



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

NEW TO THE BIBLE

Where Should I Begin Reading the Bible?

A simple guide to choosing a place to start with confidence

The short answer

Begin with Jesus. If you are completely new to the Bible, start with the Gospel of John or Mark. Read slowly, ask simple questions, and keep going even when you do not understand everything.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.”

Psalm 119:105 WEB

Simple · Clear · Scripture-grounded



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WELCOME

This guide is meant to send you back to the Bible

This Companion was not written to replace your Bible. It was written to help you fall in love with it. Every page is intended to send you back into God's Word with greater confidence, deeper understanding, and a clearer picture of Jesus Christ. If, after using this Companion, you spend more time reading your Bible than reading these pages—then it has accomplished its purpose.

Foundational truth

The Bible is not merely a book to be understood. It is God's self-revelation, given so that people may know Him through Jesus Christ (John 5:39–40; 20:30–31; 2 Timothy 3:14–17).

What this guide will help you do

01

Choose a starting book

Find a clear first step based on what you most need to understand right now.

02

Read with simple questions

Learn a repeatable method that keeps the passage—not your assumptions—at the center.

03

Build a sustainable rhythm

Create a realistic plan that encourages lifelong time in Scripture rather than a short burst of perfection.

The goal

Everything points to God. Everything points to Jesus. Everything points back to Scripture.



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[BEGIN HERE](#)

You do not need the perfect starting point

The Bible is a collection of 66 books that together tell one unfolding story. You do not have to understand the whole library before you begin. Choose one book, read it in order, and ask God to help you understand what you are reading (Luke 24:45; James 1:5).

01

Start small

One chapter—or even one paragraph—is a meaningful beginning. Consistency matters more than speed.

02

Begin with a whole book

Reading a biblical book from beginning to end helps you follow the author's message instead of collecting isolated verses.

03

Expect questions

Confusion does not mean you are failing. Write down questions, read the surrounding verses, and keep learning.

04

Let Scripture lead to Jesus

The Bible reveals God's character, humanity's need, and His rescue centered in Jesus (Luke 24:27; John 20:30–31).

A simple goal

Do not read merely to finish pages. Read to know God, understand His Word, trust Jesus, and learn to live faithfully with the Holy Spirit's help.



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IF YOU ARE COMPLETELY NEW

A clear place to start

This is not the only faithful option. It gives a new reader a manageable path from Jesus, to the beginning of the story, to the early Church and the gospel explained. If five books feels like too much, begin with John alone and choose the next step after you finish.

01

John — meet Jesus

John explains who Jesus is, why He came, and why believing in Him brings life (John 1:1–18; 20:30–31).

02

Mark — see what Jesus did

Mark is concise and fast-moving, emphasizing Jesus' authority, service, suffering, death, and resurrection (Mark 1:1; 10:45).

03

Genesis — learn how the story begins

Genesis introduces creation, sin, God's promises, Abraham's family, and the beginnings of Israel.

04

Acts — watch the gospel move outward

Acts continues after Jesus' resurrection and shows the Holy Spirit forming and sending the early Church (Acts 1:8).

05

Romans — learn what the gospel means

Romans carefully explains sin, grace, faith, new life, and God's saving work. Read it slowly after you know the basic story.



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CHOOSE A STARTING POINT

What are you hoping to understand?

01

I want to know Jesus

Start with John for His identity or Mark for a shorter, action-focused account. Then read Luke and Acts together.

02

I want the Bible's big story

Read Genesis, Exodus 1–20, Luke, Acts, and The One Story of Scripture guide before beginning a full reading plan.

03

I need practical wisdom

Begin with Proverbs and James. Read each teaching in context and ask how it reflects God's character and shapes faithful living.

04

I am hurting or afraid

Begin with selected Psalms such as 23, 27, 34, 42–43, 46, 56, 73, and 121. Then read John to see God's heart revealed in Jesus.

05

I want to grow as a disciple

Begin with John, Acts, Ephesians, Philippians, and James. Keep returning to the Gospels so Jesus remains the center.

Important

A book may comfort, teach, correct, and challenge you at the same time. These suggestions are doorways—not labels that limit what any biblical book can say.



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A READY-MADE FIRST STEP

Your first 21 days in John

John has 21 chapters, making it a natural three-week starting plan. Read one chapter each day. If a chapter feels long, divide it across two days. The goal is understanding—not keeping up with a calendar.

Before you read

Ask: “Father, help me see who Jesus is, understand what is true, and respond faithfully to Your Word.”

After each chapter, write one short answer

- What does this chapter show me about Jesus?
- What does it reveal about people—including me?
- Is there a promise to trust, a warning to notice, or a truth to remember?
- What is one honest question I still have?

Pay special attention to these signposts

- John 1 — Jesus is the eternal Word who became human.
- John 3 — Jesus explains new birth and God’s saving love.
- John 10 — Jesus is the Good Shepherd.
- John 11 — Jesus is the resurrection and the life.
- John 13–17 — Jesus prepares and prays for His disciples.
- John 19–20 — Jesus dies, rises, and invites belief.



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READ WITH CONFIDENCE

A simple method for any passage

01

Read

Read the whole paragraph or chapter before selecting a favorite line. Notice what comes before and after.

02

Observe

Ask what the passage actually says. Notice people, actions, repeated words, questions, promises, and contrasts.

03

Understand

Ask what the writer was communicating to the original readers. Use a study Bible or trusted resource when background is needed.

04

Connect

Consider how the passage fits the book, the Bible's larger story, and Scripture's clear teaching about Jesus.

05

Respond

Pray about what you learned. Trust what is true, obey what applies, and ask the Holy Spirit to shape your heart and life (James 1:22–25).

Keep the order clear

First observe. Then understand. Then apply. Beginning with “What does this mean to me?” can make the Bible say what we want instead of receiving what God has said.



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COMMON BEGINNER WORRIES

What if I do not understand everything?

Do I have to start at Genesis and read straight through?

No. Reading cover to cover is valuable, but it is not required for your first experience. Beginning with a Gospel gives you the center of the story before you work through harder sections.

Is it wrong to skip genealogies or laws?

Do not treat them as unimportant, but it is okay to mark questions and continue. Genealogies, laws, and repeated details become clearer as you learn their place in the story. Return to them with better context.

What if I miss a day?

Begin again where you stopped. Scripture is an invitation to know God, not a streak to protect. A missed day does not erase what you have learned.

What if I find something troubling?

Do not hide the question or rush toward an easy answer. Read the full context, compare clear passages, use trustworthy resources, and ask a mature believer who welcomes honest questions (Acts 17:11).

Do I need to understand every word before moving on?

No. Write down the question and continue following the main message. Understanding grows through repeated reading over time.

Questions are not the enemy of faith

Honest questions can lead us deeper when they are brought humbly to Scripture, prayer, careful study, and wise believers.



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SET YOURSELF UP WELL

Choose tools that help you keep reading

Use a translation you can understand

For a new reader, the New Living Translation (NLT) is especially approachable. The New International Version (NIV), Christian Standard Bible (CSB), and New English Translation (NET) are also readable options. The World English Bible (WEB) is a helpful public-domain translation.

Compare—without becoming overwhelmed

One main Bible is enough for daily reading. When a verse is confusing, compare one or two other translations. Differences often reflect how translators express the same Hebrew or Greek wording in natural English.

Use resources as companions, not substitutes

A study Bible, Bible dictionary, map, or trusted commentary can explain context. Read the biblical passage first, check the resource, and then return to Scripture to verify the explanation.

Listening is a faithful way to receive Scripture

An audio Bible can help readers who process spoken words more easily, have limited reading time, or find print difficult. Listen while following the text when possible, or replay a passage and pause to reflect. Hearing Scripture is not a lesser form of engagement (Romans 10:17; 1 Timothy 4:13).

Create a sustainable rhythm

- Five minutes: read one paragraph and write one truth.
- Fifteen minutes: read one chapter, answer the five questions, and pray.
- Thirty minutes: add cross-references, background, or discussion with another believer.

The best plan is one you can continue

Choose a regular time and place, but leave room for real life. The goal is a lifelong relationship with God's Word—not a short burst of perfection.



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AFTER YOUR FIRST BOOK

Choose the next faithful step

01

Read another Gospel

After John, read Mark or Luke. Notice what each writer emphasizes while presenting the same Jesus.

02

Add the beginning of the story

Read Genesis, followed by Exodus 1–20. Watch for creation, rebellion, promise, rescue, covenant, and God's presence.

03

Follow Jesus' mission

Read Acts after Luke or John to see the risen Jesus send the Spirit and carry the gospel toward the nations.

04

Learn to live the gospel

Read Ephesians, Philippians, or James before tackling a longer letter such as Romans.

05

Begin a whole-Bible plan

When you are ready, choose a chronological or canonical plan that includes enough context and a pace you can sustain.

A healthy pattern

Keep alternating between the Gospels and other parts of Scripture. This helps you learn the whole Bible while repeatedly returning to Jesus, who is its center.



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WANT TO DIG DEEPER?

Why starting points matter—but do not control meaning

The Bible has a God-given shape

The books are arranged in meaningful groups: Law, History, Poetry and Wisdom, Prophets, Gospels, Acts, Letters, and Revelation. A reading plan may change the order for learning purposes, but it should not make us forget each book's original setting or canonical neighbors.

Canonical and chronological plans do different things

A canonical plan follows the Bible's published order. A chronological plan arranges passages according to an estimated historical timeline. Chronological plans can clarify when events occurred, but some dates are debated and the biblical writers sometimes organize material thematically rather than strictly by time.

Genre changes how we read

Narrative tells what happened but does not automatically approve every action. Poetry uses imagery. Proverbs express wise general patterns rather than unconditional promises. Letters address real churches and situations. Prophecy and apocalyptic writing use symbols that must be read in biblical context.

The whole Bible points toward God's rescue

Jesus taught that the Scriptures bear witness to Him (Luke 24:27, 44–47; John 5:39–40). This does not mean every verse is a secret prediction. It means the Bible's promises, patterns, covenants, offices, and themes reach their fulfillment in God's saving work through Christ.

Go deeper without losing the center

More knowledge should lead to worship, humility, obedience, and love. If a framework makes us proud or replaces time in Scripture, it has stopped serving its purpose.



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MAKE IT PERSONAL

Build your starting plan

My reason for reading right now

The first book I will read

My realistic rhythm

I will read _____ for about _____ minutes, _____ days each week.

The questions I will ask

- What does this show me about God or Jesus?
- What does it reveal about people?
- What truth should I trust or remember?
- How should I respond?
- What question do I want to investigate?

Someone I can ask for help

One-sentence memory anchor

Start with Jesus, read whole books in context, ask honest questions, and keep returning to Scripture until its truth begins to shape how you know God and live.

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THE MOST IMPORTANT PLACE TO BEGIN

Would you like to begin with Jesus?

The Bible's message is good news. God created us to know Him, but every one of us has sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Sin separates us from God, and we cannot repair that relationship through good works, religion, or effort.

God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived without sin, died for our sins, and rose from the dead. Through Him, God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life as a gift of grace (Romans 5:6–8; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3–4; Ephesians 2:8–9).

How do we respond?

01

Turn toward God

Repentance means turning from sin and self-rule toward God. It is not becoming perfect before you come to Him (Acts 3:19).

02

Believe in Jesus

Trust that Jesus is Lord and that His death and resurrection are sufficient to save you (John 3:16; Romans 10:9–10).

03

Call on Him

Speak to God honestly. Confess your need, place your trust in Jesus, and ask Him to forgive you and lead your life. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13 WEB).

A prayer can express your faith

Jesus, I know that I have sinned and cannot save myself. I believe You died for my sins and rose again. I turn to You, ask for Your forgiveness, and trust You as my Savior and Lord. Help me follow You and grow in Your Word. Amen.

A prayer is not a magic formula—the words themselves do not save us. Jesus saves everyone who truly comes to Him in faith. If you have trusted Christ, begin reading His Word, tell another faithful Christian, connect with a Bible-believing local church, and learn about baptism and discipleship (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 2:38–42).