

HOW TO FIND READINGS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible is not just one book; it is a collection of many books. The writings in the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by many different authors using different styles.

The Bible is made up of two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains 46 books that tell stories about the Jewish people and their faith in God before Jesus was born.

The first five books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—are referred to as the Torah, meaning “instruction” or “law.” The central story in the Torah is the Exodus, the liberation of the Hebrew slaves as Moses led them out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. During the journey God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and the people.

A beautiful part of the Old Testament is the Book of Psalms. A psalm is a prayer in the form of a poem. Each psalm expresses an aspect, or feature, of the depth of human emotion. Over several centuries 150 psalms were gathered to form the Book of Psalms. They were once sung at the Temple in Jerusalem, and they have been used in the public worship of the Church since its beginning. Catholics also pray the Psalms as part of their private prayer and reflection.

The prophets were called by God to speak for him and urge the Jewish people to be faithful to the Covenant. A large part—18 books—of the Old Testament presents the messages and actions of the prophets.

The New Testament contains 27 books that tell the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection and the experience of the early Christians. For Christians the most important books of the New Testament are the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Many of the 27 books are letters written by leaders such as Saint Paul.

How can you find a passage in the Bible?

Bible passages are identified by book, chapter, and verse, for example, Ex 3:1-4. The name of the book comes first. It is often in abbreviated form. Your Bible’s table of contents will help you determine what the abbreviation means. In our example, *Ex* stands for *Exodus*. After the name of the book, there are two numbers. The first one identifies the chapter, which in our example is chapter three; it is followed by a colon. The second number identifies the verse or verses, which in our example are verses one to four.

THE CANON OF THE CATHOLIC BIBLE

HEBREW SCRIPTURES THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE PENTATEUCH

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

WISDOM BOOKS

JOB
PSALMS
PROVERBS
ECCLESIASTES
SONGS
WISDOM
SIRACH

HISTORICAL BOOKS

JOSHUA
JUDGES
RUTH
1 SAMUEL
2 SAMUEL
1 KINGS
2 KINGS
1 CHRONICLES
2 CHRONICLES
EZRA
NEHEMIAH
TOBIT
JUDITH
ESTHER
1 MACCABEES
2 MACCABEES

THE PROPHETS

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
LAMENTATIONS
BARUCH
EZEKIEL
DANIEL
HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES THE NEW TESTAMENT

GOSPELS

MATTHEW
MARK
LUKE
JOHN

HISTORICAL

ACTS OF THE
APOSTLES

LETTERS OF PAUL

ROMANS
1 CORINTHIANS
2 CORINTHIANS
GALATIANS
EPHESIANS
PHILIPPIANS
COLOSSIANS
1 THESSALONIANS
2 THESSALONIANS
1 TIMOTHY
2 TIMOTHY
TITUS
PHILEMON

NON-PAULINE LETTERS

HEBREWS
JAMES
1 PETER
2 PETER
1 JOHN
2 JOHN
3 JOHN
JUDE

APOCALYPTIC

REVELATION