

THE BASIC BIBLE POCKET GUIDE

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Welcome to *The Basic Bible Pocket Guide*

This pocket guide provides quick summaries of all 66 books of the Bible. As you read these summaries, you will discover the main message God intended for His readers in each book of the Bible, as well as a “life message” just for you.

From a big-picture standpoint, the Bible is divided into two major sections:

The Old Testament

The Old Testament is a collection of 39 books, which break down into these main categories:

History—The first 17 books (Genesis through Esther) give the history of creation through the inception and destruction of the nation of Israel.

Poetry—The next five books (Job through Song of Solomon) use Hebrew poetry to delve into the questions of suffering, wisdom, life, love, and most importantly, the character and nature of God.

Prophecy—The last 17 books (Isaiah through Malachi) were written by men appointed to “speak” for God. Their messages were to entreat and warn God’s people that continued disobedience would lead to disaster. In the midst of these dire warnings was a clear ray of hope that the coming Messiah would make things right.

The New Testament

Like the Old Testament, the New Testament is not one book, but a collection of 27 individual books that reflect a wide range of themes, literary forms, and purposes.

History—The first five books (Matthew through Acts) record the life and times of Jesus, the Messiah who was prophesied in the Old Testament. Acts gives the record of the spread of the good news of Jesus’ offer of salvation, beginning with Jerusalem and going to the outermost parts of the earth.

Doctrine—The last 22 books (Romans through Revelation) contain letters of teaching and instruction in Christian truth and practice.

A Personal Word

It is my hope that *The Basic Bible Pocket Guide* will...

- become a useful tool to help you study the Bible,
- better acquaint you with God's singular message of salvation for mankind, and
- stimulate you to understand the amazing and life-changing truths in God's Word.

Genesis

*In the beginning God
created the heavens and the earth. (1:1)*

Theme: Beginnings

Date written: 1445–1405 BC

Author: Moses

Setting: Middle East

GENESIS is about beginnings. God begins the Bible, His written revelation, with major events such as the creation of the universe, the fall of man into sin, the flood of judgment, and the founding of the nation of Israel. In the book of Genesis, God also introduces readers to the individual people who will be part of His plan for redeeming the human race.

LIFE APPLICATION: Just as with key players in the book of Genesis—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, and others—God can do great things through weak vessels, and that includes you. This is one of the wonderful messages of the book of Genesis: The God who created us is not finished with us. He is in the business of “re-creating” us, giving us new beginnings and helping us become the kind

of people He desires us to be. By His grace and because of His sovereign plan, your mistakes and shortcomings do not disqualify you from being part of His grand plan, a plan still being worked out in you. God is well able to turn your tragedies into triumphs. Whatever your past, and whatever your failures, make this a day of beginnings—starting with reading your Bible.

Prayer: Lord, You showed the men and women of Genesis grace and mercy, and I thank You for extending that same grace and mercy to me.

God uses the flawed and the imperfect to accomplish His perfect will.

Exodus

*I have come down to deliver them out
of the hand of the Egyptians,
and to bring them up from that land
to a good and large land... (3:8)*

Theme: Deliverance

Date written: 1445–1405 BC

Author: Moses

Setting: From Egypt to Mount Sinai

EXODUS is about deliverance. After being slaves for 400 years, God delivered His chosen people from slavery. Pharaoh refused Moses' request that the Israelites be allowed to leave Egypt, and God sent ten dramatic and miraculous plagues to convince Pharaoh to let the people go. The last plague was the death of the Egyptian firstborn, whereas the Israelite firstborn were preserved through the Pass-over lamb's blood sprinkled on the doorposts of each Israelite home. At this point Pharaoh finally allowed for the massive, wondrous exodus. But it was difficult for the Israelites to adjust to freedom. Slavery in Egypt had its benefits, and God's people often looked back on their days of slavery

with lustful longing, forgetting that they had been treated inhumanely.

LIFE APPLICATION: As He did with the Israelites, God extends deliverance to you from slavery—slavery to sin—through the shed blood of God’s perfect lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. But, like the Israelites, you are often tempted to look back, longing for the pleasures of sin while forgetting the harsh cruelty of living under sin’s bondage. Let Exodus remind you of your deliverance through the blood of Jesus. Keep looking forward! Keep remembering the glory of God and His Son’s victory over sin—including your sin.

Prayer: Lord, help me to always remember the glory of Your Son’s victory over sin—my sin.

*God hears the cries of His suffering people
and delivers them.*

Leviticus

*I am the LORD your God...
You shall be holy; for I am holy. (11:44)*

Theme: Instruction

Date written: 1445–1405 BC

Author: Moses

Setting: Mount Sinai

LEVITICUS is about instruction. One year has gone by since God's people left Egypt. During that year, two new developments have taken place in God's dealings with His people. First, God's glory is now residing among the Israelites; and second, a central place of worship—the tabernacle—exists. But it was apparent that the people had very little knowledge of how to worship and live God's way. God used His servant Moses to deliver His Word to instruct the people how to live holy in response to the holiness of God. This emphasis on the holiness and character of God is repeated more than 50 times through the phrases "I am the LORD" and "I am Holy."

LIFE APPLICATION: Whether you realize it or not, your Christian perspectives are being challenged

or distorted by the culture around you. Your worship and morality are constantly being influenced—or informed, fashioned, or forged—by an ungodly society. But God gives you His instruction book, the Bible, to correct any warped values and teach you how to properly live and worship. Be careful not to disregard God's instructions. Read your Bible so that you understand what a holy God demands for holy living. Always heed God's instruction.

Prayer: Lord, give me the discipline I need to daily read Your Word so I can be influenced daily to live a holy life.

*You are being fashioned into one of two images—
either God's, or the world's. Make a choice!*

Matthew

*Jesus began to preach and to say,
“Repent, for the kingdom of
heaven is at hand.” (4:17)*

Theme: The kingdom of God

Date written: AD 60

Author: Matthew (Levi)

Setting: Palestine

MATTHEW is about the arrival of the King. Matthew was a tax collector until Jesus called him to become one of His 12 disciples. Immediately after responding to Christ's call, Matthew held a reception to let everyone know about Jesus and to personally meet Him (Matthew 9:9-13). Later, after Jesus returned to heaven, Matthew wrote to the Jewish Christians who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. They were beginning to experience persecution, and Matthew wrote to strengthen their faith and give them a tool for evangelizing their Jewish communities. He presented Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's promised Messiah and rightful King.

LIFE APPLICATION: The kingdom of heaven is still being offered to people today, but the price for entry is accepting its King—Jesus Christ—by faith. Only after believing in Jesus alone to save you from your sin will God change you from the inside out to be a citizen of His kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom now, but when Jesus returns, He will establish His rule on earth.

Are you one of Jesus' subjects? If so, let the whole world know. Like Matthew, be faithful to share the good news of your King with your family, friends, and co-workers. Let them know "The King is coming!"

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I look forward to Your return as King of kings and Lord of lords. May I be faithful to share Your message of salvation with everyone I meet.

*Jesus did not preach abstract religion,
but a new way of living.*

Mark

*The Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve,
and to give His life a ransom
for many. (10:45)*

Theme: The Suffering Servant

Date written: AD 60

Author: John Mark

Setting: Rome

MARK is about the Suffering Servant. Though John Mark was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, he was a close companion of the apostle Peter, who passed on the details of his association with Jesus to Mark. Writing from Rome, Mark targeted Roman believers and presented Jesus as a servant to His fellow man. The book focuses more on Jesus' deeds than His teachings. It demonstrates the humanity of Christ and describes His human emotions, His limitations as a human, and ultimately, His physical death. At the same time, Mark clearly reveals the power and authority of this unique Servant, showing Him as no less than the Son of God, as demonstrated in His resurrection.

LIFE APPLICATION: Like most people, the religious leaders of Jesus' day wanted to be served and rule over others. Yet Jesus taught—and lived—the exact opposite attitude. Real greatness is shown by service and sacrifice. Through Mark's eyes you see Jesus as an active, compassionate, and obedient Servant who constantly ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of others.

Always remember that real greatness is shown by service and sacrifice. Ambition and love of power and position should not be your goal. Instead, seek to be a servant. And who better for you to look to and emulate than the ultimate model of true servanthood, Jesus Christ?

Prayer: Lord, may I always remember that true greatness is not in being served but in serving others. Lead me daily to those whom I can serve in Your name, Lord Jesus.

Jesus came to serve, and He wants you to follow His example.

Luke

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. (19:10)

Theme: The Perfect Man

Date written: AD 60–62

Author: Luke, the beloved physician

Setting: Rome

LUKE is about the Perfect Man. As a doctor and the only Gentile author of the New Testament, Luke wrote to give an accurate historical account of the unique life of Jesus. He wrote to strengthen the faith of Gentile believers. He described Jesus as the Perfect Man—the Son of Man—who came to seek and save sinful men. Luke also showed a strong interest in how people's lives intersected with Jesus'. He described Jesus' interactions with others, in which our Lord disregarded social norms and religious bigotry. In this way Jesus revealed the universality of the Christian message.

LIFE APPLICATION: Jesus' love and compassion should serve as a powerful example as you go about interacting with other people. For example, you need to be like the Good Samaritan described by

Jesus in Luke chapter 10—the Samaritan stopped to help a person who was suffering. No, you are not Jesus. But when you perform acts of love and show compassion, you point others to the Spirit of Jesus, who lives in you.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, as I read Your Word, I can see that You expect certain attitudes in my life—attitudes like forgiveness, faithfulness, and thankfulness. Give me strength each day to live out these attitudes and honor Your presence in my life.

Jesus showed compassion for the hurting and the lost, and so should you.