



Reading the Bible can seem daunting, especially for those new to the faith or for anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of God's Word. The Bible, an ancient collection of books with diverse literary styles and genres, offers spiritual guidance for life, faith, and one's relationship with God. But where should one begin? This article aims to provide an accessible and spiritual approach to Bible reading, one that inspires and builds up.

## 1. Understanding the Bible as a Spiritual Library

The Bible is not a book to be read from cover to cover like a novel. It's a collection of 73 books (in the Catholic version) divided into the Old and New Testaments, written by different authors over centuries. Each book has a particular purpose: some are historical, others poetic, prophetic, wisdom literature, or doctrinal.

### The Structure of the Bible

The Old Testament contains the story of Israel, its prophets, and its relationship with God. The New Testament tells of Jesus' life, the founding of the Church, and the hope of salvation. Knowing this structure helps us see that, although all books form part of the same divine narrative, some are more accessible or relevant for different seasons of life.

## 2. Where to Begin?

### a) Start with the Gospels

For many believers, especially those new to the faith, the New Testament is the ideal place to start, as it takes us directly into the life and teachings of Jesus, the core of Christian faith. Among the Gospels, **the Gospel of Mark** is often recommended as a first step. It's the shortest Gospel and gets straight to the point, presenting Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. **Then, the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John** offer broader and deeper perspectives on Jesus' life and teachings.

- **Mark:** Ideal as a quick introduction to Jesus, focusing on His actions and miracles.
- **Matthew and Luke:** Provide details of Jesus' early life, His most famous teachings (like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew), and parables filled with spiritual wisdom.
- **John:** Deeper and more theological, presenting Jesus as the eternal and incarnate Word of God.



#### b) Acts of the Apostles

After the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles is a natural continuation, as it narrates the growth of the early Church. This book inspires us with the testimony of the first Christians who, despite persecutions, spread the message of Christ to the world.

#### c) Letters of St. Paul

Paul's letters offer doctrinal teachings and practical advice on Christian living, faith, and ethics. The **Letter to the Romans** is foundational, explaining salvation and grace. **The letters to the Corinthians** help us understand life in community and the challenges of Christian life.

### 3. The Wisdom of the Old Testament

Once you're familiar with the New Testament, you can explore the Old Testament, starting with wisdom and poetic books that are deeply human and spiritual.

#### a) The Psalms

The Psalms are prayers and poems encompassing joy, repentance, praise, and supplication. **David**, the author of many Psalms, honestly expresses his emotions before God, providing us words to express our own joys and struggles.

#### b) Proverbs and Ecclesiastes

These books offer practical wisdom for daily life. **Proverbs** gives advice on family, friendship, justice, and wisdom; **Ecclesiastes** reflects on the purpose of life and eternity.

#### c) Genesis and Exodus

After reading the Gospels and some letters and wisdom books, we can approach the books of law and history, beginning with Genesis and Exodus. **Genesis** shows us the origin of the world and humanity, as well as God's promises to Abraham and his descendants. **Exodus** narrates Israel's liberation from Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land, establishing God's covenant with His people.

### 4. How to Approach Bible Reading



#### a) Prayer and Reflection

Each reading should start with prayer. The Bible is not just any book; it's the living Word of God, and it's vital to ask the Holy Spirit's guidance to understand and apply what we read. Praying before and after reading helps cultivate an attitude of listening and humility.

#### b) Bringing the Bible into Daily Life

Reading the Bible isn't enough; it's essential to live it. Here are some practical ideas:

- **Choose a key verse** from each reading and meditate on it throughout the day.
- **Write down questions or reflections** to explore later.
- **Seek practical applications:** For example, if reading about forgiveness in Matthew 18, consider who you may need to forgive in your own life.

#### c) Use a Reading Plan

Bible reading plans can be very helpful, especially for those wanting to follow an orderly and deep approach. Some focus on Jesus' life, others cover both Old and New Testaments in parallel, or alternate between wisdom and doctrinal books.

## 5. The Relevance of the Bible Today

We live in a time when the noise of information and materialism makes spiritual life challenging. Though written centuries ago, the Bible offers answers to modern dilemmas: it shows us the path of peace, reconciliation, and true love. Its message remains relevant, as God continues to speak through it to every open heart.

#### Spiritual Application in Today's Context

- **In personal relationships:** The Bible teaches about forgiveness, compassion, and service. In a fragmented world, these principles can heal family wounds and strengthen friendships.
- **In ethics and social justice:** The teachings of the prophets and Jesus about justice, charity, and care for the vulnerable invite us to question our priorities and commit to the common good.
- **In the search for meaning:** Books like Ecclesiastes and Jesus' words about "treasure in heaven" remind us that the meaning of life goes beyond worldly success.



## 6. Conclusion: The Bible as a Companion on the Faith Journey

The Bible is more than a book; it is an encounter with God and a mirror where we recognize our need for Him. Reading it is not simply an intellectual exercise; it is an act of love and openness to God's will. As we progress through our reading, we are transformed, and our thoughts and actions align more closely with God's ways.

Finally, remember that reading the Bible is a lifelong journey. There's no rush. Let each word and story settle in your heart, and allow God to speak through them. May your Bible reading be a time of growth, reflection, and spiritual renewal, where you find in God's Word an eternal guide for your life.