

The Bible is good to read, but not necessarily easy to read. This is a guide to help you.

The Bible isn't really one big book, but a library of 66 little books. The books are often written by different authors, at different times, in different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), to different audiences. The books have differing forms: history, law, poetry, prose, prophecy, letters.

The first 39 books of the Bible, Genesis through Malachi, are the “Old Testament.” They are chiefly concerned with the ancient nation of Israel. The remaining 27 books, Matthew through Revelation, are the “New Testament.” They are chiefly concerned with Jesus and the early Christian Church.

1. The main idea – selected passages.

Genesis ch. 1-3; Ecclesiastes	Our Condition
Deuteronomy ch. 5-6; Matthew ch. 5-7	The Law
Romans ch. 1-5; Isaiah ch. 53	The Gospel (good news)

(A chapter is usually one or two pages long.)

2. Extra credit – Who is Jesus Christ?

Job ch. 33	A ransom is found	Ezekiel ch. 34	The good shepherd
Genesis ch. 22	The LORD will provide	John	According to John
Mark	According to Mark	Luke ch. 24	Fulfillment
2 Samuel ch. 7	House of David	Acts ch. 1-4, 10	According to Peter
Micah ch. 5	A ruler from Bethlehem	Colossians	According to Paul
Matthew ch. 1-2	Born king of the Jews	Daniel ch. 7	The son of man
Deuteronomy ch. 18	A prophet like Moses	Revelation ch. 19-22	Return of the king

3. Further reading. The Bible is arranged somewhat chronologically, but primarily by type of book. Here are the major groupings:

Old Testament

Genesis – Deuteronomy	Books by Moses
Joshua – Esther	History
Job – Song of Solomon	Wisdom
Isaiah – Daniel	Large prophetic books
Hosea – Malachi	Small prophetic books

New Testament

Matthew – John	Life of Jesus
Acts	History
Romans – Philemon	Letters by Paul
Hebrews – Jude	Letters by others
Revelation	Prophetic book

Here are some collections of books that go together:

Genesis – Deuteronomy	Also called the Law, the Torah, or the Pentateuch
1 Samuel – 2 Kings	History of Israel and Judah, from Samuel to the exile
1 Chronicles – Nehemiah	History of Judah, from David through the return from exile
Hosea – Malachi	Also called the Minor Prophets
Luke, Acts	Books by Luke

Here are how the books of the Bible roughly fit with major historical events:

Genesis Job	Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
(400 years)	
Exodus – Deuteronomy	Israelites, led by Moses, leave Egypt
Joshua	Israelites, led by Joshua, settle in Canaan
Judges, Ruth	Israel ruled by judges
1 & 2 Samuel 1 Chronicles Psalms	Samuel, Kings Saul and David
1 Kings ch. 1-14 2 Chronicles ch. 1-12 Proverbs – Song of Solomon	King Solomon, Division into two kingdoms: Israel in the North, capital Samaria Judah in the South, capital Jerusalem
1 Kings ch. 15-22; 2 Kings 2 Chronicles ch. 13-36 Isaiah, Jeremiah Hosea – Zephaniah	Remaining kings Israel taken into exile by Assyria, 722 B.C. Judah taken into exile by Babylon, 587 B.C.
(exile) Lamentations – Daniel Esther*	Persians, led by Cyrus the Great, conquer the Babylonian Empire, 539 B.C.
Ezra, Nehemiah Haggai – Malachi	Return from exile
(400 years)	Greeks, led by Alexander the Great, conquer the Persian Empire, 333 B.C. Romans, led by Pompey, conquer Jerusalem, 63 B.C.
New Testament	Jesus Christ and the early Christian Church Romans, led by Titus, destroy Jerusalem, 70 A.D.

*Technically, the events of Esther occur between chapters 4 and 5 of Ezra. However, it is a story of people still in exile.

4. Which Bible translation? The King James Version can be hard to read, since it reflects the English language as it existed in 1769 (thee, thou, etc.). Examples of good modern translations are the New American Standard Bible, the English Standard Version, and the New King James Version.

The Message is popular, but be aware it is not a translation but a paraphrase, the opinion of one man.