

Preface

There are sixty-six books in the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament, and twenty-seven in the New Testament. It was written by about forty men, beginning thirty-five hundred years ago. The last book was written near the end of the first century AD. Some of the authors are unknown, but all of them were guided by the Holy Spirit of God. That means God is the ultimate author of the Bible. Indeed, there are many places, especially in the New Testament, where the authors speak of the scriptures as the word of God. Therefore, the Bible is truly the book from heaven. The men God used to write its words were all Hebrews (the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), for they were God's chosen people.

The first book of the Old Testament is called Genesis. It tells about the beginning of the world, and about the patriarchs of the Hebrew people. The next four books contain the law of Moses. They also tell about the creation of the nation of Israel. Moses was the author of the first five books. They are called the Pentateuch, meaning five. Jews call them the Torah, meaning law. The Israelites were later called Jews when only the tribe of Judah survived conquest. The next twelve books contain roughly a thousand years of historical information about the Israelites, down to the fourth century BC. The next five books contain writings of wisdom and psalms. The remaining Old Testament books are primarily prophecy.

The first four books of the New Testament tell about the life of Christ. The fifth book is about the early history of his church. The next twenty-one books contain information about Christianity and instructions for Christians. The last one is a book of prophecy.

The Bible contains over 783,000 words. This brief description of it contains about 123,000 words. That represents less than sixteen percent of the Bible. Nevertheless, I tried to include all of the major events and topics. Of course, I had to condense much of what it says, and only give the gist. Also I omitted much of the detail, such as long lists of names, as well as some lesser events. Of necessity I had to make many judgments about what to exclude. Therefore, you must keep in mind that this is just a simple description of what is in the Bible. Yet it will give you a good acquaintance with it. And once you become acquainted, I hope you will want to know more about that greatest of all books—the word of God.

You may also want to read the full edition of my description of the Bible. It contains about 345,000 words, which is three times as many as this description. That represents forty-four percent of the Bible. If we can compare the Bible to the body of a man, then this condensed edition would be like seeing a line drawing of him. While the full edition would be more like seeing his photograph. Of course, no description can replace the real thing. Therefore, you should eventually graduate to studying the Bible itself.

I strongly recommend using a dictionary for words you do not recognize or are uncertain about. When I was young and foolish I belittled the importance of a good vocabulary. Yet I have learned that the smartest people work hard to learn new words. Words are tools for the mind to build wisdom and intelligence. Therefore, if you want to be smart, work hard to learn new words. And one of the best ways is to refer to a dictionary while reading serious books. Develop that good habit and it will bless you all your life. Your mind will grow stronger.

Nevertheless, if you think that might be too distracting initially then you might want to read first as an overview. After which you could go back and study the material more carefully with the aid of a dictionary and a Bible. But regardless of how you choose to learn about the Holy Bible, you can be sure the more you gain knowledge and understanding of it, the greater will be the positive affect upon your soul.

Finally, a word of warning about modern English translations. Most of them (including the popular NIV) distort the original text of the Bible with many changes. The authors of those translations use the so-called “dynamic equivalent” method, which is simply a flattering euphemism for loose translating. The only thing dynamic about the method is to aggressively corrupt the original text with their opinions instead of faithful translation. The authors of them make many guesses about what the scriptures mean, then they choose words to make it easy to read. Such versions are very popular because they have chosen the wide path, which Jesus condemned when he said, **“Enter ye in by the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter through it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted the way, that leads to life, and few are those who find it”** (Matthew. 7:13-14).

Those kinds of versions vary in how loosely they translate, but none of them are trustworthy. They are all corrupted, more or less,

with many instances of interpretation instead of translation. Among the greatest offenders are the “easy-to-read” style versions. Consider just one example of how loosely they translate. Below are translations of Romans 7:9 from three legitimate versions:

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died (King James Version).

I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died (New King James Version).

I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died (New American Standard Version).

Here is how the *Living Bible* translates that passage: “That is why I felt fine so long as I did not understand what the law really demanded. But when I learned the truth, I realized that I had broken the law and was a sinner, doomed to die.” Can you not see how different it reads? It is not what the Bible says, it is what the author thinks it means.

It is wrong to paraphrase the holy scriptures or reword them to make the text seem modern and always easy to read. It perverts and debases the message. Perhaps the most guilty of that are the Bible story books for children. Simplified descriptions of the Bible for children can be useful, but they should never be called Bibles. Moreover, no publication should contain pictures of Bible characters, because all such things are deceitful. If you want something for children, try *Selected Scriptures from the Holy Bible: Readings for the Young*, compiled by Genelle Porter. You can also learn more about many of the issues related to translating the Bible from my article *Preserving the Word of God* at my website. The internet address is www.stillvoices.org.

“Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, alone wise, to God is honor and glory into the ages of the ages. Truly” (1st Timothy 1:17).

NOTE: The scriptures I quote are from the ACV (A Conservative Version), unless otherwise stated. Also I use gender relevant words in their historic meaning.
