Apostles."

- Romans through Philemon are 13 letters written by the apostle Paul to various churches and followers of Christ to help them grow in their relationship with Christ.
- Hebrews through Revelation are nine letters written to early followers of Christ by other apostles including: James, Peter, Jude, and John.
- Now, looking at the Table of Contents, find the Gospel of John in the N.T. and turn there using the page numbers.
- Each book of the Bible has a numbered reference system that enables us to locate specific passages more easily. The numbering system contains chapters, which are further broken down into verses. For instance John 3:16 refers to the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 16. Go there now.
- Try looking up Romans 5:8 and Philippians 1:6.
- As you develop a regular habit of reading the Bible, you will become more and more familiar with navigating it. Meanwhile, use the Table of Contents and ask others for help. If your Bible has a concordance in the back of it, you can also look up passages using a key word. There are also great online resources like: www.biblegateway.com.

Reading the Bible

- When you read the Bible, come to it with an attitude of expecting to meet with and hear from God!
- Ask God to help you understand his Word.
- Read the Bible with the intent to align your thoughts and lifestyle with God's design for you.