

GOD'S WORD

Staff Training Bible Study



Dawson Trotman *“incorporated into his life any and all legitimate ways to absorb the Scriptures. Bible studies with other young men, taking notes on his pastor’s sermons, listening to radio programs that featured Bible instruction, a year at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles—these were whetting his appetite for even more. Dawson just couldn’t get enough Bible. His capacity grew with his intake, and as he grew he desperately wanted to share these rich gems of Scripture with others...”*

- Robert Foster, *“The Navigator”*

From our earliest days as a disciple making movement, Navigators have been marked by a deep engagement with God and his word! We long to hear from God and be transformed by an authentic faith in Jesus. The way we approach and apply the Scriptures is critical to our growth as disciples of Jesus and disciple makers. May this study about God’s word, in God’s word, provoke your mind, engage your heart, and fill your tool belt as you walk with God and serve others.

WHERE WE’RE GOING:

01	02	03	04	05	06	07
GOD SPEAKS	FORMED	WORD MADE FLESH	TEACHING OTHERS	ON THE FRONTLINES	RESPOND	APPENDIX
Discovering the God who makes Himself known.	From Exodus to the Early Church God has used his word to form his people	Reflecting on the pinnacle of God’s revelation, Jesus Christ	Exploring the heart and skill of leading others into the Scriptures	Discuss with teammates the challenges and opportunities inherent in our technological age	Making it personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniqueness of the Bible • The Structure of the Bible



WHERE YOU’VE BEEN:

What are your earliest memories reading/studying the Bible?

01 GOD SPEAKS

A. God Wants to be Known

From cover to cover, the Scriptures describe a God who delights in being known, seen, and experienced. It is God's nature to communicate with us so that we can experience and respond to him.

1) What do the following passages teach us about seeking and knowing God?

Jeremiah 9:23-24

Acts 17:26-27

John 17:3

Hebrews 11:6

2) The chart below highlights just a few of the many ways God breaks through to humanity. Consider them individually, but don't lose sight of their collective weight!

God's Word Through	Passages	Put this concept in your own words	How does this inspire your understanding of God?
Creation and Nature	Psalm 19:1-3 Psalm 33:4-6		
The Law of Moses	Exodus 34:27-35 Deuteronomy 4:5-8 Deuteronomy 29:29		
The Prophets	Exodus 7:1-5 1 Samuel 3:19-21 2 Peter 1:20-21		
Jesus	John 1:14, 17-18 Hebrews 1:1-3		
The Holy Spirit	John 16:12-14 Romans 8:14-16		



B. Explore the Metaphors

By framing high and lofty spiritual realities in terms of familiar pictures and experiences, God helps us to know Him in very tangible and practical ways. As you read the following passages, identify the metaphor and consider how these direct us to relate with God and His word.

Jeremiah 23:28,29

Psalms 119:105

Jeremiah 15:16/Matthew 4:4

Hebrews 4:12

- 1) For Team Discussion: Which of these resonates most strongly with your experience of God's word? Do you have another favorite metaphor not on this list?

C. Words of Caution for the Journey

As believers who spend extensive time reading and studying the Bible, we are vulnerable to some potential pitfalls. What are ways we can end up in the ditch on the journey? How do we avoid these?

Isaiah 29:13

Matthew 7:24-27

John 5:39-40

- 1) How does *knowing about God from the Bible* differ from *knowing the God of the Bible*? Can you give an example from your own life?

02 FORMED

In this section we will follow two threads. First, the story of God *forming* a book for his people. And second, how that collection of writings *informs* and *transforms* the identity of those people. From Israel's first steps out of slavery to the house-gatherings of Jesus' disciples, and all the way to our current technological innovations spiritual growth and maturity has always been tethered to God's inspired word.

A. Written Down

The following verses are the earliest accounts in Israel's history when God asks someone (Moses) to "write these things down." Although the details surrounding these moments may seem a little odd, pay attention to the motivation and heart of God in giving Israel his written word.

Exodus 17:8-16

Exodus 24:3-8

Deuteronomy 31:9-13

- 1) What types of things did God want them to capture in writing?
- 2) We know from the opening chapters of Exodus, that the end of Israel's years in Egypt found them in powerless bondage and horrible mistreatment as an enslaved people. The world they were leaving had shaped them in profound ways. Connect with Israel's story of being freed from a lifetime of captivity. What would you need to hear from the Lord in those first days, months, and years on the other side of the Red Sea?
- 3) What advantages came with having God's words in writing as time went on?
- 4) **Read Joshua 1:8.** Why do you think Israel's success in the promised land was linked so strongly to keeping God's word daily on their lips, hearts, and minds?

Capture your thoughts on how God has used the word to re-form your identity over time.



B. Rediscovered

At the age of 8, Josiah found himself succeeding his dethroned and deceased father as Judah's 16th king. Josiah's leadership and heart for God shine as a ray of hope in an otherwise disappointing, downward spiral of kings who rejected Yahweh for the worship practices of neighboring gods. Read the following excerpt from Josiah's story in **2 Chronicles 34:1-33**.

- 1) How would you describe Israel's relationship with their Bible, (the "Book of the Law") at this moment in history? Why has it become this way?

- 2) What details resonate with you about Josiah's response to finding the Scriptures?

- 3) The Scriptures were literally lost—disregarded in some corner of the temple for generations! What are some of the ways the Bible has become lost on your generation?

- 4) How can you help people find God's word afresh?

C. After Exile

Roughly one-hundred years after Josiah, and a long period of exile in Babylon and Assyria, God brings Israel out of captivity once again. Israel returns to Jerusalem to rebuild and fortify the desolated city. For the first time in generations, Israel hears the Scriptures read to them in Jerusalem. Read **Nehemiah 8:1-12** and reflect on the questions below.

- 1) What stands out to you personally from this story?

- 2) Why do you think this was such an emotional moment?



- 3) Can you remember a time from your own life when your heart was touched as someone read and taught the Scriptures?

D. The Bible Jesus Used

Between the end of the Old Testament (roughly 450 BCE) and Jesus' first coming, the Jewish library of sacred writings had expanded to include more than just the "Law of Moses." It included books like Nehemiah, the messages of several prophets, and the wisdom literature like Proverbs.

These writings were received by the Jewish community as a unified work—each piece an individual example of God's word to his people and together a collection of many interlocking parts.



*For Further Exploration: Check out **The Bible Project Video** "Overview: TaNaK / Old Testament" for a helpful summary of how the Old Testament became more than just the law of Moses.*

- 1) Use a Bible study search engine (like blueletterbible.org) to perform a word search on **graphe (Stong's G1124)**. (You can do this by typing G1124 in the BLB search bar.) This is the greek word translated "The Scripture(s)" in most english translations of the New Testament. Survey the list of references and make a few observations about how the word "Scriptures" was used and understood during New Testament times.
- 2) Choose 3-4 individual references you find most interesting. What do you learn about the nature and purpose of "The Scriptures" to first century Jews and earliest followers of Jesus?

E. New Additions to the Sacred Library

The twenty-seven books we enjoy in our current New Testament were individually written during a dynamic 50-year window following the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

New Testament books come in all shapes and sizes. In many cases, the author's purpose is implicit—only after reflection can you understand the motivations and the target audience. However, every once in a while you will find an explicit statement of purpose. What motivated the authors as they wrote these beloved New Testament books?

Luke 1:1-4

John 20:30-31

1 John 5:11-13

For Reflection and Discussion:

1. Romans 15:4 says, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.(ESV)” In what ways have you found yourself open to God *for instruction* and hungry for *encouragement* in recent weeks and months? Consider reaching out to a mentor for a recommendation, a passage, verse, or section of the Scriptures to read/study in light of what's on your heart.
2. The Bible is a big book, and it takes time to understand how it fits together and informs life today. What portions of your Bible seem most distant to you?
3. In this section we've introduced the notion that your Bible has a formation story of its own. Some people enjoy the history of Bible formation, translation, and the many questions related to this subject. How about you? Do you think it's important to understand how our Bible came together? Why or why not?
4. In your work with students, have you come across anyone who is inquisitive or skeptical about the nature and origins of the Bible? What are their questions?



03 WORD MADE FLESH

A. Pinnacle of Revelation

All that we've seen so far has only led us to the foothills of the mountain. God's highest, clearest, and fullest expression of Himself comes not from words on paper but the *Word made flesh*.

- 1) As you reflect on John 1:14 below, what is at the heart of the expression, "the Word became flesh?"

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (ESV)

"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son. Generous inside and out, true from start to finish." (MSG)

"So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." (NLT)

- 2) In what ways do the following passages continue to exalt and elevate Jesus Christ as the pinnacle of God's revelation of Himself?

Hebrews 1:1-4

Luke 4:16-21

Luke 24:44-45

Revelation 19:13-16

B. Rejoicing in the Word

As we gaze upon Jesus we rejoice exceedingly at God's marvelous Word made flesh and join the Psalmist in saying *"I rejoice at Your word like one who finds great spoil"* (Psalm 119:162).

Look at these passages and pay close attention to what happens in the heart when we encounter the Word made flesh. List the ways you see the heart being stirred?

Psalm 118:22-24

Luke 24:32

John 15:11

C. Response!

For the first eleven chapters in Romans, Paul revels in the majesty of Christ and the implications of faith in Him. This leads him to burst out in praise!

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

*“For who has known the mind of the Lord,
or who has been his counselor?”*

*“Or who has given a gift to him
that he might be repaid?”*

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

Romans 11:33-36

As you lift your eyes to the person of Christ, try writing your own anthem of praise. Having a hard time coming up with the words? Follow Pauls example by stringing together a few refrains from the OT poets and prophets! (See *Is 40:13, Job 41:11*)

04 TEACHING OTHERS

A. Called to Teach

Our joy in Christ spills over into teaching the next generation. In disciple making, teaching can take on many different forms: responding to a student’s question in a one-to-one; locking eyes with those sitting in a small group to give a word of encouragement; opening up the Bible with someone who’s never read it; explaining the significance of a truth about God over social media; and yes, giving a message to a room full of people.

- 1) Who (or what) is currently teaching the students on your campus?



2) Do you think of yourself as a teacher? Why or why not?

Read the following passages and make observations about the variety of teaching moments (who is teaching, what is being taught, and how teaching/learning happens, etc).

Acts 2:14-41

Acts 8:26-40

Acts 18:24-26

3) What common threads do you observe throughout these teaching moments?

B. Teachers who Love

In first century Israel, few professions were held in higher esteem than being a Rabbi (teacher). Training to become a Rabbi in the Jewish tradition was rigorous, competitive and political—often tied to authority, alliances, and prestige.

Jesus proved to be a different kind of Rabbi. One of his primary training objectives was love. Agape love is characterized by devotion and commitment; it is a love that wishes for and works toward the best possible outcomes for others. How do you see Jesus training his disciples in love in the passages below?

Matthew 5:43-48

Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew 22:34-40

John 13:1,12-17, 34-35

1) What is the difference between a teacher who loves people and a person who loves to teach? Which are you?

- 2) In Phil 2:19-24, the apostle Paul is commending his son in the faith, Timothy, to the church at Philippi. He says, “For I have no one else like him who will be *genuinely concerned for your welfare.*” When you show up in someone’s life, what can crowd out “genuine concern”?

C. A Teachers Greatest Tool

In his final recorded letter, Paul reminds Timothy of their relationship and ministry partnership over many years, miles, and experiences and urges him to keep carrying the gospel message forward.

Read 2nd Timothy 3:10-17 and make 10-12 observations below:

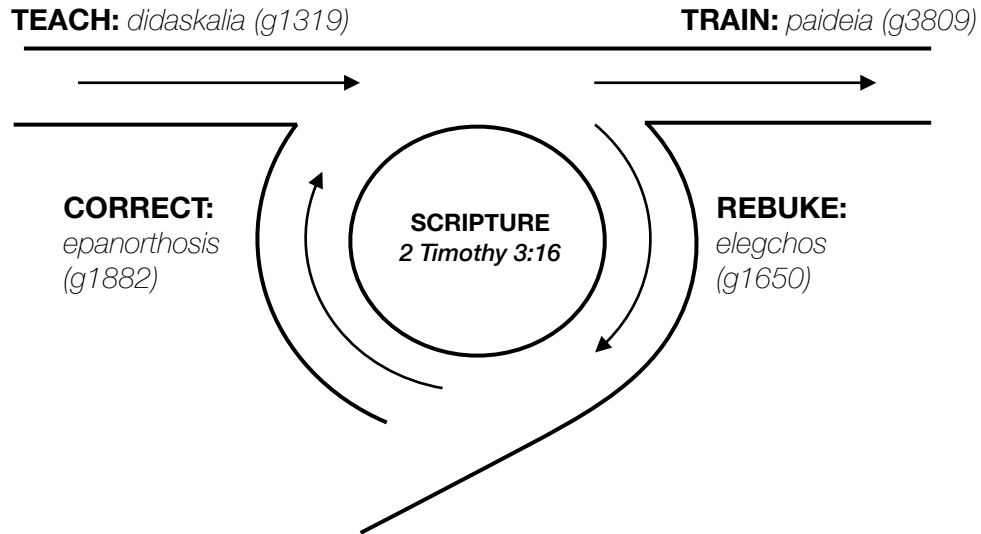
- 1) What's the heart behind Paul's main point in this passage?

- 2) Why do you think Paul brings Timothy back to the role of “The Scriptures” 3:15-17?



Paul tells Timothy that the Scriptures are “useful” (NIV) in four key ways on the path to maturity. Selfishness, sinful desires, impure motives, immature thinking, and even straight up ignorance can spin us around as we walk with God.

Like the diagram below shows, God’s word is good news when we take wrong turns! A combination of the Scriptures, humility and a life lived alongside loving and wise believers can carry us on toward maturity.



- 3) Give an example of times you've personally experienced the Scriptures in each of these ways.

Read Galatians 2:1-14 for an example of Paul’s loving (but tense!) encounter with Peter.

- 4) Why did Paul rebuke/correct Peter? What was at stake?

- 5) People are constantly making mistakes as they grow in Christ and help others. How do you know what behaviors qualify as something worth rebuking? Ignoring? What’s involved in doing this well?

D. Teaching and Disciple Making

Teaching isn't always telling. Promoting self-discovery is a necessary skill for teachers. Disciple makers must work creatively to help others experience God for themselves.

Jesus taught crowds, opponents, and his inner circle of disciples through stories, sermons and questions that leveraged the power of self-discovery. In the gospel accounts Jesus asked over 300 questions and not one was for his own understanding!

- 1) What do you observe about the way Jesus uses questions in the verses below?

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

Mark 8:27-29

"And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers.'"

Mark 11:17

One day an expert in the law stood up to test Him. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law? Jesus replied. "How do you read it?"

Luke 10:25-26

- 2) Who are the people in your life who ask good questions? What about them and their questions makes them stand out to you?



Helpful Resource: Karen Lee Thorpe's, "How to Ask Great Questions" has been of tremendous help to many disciple makers wanting help in question asking/small group leadership dynamic. Consider ordering a copy if you want to take a deeper dive into this area.



Take it to Campus

Creating conversation around the Scriptures is a key for evangelism and discipleship. For some people, question asking and promoting conversation comes more naturally. If that person is not you, DON'T worry! This is an area you will get better at with practice. Consider the following simple outline as a way to get started.

- A) Be present to the passage: *Help them explore and discover what's happening in the text..*
- 1) Observation questions - who, what, where, how, relationships, context?
 - 2) Meaning questions - what is this about, what is the main message here?
- B) Be present to yourself: *Help them open up, see themselves, share their story in light of what's being talked about here.*
- 1) Experience questions - Have you ever experienced anything like this?
 - 2) Current reality questions - How does what we are reading here relate to what is going on, prevailing ideas and philosophies, current events, personal lives, etc.
 - 3) Response questions - How does this hit you personally?
 - 4) What does this reveal to us about people, and the human experience?
- C) Be present to God: *Help them process and discover what responding to God looks like.*
- 1) Relationship questions - How does this speak to what's going on in your relationship with God today?
 - 2) Trust questions - What promise is God extending to you? Any obstacles to trusting God in this way? How is he inviting you to trust him?
 - 3) Worship questions - How is God speaking to you through this passage? What is one way you could say yes to Him this week?

Take 2 Timothy 3:10-17, the passage you studied in Section C. Pretend you are preparing for a low prep, group discussion with some students on your campus who identify as believers. Come up with 2-3 good questions in each of these categories.

A) Be present to the passage:

1)

2)

3)

B) Be present to yourself:

1)

2)

3)

C) Be present to God:

1)

2)

3)



05 ON THE FRONTLINES

Case Study: Tacos and Real Talk

The goal of this case study is to explore using the Bible in evangelism and personal discipleship as we increasingly lead *digital natives* into the Word of God. This exercise is designed for you to discuss with your trainer, local or regional team, or with student leaders.

You (Jasmine) met Sophia at a fall launch event last month and have enjoyed lunch together a few times since. Last week you invited Sophia to check out a four week investigative Bible discussion, “Tacos and Real Talk”, starting this Thursday. You both laugh over the cheesy title, she lets you know she’s a vegetarian, but otherwise seems genuinely open to the invitation. In her words, “Religion is so confusing, but I’ve enjoyed meeting up with you and our talks about God things.” She even asks if she can bring her roommate Megan. Sophia is pretty sure Megan is “Christian or Catholic or something.”

Thursday night rolls around. You pick up Sophia and her roommate Megan. You’ve spent most of the afternoon visiting students, texting reminders, ordering food, and making an “all in one” handout for the discussion. You figured that a handout with questions and printed passage from John will save you from carrying a stack of paper Bibles to the meeting.

Sam, a Nav student who came to Christ last year, is excited to help the cause by hosting the get-together at his off-campus apartment. A small group of men and women with diverse church experiences and faith backgrounds file into the off campus apartment. You are thrilled to see a large group of students who have taken a risk to be there. From your conversations earlier in the week, you expect over half the room has never before considered reading the Bible, most don’t think of themselves as Christians.

The tacos were a hit! The carne asada went fast and Sophia was grateful for the veggie tacos set aside just for her. While transitioning the group toward your prepared discussion around the Bible, you panic a little as you realize your handouts are in the car. Your move to the door is swift, you fly down three flights of stairs and back in less than 90 seconds. However, when you get back to the apartment, you find some eager beavers in the group have taken matters into their own hands!

Sophia’s roommate already has brandished her KJV Bible from her purse. It was a gift from her pastor back home who encouraged her to be cautious of other “modern versions.” Sam, your host, graciously but somewhat awkwardly transferred all seven pounds of his ESV Study Bible from bookshelf to Brian, the new guy sitting next to him. It would not take long for Brian to discover the jackpot of helpful information and commentary on each page. Being a history major, he was totally into the maps and timelines of ancient Israel. On two occasions, Brian was able to weigh-in with “Sam’s Bible has a note saying...”helping to clear up questions voiced by others around the circle.

Two other freshmen, Nick and Jessie, opened up the YouVersion Bible app in your absence. They learned about it from someone two weeks ago during a NavNight breakout group discussion. Nick would toggle back and forth between ESPN and John 2 the rest of the evening. You would soon marvel at how Nick was able to read the passage from his phone and seconds later give scoring updates from the big game.

Jessie was helping Sophia download the app as you reclaimed your place on the couch a bit out of breath. As you passed out your handouts, Jessie asked you “which of these three letter abbreviations

should we use this time?” Sophia was impressed by so many options, especially the selection of Bibles in Spanish. Her grandparents had immigrated to the US from Mexico in the 60s, and Spanish was still spoken in her home growing up.

Getting the group *on the same page* took a little work, but the conversation that evening was really good overall. Some used your handouts, a few read from various paper Bibles, and others from their phones. People made some new friends, found the story of Jesus’ first miracle interesting, and your discussion questions were easily relatable to life today. You asked everyone to put in orders for next week’s meal and save the date.

As you drove Sophia and her roommate back to the dorm, Sophia shared an encouraging summary about the evening. She said, “That was really cool. I’ve never been part of anything like that. I would like to read some more stories like that on my own. It seemed like everyone had a different kind of Bible. Which one do you think I should use? Is just using one on my phone okay?”

For group discussion.

1. Can you relate to any of these circumstances from your own experience in outreach? Did any individuals around the living room remind you of anyone?
2. Reflect on the dynamics of paper and screen brought up in this situation. As the group’s leader that night, what did Jasmine have to navigate? What practicalities and principles does this situation bring up?
3. Throughout church history, technological innovations and coinciding cultural shifts have shaped the way people relate with the Bible (translation from ancient languages to the peoples language, invention of printing press, radio broadcasting, mobile devices, etc.) Today however, when someone in your ministry begins growing in Christ, reading and studying the Bible regularly, sharing with others in groups and one-to-ones, do you encourage them to go paper or digital? Why?
4. How do you handle situations with students you are discipling when their preferences, beliefs about the Bible, and commitment to it differ from yours? What are the top shelf principles you fall back on as you lead others to greater skill, devotion, and understanding of the word of God? Reflect on this in light of your own journey as a growing Christian.



06 RESPOND

Take a few minutes to *review* your study and consider the highlights. Then *reflect* on the questions below. DON'T SKIP THIS...*responding* is a key part of being formed through this experience.

What Scriptures most stood out to me? Why?

As a disciple of Jesus who is making other disciples, why does this topic matter?

What is a way God is inviting me to trust Him? How will I respond?

07 APPENDIX

The Uniqueness of the Bible

The Bible was written...

- Over a period of 1500 years
- Throughout 40 generations of humanity
- By more than 40 authors including: kings, peasants, fishermen, poets, political leaders, philosophers, scholars, prophets, and scribes
- In varieties of geographic locations representing the greatest of ancient cultures
- In times of war, peace, prosperity and societal collapse
- Conveying a wide range of human emotions, experiences and shortcomings
- On three continents comprising both eastern and western civilization
- In three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek
- With hundreds of topics, but one unifying message

The Bible's influence...

- More copies (over 100 million every year) have been printed and circulated than any other book in the world
- By October 2020, there were 704 languages that had complete translations of the Bible, another 1551 that had translations of the New Testament, and another 1160 with at least a portion of scripture translated. (There are 7,360 languages in the world)

Bible history...

- The oldest surviving piece of any New Testament manuscript is an Egyptian papyrus fragment containing verses from John 18
- Called the Rylands fragment, scholars date it at about the year 130 A.D. Earliest portions of the Old Testament date from the year 125 B.C., being a part of the enormous amount (40,000 fragments—500 books) of writings found in Qumran, known as the Dead Sea Scrolls
- The word Bible comes from the Greek word for “papyrus plant” (biblios). The leaves of the papyrus plant were used to make paper
- Biblios also means “little books”
- The Bible's chapter divisions were introduced by Stephen Langton, a lecturer at the University of Paris, in 1228
- The Old Testament verse divisions were completed by R. Nathan in 1448 and the New Testament by Robert Stephanus in 1551
- The first chapter and verse Bible appeared in the Geneva translation in 1560

The Structure of the Bible

HEBREW SCRIPTURES

TORAH (Law)	NEVI'IM (Prophets)	KETHUVIM (Writings)
Genesis	Joshua	Ruth
Exodus	Judges	Psalms
Leviticus	Samuel (A, B)	Job
Numbers	Kings (A, B)	Proverbs
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	Ecclesiastes
	Jeremiah	Song of Solomon
	Ezekiel	Lamentations
	The Twelve (Minor Prophets)	Daniel
	Chronicles (A, B)	Esther
		Ezra-Nehemiah

PROTESTANT/ OLD

LAW	HISTORY	POETRY/WISDOM	PROPHECY
Genesis	Joshua	Job	Isaiah
Exodus	Judges	Psalms	Jeremiah
Leviticus	Ruth	Proverbs	Ezekiel
Numbers	1 & 2 Samuel	Song of Songs	Daniel
Deuteronomy	1 & 2 Kings	Ecclesiastes	The Twelve (Minor Prophets)
1 & 2 Chronicles	Lamentations		
	Ezra		
	Nehemiah		
	Esther		

PROTESTANT/ NEW

HISTORY	LETTERS	PROPHECY
Matthew	Romans	Revelation
Mark	1 & 2 Corinthians	
Luke	Galatians	
John	Ephesians	
Acts	Philippians	
	Colossians	
	1 & 2 Thessalonians	
	1 & 2 Timothy	
	Titus	
	Philemon	
	Hebrews	
	James	
	1 & 2 Peter	
	1, 2 & 3 John	
	Jude	