



*Your word is
a lamp to my feet and
a light to my path.*

STEP ONE

Get a Catholic Bible *and* read an introduction to the Bible.

- Find a Catholic translation (New American Bible, Jerusalem Bible, New Jerusalem Bible) OR a “Catholic Edition” of translations that are not specifically Catholic (Revised Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version).
- Read a favorite passage in a few translations and choose the language you like. (See p. 2 for translation advice.)
- Find an introduction to the Bible that answers YOUR questions and read it. Every Catholic can benefit from reading an overview of the Bible. You will return again and again to this basic book.

RESOURCES

1. ***God's Library: A Catholic Introduction to the World's Greatest Book***
by Joe Paprocki Chicago: Loyola Press (2005)
Easy and entertaining to read. Emphasizes organization of the Bible and answering basic questions. Excellent book for real beginners. Includes quizzes. Can be used for junior high and high school ages as well as adults.
2. ***Introduction to the Bible: A Catholic Guide to Studying Scripture***
by Stephen J. Binz Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press (2007)
Broader in scope and more in-depth than #1. Asks typical questions and answers them. Especially strong on the Word of God in Christian life and in the Church, and the basics of biblical interpretation and biblical fundamentalism.
3. ***Getting to Know the Bible: An Introduction to Sacred Scripture for Catholics***
by Rev. Melvin L. Farrell, S.S., rev. by J. McHugh Chicago: ACTA Publications (2003)
A little more in-depth and a different focus from #2. Very readable and professionally written. Excellent short presentation of the history behind the Old Testament books and the Jewish setting for the New Testament books. Excellent chapter on why not everyone at the time understood Jesus to be the Messiah.

Bible Translations

GOOD TO USE

For easy reading in modern English (good for both adults and youth)

- *The Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

For accurate translations that also work well for personal and liturgical reading

- ***New American Bible (NAB):***
What U.S. Catholics use in the liturgy
- *New Jerusalem Bible (NJB):*
Used in the Catholic liturgy in England
- *Revised Standard Version (RSV)* and *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):*
Used in Protestant liturgies
- *New International Version (NIV):*
Used by evangelical Christians. A good translation that is often the basis for evangelical devotional Bibles, such as *The Women's Devotional Bible*. While the translation is good, the additional texts in these devotional Bibles may reflect evangelical Christian theology, which can be confusing for Catholics.

NOT RECOMMENDED

- *The King James Version (KJV):*
An older but classic Protestant translation. Hard to read because of the old form of English used. Can be inaccurate because it's based on outdated Hebrew and Greek scholarship.
- *The Douay-Rheims:*
An older Catholic translation. Uses older English and can be hard to read. Can be inaccurate because it's translated from the traditional Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate) instead of from the original biblical languages with modern scholarship.
- *Versions of the Bible by:*
The Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses)
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)
The Seventh Day Adventists
These versions of the Bible are inaccurate and incomplete.
They should not be used by Catholics.

HOW TO FIND WHICH TRANSLATION IS USED IN A BIBLE

Sometimes the title of the Bible itself tells you which translation is used.

Sometimes you have to look on the title page to find the translation.

Example: *The Catholic Study Bible* (the title of the book) uses the New American Bible translation (listed on the title page).



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STEP TWO

Start reading the Bible— and keep learning.

- Your goal: **QUALITY**, not quantity! You don't need to begin with Genesis and keep going until the end of Revelation.
- Begin with a gospel: Either the Sunday gospel readings, from the lectionary (the Church's list of readings used in the liturgy), or an entire gospel, so you can get a sense of a gospel as a book. (A good choice: Mark)
- Or, read a letter of Paul, such as Philippians.
- For the Old Testament, try Genesis 1-11, Exodus 1-20, Psalms, and Proverbs.
- Whatever you read, look for a guide to help you with key themes, important teachings, and background to connect you with the times and places in which the book was written.

LECTIONARY-BASED RESOURCES (for biblical selections used at Mass)

4. ***Sunday by Sunday*** Good Ground Press (www.goodgroundpress.com)
Short and simple weekly publication can be used with a group or individually. Focus on explaining and reflecting on gospel reading. Also includes prayers, and reflection on the Old Testament reading.
5. ***Living with Christ*** Novalis (www.livingwithchrist.us)
Monthly publication includes all the Mass readings for the month, biblical background on the Sunday gospels, reflections on the readings, household prayers, teaching from Christian tradition.
6. ***At Home with the Word*** Liturgy Training Publications (www.ltp.org)
Annual publication with solid background and reflection on all the Sunday readings, very good basic introductions to the year's gospels, and a good basic guide to studying and praying Scripture.

GENERAL RESOURCES (for specific biblical books and topics)

7. ***Who Is Jesus? Why Is He Important? An Invitation to the New Testament***
by Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward (1999)
Everything a beginner needs to get started reading the New Testament—yet, an excellent book for Bible readers at any level, because of the knowledge and wisdom of this top Catholic biblical scholar. Takes the reader through the New Testament book-by-book in a clear, simple, and personal way.

GENERAL RESOURCES *(continued)*

8. ***People of the Covenant: An Invitation to the Old Testament***
by Dianne Bergant, C.S.A. Lanham, MD: Sheed & Ward (2001)
Everything a beginner needs to get started reading the Old Testament, invitingly presented through categories of people we meet in these books (ancestors, kings, priests, prophets, wise ones...). Answers questions beginners have about the Old Testament. Author is Professor of Old Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.
9. ***Scripture from Scratch*** St. Anthony Messenger Press (www.americancatholic.org)
Outstanding one-stop resource for basic guidance on the entire Bible. Numerous topics—on Bible basics, biblical themes, individual books—presented in easy-to-read 4-page format, all written by Catholic biblical scholars and experienced Catholic educators. Many topics available free on-line at the web site. Other topics can be ordered individually. Get all the topics collected and indexed in a notebook with suggestions for mini-courses in the *Scripture from Scratch Sourcebook*. A must-have resource for parishes!
10. ***God's Word Today*** (www.godswordtoday.com)
Monthly publication that offers basic teaching and reflection on a different book of the Bible or a different biblical topic each month. Special features include readers' questions about the Bible and exploration of key words of the Bible.

A BASIC METHOD FOR READING SCRIPTURE

1. Read the text and ask questions as you read.
2. Read your Bible study resource. Look for answers to your questions as well as for things you didn't ask or know.
3. Read the text again. Reflect on your reading, perhaps using reflection questions from your Bible study resource. Look at your own life in light of the biblical text.
4. Pray with the text—with the verses YOU feel are important, or with what YOU have learned.

A PRAYER WHEN YOU OPEN YOUR BIBLE

O Loving God, you plant your word like seed in our hearts.
Send your Holy Spirit to nourish this precious seed
and make it bear fruit for your glory.
This I ask through Jesus your Word Made Flesh. Amen

From Bible Stories Revisited: Discover Your Stories in the Old Testament by Macrina Scott, O.S.F.
Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press (1999)



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STEP THREE

Keep reading the Bible— and learn more.

- When you have questions that are not answered in the introductory, overview books, or if you want to learn more about specific biblical topics, you need different resources.
- A study Bible includes a particular Bible translation, plus supplementary essays, reading guides, maps, and more.
- Commentaries take you section-by-section or verse-by-verse through a text. They usually include a translation of the text with comments. They come in many levels. Be sure to choose the level that's right for you.
- Study Bibles and commentaries produced by Catholic biblical scholars offer Catholic theological viewpoints and connections to the Catholic interpretive and faith tradition. However, ecumenical resources produced by teams of Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars are also good.
- An overview of the historical background of the Bible will help you place the biblical books in their world, which is a key aspect of the Catholic approach to reading Scripture.

RESOURCES

11. ***The Catholic Study Bible (2nd edition)***

Editors: Donald Senior and John J. Collins

Oxford University Press (2006)

THE study Bible for Catholics. Includes the New American Bible translation; excellent intermediate-level reading guides for each book of the Bible produced by a “who’s who” of Catholic biblical scholars; extra essays on topics such as “The Bible in Catholic Life;” daily and Sunday lectionary readings; a concordance; maps; and more.

12. ***Collegeville Commentary Series (Old Testament and New Testament)***

New Collegeville Commentary Series (New Testament) The Liturgical Press

The best introductory level commentary available. Choose inexpensive individual volumes for specific biblical books, or buy the Old Testament and/or New Testament series bound in one volume. A must-have resource for parishes!

RESOURCES *(continued)*

13. ***The Collegeville Bible Handbook*** Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press (1997)
A colorful, illustrated book-by-book presentation of the key themes and contents of each book of the Bible, drawn from the Collegeville Commentary Series texts. Includes maps and photographs that give the reader a sense of the biblical world. Great resource for quick overviews.
14. ***Invitation to the Gospels***
by Paul J. Achtemeier, Robert Karris, O.F.M., George MacRae, S.J., Daniel Harrington, S.J., Donald Senior, C.P. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press (2002)
Section-by-section commentaries on and introductions to each gospel, written by Catholic biblical scholars who have deep knowledge of their text and good pastoral sense. Offers clear answers to questions of background and theology readers commonly ask about the gospels.
15. ***The Catholic Bible Study Handbook (2nd revised edition)***
by Jerome Kodell, O.S.B. Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books (2001)
An “advanced beginner” introduction to the Bible by the co-founder and author of the Little Rock Scripture Study program. Offers an excellent overview of the historical context out of which the books of the Bible arose in chapter 5. Also includes an overview of writings produced at the same time as the biblical writings that help us understand them (the Dead Sea Scrolls, the gospels not included in the New Testament, the early rabbinic writings, and more).
16. ***The Bible Today*** (www.litpress.org)
Outstanding publication produced six times a year by Catholic biblical scholars who want to share what they know with the average Catholic who wants to learn more about Scripture. Each issue offers a few articles on a theme or book of the Bible, as well as fascinating illustrated special features that focus on the biblical world, the biblical roots of the Catholic faith, and more. Includes reflection questions and resources for further study. A must-have resource for parishes!

WEB SITES WITH PHOTOS OF THE BIBLICAL WORLD

Guided Biblical Archaeology Tour of the Holy Lands

www.digbible.org/tour

Choose from several tours covering Jerusalem, ancient Israelite cities, and life in biblical times.

Journey of Paul

www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Paul/main.htm

See the cities Paul visited in the Acts of the Apostles as they look today in a site developed by biblical scholar Craig Koester.

Cities of Revelation

www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/main.htm

See the seven cities of the book of Revelation as they look today in a site developed by scholar Craig Koester.



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STEP FOUR

Deepen your experience of Scripture.

- Always remember your primary focus: deepening your faith and your relationship with God THROUGH the biblical text.
- Christianity has a rich tradition of praying with Scripture. Look for resources to teach you the basics about various methods of biblical prayer.
- Gathering information is not the only way to learn about the biblical texts. Exploring and reflecting on the characters and dialogue in the many biblical stories and the images of God and community the Bible offers will deepen your encounter in different ways
- Make reading, praying, and learning about Scripture part of your daily life. Identify the obstacles that prevent you from meeting God in Scripture each day, and eliminate them.

RESOURCES

15. ***The Catholic Bible Study Handbook (2nd revised edition)*** [See also p. 6 for this resource.]
by Jerome Kodell, O.S.B. Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books (2001)
See Part III, "Personal Bible Study," for excellent examples of how to study biblical passages and a beautiful introduction to methods and attitudes of biblical prayer.
17. ***Finding Your Bible: A Catholic's Guide***
by Rev. Timothy Schehr Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press (2004)
In addition to basic information about the Bible, this beautiful and simple book leads the reader to a deeper encounter with the biblical texts through the people, conversations, and images the Bible offers. It sets aside analysis and facts and focuses on imaginative and reflective engagement. It includes creative reflection activities that can fruitfully be used at any stage of Bible study.
18. ***Reading Scripture as the Word of God: Practical Approaches and Attitudes (4th edition)***
by George Martin Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books (1998)
This book is deeply spiritual and at the same time very practical, offering practical considerations for how to make the Bible part of your life, as well as excellent guidance on listening to and praying Scripture. Part II, "The Word of God," helps the reader understand how God "speaks" in Scripture and the place of Scripture in the life of the Church.