



FIRST STEPS

STUDIES TO BEGIN YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST
By Marlon Furtado

“Why the Bible Is Special”

WHAT ABOUT THE BIBLE?

The Bible is God's **Love Letter** to you. It will soon become the most important book in your life. You will find comfort, guidance, and encouragement as you read it. You may have grown up in a church that honored the Bible and you already have a working knowledge of it. But many of you never opened a Bible or entered a church until you became a Christian in your adult years. We are writing this booklet as though you are brand new to the Bible.

THE BIBLE IS VERY IMPORTANT

An important passage in the Bible is **2 Timothy 3:16**. It says, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*" What it means by stating that the Bible is "God-breathed" is that it originated in God's mind and that He made sure what was written is exactly what He wants us to know. It means that the Bible has God's stamp of approval on it. In fact, you'll hear Christians refer to the Bible as **God's Word** or simple as **The Scripture**. Only the Bible has God's promise of being fully trustworthy and dependable for your life. It's unique above all other books. Because Christianity is based upon the Bible, it is critical that believers become knowledgeable of what it says. Below are some basic directions to help you find your way in God's Word.

A FEW LANDMARKS

Your Bible's Table of Contents will list sixty-six different names, each one being a separate *book* of the Bible: the book of Genesis, the book of Exodus, etc. The Bible is really a collection of books written by various men over the course of about 1500 years. Christians sometimes refer to the entire Bible as **The Book**.

God's Word is organized into two major parts. The first thirty-nine books make up the **Old Testament**. The remainder form the **New Testament**. The Old Testament begins at the front of your Bible and extends about two-thirds of the way through it. The New Testament comprises the last third.

- **OLD TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament begins by telling us that God created our earth and the entire universe. He spoke it into existence. God's Word reveals that the God you have come to know through Jesus Christ is not some wimpy figment of man's imagination, but the powerful One who designed and instituted all the physical laws around us. God wants you to have confidence that your life is in His strong, wise and powerful hands. Much of the Old Testament focuses around the nation of Israel. That's because Israel played a key role in God's work in human history. The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi, written about four hundred years before Jesus was born.

- **NEW TESTAMENT**

The New Testament begins with four biographical sketches of the life of our Lord Jesus, the books of *Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*. The remainder of the New Testament was written specifically to Christians. We refer to them as the *book* of Ephesians, etc., though they were not written as books. Rather, they were *letters*. Some of them were written to churches; others to individuals.

WHERE SHOULD I START READING?

Since you are just starting to grow in your relationship with Christ, I would suggest you concentrate more on reading in the New Testament for now. We'll learn more about the Old Testament later. On the next page is a simplified overview of the arrangement of the New Testament. Open your Bible to its Table of Contents to view the names of the various books.

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Matthew - John | Biographies of Jesus' life. Each of these writers gives a different emphasis of His life. Some is repetitive, but all good. |
| Acts | This is a record of some of the adventures of the early Christians. Lots of action. |
| Romans - Philemon | These are letters that the apostle Paul wrote to individuals and churches to inform them how to walk with Christ and to deal with various problems. |
| Hebrews - Revelation | These are letters written by other authors. Like Paul's letters, they help us to know how to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord. |

WHAT'S WITH ALL THE NUMBERS?

As you read your Bible you will notice there are lots of numbers. Usually, larger ones begin each chapter. Smaller numbers are either alongside the text or scattered through it. These denote the individual verses within the chapter, making it easier to locate passages. For example, if we asked you to look up John 3:16, you would turn to —

John = book of John (fourth book in the New Testament)
 3 = third chapter
 : = serves only as a separator
 16 = sixteenth verse.

Give it a try. Locate John 3:16 in your Bible. It should read, ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*** If you are using a translation other than the New International Version (NIV), it may read slightly different.

SOME HELPFUL TIPS

- ***Opening a Love Letter***

As you begin to read the Bible, approach it as though it were a *Love Letter* from God to you. It's not just a rule book, or a history book, or a self-help guide. It is God's way of reminding you that He loves you and wants the best for you.

- ***Knowing the Major Characters***

There are four main personalities within the Bible. Below is a brief introduction to them. You'll become much better acquainted with them in the days ahead.

GOD

The very first verse in the Bible says, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* God is the Creator of our universe. He knows everything about you and loves you. Jesus referred to Him as His Father, and He is now your heavenly Father to whom you can pray.

God doesn't have a body like you and I do, but the Bible often speaks of Him in physical terms to help us relate to Him. For example, it says that He will guide you with His eye. It doesn't mean that He has a giant eyeball. It means that He is fully aware of your situation and that He will lead you. It speaks of us finding refuge under His wings. God doesn't really have wings, but like a mother bird protects her chicks, we can run to Him for help and have confidence that He will take care of us.

JESUS

He is God's Son, the one physically born into our world around 4-6 BC in the town of Bethlehem in Israel. The Bible declares that Jesus lived in heaven with the Father long before He was born into this world as a man. In fact, Philippians 2:5-8 informs us that Jesus has all the attributes and qualities of God, but that He willingly left heaven and took on the role of Rescuer when He became a man and died on the cross for us.

Philippians 2:5-8 *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!"*

HOLY SPIRIT

Shortly before Jesus was crucified, He promised His followers that after He returned to heaven, the Father would send His Spirit to live in every Christian. When you asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, it was His Holy Spirit who came to dwell inside of you. **1 Corinthians 2:12** says, *"We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."* The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force or power or energy like "The Force" in the Stars Wars movies. He has all the attributes and qualities of God. He helps you understand things from the Bible.

Romans 8:15-16 says, *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."* The Holy Spirit is making you aware of a whole new personal relationship with God. He is the reason you now suddenly are feeling close to God.

DEVIL

The devil is not an imaginary person with a goatee and horns in a red suit holding a pitchfork. He is a real being who was created as a beautiful and intelligent angel. He led other angels to attempt to overthrow God. It failed and ever since, the devil has had a burning hatred for God and for those who follow Him. Another name for the devil is *Satan*. The angels who teamed up with the devil are now referred to as *demons*.

Because angels do not die nor sleep, the devil has continued for thousands of years to plague human history with cruelty and hatred. His aim, now that you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, is to keep you from developing your relationship with God to the fullest. You don't need to fear him — his powers don't compare to God's — but he will continue to try to trip you up.

The Bible describes the Christian life as a wrestling match against evil forces. **Ephesians 6:10-12** says, *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*

The key to victory is to daily surrender yourself to God's will. He will give you the power to resist the devil's temptations. **James 4:7** says, *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

- **Understanding the Drama**

From start to finish, the Bible has an overarching storyline that connects everything together. God created a beautiful world for men and women to enjoy. The devil deceived the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, to doubt God's love and wisdom and rebel against His instructions. Their disobedience was sin and resulted in a great separation from God. Every person since then has also sinned and experienced this estrangement from God.

But God immediately set in motion a plan to bring into our world a HERO, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would be able to set things right. For those who trust Jesus, God has another place called Heaven prepared for their enjoyment forever.

LET'S OPEN YOUR BIBLE

To help you become more familiar with your Bible, find the following verses in your Bible and fill in the blanks. These verses are from the New International Version (NIV).

Matthew 4:4

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on _____ alone, but on every _____ that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Acts 17:11

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the _____ every _____ to see if what Paul said was true.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All _____ is _____ and is useful for _____, rebuking, correcting and _____ in _____, so that the man of God may be thoroughly _____ for every good work.

Hebrews 4:12

For the _____ of God is _____ and _____. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it _____ the thoughts and _____ of the heart.

Summary:

The Bible tells us how to receive eternal life, as well as how to live right in this life. It is the only Book that we can fully trust to be true.

Just as we need proper nourishment to grow physically, so we need good nourishment to grow spiritually. If you read God's Word daily, you will grow strong in your faith.

DURING THIS NEXT WEEK

1. Read your Bible

The best way to become familiar with the Bible and to experience its power is to read it each day. I have included a chart of the New Testament on the next page to help you keep track of your reading. One thing that will be helpful is to **mark up your Bible**. Underline it, circle it, make notes, put question marks in the margin, or whatever else helps you to become more familiar with the Word of God.

2. Tell someone about Jesus

Look for an opportunity to tell someone about your new faith in Jesus. Who are some friends or relatives you want to know Jesus in a personal way like you do now?

PRAY: Let's pray right now for these people.

3. Go to Church

When you go to church be sure to take your Bible and a pen. As you listen to the pastor speak, take notes. Also, when you attend a smaller group Bible study, take notes.

At your next meeting with your mentor, before you launch into the next lesson take time to share with each other what you learned from the Bible this week.

Bible Reading Schedule

As you read through various chapters, mark them off on your chart.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Matthew | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | | | |
| Mark | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| Luke | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | | | | | | | | |
| John | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Acts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | | | |
| Romans | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 1 Corinthians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 2 Corinthians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | | | |
| Galatians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ephesians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Philippians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Colossians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Thessalonians | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Thessalonians | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Timothy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Timothy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Titus | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Philemon | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hebrews | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | | | |
| James | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Peter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Peter | 1 | 2 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 John | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 John | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 John | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jude | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Revelation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | | | | | | | | | | |