



The Gospels



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Welcome

Welcome to *Guiding Word*. This six-volume collection will help you better read and understand the Bible, the most important book ever written. In it, we read and hear God’s Word, which is written so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing we may have eternal life in His name (John 20:31).

Why have another Bible resource? First, the Bible is a complex library of books, and it is often intimidating for people to read on their own. Second, while there are many resources designed to help you read and understand the Bible, each has its own format and style and may not be suitable for every learner. We hope this resource will fill a gap and be useful for you.

Think of this series of books as a travel guide to the Bible. Just as a travel guide helps you prepare for and better enjoy a trip, this resource will enable you to better understand and appreciate the Bible as you journey through it. The sections have been designed to help you prepare for reading and understanding difficult passages, to explain the overall course of the Scriptures, to prompt you to reflect on the text as you read, to point out important milestones and events, and to guide you to Jesus’ presence throughout the Bible.

If you are already familiar with the organization of the Bible, feel free to skip ahead to the section titled “What’s in *Guiding Word*?”

What’s in the Bible?

The Bible is all about God’s plan to restore fallen humanity and His broken creation by sending His Son. But what’s in the Bible? How do we look at it? How do we use it? Though we call the Bible a book, it’s actually a collection of sixty-six books. These were written over a period of 1,500 years by many authors.

The Bible has two divisions: the Old Testament and the New Testament. We don’t use the word *testament* too often today. It’s related to words like *covenant* and *contract*.

The Old Testament includes the first thirty-nine books of the Bible. These are the books written about the events that happened before Jesus was born. They all point us toward Jesus. The name *Old Testament* is a little misleading because sometimes we think of old things as not important or out of style. Instead, these books can be thought of as the first covenant or promise that God made to His people to send the Savior, Jesus. And as you will see, Jesus is present throughout the Old Testament. The New Testament includes the last twenty-seven books of the Bible, which record Jesus’ life and mission, as well as the life of Jesus’ early followers in the church. These books point us back to Jesus and how He fulfilled all of God’s promises made for us in the Old Testament. Again, these are all about Jesus.

The books of the Bible are organized in a way that may seem confusing at first but makes sense when you know the system. How are the books in a library organized? In libraries,

books are organized by their type. Fiction is in one section, and nonfiction is in another; magazines are in one spot and children’s books in another. The same goes for the Bible. Instead of the books being ordered by the date they were written or by their authors, the books of the Bible are put in categories, or genres; then the books are generally organized by date written within that genre.

NAVIGATING THE LIBRARY

The first five books of the Old Testament—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—are called the Books of Moses, or the Torah, meaning “Law of God.” They were written down by Moses and are covered in the first volume of this series.

The next books in the Old Testament are called the Books of History. These tell the history of God’s people from the time of Moses up to the time of Jesus and are covered in the second volume.

Next are the Books of Wisdom and Poetry. These poetical books were written at different times during the Old Testament history, mostly by kings David and Solomon. These are covered in the third volume.

The last group of Old Testament books are the Books of the Prophets. These books record God’s special messages to His Old Testament people, mostly during the second half of their history. They are discussed in the fourth volume.

The New Testament has five genres. The first four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are called the Gospels. Each Gospel tells of the life and mission of Jesus from a different writer and perspective. These accounts make up the heart of the Bible and are covered in the fifth *Guiding Word* volume.

Next is the book of the Acts of the Apostles (also known simply as Acts). This historical book records events from the early years of the Christian Church and the lives of the first Christians after Jesus ascended into heaven. The next books are called the Pauline Epistles (*epistle* means “letter”). These are letters that the apostle Paul wrote to the early Christians. Near the end of the New Testament are the General Epistles. These are letters that other people besides Paul wrote to the early Christians. The final book of the Bible is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament, the book of Revelation. This shows the vision Jesus revealed to the apostle John about life in the end times (that is, the time between Christ’s first and second coming) and the restoration of God’s creation. The books of Acts through Revelation are covered in the sixth and final volume of *Guiding Word*.

66 BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT	GENESIS	
	EXODUS	
	LEVITICUS	
	NUMBERS	
	DEUTERONOMY	
BOOKS OF MOSES (Torah)	JOSHUA	
	JUDGES	
	RUTH	
	1 SAMUEL	
	2 SAMUEL	
	1 KINGS	
	2 KINGS	
	1 CHRONICLES	
	2 CHRONICLES	
	EZRA	
HISTORY	NEHEMIAH	
	ESTHER	
	JOB	
	PSALMS	
	PROVERBS	
	ECCLESIASTES	
	SONG OF SOLOMON	
	ISAIAH	
	JEREMIAH	
	LAMENTATIONS	
WISDOM & POETRY	EZEKIEL	
	DANIEL	
	HOSEA	
	JOEL	
	AMOS	
	OBADIAH	
	JONAH	
	MICAH	
	NAHUM	
	HABAKKUK	
PROPHETS	ZEPHANIAH	
	HAGGAI	
	ZECHARIAH	
	MALACHI	
	MATTHEW	
	NEW TESTAMENT	MARK
		LUKE
		JOHN
		ACTS
	GOSPELS	ROMANS
1 CORINTHIANS		
2 CORINTHIANS		
GALATIANS		
HISTORY	EPHESIANS	
	PHILIPPIANS	
	COLOSSIANS	
	1 THESSALONIANS	
	2 THESSALONIANS	
	1 TIMOTHY	
	2 TIMOTHY	
	TITUS	
	PHILEMON	
	PAULINE EPISTLES (Letters)	HEBREWS
JAMES		
1 PETER		
2 PETER		
1 JOHN		
2 JOHN		
3 JOHN		
JUDE		
GENERAL EPISTLES		REVELATION
		END TIMES

NAVIGATING THE BIBLE

When you open up a Bible, you'll see chapter and verse numbers scattered throughout the pages. Did you know that those numbers were not originally there? As people used the Bible more and more and made copies, later scholars eventually put in these numbers to help people quickly find sections or passages. We call these Bible references.

UNDERSTANDING BIBLE REFERENCES
The following diagram illustrates how a common Bible reference to **John 3:16** breaks down.

Book Title	Chapter Number	Verse Number
John	3:	16

Using the Bible's table of contents, look up the book of John. Then find chapter 3 and finally verse 16.

What's in *Guiding Word*?

Each volume of *Guiding Word* is laid out in a similar fashion. After this series introduction is an introduction for that specific volume. Then, each book of the Bible has its own introduction, which will help you better understand and dig into that particular book.

Each book of the Bible follows an outline, which breaks the book into major divisions and then each division into sections. The section heads were not included in the original biblical text but were added later to help clarify how the text flows from narrative to narrative or idea to idea. In *Guiding Word*, these correspond to the subheadings in the ESV translation of the Bible. From here on out, we will refer to these subhead sections as “passages.”

Following the pattern of a travel guide, *Guiding Word* includes some features to help you read through, better understand, and reflect on each passage of the Bible. These features include the following:

(1) Orientation. This is a short summary of each passage. Just as a travel guide gives you a glimpse of where you will be going on your journey before you arrive, the summary will help orient you to where you are in the Bible and where you are going. After reading the summary for each passage, read the text itself in your Bible. Alternatively, if you are skimming a book of the Bible, previewing the book, or only want to understand the high points before reading deeper, these summaries are a good place to start.

(2) Observation Points. In the side margins, you will find open-ended questions. Use these reflection questions to help you slow down, observe, and reflect on the passage. There is room in the side margin for recording reflections, thoughts, and notes as you go. Just as a travel guide will prompt you to look out for specific things on your way, the reflection questions will help you better observe what's going on in the text.

(3) **Landmarks.** These special features, interspersed in the text, will help you appreciate the overall journey through God’s Word. In any journey, you will encounter landmarks of all types that pop out to you, may interest you, or may even make you scratch your head. Landmarks in *Guiding Word* are identified by icons and colored bars, and can be read before or after you read the corresponding passage. Landmarks include the following categories:

VISUALIZE

This feature includes maps, diagrams, pictures, or infographics to help you visualize scenes, locations, and concepts in a passage.

PICTURE OF THE SAVIOR

This feature highlights people, places, or events from the Old Testament that are referenced in the New Testament. These set the stage for the coming of Jesus and helped reveal His work of salvation.

LINK BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

In the Old Testament, this highlights people or events that Jesus or His apostles will discuss, explain, or fulfill in the New Testament. In the New Testament, this feature points the reader back to the Old Testament person or event that set the stage for the New Testament passage.

CLEAR THE CONFUSION

This Landmark clarifies passages that are likely to leave the reader confused and fills the gaps—providing backstories, describing future developments, or discussing the significance of the event.

SET THE SCENE

This feature explains important cultural or historical themes that help you better understand the context of the passage.

WAYPOINT

This feature is designed to be a longer stopping point. When you travel, you will likely stop at notable locations for an extended period of time to really experience the destination. Waypoints in *Guiding Word* function like stopping points that are worth investigating along the journey through God’s Word. Each Waypoint has a three-part structure:

- What does this text show us?
- What does this text reveal about God’s plan of salvation?
- What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God’s people today?

Each Waypoint also has reflection questions associated with it. The Waypoints can be considered on your own or in a group study. However you choose to use the Waypoints is up to you, but use the summaries and reflection prompts to help guide you through a deeper reading of the text.

How to Use *Guiding Word*

You can use this resource in multiple ways:

- Read through the Bible on your own, passage by passage. The summary of each passage will help orient you to where the narrative is taking you, and the reflection questions are observation prompts that will help you pay closer attention to what you’re reading. The interspersed Landmark features will help you visualize important images or concepts, or understand and connect key themes to the overall story of Scripture.
- Read through the Bible in a small group or Bible study setting. The guided summaries and reflection questions make good prompts if you are reading through the Scriptures as a group, providing some reflections along the way. The Waypoint sections also serve as great places to stop and reflect on key narratives.
- Read a good thirty-thousand-foot summary of the Bible. *Guiding Word* includes summaries of passages, and if you have never read certain books of the Bible or are intimidated by their length, you can take a few minutes to get introduced or oriented to them via summaries and graphics.

Whether or not you’ve read through all or parts of the Bible before, *Guiding Word* will serve as your companion and guide through the journey.

The Gospels

The four New Testament books covered in this fifth volume of *Guiding Word* show us the earthly life and ministry of God’s Son, the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament, God with us: Jesus Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John record the words and deeds of Jesus as He lived among us, taught about the kingdom of heaven, and suffered and died to take away our sins. Each Gospel writer records Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, which is the way God restored His fallen creation.

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE FOUR GOSPELS

Matthew was a tax collector whom Jesus called to be one of His twelve apostles. Matthew writes to his fellow Jews, showing how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament passages that prophesy the mission of the coming Messiah.

Mark was a missionary who worked with Paul and was Peter's assistant in Rome. Biblical scholars believe his account was written from Peter's eyewitness testimony to the Romans.

Luke was a physician who accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. He interviewed eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and wrote an orderly account for a Christian named Theophilus.

John was a fisherman Jesus called as one of His twelve apostles, along with his brother James. John focuses on Jesus' divinity as the eternal Son of God, and he records many of Jesus' memorable sayings that are not recorded in the other Gospels.

THE GOSPELS, WITH THEIR GENERAL DIVISIONS

- **Matthew**
 - The Person of Jesus Christ (1:1–4:11)
 - The Proclamation and Ministry of Jesus Christ to Israel (4:12–16:20)
 - The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (16:21–28:20)
- **Mark**
 - Prologue (1:1–13)
 - Jesus' Public Ministry (1:14–8:30)
 - Jesus Prepares His Disciples (8:31–10:52)
 - Jesus Enters Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)
 - Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection (14:1–16:20)
- **Luke**
 - Jesus' Birth and Early Life (1:1–2:52)
 - Jesus Begins His Ministry (3:1–8:56)
 - Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem (9:1–21:38)
 - Jesus Is Captured and Crucified (22:1–23:56)
 - Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension (24:1–53)
- **John**
 - John's Prologue (1:1–18)
 - Jesus' Ministry (1:19–10:42)
 - Persistent Unbelief (11:1–12:50)
 - Passover and Holy Week (13:1–19:42)
 - Jesus' Resurrection (20:1–21:25)

MATTHEW

Welcome to Matthew

After the closing words of Malachi, the Jewish people wait over four hundred years for the arrival of the promised Messiah. Matthew records the life of Jesus, God's Son, the Messiah, and writes about the Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfills as He brings life and salvation to the entire world. As you read the book of Matthew, take comfort in seeing God fulfill His promises, and rest assured He will fulfill all His promises to you.



As you read the Gospel of Matthew, consider these questions: How does the Old Testament point to Jesus? How does He fulfill the prophecies about the Messiah?

Matthew at a Glance

- **Start:** Matthew begins with a genealogy that traces Jesus' lineage from Abraham to His birth, where the narrative begins.
- **End:** Matthew ends as Jesus appears to His disciples on a mountain in Galilee, commissioning them to baptize and teach all nations.
- **Theme:** Jesus comes as the Messiah and fulfills God's promises, bringing salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles.
- **Author and Date:** Matthew, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, wrote this Gospel during the middle of the first century, around the time of the later events in Acts.
- **Places Visited:** Judah, Samaria, Galilee, Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethany, Jerusalem, the Jordan River, the Mount of Olives, Gethsemane
- **Journey Time:** The twenty-eight chapters of the Gospel of Matthew can be read in about two and a half hours.
- **Outline:**
 - The Person of Jesus Christ (1:1–4:11)
 - The Proclamation and Ministry of Jesus Christ to Israel (4:12–16:20)
 - The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (16:21–28:20)

Five Top Sights and Spectacles of Matthew

The Wise Men (2:1–12) Journey with the Wise Men to find the baby Jesus, rejoicing with them as you worship the newborn Savior.

The Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:28) Learn from your Savior as He teaches us how to live as children of God.

The Transfiguration (17:1–13) Behold the majesty of the Son of God, hear the testimonies of Moses and Elijah, and feel the grandeur of the voice of God the Father.

Woe to the Pharisees (23:1–36) Witness the Lord's scathing criticism of the Pharisees and the scribes, the Jewish spiritual leaders who twisted the teachings of the Old Testament for their own glory.

The Great Commission (28:16–20) Hear Jesus calling as He ascends to heaven and commands us to proclaim the Good News to all nations.



Matthew wrote this Gospel to a Jewish audience. Why do you think he wanted to emphasize Jesus' connections to the Old Testament?

Seeing Jesus in Matthew

Matthew portrays Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament who brings God's kingdom to the earth. As he narrates Jesus' ministry, Matthew draws attention to the Old Testament prophecies Jesus fulfills as He brings salvation to the Jewish people and extends His salvation to all nations.

The Person of Jesus Christ (1:1–4:11)

Matthew provides Jesus' genealogy, then describes His birth, the visit of the Wise Men, and Jesus' Baptism and temptation in the wilderness.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1–17)

Matthew recounts the generations of Jesus' human ancestors, showing how Jesus of Nazareth has fulfilled the promise that the Messiah would come from the lineage of Abraham through David.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST (1:18–25)

WAYPOINT

What does this text show us?

God sends Jesus to be born of a virgin, fulfilling the sign God had promised to King Ahaz (see Isaiah 7:14). God provides Mary with a merciful husband, and He provides Joseph with a dream to reassure him of Mary's innocence.

What does this text reveal about God's plan of salvation?

God had revealed His plan of salvation throughout the Old Testament as He provided prophecies of the Messiah. In Jesus, He fulfills these prophecies, showing us His plans are intentional as He faithfully provides for His people.

What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God's people today?

As we witness God's fulfillment of His promises, we learn to trust God in our present lives. Not only will God keep His promises to us, but He will also provide the means for His promises to protect and benefit us.



We do not regularly experience God speaking to us through a dream or vision. How does God speak to us today?



Why is it important that God provided prophecies to identify His Son, the world's Savior?



How does God continue to keep His promises to the church?

SET THE SCENE

Marriage and Divorce in the Bible

In Jewish culture, marriages were arranged by parents and began with a betrothal period. During betrothal, the man and woman were legally husband and wife but lived apart until the wedding feast.

LINK BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS

The Virgin Mary → The Virgin Shall Conceive (Matthew 1:18–25 → Isaiah 7:14)

Matthew records Jesus' first fulfillment of a messianic prophecy, quoting Isaiah 7:14, when God offered a sign to King Ahaz. By the Holy Spirit's power, Jesus was conceived without a human father, born of the virgin Mary.



What do you find most fascinating about the visit of the Wise Men?

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN (2:1-12)



Wise Men (Magi) from the East follow a special star to Jerusalem. After consulting with priests, Herod directs them to Bethlehem. They worship Jesus as the King of the Jews and give Him gifts fit for a king.



How does Joseph react every time God sends him a dream? What does this teach us about faith and trust in God?

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT (2:13–15)

An angel warns Joseph of impending danger, leading Joseph to flee with Mary and Jesus to Egypt for safety.

HEROD KILLS THE CHILDREN (2:16–18)

Enraged by the Wise Men's deception, Herod orders the killing of every male child in the vicinity of Bethlehem who could be the newborn King of the Jews based on their age.

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH (2:19–23)

After Herod dies, God tells Joseph to return from Egypt. Learning that Herod's son Archelaus is ruling Jerusalem and Judea, Mary and Joseph return to Nazareth, their former home, to raise Jesus.



SET THE SCENE

What was so bad about Archelaus?

At the beginning of his rule, Archelaus killed three thousand Jews protesting at the temple, resulting in widespread opposition. After ten years, the emperor deposed and replaced him with a series of Roman military governors, including Pontius Pilate.

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY (3:1–12)

John the Baptist preaches in the region around the Jordan River. Many Jews come to him and he baptizes them, calling everybody to repent of their sins and to prepare for the coming Messiah.



How does Jesus' Baptism bring more richness and meaning to your Baptism?

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS (3:13-17)




WAYPOINT
What does this text show us?

Jesus journeys to the Jordan, and John baptizes Him, despite John's initial protests. After the Baptism, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit manifest themselves and confirm Jesus' divinity.

What does this text reveal about God's plan of salvation?

To save humanity from sin, the Son of God takes our human nature into Himself in His conception. To further identify Himself with His human creatures, Jesus joins us in the waters of Baptism. The sinless Son of God takes our sins upon Himself, purifying the waters of Baptism to wash away our sins forever.

What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God's people today?

When we are baptized, we experience the same blessings Jesus experienced at His Baptism. God claims us as His son or daughter, rooting our identity in Him, and He bestows on us the Holy Spirit, who leads us in our callings.



Why do you think John tried to deter Jesus from being baptized?



How does Jesus' Baptism as our substitute empower our own Baptism?



How does God give us new life and salvation in our Baptism?

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS (4:1–11)

The devil personally tempts Jesus to distrust His heavenly Father and use His powers to feed Himself, test God, and gain earthly glory. Jesus resists all these temptations by clinging to God's Old Testament Word alone.


CLEAR THE CONFUSION
Why was Jesus tempted?

To be our Savior from sin, Jesus had to experience every part of human life. Hebrews 4:14–16 reveals that Jesus experienced the same temptations we face today. So we can turn to Him when we struggle with temptation, looking for His guidance and His strength to help us resist temptation as He did.

The Proclamation and Ministry of Jesus Christ to Israel (4:12–16:20)



What do you think is the significance of the land of Israel being at the crossroads of Africa, Europe, and Asia?

VISUALIZE

Geography of Matthew

Jesus preaches, teaches, and performs miracles throughout Galilee as He reveals Himself to His disciples.



JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY (4:12–17)

After John the Baptist is arrested, Jesus begins His ministry in the land of Galilee, proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of heaven.



SET THE SCENE

Galilee

Galilee was a district of the Roman Empire north of Judea and Samaria. In Old Testament times, Galilee would have been in the territories of Zebulun and Naphtali, in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Since Galilee housed a mix of Jews and Gentiles, the Jews considered Galilee inferior to Judea.

JESUS CALLS THE FIRST DISCIPLES (4:18–22)



WAYPOINT

What does this text show us?

On the coast of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, fisherman brothers, to follow Him and be fishers of men. He also calls a second pair of fisherman brothers, James and John, and all four follow Him.

What does this text reveal about God's plan of salvation?

God sent His Son, Jesus, to win salvation for the world. But His great sacrifice would benefit no one unless His Gospel message went out to all nations. Jesus handpicked twelve disciples who would follow and learn from Him, then be empowered by the Holy Spirit to found the New Testament church.

What does this text uncover about our identity and calling as God's people today?

Just as Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him and become fishers of men, God calls us to become His disciples. We learn from His Word, and He makes us fishers of men as well, spreading the Gospel and calling everyone to faith in Jesus through us.



What does it say about Jesus that the fishermen left everything and followed Him immediately?



Why was it important to have eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection?



Besides being a fisher of men, what callings has God given to you?

JESUS MINISTERS TO GREAT CROWDS (4:23–25)

Jesus continues His ministry throughout Galilee, gathering crowds from Judea, Syria, the Decapolis, and the region east of the Jordan River as they follow Him to hear His teachings and see His miracles.