

the Writing center



BIBLE REFERENCES, CITATIONS, AND TRANSLATIONS: SHORT FORM

How to Mention Bible Passages in a Sentence

In 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul discusses how spiritual gifts should properly function in the corporate gathering of the church.

- Notice, the “en dash” (–) is used between chapters and verses (not a hyphen [-]).

Second Samuel 7 outlines the Davidic Covenant. However, in 1 Timothy 3:1–13, Paul details the qualifications for elders and deacons.

- Notice that if the biblical book begins with a number, it is written out when it begins a sentence.

How to Cite Bible Passages in Parenthetical Notes

Death is also a power under the control of Satan (Heb 2:14), who is the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2), the “god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4; cf. John 14:30), and the “deceiver of the whole world” (Rev 12:9).

- Note that citations come after the quotation marks. Also, normally citations come at the end but each of these verses are supporting a separate point, so they are placed next to their respective points.

I believe that the righteous will inherit eternal life and the wicked will inherit eternal condemnation (Dan 12:2; Matt 25:34, 46; John 5:28–29; Acts 1:11; 24:15; 2 Tim 4:1; 2 Thess 1:7–9; Rev 20:13, 15; 21:68).

- Note that book titles are abbreviated and in canonical order. Also, commas separate verses and semicolons separate books.

Punctuation for Bible Quotations

The author of the epistle identifies himself as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Jas 1:1).

- Here, the sentence flows naturally into the quotation so no punctuation is needed to introduce the quoted material.

Paul exhorts Timothy, saying, “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2).

- Here, the quote is preceded by an introductory statement (“saying”), so you include a comma before the quote (see also: Paul says to Timothy, “Preach . . .”).

Paul then lists several exhortations for Timothy to follow: “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim 4:2).

- Here, there is a complete sentence (i.e., an independent clause) before the quoted material, so you include a colon before the quote.

Indicating a Translation

In John 1:29, for example, Jesus is described as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (ESV).

John the Baptist, upon seeing Jesus, proclaims him as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 ESV).

- The translation is noted on the *first quotation* (not paraphrase). After this, only note the translation if you switch to a different translation.
- The abbreviations for translations can be found in the SBTS Manual of Style §4.9.
- Also, a footnote could be used instead of the parentheses: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations come from the ESV.

Confer and Parallel Passages

In fact, death has reigned—as a ruling power over the world—ever since the sin of Adam (Rom 5:12–18; cf. Gen 2:17; 1 Cor 15:21a, 22a).

- “cf.” means confer and indicates that Romans 5:12–18 is the primary support but Genesis and 1 Corinthians indirectly support the statement.

After King Amon was put to death by his servants, Josiah became king over Judah (2 Kgs 21:23–24 // 2 Chron 22:24–25).

- Both passages narrate the same events so // indicates that these are parallel passages.

Further Abbreviations and Capitalization

- When dealing with a particular passage, you can use (v. #) to indicate a single verse or (vv. #-#) to indicate multiple verses. However, just like biblical books, the words “verse/verses” are always written out when used in the sentence but always abbreviated when in parentheses.
- Rule of thumb: nouns for the Bible are capital but adjectives are not. So, Bible, Scripture, Word of God, versus biblical, scriptural, or biblically.

- Capitalizing divine pronouns is discouraged in academic writing and in the SBTS Manual of Style §4.8, but you can follow your conscience and capitalize them as long as you are consistent in either capitalizing or not capitalizing them.
- Rules for Psalms: the book is called Psalms, but you can refer to psalms generally with a lowercase if you are not specifying any particular one. However, Psalm 23 (Ps 23) is only one psalm and so only one “s” in the parenthetical citation but Psalms 23–24 (Pss 23–24) is more than one psalm and so two “s” in the parentheses.

BIBLE ABBREVIATIONS

Old Testament

Abbreviation	Book Title
Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam	2 Samuel
1 Kgdms	1 Kingdoms (LXX)
2 Kgdms	2 Kingdoms (LXX)
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Kgs	2 Kings
1 Chr	1 Chronicles
2 Chr	2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Esth	Esther
Job	Job
Ps/Pss	Psalms/Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Eccl (or Qoh)	Ecclesiastes (or Qoheleth)
Song (or Cant)	Song of Songs/Solomon (Canticles)
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Abbreviation	Book Title
Matt	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom	Romans
1 Cor	1 Corinthians
2 Cor	2 Corinthians
Gal	Galatians
Eph	Ephesians
Phil	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
1 Tim	1 Timothy
2 Tim	2 Timothy
Titus	Titus
Phlm	Philemon
Heb	Hebrews
Jas	James
1 Pet	1 Peter
2 Pet	2 Peter
1 John	1 John
2 John	2 John
3 John	3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev	Revelation