



The Shape of **the Bible**

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At **Scripture Union Ireland**, our goal is to help people experience God in ways that encourage them to follow Jesus - through Scripture and prayer.

Our hope is that this guide gets you excited about God and curious about how The Bible can help you get to know Him better!



WHAT IS THE BIBLE?



The Bible is one of the ways that God **reveals** Himself. All the stories, poems, letters and history, written over time, together tell one big story.

Through that story, we can learn what God's like, what He cares about and how we can get to know Him for ourselves!

The main plot of the story is all about how God created the world, how humans turned away from Him, and how God kept working to bring people back into a relationship with Him.

It follows God's promises to Israel, the life and teachings of Jesus as the fulfilment of those promises, and the spread of His message.

In the end, it points toward a future where God restores creation and makes all things whole again.

WHAT WE THINK THE BIBLE IS WILL CHANGE HOW WE READ IT.

If the Bible is a way that God reveals Himself, then we should ask, *"what could God be saying?"*

If it is a collection of different kinds of books from different times, then we should **explore** the history, places and people that are mentioned.

If it all tells one big story, which helps us know get to know God for ourselves, then it's helpful to ask, *"how is this verse/ passage part of that big story and what is it telling me about God?"*

TYPES OF BOOKS



We don't read every kind of book the same, right?

You wouldn't read a car manual like a cookbook, or an autobiography like a play.

In the same way, it really helps to read the different books in the Bible based on what **type** of writing they are.

We can do this by looking out for different details.

The contents of the Bible can be grouped into 3 main types:

Story:

The text reveals something about God by *telling a story*.

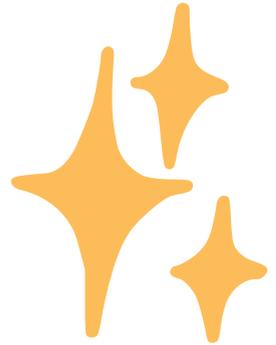
Helpful things to pay attention to:

- Characters (who)
- Setting (when + where)
- Plot (what is happening)



Poetry:

The text reveals something about God by using *intense* and *emotional* language.



Helpful things to pay attention to:

- Images
- Metaphors
- Figures of Speech
- Repetition

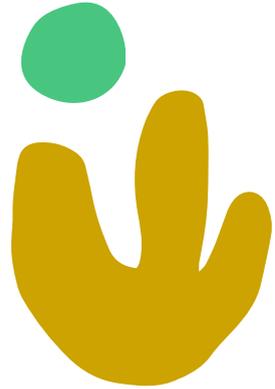
Ideas:

The text reveals something about God by presenting a *logical sequence* of thoughts.

Helpful things to pay attention to:

- Connecting Words (so that, therefore, in order to ..)
- Instructions
- Explanations





THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament is what we call the first two thirds of this story.

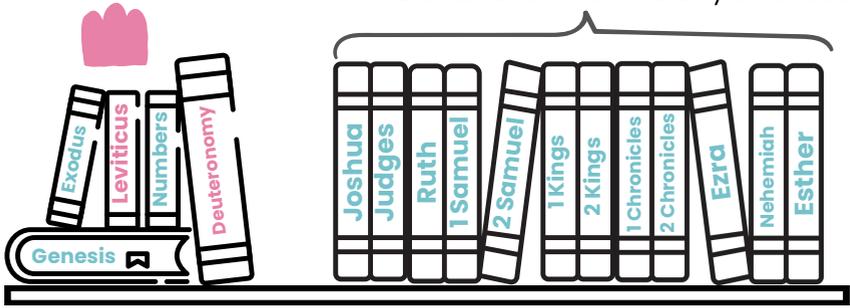
These books cover the story of God from the creation of the world and the first people, to the formation of a community of people that would reveal God – and their successes and failures.

These stories give us an insight to what God is like and how He interacts with people to help them know Him through the different circumstances they find themselves in.

Note: There are additional books commonly referred to as “deuterocanonical” or “The Apocrypha” that various Christian traditions include in their collections. These books were written during the Intertestamental Period (the time between the Old and New Testaments)

Books of History

Tell the stories of Israel's history as a Nation.



Books of Moses

Assumed to be written by Moses or informed by his life.



Books of Wisdom

Collections of songs, poems, and allegories sharing perspectives on life.



Books of Prophets

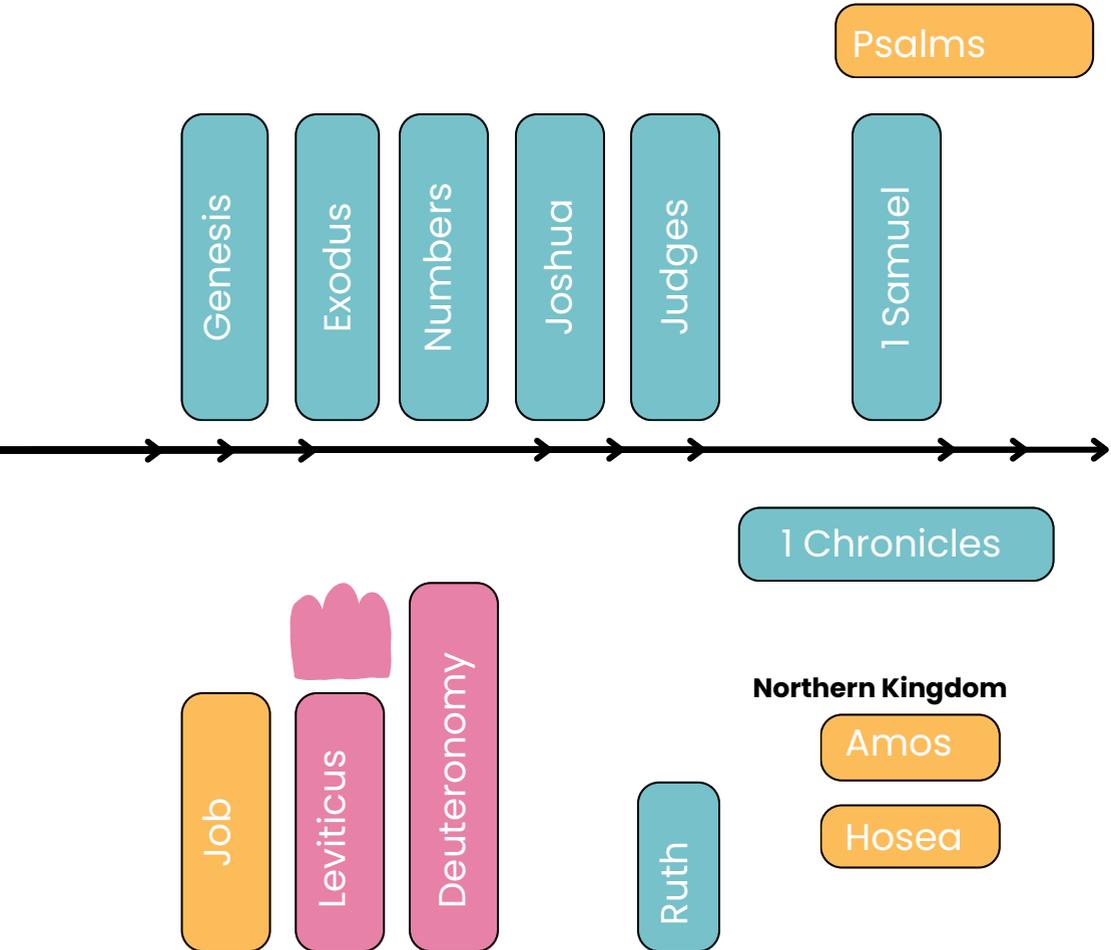
Collections of messages given by the Prophets*.

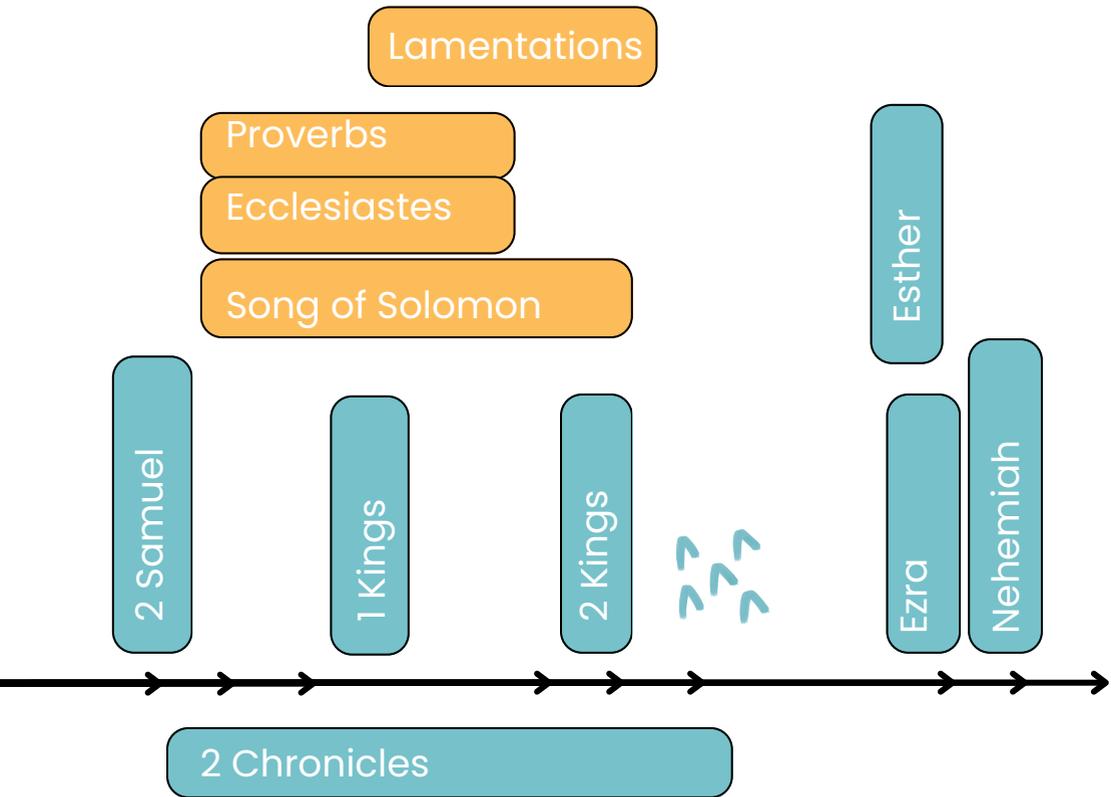
*Prophets = people who speak on God's behalf.
They communicate messages to specific audiences e.g
Jeremiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom (Judah)

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Chronologically

● Story ● Poetry ● Ideas





Southern Kingdom

- Joel
- Micah
- Isaiah
- Zephaniah
- Habakkuk
- Jeremiah



- Jonah
- Nahum
- Obadiah

- Daniel
- Ezekiel

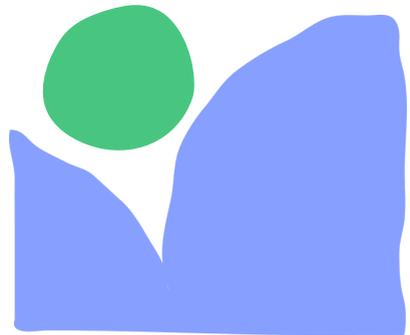
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament books hold the stories and teachings of Jesus and how they were understood and taught to the communities who were formed around Him. They make up the last third of the Bible.

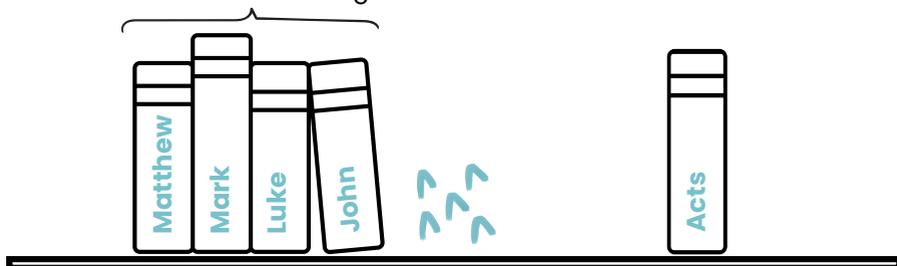
These books are all about how Jesus is not only the Son of God but God Himself!

So when we read about Jesus' interactions, how he shows grace and love, we're seeing more of what God is like.



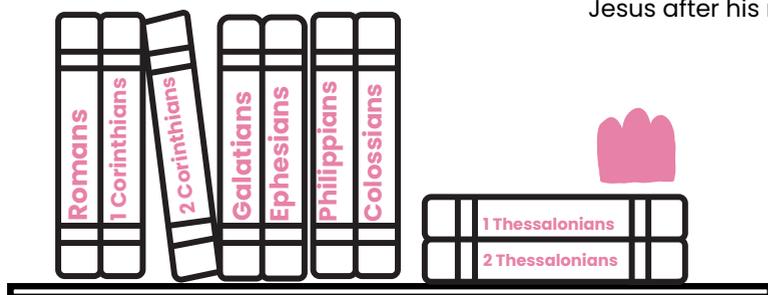
The Gospels

Accounts of Jesus' life and teachings from four distinct authors.



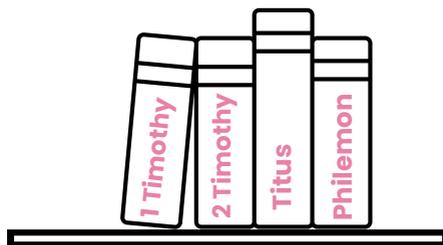
Acts of the Apostles

The movements of the first followers of Jesus after his resurrection.



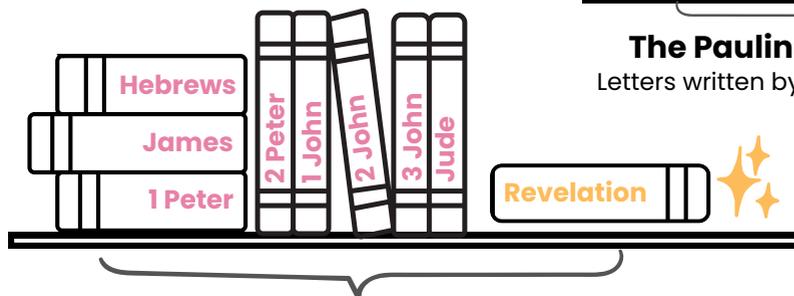
The Pauline Epistles I

Letters written by Paul to churches



The Pauline Epistles II

Letters written by Paul to individuals



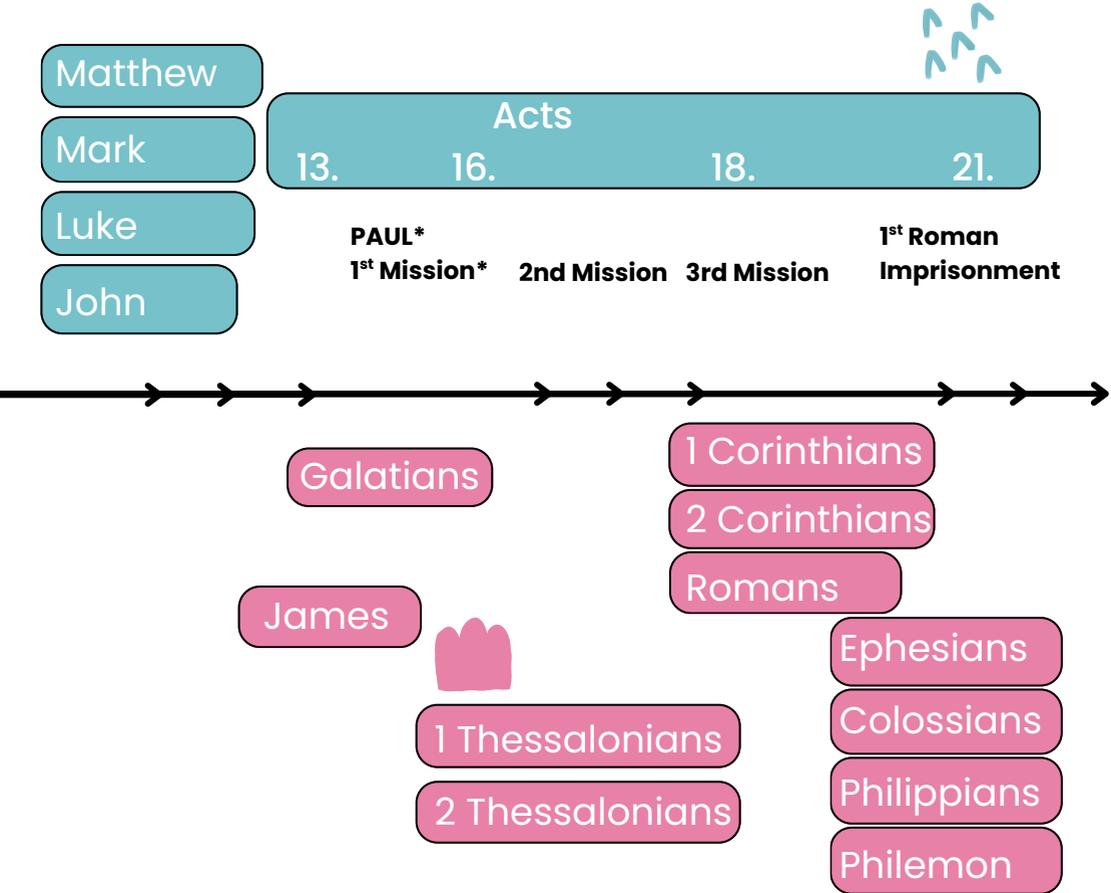
General Epistles

Letters written by others

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Chronologically

● Story ● Poetry ● Ideas



Notes:

*Paul - was a significant character in the New Testament! He started as an enemy of the early Christians until he had a dramatic encounter with Jesus that completely transformed him. Read about it in Acts 9:1-19!

Paul's Freedom

Paul's 2nd Roman Imprisonment

The Church Grows



1 Timothy
Titus

2 Timothy

1 John
2 John
3 John
Revelation

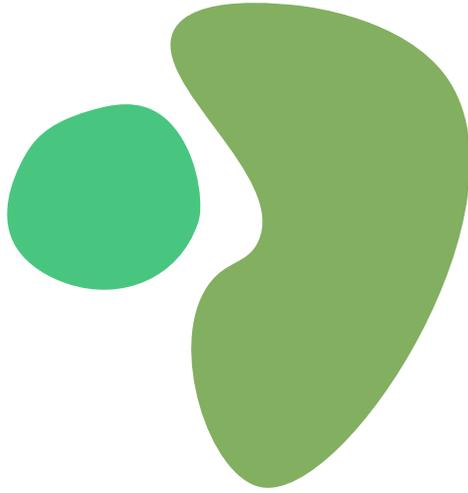
1 Peter
2 Peter

Hebrews
Jude



Notes:

*Mission - Paul took a series of extended trips to encourage and instruct communities and friends - telling them all about Jesus. His travels are documented in the Book of Acts and his letters make up most of the New Testament.



There are many different ways to engage with the Bible!

Here are some simple steps we like to use to help us explore what's going on in whatever part that we're reading.



*Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law..
Psalm 119:18*

PRAY

Remember that God wants to reveal Himself! Start by welcoming Him into your reading.

READ

Slowly + carefully.

ASK

What do you think this is about?

What do you see / understand about God's character from what you're reading?

What do you think God could be saying through it today?

PAUSE

Take a moment to reflect on what is standing out to you.

RESPOND

How could you respond to what is being communicated?



Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
Psalm 119 v 105



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