Citing the Bible
Brief Guide

This is a brief guide to citing the Bible APA. For the authoritative explanation of this style, refer to: Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th ed. (2010).


The APA Publication Manual only briefly touches upon citing classical religious works, such as the Bible or other scriptural writings, while their online style blog (http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2009/12/happy-holiday-citing-citation-of-classical-works.html) expands on the subject with a few examples.

In the running text of your paper or project

The APA makes no comment on how religious works are to be formatted within the running text, other than to say that the first time a general reference is made to the Bible in the running text, it should be followed by the version in parentheses.

The researchers consulted the Bible (King James Version) to provide items for the development of their religious values assessment.

In-Text Citations

The first time you refer to a particular Bible passage in your text, provide a parenthetical citation containing the book of the Bible, the chapter and verse numbers—separated by a colon—followed by a space and the version of the Bible. According to APA's examples, the books of the Bible can be abbreviated, though they don't provide a list of prescribed abbreviations. Also, the version should be normal text, not italicized.

The Bible enumerates these virtues: “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:1 New International Version).

If the book, chapter, and verse are mentioned in the running text of the first mention of a Bible version, you can omit these from the parenthetical citation, including only the version.

In 1 Cor. 13:1 (New International Version), the Bible states that of the three virtues of love, faith, and hope, love is the greatest.

Subsequent citations of the version can omit the version title and just include the chapter and verse, if no citation to another version intervenes. Similarly, if you've mentioned the title of the version in your running text, you do not need to include it in the parenthetical citation.

In one of the most vivid prophetic visions in the Bible, Ezekiel saw “what seemed to be four living creatures,” each with the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (Ezek. 1:5-10 New Jerusalem Bible). John of Patmos echoes this passage when describing his vision (Rev. 4:6-8).
Referenc

APA does not require you to include a reference list entry for classical religious works, such as the Bible. Only the in-text citations are required. If your assignment heavily references biblical texts, though, you should confirm with your instructor whether this is acceptable or whether you are expected to include entries for those works (which would then follow the suitable APA style for book or website references).

PLEASE NOTE the above guidelines apply only to references to a biblical passage; if you reference introductory material or commentary in a Bible, such as in a study Bible, an entry with full publication information must be included in the reference list, and the in-text citation should be treated like a typical book citation, using the publication date.