1. OVERVIEW
The Overview helps readers to find out quickly what this book of the Bible is about and why it is important. It gives a thumbnail sketch of the book and its contents and purpose.

2. SETTING
What is the story behind each book of the Bible? What was the need for each book in its setting? Every book of the Bible was written by flesh-and-blood people living in a particular time and place in history. They faced real challenges and difficulties. They wrote to other real flesh-and-blood people living at their own time in history. They wrote to address specific problems in their world, to help their readers understand God’s mind regarding the issues and problems that they faced.

The world of the Bible is very different from our world today, but people are the same everywhere. If we understand the setting in which each book of the Bible was written, we will be in a much better position to understand what problems it addressed, what actions it was prompting, and what message it communicates.

3. MAP
The book introductions include maps of the setting to show where the events in each book of the Bible took place and how the places mentioned in that book fit into the world. Each map includes a caption that describes the map and how it relates to the book’s setting. Along with a caption, most of these maps include a short index of places mentioned in the book.

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS
Each book introduction helps readers understand that book as its original readers first understood it in their world. The book introduction discusses the book’s setting, gives a summary of its literary structure, discusses historical issues such as authorship and date of writing, and explains the meaning and message of the book for its readers.
4. TIMELINE

A timeline can be found in the margin of nearly all book introductions. The timelines show when the events in each book of the Bible took place and what was going on at the time. We can refer to the timeline while reading the setting and summary for the book, and again while reading the book, to help clarify and reinforce how the events fit into the flow of history.

5. SUMMARY

What is the structure and flow of ideas in each book of the Bible? The Summary provides just that—a brief summary of the contents of the book. If the book is narrative, the Summary tells its story. If the book is a letter, the Summary explains its contents and the flow of its reasoning. If the book is an anthology, the Summary describes the structure and contents of the collection. If we have in mind the flow of the book, we can better understand each individual passage.

6. OUTLINE

Each book includes an outline with up to three levels of headings. In the introduction, we provide the first level of the outline to give the reader an overview. The full outline is embedded in the NLT text as running headings. These book outlines follow the literary structure of the book—how the authors themselves thought about the organization and flow of ideas.
7. AUTHOR, DATE, AND OTHER HISTORICAL ISSUES
What do we know about who wrote this book and when it was written? What are the difficulties in determining the historical facts? Even though these issues might not be familiar ground, they are important. Understanding these things can help us appreciate the complexity of the Bible. Far from undermining confidence in Scripture, the issues discussed here give us a greater appreciation of how magnificent Scripture truly is. At the same time, we learn to be humble in how we interpret God’s word.

8. MEANING AND MESSAGE
What is the message of each book of the Bible? What is its significance now? Here’s where the rubber meets the road. Everything in a book’s introduction—setting, summary, author, date, genre—is intended to prepare us to understand what that book of the Bible has to say, its message and significance. Reading these paragraphs carefully and reflectively will give us the keys to understanding that book of the Bible.
9. **EPIGRAPHS**

Sometimes other authors say insightful things about a book of the Bible, or they make a poignant observation about something that a given book discusses. The editors have gathered some of the best quotations they could find about each book and put them in the margins of the book introductions, to stimulate thinking and to promote meaningful interaction with each book of the Bible.

10. **FURTHER READING**

Where can we learn more about each book of the Bible? The *NLT Study Bible* has plenty of resources for a lifetime journey of reading, studying, and discovering the riches of Scripture. Some readers, however, will want to go even further. At the end of each book introduction, the editors have recommended some of the resources that have helped them the most in studying and understanding that particular book of the Bible. They’ve chosen materials that are available in the general market—no seminary required! Nearly all of these books are as close as a visit to a local or online Christian retailer.

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**SECTION INTRODUCTIONS**

For each major section of the Bible, the section introduction gives an overview of the books in that section and discusses issues that affect the interpretation of those books. (Not shown)

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**CHRONOLOGY ARTICLES**

For each major period of biblical history, the chronology article provides a historical overview and discusses key issues regarding historical context. Each article includes a timeline of events during that period of history. (Not shown)
11. RUNNING OUTLINES

The NLT text of each book includes a running outline to show how the sections of that book fit together. The numbered top level of the outline matches the short outline in the book introduction. The second- and third-level headings describe the book's structure in greater detail, down to the level of individual passages. These outlines follow the literary structure of the book, so they show what the author of the book thought about how the book was put together.

12. THEME NOTES

How does the NLT Study Bible explain the themes of the Bible? Theme notes develop the main themes and topics that arise in each book. They are placed alongside particularly relevant passages but go beyond the passage at hand and extend to other books of the Bible. References for further study are included in the margin.

The topics in the theme notes have been chosen based on the major themes that occur in Scripture. They provide the first steps in developing a biblical theology without attempting to formulate a specific doctrinal system (such as reformed, charismatic, or Baptist). Because of this, the theme notes are designed to make us think and will stretch us to consider the teaching of Scripture more fully, whatever our doctrinal background.
13. PERSON PROFILES

The NLT Study Bible includes person profiles that describe the lives of the individuals who inhabit the pages of Scripture. Each of these people contributes significantly to the story and message of the Bible. Their lives instruct us with examples and counter-examples, and their stories help us better understand the Bible, its world, and its message. Their relationship with God, or lack of it, helps us to understand how we can have a relationship with God.

14. STUDY NOTES

Sometimes readers look at a note in a study Bible to understand the meaning of a verse and find themselves asking, “So what?” about a seemingly unrelated fact. The notes in the NLT Study Bible have been developed with the “So what?” test in mind—the editors’ goal is that the study notes will clearly help us as readers to understand the verse or passage better.

The notes focus on the meaning and message of Scripture, not just facts. This means that there are notes on words, phrases, sentences, verses, paragraphs, and whole sections. The editors have included historical and literary notes to help draw us into the world of the Bible and the context in which it was originally read and heard.

Also included in the study notes is the full NLT textual footnote apparatus, which identifies variations in the Hebrew and Greek text as well as providing alternate translation possibilities.

Every excerpt from the NLT text is easily identified in bold italic type.
15. CROSS-REFERENCE SYSTEM

Some cross-reference systems are based on connections between individual words, without regard to whether there is any connection in meaning between the two verses or passages. With the NLT Study Bible, the cross-references relate to the meaning of the whole verse or passage, so the cross-references are always directly applicable.

To compare specific ideas within a verse, the study notes at the bottom of the page often include cross-references for individual words and phrases, along with a brief explanation of the nature of the connection.

In the cross-reference system, parallel lines (//) show that a particular cross-reference is a parallel passage that describes the same events or says much the same thing. An asterisk (*) is used to indicate where the NT quotes the OT.

16. PARALLEL PASSAGES

The NLT text indicates parallels with passages in other books. For example, the Gospel of Matthew has many parallels in Mark, Luke, and John. Similarly, the books of 2 Samuel through 2 Kings have many parallels to the books of 1–2 Chronicles. The parallel references are useful for making comparisons between different versions of the same events and gaining a deeper, fuller understanding of what was happening.
17. WORD STUDY SYSTEM

The NLT Study Bible includes a word study system in the cross-reference column. Because the NLT is a dynamic translation, a particular word in Greek or Hebrew is not always translated the same way, but is translated in a manner that is appropriate for the context. This makes word studies richer and more productive, because the range of meaning for a particular Greek or Hebrew word becomes very clear, and it is easier to avoid common misunderstandings about what the word means.

There are word studies for 100 Hebrew words and 100 Greek words. For each word, the editors have included enough occurrences to illustrate the range of meanings for that word. Each occurrence is indicated in the NLT text with a superscript letter (a, b, c, etc.). The same superscript letter occurs in the cross-reference column under that verse. After the superscript letter the Hebrew or Greek word is given, followed by a reference number that matches the glossary at the back and many widely available study tools, such as Strong's Concordance. On the next line is a chain-reference link to the next highlighted occurrence of the word. The word study system thus opens up a whole world of Greek and Hebrew word study.
18. CHARTS
Charts organize textual information into a form that is easy to understand quickly.

19. MAPS
Maps throughout the study materials visualize the events and places mentioned in the text of Scripture.
22. ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations help visualize objects that might be difficult to imagine without a picture. For example, the illustration of Noah’s Ark shows just how big that floating storage box was and how much it was able to hold.

21. TIMELINES

Timelines show when in history various events took place and how they relate to other events in the Bible and in the surrounding world. The Bible is a record of history, and it is fascinating and stimulating to see just how the events of the Bible fit into recorded history as known from the surrounding cultures.

20. DIAGRAMS

Diagrams organize information visually in order to show relationships. For example, the genealogy of Terah, Abraham’s father, helps sort out the relationships among many of the people who play a role in the book of Genesis.