



FREE RESOURCE · FAITH

BIBLE 101

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A thirty-day reading plan. One passage a day, read slowly.

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Bible 101: A thirty-day reading plan

A thirty-day introduction to the Bible: one passage a day, a line of context, and one question to take with you.

It is part of Bible 101, an educational series for people who are curious about the Bible, new to it, or returning after a long time away.

Short quotations are from the King James Version (public domain). Passage references follow the chapter and verse numbering used in most English Bibles.

CREDITS

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USE

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On reading slowly

Bible 101 began with a simple observation: many people own a Bible, or have heard parts of it read aloud, without ever having been shown how to read it for themselves. This plan is a starting point.

Thirty days is not enough to read the whole Bible. It is enough to meet its main movements: creation and calling, rescue and law, poetry and protest, exile and return, and then the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the first communities who followed him. Each day is a single passage, usually one or two chapters, chosen because it is foundational, much loved or often misunderstood.

Read slowly. The temptation with any plan is to tick the box and move on. Read the passage once to understand what happens. Read it again and notice one word, image or line that stays with you. Then answer the reflection question in a sentence or two. Twenty minutes is plenty.

Use a translation you can understand. The few short quotations in this guide are from the King James Version because it is in the public domain, but a modern translation may be easier for daily reading. Keep a pencil nearby. If you miss a day, pick up where you left off; the plan is there to serve you.

I am a lawyer by training and a believer by conviction, and I have found that the Bible rewards the same patience a careful reader brings to any important text. Come with your questions. It can hold them.

A SIMPLE DAILY RHYTHM

1

Read

the passage once, straight through, for the story or the argument.

2

Notice

one word, image or line on a second, slower reading.

3

Ask

who wrote this, to whom, and why. Use the context note.

4

Respond

with the reflection question, a sentence or a short prayer.



How the Bible is put together

The Bible is less like a single book and more like a library: sixty-six books in most Protestant Bibles, written over many centuries in Hebrew, some Aramaic and Greek, by many authors, in many forms.

THE OLD TESTAMENT · 39 BOOKS

Law 5 books	Genesis to Deuteronomy. Creation, the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Exodus, and the covenant at Sinai. Also called the Torah or the Pentateuch.
History 12 books	Joshua to Esther. Israel in the land: judges, kings, division, exile in Babylon and the return.
Wisdom & poetry 5 books	Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Prayer, lament, love and practical wisdom.
Prophets 17 books	Isaiah to Malachi. Messages of warning, justice and hope, often to people facing or living in exile. The “major” and “minor” prophets are named for length, not importance.

THE NEW TESTAMENT · 27 BOOKS

Gospels 4 books	Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Four accounts of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus.
History 1 book	Acts. The spread of the early church from Jerusalem to Rome.
Letters 21 books	Romans to Jude. Thirteen letters attributed to Paul, then Hebrews and seven general letters, written to churches and individuals.
Apocalyptic 1 book	Revelation. Vision and symbol, written to encourage churches under pressure.

READING A REFERENCE

“John 3:16” means the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16.
“Genesis 1–2” means chapters 1 and 2. Chapter and verse numbers were added long after the books were written, so read across them.

READ BY GENRE

A psalm is a song, a proverb is a general truth, a letter answers real questions from a real church. Ask what kind of writing you are holding before you ask what it means for you.

A NOTE ON BIBLES

Catholic and Orthodox Bibles include additional Old Testament books. The Jewish Scriptures contain the same books as the Protestant Old Testament, arranged in a different order.

Thirty days

Days 1–18 move through the Old Testament; days 19–30 through the New.

DAY	PASSAGE	CONTEXT	REFLECT
01	Genesis 1–2 ☐ Read	The opening of the Bible: God brings order to a world “without form, and void” and makes humanity in his image.	<i>What does it mean to you that every person is made in the image of God?</i>
		A LINE NOTICED	
02	Genesis 12 ☐ Read	God calls Abram to leave his country and family for a land he has not seen, promising that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him.	<i>What would it take for you to step out without seeing the whole road?</i>
		A LINE NOTICED	
03	Genesis 45 ☐ Read	After years of betrayal, slavery and prison (chapters 37–44), Joseph reveals himself to the brothers who sold him.	<i>Is there a hurt in your story that you are still waiting to see redeemed?</i>
		A LINE NOTICED	
04	Exodus 3 ☐ Read	Moses, now a shepherd in exile, meets God at the burning bush and is sent back to Egypt to lead his people out of slavery.	<i>Which of Moses’ objections sounds most like your own?</i>
		A LINE NOTICED	
05	Exodus 20 ☐ Read	The Ten Commandments, given at Sinai. Notice the order: the law follows the rescue from Egypt (20:2).	<i>Which commandment do you find hardest to keep, and why?</i>
		A LINE NOTICED	
06	Deuteronomy 6 ☐ Read	Moses speaks to a new generation, including the Shema (“Hear, O Israel”, 6:4) and the call to talk of these words at home.	<i>How is faith, or whatever you value most, passed on in your home?</i>
		A LINE NOTICED	

DAY	PASSAGE	CONTEXT	REFLECT
07	Ruth 1–4 ☐ Read	A short story of loyalty: a widow from Moab stays with her mother-in-law and becomes the great-grandmother of King David. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Where have you seen ordinary kindness change the course of a family?</i>
08	1 Samuel 16–17 ☐ Read	David, the youngest son, is anointed king, then faces Goliath. “The LORD looketh on the heart” (16:7). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What might God see when he looks past appearances to your heart?</i>
09	1 Kings 19 ☐ Read	The prophet Elijah, exhausted and afraid, is fed, allowed to sleep, and meets God in “a still small voice” (19:12). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What does Elijah’s recovery suggest about how God treats people who are worn out?</i>
10	Psalms 1 and 23 ☐ Read	Two short songs: a tree planted by the rivers of water, and the LORD as a shepherd. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Which image speaks to where you are this week, and why?</i>
11	Psalms 139 ☐ Read	A prayer from someone who is completely known by God, from before birth to “the uttermost parts of the sea”. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Does being fully known feel like comfort or exposure to you?</i>
12	Proverbs 3 ☐ Read	Wisdom in the voice of a parent to a child: “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart” (3:5). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Where are you currently leaning on your own understanding?</i>
13	Ecclesiastes 3 ☐ Read	A teacher reflects on time and the limits of human control: “To every thing there is a season” (3:1). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What season are you in right now, and what does it ask of you?</i>
14	Isaiah 40 ☐ Read	Words of comfort to a people facing exile, ending with renewed strength for “they that wait upon the LORD” (40:31). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Where do you need comfort more than advice?</i>

DAY	PASSAGE	CONTEXT	REFLECT
15	Jeremiah 29 ☐ Read	A letter to the exiles in Babylon: build houses, plant gardens and “seek the peace of the city” (29:7). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>How might you seek the good of the place where you live now, even if it does not yet feel like home?</i>
16	Daniel 6 ☐ Read	Daniel, a faithful exile serving a foreign king, keeps praying after a decree forbids it, and is thrown to the lions. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What habits keep you steady when the culture around you does not share your convictions?</i>
17	Jonah 1–4 ☐ Read	A reluctant prophet runs from God, is brought back, and is angry when God shows mercy to his enemies. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Who do you find it hardest to want God to be merciful to?</i>
18	Micah 6 ☐ Read	God brings a case against his people, and the answer is plain: do justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God (6:8). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Which of the three is most missing from your life at present?</i>
19	Matthew 5 ☐ Read	The start of the Sermon on the Mount: the Beatitudes, salt and light, and a deeper reading of the law. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Which of the Beatitudes surprises you most?</i>
20	Matthew 6–7 ☐ Read	The Sermon continues: the Lord’s Prayer, worry, judging others, and the wise and foolish builders. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What are you building on, and would it hold in a storm?</i>
21	Luke 10 ☐ Read	Asked “who is my neighbour?”, Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan, then visits Martha and Mary. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Who is the neighbour you would rather not notice?</i>
22	Luke 15 ☐ Read	Three stories of lost things, a sheep, a coin and a son, told to critics of the company Jesus kept. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Do you identify most with the younger son, the older son or the father?</i>

DAY	PASSAGE	CONTEXT	REFLECT
23	John 1 ☐ Read	John's Gospel opens with "In the beginning was the Word" and the chapter turns on an invitation: "Come and see" (1:39). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What would you like to "come and see" about Jesus?</i>
24	John 3 ☐ Read	Nicodemus, a respected teacher, comes to Jesus by night with honest questions. The chapter includes John 3:16. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What question would you bring to Jesus if you could visit unseen, at night?</i>
25	John 20–21 ☐ Read	The resurrection: an empty tomb, a doubting disciple, and breakfast by the sea where Peter is restored. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What does Jesus' treatment of Thomas and Peter say about doubt and failure?</i>
26	Acts 2 ☐ Read	At Pentecost the Spirit comes, Peter preaches, and the first believers share teaching, meals and prayer (2:42). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What would it look like to belong to a community like this?</i>
27	Romans 8 ☐ Read	Paul on life in the Spirit, from "no condemnation" (8:1) to nothing that can separate us from the love of God (8:38–39). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Which promise in this chapter do you most need to believe today?</i>
28	1 Corinthians 13 ☐ Read	Written to a gifted but divided church: love ("charity" in the KJV) described as patient, kind and enduring. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>Read verses 4–7 with your own name in place of love. Where does it ring true, and where not yet?</i>
29	James 1 ☐ Read	A practical letter on trials, wisdom and listening: be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (1:22). A LINE I NOTICED	<i>What have you heard or read this month that you now need to do?</i>
30	Revelation 21–22 ☐ Read	The Bible ends where it began: a renewed creation, a river, the tree of life, and God dwelling with his people. A LINE I NOTICED	<i>How does this picture of the end change the way you live now?</i>

Reading notes

Words that stood out, questions to ask someone, verses worth memorising, prayers.



*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a
light unto my path.”*

PSALM 119:105, KJV

When you finish, consider reading one whole Gospel from beginning to end. Mark
is the shortest. More from the Bible 101 series is on the website.

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