

At first glance, the Bible seems to be a disorganized collection of articles with funny sounding titles. But this is not so at all, as you will come to see. The fact is, the title of each book reflects the nature of its contents ... and ... the books are organized in a very logical and orderly way.

The two largest and most obvious divisions of the Bible are the Old Testament and the New Testament. The individual books contained in each of these collections is also grouped into smaller divisions as well. For instance, the books of the Old Testament are divided into four groups. There are the books of: Law, History, Poetry, and Prophecy. The first five books of the Old Testament are called the books of Law, mainly because they contain the Laws of Moses which were given to the people of Israel. The book of Genesis tells the story of beginnings, for the word Genesis means "Beginnings." It records the beginning of the world, of life, of mankind, and the beginning of sin. It also explains the beginning of Israel, the nation through whom the solution for sin would emerge. The book of Exodus tells of the escape, or "exit," of Israel from Egyptian slavery. The book of Leviticus is named for the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe, for the book contains the laws of God which pertain to priestly service. The book of Numbers contains a census, or "numbering" of the tribes of Israel after their escape from Egypt. The book of Deuteronomy is the account of Moses' final speeches to Israel before his death. In Greek, the word Deuteronomy means "Second Law." These are the five books of Law.

The next twelve books of the Old Testament are the books of History. They record the history of Israel, beginning with the conquest of the land of Canaan and ending with the return of God's people from foreign captivity. The books of History include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The next division, the books of Poetry, includes Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. The book of Job is a study in human suffering and how we should handle it. Psalms is a collection of songs which were used in worship to God. Proverbs is a study in wisdom ... accompanied by a collection of short, wise sayings. Ecclesiastes means "the preacher." Written by Solomon, this book is an essay on the meaning of life and what Solomon concluded were the truly important issues of life. Song of Solomon is sort of like an ancient marriage manual, graphically portraying the intimate love between a husband and wife. The remaining seventeen books of the Old Testament are books of prophecy. They contain the recorded writings of some of God's prophets. The work of a prophet was to speak on behalf of God. They communicated God's concern when His people drifted away from His Law; they foretold impending punishment from God if His people did not repent; and they usually promised an end to the punishment and a reconciliation to God's favor. These are the divisions of the Old Testament books.

The New Testament is also divided into four major groupings. There are the books of: Biography, History, Correspondence, and Prophecy. The first four books of the New Testament, called "The Gospels," are actually biographical treatments of the life of Jesus. They were written by, and are called, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is only one book in the History section. It is the book of Acts, so called because it records the "acts" or "actions" of the apostles. This book describes how the Lord's church began and then follows the history of the church as it spread throughout the world. The next section of New Testament books is really a collection of letters which were written by inspired leaders of the early church. Some of them are letters to specific churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, and Thessalonica. These letters were written by the apostle Paul, who also wrote letters to individual people, like Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. Some are general letters to the church at large. The titles of these general letters reflect the names of their authors: James, Peter, John, and Jude. The last division of the New Testament contains one book of prophecy. It is called the book of Revelation. The apostle John recorded in this book a series of visions he experienced which came from God. The book reveals the future outcome of the church. It was meant to be an encouragement to early Christians who were undergoing severe persecution. These are the divisions of the New Testament books.

As you can see, the books of the Bible are arranged in a very organized and orderly manner, and the title of each book has a perfectly logical meaning. There are 66 books in the Bible ... 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. The Old Testament contains five books of Law, twelve books of History, five books of Poetry, and seventeen books of Prophecy. The New Testament contains four books of Biography, one book of History, twenty one books of Correspondence, and one book of Prophecy. This is the way the Bible is organized.



1. What are the Four Major Divisions of the Old Testament Books?  
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2. Why are the first five books of the Old Testament called "Books of Law"?
3. Match the following "Books of Law" with meanings for their titles:
 

a. Genesis	_____	contains a census of the tribes of Israel
b. Exodus	_____	contains laws pertaining to the priests
c. Leviticus	_____	contains accounts of the beginnings of things
d. Numbers	_____	contains a second giving of the law
e. Deuteronomy	_____	contains account of Israel's exit from Egypt
4. List the O.T. books of "History" whose titles reflect the names of their main characters.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. The 12 books of O.T. History begin with what event and end with what event?
6. Match the following "Books of Poetry" with the proper word which closely associates with it:
 

a. Job	_____	Preacher
b. Psalms	_____	Suffering
c. Proverbs	_____	Songs
d. Ecclesiastes	_____	Marriage
e. Song of Solomon	_____	Wisdom
7. List the names of the prophets whose writings are preserved in O.T. "Books of Prophecy".  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
8. What was the work of a prophet? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name the three thoughts that prophets usually communicated to God's People:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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