



## **SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT AND STUDY GUIDE**

**Date:** Sunday, December 11, 2022

**Series:** Mechanics of the Bible

**Lesson Title:** The Structure of the Bible

**Key Verse:** Proverbs 4:7...with all thy getting, get understanding.

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### **Instructions for This Week:**

1. Take this week to study your Sunday School lesson prior to coming to class.
2. Do the homework assignments throughout this study guide.
3. Bring the study guide along with your answers to class.

**See you there!**

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### **Introduction**

**What is the structure of the Bible? How is the Bible laid out?  
Ready to learn? Let's go!**

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### **Bible Facts**

**The Bible is a collection of 66 books.**

**The Bible has Two Major Divisions: The Old Testament and the New Testament.**

- **The Old Testament contains 39 books**
- **The New Testament contains 27 books**
- **Altogether, about 40 authors over a period of 1,500 years**

**1. Assignment:** List the two major divisions of the Bible and how many books each division contains.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ **How many books?** \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ **How many books?** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Assignment:** About how many authors are there in the bible? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Old Testament**

**First, let's deal with the Old Testament** (and largest division of the Bible).

Now, the **Old Testament** is not called the Old Testament because it is obsolete and it doesn't have anything to say to us. It's called the Old Testament because it came first. It records the history and writings of Israel in the centuries prior to the coming of Jesus.

Another way to think of the Old Testament is to call it the **Hebrew Bible** because this is the Bible that Jesus and His followers had. They did not have the New Testament yet. All they had was the Hebrew Bible – the Old Testament.

*There was a 400-year period of silence between the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, and the accounts of the Gospels that begin with John the Baptist proclaiming the arrival of Jesus in the New Testament.*

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## **New Testament**

**The second** (and smallest division of the Bible) is the **New Testament**. The New Testament was written over a period of years. It started being written shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The books were written to churches and individual Christians.

And so, we have the Bible; the **Old Testament** and the **New Testament** coming together to tell us **God's Story for us today**.

**Want more? I know you do. So, let's go!**

## Genres of the Bible

There is something else to understand about the structure of the Bible. The Bible is organized **not by date** but by **Genre**.

**Genre** refers to a type of literature that is contained in each book of the Bible. And as you open the Table of Contents you can see how the Bible is organized by **Genre**.

Below is an illustration showing the books organized by **Genre**.



## **The Law: Genesis – Deuteronomy (5 books)**

The first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are referred to as the **Pentateuch** or **Books of the Law** because they are generally the Law of Moses.

There are 4 types of **literature** found in the Old Testament: **Law, History, Poetry, and the Prophets**. It is here we learn about creation, the flood, the Tower of Babel, the patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt, Mount Sinai, and the 40 years of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness.

**1. Assignment:** List the four types of literature found in the Old Testament.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Assignment:** What is one of the two ways to refer to the first 5 books of the Bible? \_\_\_\_\_

## **History: Joshua – Esther (12 books)**

The Books of History begin where the Books of the Law end and include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Here we read about the conquest of the Promised Land, the period of the Judges, the United Kingdom, the Divided Kingdom, the Babylonian captivity and the restoration of the Israelite people to their homeland. It is at this point that Old Testament history essentially comes to a close.

**Assignment:** Name a historical event covered in the Books of History.

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## **Poetry: Job – Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) (5 books)**

The Books of Poetry got their name because of their **poetic nature**. These books include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon (also called the Song of Songs). These books are distinctly Hebrew and consist of wisdom literature, songs, and narratives.

**Assignment:** How did the Books of Poetry get their name? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Major Prophets: Isaiah – Daniel (5 books)**

Throughout their history, God spoke to His people through prophets. They are called Major Prophets because these books tended to be a bit longer. They were often used as a mouthpiece for God to share His promises and warnings, foretell future events and call people to turn from sin and live a godly life. The Major Prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

## **Minor Prophets: Hosea – Malachi (12 books)**

The books of Hosea through Malachi are called the Minor Prophets; not because they were unimportant but because they are smaller books with the same purpose and same intent of the Major Prophets. They were telling God's people how to understand the events of today and what God was going to do in the future. The Minor Prophets include Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

**Assignment:** What is the difference between the Major and Minor Prophets? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Gospels: Matthew – John (4 books)**

The first four books of the New Testament Bible are called the Gospels. They include Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Gospels are four

different accounts about the life of Jesus. Each Gospel is written from a different perspective with different purposes, so they each give us different accounts, even though they do contain overlapping stories. There are three that are very similar and they are called the “synoptic gospels” – Matthew, Mark and Luke.

**1. Assignment:** What is the name given to the first four books of the New Testament? \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Assignment:** There are three synoptic gospels. What are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **History of the Church: Acts (1 book)**

The Book of Acts is a very focused book of history. It looks at the spread of the Christian Church; starting with a few Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who then spread out to the entire Roman Empire. The Apostle Paul is the primary character in the book, but we also learn about Peter and other early leaders in the church.

**Assignment:** Who is the primary character in the Book of Acts?

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### **Paul’s Letters to the Church: Romans – Philemon (13 books)**

Paul spent much of his life planting churches on several missionary journeys. He later wrote letters to many of the churches and many of these letters have been preserved in the New Testament. Paul’s letters include Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

**Assignment:** What did Paul spend much of his life doing? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **General Letters to the Church: Hebrew – Jude (8 books)**

There were also letters written by people like Peter, John, and others. Each letter had a specific audience in mind as well as a reason for the letter. Each letter is, therefore, unique with its own flavor and lessons to be learned. The General Letters (Epistles) include Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2 & 3 John, and Jude.

## **Prophecy: Revelation (1 book)**

Finally, and most prevalent, **Revelation is apocalyptic literature**. It's a mix of prophecy, eschatology – talking about the return of Jesus, the end of the world and how God wants us to live until that time comes. This book of prophecy is a powerful depiction of God's vision for the end of the world and for the beginning of the rest of eternity.

So, these are the Genres of the Bible. It is important that you understand something about Genre; You don't have to be an expert in Genres to appreciate the Bible but it's going to impact how you read the Word of God. This is because a book's Genre guides the way you read it.

For instance, when you read the Books of History, Chronicles and Kings - God commands a family to move to the north and take the family and all of their belongings; You need to think; that is **NOT** a command for me. God is **NOT** telling you to quit your job, sell your house etc. and move north. God was talking to a prophet or a King telling him what to do in his context.

Stay tuned...in an upcoming lesson we're going to go further in providing insight on how to read the bible to enrich your experience of studying God's Word!