



How Can I
UNDERSTAND
The Bible?

WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE?

PORTICO
LEARNING HUB



FOUNDATIONS - MODULE 13C



"As Christians, we believe that the Bible is a divine revelation of God's story - His-story of creation, who we are, and how we can relate to Him and the world.

In this module you will learn how the Bible is divided into different types of books, so we can get to know God better. There are historical books, and books about wisdom and prophecy, and of course, the Gospels and letters that teach us how to live.

I hope that by the end of this module you will have a better understanding of the Bible, and why it's so important to interpret Scripture correctly."

Rick Carroll

Key Topics



01
WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS
OF BIBLICAL WRITING?



02
WHAT IS THE PROPER WAY
TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE?



03
WHY IS PROPHECY SIGNIFICANT
TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE?

*The very essence of your
words is truth; all your
just regulations will stand
forever.*



PSALMS 119:160 (NLT)

01

What Are The Different Kinds Of Biblical Writing?

The 66 books of the Bible are arranged by categories, roughly in chronological order of historical events, rather than the date when they were written.

PENTATEUCH (Books of Law)

Genesis	Tells the story of creation, the patriarchs, and the early history of the Israelite people.	Moses	1400 BC
Exodus	Recounts the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt, their journey through the wilderness, and the giving of the Ten Commandments.	Moses	1400 BC
Leviticus	Provides laws and regulations for the Israelites, including instructions for various sacrifices and rituals.	Moses	1400 BC
Numbers	Documents the Israelites' time in the wilderness, including the census, the organization of the tribes, and their preparation to enter the Promised Land.	Moses	1400 BC
Deuteronomy	Contains a series of speeches by Moses, reviewing the laws and commandments given to the Israelites and preparing them for life in the Promised Land.	Moses	1400 BC

HISTORICAL BOOKS of the Old Testament

Joshua	Tells the story of the conquest of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, Moses' successor.	Joshua	1350 BC
Judges	Recounts the period of Israel's history after Joshua's death, when various judges arose to deliver the Israelites from their enemies.	Samuel/Nathan/Gad	1000-900 BC
Ruth	Tells the story of a Moabite woman called Ruth, who becomes the great-grandmother of King David.	Samuel/Nathan/Gad	1000-900 BC
1 Samuel	Covers the rise of Samuel as a prophet and judge of Israel, the transition from judges to kings, and the reign of King Saul.	Samuel/Nathan/Gad	1000-900 BC
2 Samuel	Continues the narrative of King David's reign, including his military victories and personal struggles.	Samuel/Nathan/Gad	1000-900 BC
1 Kings	Documents the reigns of King Solomon and his successors, detailing the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the division of the kingdom after Solomon's death.	Jeremiah	600 BC
2 Kings	Continues the history of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah, focusing on the various kings and prophets during this period.	Jeremiah	600 BC
1 Chronicles	Presents the genealogical account of the Israelites, with a special emphasis on the lineage of King David.	Ezra	450 BC
2 Chronicles	Continues the historical narrative from 1 Chronicles, covering the reigns of the kings of Judah, and the importance of worship in the temple.	Ezra	450 BC
Ezra	Tells the story of the Israelites' return from Babylonian exile, and their efforts to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.	Ezra	450 BC
Nehemiah	Follows the events of Ezra and recounts the efforts of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.	Ezra	450 BC
Esther	Tells the story of a Jewish girl named Esther, who becomes queen of Persia and saves her people from a plot to destroy them.	Mordecai	400 BC

WISDOM BOOKS

Job	Explores the question of human suffering and the concept of divine justice. It tells the story of a man named Job who endures great hardships and engages in philosophical discussions with his friends.	Moses	1400 BC
Psalms	A collection of 150 poetic and lyrical songs or prayers. It covers a wide range of emotions and topics, including praise, thanksgiving, lament, and wisdom. Many of the psalms are attributed to King David.	Mostly David	1000-400 BC
Proverbs	A collection of wise sayings and teachings attributed to King Solomon. It offers practical advice on various aspects of life, including wisdom, morality, relationships, work, and money.	Solomon	900 BC
Ecclesiastes	Reflects on the meaning of life, and the pursuit of happiness. It explores themes such as the vanity of earthly pursuits, and the importance of fearing God and keeping His commandments.	Solomon	900 BC
Song of Solomon	Also known as the Song of Songs, this book is a lyrical poem depicting the love and desire between a bride and bridegroom. It uses metaphorical language to convey the beauty and intensity of romantic love.	Solomon	900 BC

PROPHECY BOOKS of the Old Testament

Isaiah	The first of the major prophetic books in the Old Testament. It contains numerous prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, the future of Israel, and the judgment of nations.	Isaiah	700 BC
Jeremiah	Another major prophetic book in the Old Testament. It contains prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of the Israelites, as well as messages of hope and restoration.	Jeremiah	600 BC
Lamentations	The book of poems expresses grief and sorrow over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the exile of the Israelites to Babylon, as a consequence of their disobedience to God's commandments.	Jeremiah	600 BC
Ezekiel	Includes visions and prophecies given to the prophet Ezekiel during the Babylonian exile. It contains messages of judgment against Israel and other nations, as well as promises of restoration and the future temple.	Ezekiel	550 BC
Daniel	A mixture of historical narratives and prophetic visions. It contains prophecies about future empires, the coming of the Messiah, and the end times.	Daniel	550 BC
Hosea	A minor prophetic book that contains prophecies and symbolic actions that depict God's love for Israel, despite their unfaithfulness, and the future restoration of the nation.	Hosea	750 BC
Joel	A minor prophet book that focuses on the theme of judgment and restoration. It contains prophecies about a coming day of the Lord, as well as promises of God's mercy and blessings.	Joel	850 BC
Amos	A minor prophet book that primarily pronounces judgment on Israel and surrounding nations. It contains prophecies of impending disaster and calls for repentance.	Amos	750 BC
Obadiah	The shortest book in the Old Testament, it focuses on the judgment against the nation of Edom. It contains prophecies of destruction and deliverance.	Obadiah	600 BC
Jonah	A unique prophetic book that recounts the story of the prophet Jonah and his mission to the city of Nineveh. While it is not primarily a book of prophecy, it contains a prediction of Nineveh's destruction.	Jonah	700 BC
Micah	A prophetic book that contains messages of judgement against Israel and other nations, as well as prophecies of hope and the coming Messiah.	Micah	700 BC
Nahum	Focuses on the judgment against the city of Nineveh. It contains prophecies of its downfall and destruction.	Nahum	650 BC
Habakkuk	Records the dialogue between the prophet Habakkuk and God. It contains prophecies of judgment against Judah and the future triumph of God's righteousness.	Habakkuk	600 BC
Zephaniah	Pronounces judgment against Judah and other nations. It also contains prophecies of restoration and God's future blessings.	Zephaniah	650 BC
Haggai	Focuses on the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem. It contains prophecies of encouragement and promises of God's presence and blessing.	Haggai	520 BC
Zechariah	Contains visions and messages of encouragement for the people of Israel. It includes prophecies about the future Messiah, the restoration of Jerusalem, and the coming Kingdom of God.	Zechariah	500 BC
Malachi	The last book in the Old Testament, it contains prophecies and rebukes regarding the religious practices, religious corruption, social injustice, and the coming of the Messiah.	Malachi	430 BC

GOSPELS

Matthew	Presents Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah and emphasizes His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. It includes the birth narrative, the Sermon on the Mount, parables, miracles, and Jesus' death and resurrection.	Matthew	55 AD
Mark	Portrays Jesus as the suffering servant and emphasizes His actions more than His teachings. It includes accounts of Jesus' ministry, His miracles, the Last Supper, the crucifixion, and His resurrection.	John Mark	50 AD
Luke	Provides a detailed account of Jesus' life and ministry, including the birth narrative, parables, miracles, the Lord's Prayer, and the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.	Luke	60 AD
John	Focuses on the theological aspects of Jesus' life and teachings. It highlights Jesus' identity as the Son of God, and includes the "I am" sayings of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus, the Last Supper, and the resurrection.	John	90 AD

HISTORICAL BOOK of the New Testament

Acts	Describes the spread of the Gospel message throughout the Roman Empire, and the persecution of the early Christians. It emphasizes the importance of prayer and the role of the Holy Spirit.	Luke	65 AD
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TEACHING LETTERS

Romans	Written to the Christian community in Rome, it provides a detailed theological explanation of the Gospel.	Paul	50-70 AD
1 Corinthians	Written to the church in Corinth, these letters address various issues and provide guidance on matters such as church discipline, spiritual gifts, and Jesus' resurrection.	Paul	50-70 AD
2 Corinthians	Offers guidance and correction for dealing with divisions, immorality and misunderstandings of Christian doctrine in the church at Corinth.	Paul	50-70 AD
Galatians	Written to the churches in Galatia, these letters emphasize the importance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, rather than relying on adherence to Jewish law.	Paul	50-70 AD
Ephesians	Written to the church in Ephesus, these letters discuss topics such as unity in the body of Christ, the role of believers, and spiritual warfare.	Paul	50-70 AD
Philippians	A letter to the church in Philippi, expressing gratitude and encouragement, while addressing the topics of humility, joy, and contentment.	Paul	50-70 AD
Colossians	A letter to the church in Colassae, emphasizing the supremacy of Christ, and providing practical instructions for Christian living.	Paul	50-70 AD
1 Thessalonians	Written to the church in Thessalonica, the letter address issues such as the second coming of Christ, the fate of believers who have already died, and the importance of a godly life.	Paul	50-70 AD
2 Thessalonians	Continues teaching on Christ's return, emphasizing the need for patience and perseverance in the face of trials, and to stand firm in their faith, assuring them of God's justice and the ultimate triumph of Christ.	Paul	50-70 AD
1 Timothy	Addresses specific concerns in the Ephesian church, such as the roles of men and women in the church, guidelines for worship and prayer, and the treatment of widows and elders.	Paul	50-70 AD
2 Timothy	A warning to Timothy about the rise of false doctrines, and an encouragement to uphold the truth, and to be vigilant in teaching and preserving the correct understanding of the Christian faith.	Paul	50-70 AD
Titus	Provides guidance and instruction to Titus, to organize and establish proper leadership structures within the church on the Island of Crete.	Paul	50-70 AD
Philemon	Demonstrates Paul's desire to promote forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity. Encourages Philemon to show grace and mercy, urging him to treat Onesimus not as a runaway slave, but as a fellow believer.	Paul	50-70 AD
Hebrews	Written to encourage the early Christians who were facing persecution or struggling with their faith.	Unknown (maybe Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos)	65 AD
James	Provides practical guidance for Christian living, emphasizing the importance of faith expressed through good works and ethical behaviour; addressing hypocrisy and social and economic inequalities present in the church.	James	45 AD
1 Peter	Offers comfort and assurance to Christian believers facing persecution and suffering, reminding them of their identity in Christ, and encouraging them to persevere in their faith.	Peter	60 AD
2 Peter	Emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine, moral living, and the certainty of Christ's return. Strengthens believers in their faith, reminding them to remain steadfast & discerning in the face of false teachings.	Peter	60 AD
1 John	Denounces false teachings and heresies that were circulating among the early Christians. Emphasizes the importance of fellowship and unity among believers, and provides assurance to believers regarding their faith.	John	90 AD
2 John	Warns about the dangers of false doctrine, and urges early Christians to hold fast to the true teachings of Jesus Christ. Emphasizes the importance of love and truth in the Christian faith.	John	90 AD
3 John	Highlights the importance of hospitality, support for those engages in speaking the Christian message, and the rejection of those who undermine the unity and well-being of the community.	John	90 AD
Jude	Exposes the false teachers that had infiltrated the Christian community, and encourages Christians to stand firm in the faith and fight for the truth.	Jude	60 AD

PROPHECY BOOK of the New Testament

Revelation	Apocalyptic book that reveals the end of the world, and the ultimate victory of good over evil.	John	90 AD
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Reflection #1

How have you made mistakes in the past interpreting Bible passages a wrong way because you read them in the wrong literary style?

And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.

ACTS 17:11 (NLT)

02

What Is The Proper Way To Interpret The Bible?

What is Hermeneutics?

- It's the science and art of interpreting the Bible in which we seek to understand the message of the Scripture.
- It provides us with a strategy that will enable us to understand what the author intended to communicate.

Why do we need it?

- We could misinterpret a text differently based on our personal, cultural, and theological backgrounds or biases.
- We tend to jump quickly to conclusions.
- We may be spiritually blind, or have blind spots.
- We understand a part, without fully understanding the context.
- We tend to read our ideas into the Bible.

There are three major methods of interpretation used today:

1. Literal Approach

The literal meaning is held to correspond to the intention of the authors. This type of hermeneutics is often, but not necessarily, associated with belief in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, according to which the individual words of the divine message were divinely chosen.

2. Moral Interpretation

Seeks to establish exegetical principles by which ethical lessons may be drawn from the various parts of the Bible. Struggle to apply it to books like Leviticus can seek what vices might be associated with unclean animals that are forbidden.

3. Allegorical Interpretation

All things have a second reference point beyond themselves. For example, the Ark might be a form of church for us.

The most important questions to ask when interpreting Scripture:

- What did the original writer mean to communicate?
- What did it mean for the people who first heard it?
- How does this tie into the rest of Scripture?



Reflection #2

What is one thought you've never had when trying to interpret different parts of the Bible?

*Above all, you must understand
that no prophecy of Scripture
came about by the prophet's
own interpretation of things.*

*For prophecy never had its
origin in the human will, but
prophets, though human, spoke
from God as they were carried
along by the Holy Spirit.*

03

Why Is Prophecy Significant To Understanding The Bible?

27% of the Bible is prophecy and therefore must be handled properly.

Reading prophecy requires:

- Faith to trust that it was inspired by God
- An understanding of the original meaning for the people who originally heard it - FORETELLING
- An understanding of the future meaning, tied into God's plan - FORTHTELLING

The devoted religious Jews in the New Testament were interpreting portions of the Bible literally (that God will restore Israel to greatness) and other portions of the Bible figuratively, that are actually "forthtelling".

For example, the prophet Isaiah speaks of a "man of sorrows" who was "despised and rejected...pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins...beaten so we could be whole...whipped so we could be healed...oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter...unjustly condemned...his life was cut short...he was buried like a criminal...put in a rich man's grave."
(Isaiah 53:3-9)

The Jewish leaders did not understand how Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy.



Reflection #3

What challenges have you encountered when reading and understanding the prophecy books?



Bible Reading Plan

At PORTICO we believe that it's necessary to read your Bible daily to grow in your spiritual journey of faith. That's why we've designed a Bible Reading Plan with Scripture verses for each day, to help you learn more about God.

[PORTICO.CC/DAILYDEVO](https://portico.cc/dailydevo)



*Trust in the LORD
with all your heart; do
not depend on your
own understanding.*

PROVERBS 3:5 (NLT)

*When we tell you these things,
we do not use words that come
from human wisdom. Instead, we
speak words given to us by the
Spirit, using the Spirit's words to
explain spiritual truths.*

1 CORINTHIANS 2:13 (NLT)

*But people who aren't spiritual
can't receive these truths from
God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish
to them and they can't understand
it, for only those who are spiritual
can understand what
the Spirit means.*

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 (NLT)

*Work hard so you can present
yourself to God and receive his
approval. Be a good worker,
one who does not need to be
ashamed and who correctly
explains the word of truth.*

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 (NLT)

*Your word is a lamp
to guide my feet and
a light for my path.*

PSALMS 119:105 (NLT)