

Bite-Size Catholic Living V

Life Style: Reading God's Word, The Bible

An Introduction to the Bible

We believe the Bible, which means “The Book”, is the **Word of God**. In saying that, we mean that through these ancient writings of the Hebrews and early Christians that God is speaking to us. And though written by human beings in very different times and cultures from our own; we believe that through the Holy Spirit what God wants to say to his people is embedded in these writings. We therefore believe that the Word of God is alive! It is God, the Holy Trinity, speaking to us here and now. Through reading, meditating and listening to the Word of God with our hearts, whether privately, in the family setting or at the public worship of the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts giving us insights, challenges, direction, promptings, comfort and nourishment for our spirit.

The Bible is not one book but a collection of 72 documents; a library, if you will, written and collected over centuries. These documents are arranged in two large sections, the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament**. The Old Testament consists of the writings of the ancient Hebrew people, the Jews and the New Testament consists of the writings of the early Christians.

These documents includes history, poetry, legend and mythology, letters, wise sayings and proverbs, ethics and moral teachings, prophecy, and songs, known as The Psalms. We find here the stories of ancient Israel, the early Church and of course, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

For Christians, the Gospels are the most important stories of the Bible. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are a primary way we as Christians come to know Jesus. Saint Jerome said, *“Ignorance of the Word of God is ignorance of Christ”*. Thus the Bible is a book for the spiritual life of God's people. These writings are timeless since the Living God is always speaking anew to his people. Some people have called the Bible a love letter to us from God.

Looking to purchase a Bible for yourself or the family? We suggest...

For adults, the family or personal use:

1. **New American Bible**, Revised Edition. Catholic World Press.
2. **New Revised Standard Version**, Catholic Edition, National Council of Churches.

For young children:

1. **The Jesus Storybook Bible** written by Sally Lloyd-Jones & illustrated by Jago. Published by Zondervan, 2007. A retelling of the biblical stories for young children with delightful and colourful illustrations. Enjoyable for Christians of all ages.

***A CAVEAT about this translation is found on page 292. *"My body is like this bread...This cup of wine is like my blood."* Catholics do not believe the bread and wine are like the Body and Blood of Christ. We believe they ARE the Body and Blood, the humanity and divinity, of Christ. Cross out 'like'.

2. **Page-A-Day Children's Bible** written by Rhona Davies & illustrated by Marcin Piwowarski. Published by Pauline Books and Media, Boston. This is 365 daily brief passages from relating the story of our salvation from Genesis to Revelation. Read a page a day with your children. Colourful illustrations. Can be enjoyed and used by Christians of all ages for a daily scripture story.

For adolescents:

1. **The Catholic Youth Bible**, New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition, Saint Mary's Press, Minnesota, 2000. This Bible includes lively articles that offer background information, introductions to major sections of the Bible, connections to African, Asian, Hispanic and Native American cultures and more...
2. **The Catholic Children's Bible**, Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, Minnesota, 2013. This Bible uses the Good News Translation. The edition includes 25 **Featured Stories** that highlight key passages and people in the Bible. **Understand It!** enables children to comprehend central biblical themes. **Live It!** encourages children to apply the leaning of each story to their lives and **Tell It!** helps children to retain our stories by having them retell them in their own words.

How to Interpret a Bible Citation

A quote or passage from the Bible is usually followed by what is called a *citation*. The bible citation gives us the following information: the **biblical book** from which the quote or passage is taken from, the **chapter** of that book and the **verses** within that chapter.

The citation below tells us that the passage is from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, verses 13-16. Mark's Gospel is the first time someone wrote out the memories and stories about Jesus and his teaching, death and resurrection.

Take your Bible and look up this passage from the New Testament. It tells us of Jesus' relationship with children.

Mark 10:13-16

Then try to find the following passage from the Old Testament Book of Sirach, chapter 6, verses 14-17. Sirach was a wise teacher. This passage is his insights about friendship.

Sirach 6:14-17

The Books of the Bible

Old Testament [Hebrew writings]

THE PENTATEUCH

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

HISTORICAL BOOKS

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

BIBLICAL NOVELLAS

Tobit

Judith

Esther

1 Maccabees

2 Maccabees

WISDOM BOOKS

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

Wisdom of Solomon

Sirach

PROPHETIC BOOKS

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Baruch

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

New Testament [Christian writings]

THE GOSPELS

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts of the Apostles

PAULINE LETTERS

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

UNIVERSAL LETTERS

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

Revelation

Praying with the Bible (2 ways)

To pray with scripture, find a quiet time, a comfortable place and enter into silence for a few moments. **Pray to the Holy Spirit** to come and speak to you through the Word.

*Holy Father, anoint me with your Holy Spirit, so that as I read your eternal word,
your word may fill my whole being and transform me. Amen.*

As you gently read a passage; **listen with your heart**. If a word, phrase or image stands out at you – **STOP!** Relish the moment, digest the Word of God and let it burn in your heart. *What is God saying to you?* **Pause in silence** for a moment.

Respond in your heart as if in conversation. **Talk with Jesus in ordinary language** as you would any friend.

If a period of praying with the Bible seems dry, like nothing is happening. Do not worry. Use the same passage another day. Sometimes it takes a while for our ego to give way to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Be patient. The Lord Jesus will always come to those who seek him out.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola offers another form of biblical praying.

Select a passage from one of the Gospels in which Jesus is interacting with others. **Read the Gospel passage gently two or three times** so that the story and the details of the story becomes familiar to you.

Then close your eyes and reconstruct the scene in your imagination. Place yourself in the scene as an observer or as a participant. See what is going on. Interact with Jesus and other people in the passage. What does Jesus look like? How do people react to him? What emotions fill you? What do you want to say to Jesus? What is Jesus saying to you?

Some people's imaginations are very active so they construct a movie-like scenario with a Gospel passage. Others will enter the scene mulling over the actions. Engagement is what is important and the result is a more interior knowledge of Jesus.

As you finish a period of prayer, take a moment to **offer thanks to God** from our heart.