

Overview of the Bible

A summary of what's in the greatest book of all time.

by Jim Townsend

Wouldn't you love to be able to grasp what the entire Bible contains in just a few minutes? This compilation of the themes of the Bible will allow you to do just that. The following is a summary of what each book of the Bible contains. Keep it handy to refer to as you study and read.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

God is creator (1)
God communicates with human beings (1,2)
Sin is a present reality (3)
Sin messes up relationships (3)
God seeks out those who have sinned (3)
Start-over opportunities are available to those who've sinned (3)
Sin is the cause of death (3)
Sin erupts in violence (4)
Sin spirals and invades all of life (6)
God can't let sin go on forever (6-9)
Sometimes nearly everything must be destroyed to start over
Heritage trees are important (10)
Humans challenge God's primacy (11)
God calls people for specific purposes (12)
God wants people to respond to His words in faith (15:6)
Faithful obedience is a hallmark of faith
God seeks out covenant relationships with people (9, 12, 15, 17)
God uses flawed people (25, 27)
God tests our trust (22)
God's plans demand patience
Children often have the same flaws as their parents (20, 26)
Peacemaking is a valuable trait (26)
Taking matters into our own hands has consequences (30)
Responsible people don't let setbacks stall them (Joseph)
Eventually responsibility and excellence are rewarded (Joseph)

Exodus

Slavery is a human predicament (1-4)
God raises key people for specific needs (2-4)
God is known through his names (3)
Often people endure long hardship before God bails them out
God's super drama is behind the scenes of life
Better get used to waiting
Things may get worse before they get better
Salvation comes through God
God is the true liberator
Commemorative celebration is appropriate for our deliverance (12)
Eating is a form of celebration (12)
National triumphs can be memorialized.
God's majesty breaks through at times (3, 19, 32)
Divine drama is spectacular (19).
For some issues God has an absolute agenda (20)
God gives us guidance through his laws (20)
God's law covers a wide range of subjects
Don't expect deliverance to come without struggles (14, 16)
Leaders need support (17)
God has some distinct ideas about worship (25-40)
God expects to be approached in specific and solemn ways (25-40)
God develops heroes (4, 32-33)
Seeing God's face means having a personal relationship with him (33)

You can't approach God in any old way
Through the sacrificial death of another we may approach God
God's presence resides among his people (40)

Leviticus

How to approach God is vital (1-7)
Cleanliness can depict godliness (11-15)
Holiness is a chief concern to God
God is interested in what people eat (11)
God is concerned with all of life (11-15)
Celebrating is a wholesome experience (23)
Sin must be removed from our fellowship

Numbers

Get organized for maximum efficiency
Life wandering can result from sinful choices
God has to discipline his people at times
There's a place for the gung-ho (6)
God gets sick of people complaining (11)
We must resist the mob mentality (13-14)
Rebellion can be serious (16)
God provides (20-21)
Don't make an ass of yourself (22)
Beware of prophets for profit (23-25)
All God's people should have their share (34)

Deuteronomy

New adaptations have to be made for new generations (5)
Life must be governed by God's truth
God gives guidelines about teaching children wisely (6)
God takes covenant relationship seriously
Don't have idols (9)
God has something to say on the subject of war (20)
Evading the truth has consequences (28)

Joshua

God's people can conquer with courage (1)
God can do miracles (5, 10)
Don't be deceived (9)
God is not anti-organization (12-22)
God people both make strides and slip back
Failure can come from disobedience.
We are called to stand upon our principles (24)

Judges

God develops heroes
God uses flawed people (14-16)
God's Spirit empowers people (14:6, 19; 15:14 etc)
God uses women in leadership roles (4-5)
Humans tend to repeat the same old cycles (2)
Sin has a wild side (17-21)

Ruth

Marriages can be made in heaven (2)
God can reroute tragedy
God's long-range purposes may be hidden over the short-term (1, 4)
God is in control despite our desperation

1 Samuel

God wants people of character to serve him.

God reveals himself to the spiritually sensitive (3)
Watch out for the ways of the world (8)
Beware of copycatting the world (8)
God raises up people for governmental duties (10, 16)
God champions those who trust him despite overwhelming odds (17)
God is concerned about national leadership (10, 16)
Disobedience spells demotion (13, 15, 28)
Expect to fight battles
Jealousy is a relationship quencher
In-depth friendship is rare (20)
Be bighearted (26)
Beware of dabbling with the occult (28)
Sometimes death seems better than pain

2 Samuel

Cherish people from the past (1)
Get past grievances with difficult people (1)
God eventually rewards faithfulness (5)
Worshipful exuberance can take strange forms (6:14)
God makes agreements with people (7)
Sinful sex messes up lives long term (11f)
There is a time for confrontation (12)
Parent-child relationships can be heart breaking (13-19)
Finishing with the Lord is worth celebrating (22)

1 Kings

God gives wisdom to those who ask for it (3, 10:1-9)
Organizational wisdom is required to run a nation (4)
Worship takes thoughtful preparation (5-8)
Uncontrolled sex can ruin an outstanding life (11:1-13)
Cruelty to others will inevitably cause a backlash (12)
Integrity begins at home (12)
What heads of state do has international consequences (12-14)
You may be hot stuff in the world's eyes but not with God (16:21-28)
God can provide for our special needs (17)
Boldness may prompt a showdown (18)
Even great people have setbacks (19)

2 Kings

God does miracles through people of faith (2, 4, 5)
God is keeping track of records for good or bad (10:34-36, etc)
Those who disregard God can expect serious consequences (10)
God honors those who honor him (12, 18-20, 22-23)
God won't put up with evil forever (17, 24-25)
Sin ultimately brings havoc (17:21-41)
Even godly people have children who go off the deep end (21)

1 Chronicles

God is interested in individuals and their backgrounds (1-9)
History is crucial to God's people (1-9)
God is impressed with those who step out from the crowd (4:9-10)
The Bible honors heroes of the faith (11:10-47)
People of daring attract followers (12)
Proper worship is important (14-16)
God honors those who want an in-depth relationship with him (17)
Life is full of battles (18-20)
Foolish personal choices can have disastrous results (21)
Worship demands organization (22-26, 28-29)

2 Chronicles

God supplies wisdom to those who want it (1)

God values worship (3-5) 1,
God hears sincere prayers (6-7)
God honors those who stand for what is right (14-17)
God has his confronters (18) 64
Some lives are a patchwork of obedience and disobedience (24)
God is honored when leaders seek purification and reform (29-31, 34-35)
Otherwise godly people can end life in a less than godly manner (32:24-33)
Ungodly leaders wreak havoc on a nation (33)

Ezra

God moves through international events (1f)
Renewal practices may be necessary (3)
When you get serious about God, expect opposition (4)
When you start a project for God, work till it's done (6:13-18)
Prayers for confession of sin are healthy (9-10)
God has serious standards for marriage (9-10)

Nehemiah

Prayer burdens often trigger action (1)
Building anything valuable requires cooperation (3)
Expect opposition when doing God's work (4, 6)
God's Word prompts repentance and praise (8)
Confession of sin is appropriate (9)
Repentance and reform are required if sin has set in (12) 34, 122

Esther

God is working behind the scenes of human activity
Risk is a component of faith (4:12-17)
God puts people in specific situations for a special cause
Personalized guidance is a form of mentoring (4)
Sometimes diabolical plots boomerang (3-7)
Celebration accompanies God's deliverance (9)

Job

Satan seeks to bring God's people down (1-2)
God's people can expect to experience serious testing (1)
God's ways often don't seem fair
Sometimes we're made to feel like failures
Some attempts to comfort only prove uncomfortable (3f)
Suffering is not necessarily due to sin (13:19, 23; 23:6-7; 27:5-6)
God reveals himself in unexpected ways (33:12-19)
Gleams of truth can anchor the sufferer (19:25-26)
God's creation provides staggering insights (38-41)
God eventually comes through for his approved people (42)

Psalms

Depression due to grief or turmoil is normal (10, 13, 22, etc)
God's words yield great delight (1, 19, 119)
God's people call to him in their distresses (3, 4, 5, 12, 28, 43)
Believers are like God's sheep (23)
Sometimes believers face violence (10, 13, 41 etc)
Renewal follows confession (32, 51)
God's majesty evokes thought and praise (8, 139)
Praise God! (9, 18, 29, 33, 34, 47, 48)
God wants purity and integrity (15)
God lavishes his care upon us (23, 46)

Proverbs

Reverence for God is the source of wisdom (1)
Foolish people despise wisdom

Laziness brings a person down
Real friends are faithful
Words carry power for good or evil
Children need to heed their parents' wisdom
True piety breeds truest prosperity
God's wisdom is crystallized in creation (8)

Ecclesiastes

Life can be meaningless (1:2; 2:11; 4:7; etc)
People try life's pleasures and other opportunities for meaning (2)
There's a time for everything (3:1-8)
Be in awe of God and revere him (5:1-5; 12)
Wisdom is honorable (7; 9:13-18)

Song of Solomon

A loving relationship is great
Sex is highly pleasurable
Physical attraction is part of human sexuality
Romance often involves paying compliments

Isaiah

God expects ethical behavior from his people (1:10-31)
God is pro-peace (2)
God announces Immanuel (7, 9)
Nations who sin reap the consequences (13-24)
Placing ultimate trust in military will bring disappointment (31)
God supplies comfort (40)
God is high and holy in majesty (40-45)
God's Suffering Servant (42, 53, etc)
God summons to a freely offered salvation (55)
Judgment and salvation will culminate in a brand new world (65:17; 66:22)

Jeremiah

God has pre-birth plans for his servants (1)
Trusting superstitiously in religiosity is a crutch (7)
God's servants may have an axe to grind with God (20:7-12)
Judgment falls on the disobedient (25, 27)
Restoration is a biblical idea (32-33)
God's word is indestructible (36)
God registers international concerns (46-51)
Some treat faithful believers as patriotic traitors (37-38)

Lamentations

Grief is a part of life
The penalty for sin is horrible (2)
Willful disobedience makes prayer ineffective (3)
Grief can be verbalized
It may be best to suffer in silence
Hope in the midst of punishment is rooted in God's goodness

Ezekiel

Experiencing God is breathtaking (1)
God calls people into his service (2)
God's people use various means of communication (3-5)
God warns those entrenched in disobedience of judgment (11, 14, 20)
God withdraws from those who refuse his overtures (10)
Each person is individually responsible for personal guilt (18)
God expresses international concerns (25-32)
God's people are their culture's warning sentinels (33)

God can bring life out of death (37)
God thinks in terms of worship (40-48)

Daniel

Believers interact with their culture (1)
God has the big international picture in mind (2, 7)
God gives some people visionary dreams
No nation is immune from God's judgment (5)
Believers may undergo persecution (3)
God will protect those who won't compromise their convictions (3 and 6)
God will wrap up history (12)
The kingdom of God will transcend godless kingdoms (2, 7)

Hosea

God expects his people to be faithful (1f)
Marriage is disrupted by infidelity
Infidelity causes massive damage (2)
God's love is incredibly forgiving
Repentance brings restoration and blessing

Joel

Natural catastrophes may contain divine significance (1f)
Dreams can be God's vehicles of communication (2:28-32)
War brings havoc
God will judge the nations (3)

Amos

God has an international agenda(1-2)
God's people can't keep sinning and get away with it
Materialistic complacency grieves God (5:11-17; 6:1-8)
God uses various techniques to get our attention (7-8)

Obadiah

No nation is invincible (v 3-4)
Enemies of God's people will eventually be destroyed
What you sow you reap (v 15)

Jonah

Some people run from God's calling
Evil people aren't beyond hope in God's eyes
Some have a prophetic role
God calls his servants to do some difficult things
God disciplines his disobedient servants (2)
God has a heart as big as the world (4)

Micah

God's people must take inventory (1-2)
False spiritual leaders must be reprimanded (2-3)
God is pro-peace (4)
God expects a morality of justice (6)

Nahum

God is majestic (1)
God is pro-poetry (1-3)
War wreaks havoc (2)

Habakkuk

God's ways sometimes don't seem fair (1)
Sometimes violence seems overwhelming (1-2)

God's people must exercise hope-filled faith (2:1-4; 3:17-19)
God's majesty sometimes breaks through (3)
We can trust God's justice is perfect

Zephaniah

Wicked people and nations eventually get punished
Gathering with God's people fosters encouragement (3)
God has international concerns (2)

Haggai

Prosperity can have its drawbacks (1-2)
God wants his people to put him first (1)
Lack of prosperity might be tied to lack of God priority (1)

Zechariah

God communicates in very varied ways (1-6)
The Bible has a messianic message (9f)
Someday God will personally reign over the whole earth (14:9)

Malachi

God wants our best (1)
Giving is an index of priorities (3)
Judgment is coming (4)

The Apocryphal books or inter-testament period

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew

Christ offers himself as king.
Sometimes God leads us to out-of-the-way places (2)
After occasions of proving we have God's approving (3-4)
God has the very highest standards for his people (5-7)
Jesus calls for peacemakers (5)
Believers' bottom-line trust should not be in money (6)
Jesus is against judgmentalism (7)
God wants his word to be sown (13)
Popularity can be fickle (12 and 14)
Jesus is more than merely human (16)
Childlikeness is a qualification for heaven's entrance (18)
Christ's second coming will be preceded by terrible troubles (24-25)
Christ calls people to be prepared for his coming again (24-25)
We need not be stuck with shame (26) 88
Faith must be translated into social action (25)
Jesus died and rose again (27-28)
Christ's passion is in tension with anti-Semitism (27:25)
Christians have a command to Christianize (28:16-20)

Mark

Christ is compassionate (1-3)
Jesus is the unique Son of God (1:1; 9:7; 15:39)
Jesus handles anyone's sins (2:1-12)
Christ can come across as a controversialist (2:1-3:6 and 11:1-12:44)
Traditions can come packaged as trouble (7)
Jesus conquers the demonic arena (9)
Denying Christ can set you back (14:66f)

Luke

Christianity interfaces with hardcore history (1:1-4; 2:1; 3:1)

Mary has a recognized role among Christians (1-2)
Praise geysers are a sign of the Spirit's filling (1-2)
Jesus birth enables him to understand poverty (2)
Jesus seems shocking in his handling of gender issues (8:1-3; 10:38-42)
Jesus is racially and ethnically savvy (9:51-10:37)
Jesus is stronger than Satan (11:14-26)
Earthly riches aren't the true wealth (12:13-34 and 16)
God is prodigal with his love for prodigals (15)
Discipleship is demanding (14:25-35)
Persistent praying pays off (11:5-13 and 18:1-8)
Our Redeemer's resurrection is for real (24)

John

Jesus is God and the unique Son of God (1:1; 5; 10; 17; 20:28)
Jesus is our need meeter (the "I Am's")
Miracles show the Savior's significance (2f)
Miracles are designed to evoke belief (2f)
The new birth is essential (3)
Jesus offers himself to the oppressed (4)
Christ doesn't back off from controversy (5-10)
Jesus offers truest freedom (8)
Those who reject Jesus can prove highly hostile (5-10)
Jesus the Resurrector has been raised from the dead (11; 20-21)
The Christian's resource bank is the Holy Spirit (14-16)
Jesus yearns for his people to have unity (17)
Eternal life comes through faith in God's Son (20:30-31)
The Trinity is the divine interface-off (14)

Acts

The Holy Spirit empowers for Christian witness (1)
God has an international plan (2)
God welds his people into a working unity (2-4)
God's Spirit inspires power-packed preaching (2-4)
Where God's Spirit is significantly at work, expect conflict (7, 14)
Delegation gets God's work done (6:1-7)
When conflict arises, God's people must arise to the occasion (5-6)
Christ has the power to transform even the hardest cases (9)
Some the least likely get converted (9)
God has a worldwide mission 8; 10-11)
God initiates world missions (13-28)
Missionaries can expect to face persecution (14f)
Some locations produce unusual churches (11, 13)
Christ's church has to work through doctrinal and racial issues (15)
Sometimes it is necessary to engage in civil disobedience (4:18f; 5:29; 16:35-40)
Churches need leaders with shepherding hearts (20:27-38)
God can enable a believer before unbelieving civil officials (23-26)
God will get the committed to his goal (28)

Romans

God has a plan for those who have never heard the gospel (1)
Gays and lesbians face a spiritual dilemma (1)
All are subject to God's evaluation, no matter how much or little they know (1-2)
All people stand condemned because of their sweeping sins (3:1-20)
People are justified through faith in Christ and his redemptive work (1:14; 3:24-26)
Okayness with God is not by achieving, but by believing (3-4)
A dedicated believer needs to act dead to sin (6)
Struggle is not necessarily spiritually subnormal (7)
All God's resources are filtered through the Holy Spirit (8)
Trust in God's overarching control (9-11)
God's ways of working with people are mysterious (9-11)
God hasn't written the Jews off (9-11)
The Christian is called to complete commitment (12:1f)

God has given his people gift packages (12:3-8)
God gives guidelines for human government (13:1-8)
Christians can agree to disagree about minor matters (14-15)
God is interested in individuals (16)

1 Corinthians

God's wisdom is crystallized in the cross of Christ (1)
Spiritual immaturity breeds church splits (1-3)
The local church can't let immorality mushroom in its midst (5)
Sexual immorality can't be simply dismissed (5)
Christians should be able to settle their own disagreements in house (6)
Our bodies have spiritual purposes (6:12-20)
God has sexual parameters for us (7)
There's room in the church for varying views (8-10)
Restoration rather than retribution is God's goal for people (11:31f; 2 Cor. 2:5-11)
Christians should soak up past history (10)
Worship matters (11)
Self-examination should precede participation in Communion (11:17-34)
Charismatic gifts may need regulating (12-14)
Love should be paramount (13)
Christ's resurrection is the keystone to Christianity (15)

2 Corinthians

Our trials can enable us to comfort other Christians in their trials (1)
Sinning Christians who have repented need to be restored (2)
Christians are frail vessels containing Christ's unsurpassable light (4)
Christians have been entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation (5)
At times excommunication becomes necessary (6:14-18)
Christians are not exempt from hardships (6:3-13; 11:16-33)
Welcome back the wounded (2:5-11)
Christians are not to be mismatched in policy with unbelievers (6:14f)
God has given Christians principles about Christian finance (8-9)
Sacrificial giving pleases God (8-9)
There are false claimants to Christianity running around (11:1-15)
Spiritual highs often come to match our lows (12)
Sometime you feel like a fool (11:16; 12:11f; etc)

Galatians

Any other gospel besides the New Testament's is under God's curse (1:7-9)
God summons his servants (1)
You don't have to play up to VIPs (2)
There's a time for confrontation over critical issues (2:11f)
Legalism should be ousted (3-5)
Christians are under a banner of spiritual liberty (5:1f)
The Spirit's life should produce the Spirit's fruit (5:22f)
Hearticulture is heaven's horticulture (5:22f)
What we sow we reap (6)
There are times to lift other's burdens and times we shouldn't (6:1-6)

Ephesians

Christians operate in the rarified atmosphere of a higher life (1)
Spiritual death must yield to life in Christ (2:1f)
Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works (2:8-10)
Bonified Christianity can bring down racial barriers (2:11-18)
God wants unity for Christ's body, the church (4:1f)
God has given catalyst gifts to get the rest of us going and growing (4:7-16)
Forgiveness grows out of openness to love (4:25-32)
You can get good and mad, not angry and bad (4:25-32)
Christians should have a light-bearing lifestyle (4-5)
There's room for mutual submission in different married partners (5:21f)
Christians need to strap on their God-supplied spiritual armor (6:11f)

Philippians

Despite hardship, joy is possible for a believer (1-4)
For a Christian living means exalting Christ (1:21)
Christ is the superlative example of humility (2:1-11)
Humility is the key to church unity (1:27-2:30)
We need to keep striving toward our ultimate goal (3)
Our thought world should be epitomized by noble, beautiful virtues (4:8)
God values sacrificial giving (4)

Colossians

Christ is above all (1)
Christ's crosswork is the basis of all reconciliation (1:12-23)
Don't fall into the trap of false religiosity (2)
Believers need warnings about false spirituality (2:6-23)
God gives converts new character clothing (3)
God has a blueprint for families (3-4)

1 Thessalonians

The Christian message can hit like wham-bam (1)
God expects Christians to show integrity (2)
Sometimes Jew-and-Gentile relations have been strained severely (2:13-16)
Sexual morality and hard work are concerns of God (3)
Christ is coming back again (4-5)
The church should be a care package for different people (5:12-15)

2 Thessalonians

Eternal punishment will fall on gospel rejecters (1)
A lawless leader will claim divine prerogatives (2)
Christians are called to be workers, not shirkers (3)
Some Christians give the faith a bad name (3)

1 Timothy

The law targets the lawless (1)
God has guidelines for church officers (3)
God is concerned about single and other special-needs people (4)
Don't let money corrupt you (6)
Live holy lives (6)

2 Timothy

Christians are sculpted through hardships (1)
Work to be divinely approved (2)
The last days will be characterized by fallout from the faith (3)
God's Word is inspired and functional (3:14-17)
A spiritual director can set a younger believer on the right track (2-3)

Titus

Churches need qualified leaders (1)
Various age groups require distinctive guidance (2)
Saving grace is not by works, but should produce good works (3)

Philemon

Christianity intersects economic and social issues
Christianity can elevate the disenfranchised

Hebrews

Christ is above all (1)
Don't get obsessed with angelitis (1-2)
Beware of the danger of drifting from spiritual moorings (2:1f)
Don't Harden your heart toward God (3-4)
God wants to bring people truest rest (4)

Christ is the Christian's connecting Priest (4:14-8:13)
Don't fall away from the faith (6)
Christ has an absolutely unique priesthood (7-10)
Christians function under God's new arrangement (8)
Christ offered the perfect sacrifice for sins (9-10)
Guilt is removed through Christ's perfect sacrifice (9-10)
The blood of Christ is our sin remover (9)
By faith believers engage in faith exploits (11)
God's discipline sandpapers our rough spots (12:1f)

James

God gives believers trust tests (1)
Christians should not practice prejudice (2:1-13)
Works are the showcase for real faith (2:14-26)
Beware of abusing speech (3)
Bosses, don't abuse your positions of power (5:1-6)
Expect suffering, but pray in faith (5)

1 Peter

Christ's resurrection offers Christians living hope (1)
God calls Christians to lead holy lives in secular settings (2)
Christians constitute a priesthood (2:1-10)
God has societal concerns (2:11f)
God gives us family guidelines (3:1-7)
Christ is the Christians' example (2:19-25)
Christians do suffer (3-4)
Churches need unselfish shepherds (5)

2 Peter

Progress in character development (1)
Scripture doesn't have its ultimate source in humanity (1:16-21)
Beware of false teachers (2)
Expect a dramatic windup with Christ's return (3)

1 John

Walk obediently in God's light and Christian fellowship (1)
Antichristian teaching should not shake your faith (2:18-27)
Love expresses itself in compassion (3:11-24)
God is love (4:8-16)
Faith in God's Son gives assurance of eternal life (5)

2 John

Walk in obedience to Christ's commands
Beware of spiritual deception

3 John

Churches should support Christian missions
Watch out for church bosses

Jude

Contend for the core of Christianity
Heretical teachers are dangerous

Revelation

Christ is coming back (1:1-8; 19:11-16; 22:7, 12)
The glorified Lord is dazzlingly glorious (1:9-20)
Local churches have distinctive personalities, with strengths and weaknesses (2-3)
God will reward faithful churches (2-3)
Beware of church lethargy (3:14-21)
God's fullness is mind boggling (4-5)

A time of terrible tribulation will precede the end (6-18)
God's clientele is international (7)
God musters his witnesses (11)
The devil doesn't give up easily (12, 20)
Satan seeks to counteract and counterfeit God's program (13)
The harvest is coming (14:14-20)
Religion and commerce can oppose God (17-18)
A new universe is in waiting (21-22)
All sorrow will be banished from God's makeover-world (21:1-4)
Believers will get a celestial makeover (21-22) 91

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