

Approach the Bible Like No Other Book

We should read + study the Bible *unlike* any book. It is, after all, the living Word of God and should be treated as such. We must interact with this book in an intimate way, allowing our lives to be examined and changed by its piercing truths. There is no other book that can change like the Bible can. And unlike other books, we do not read the Bible merely for information. Instead, we seek to respond to its commands, heed its warnings, and apply its instructions to our lives. We want to be encouraged by its promises, corrected by its admonitions, and completely transformed by its amazing truths!

It is trustworthy: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7).

It is good: "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Prov. 30:5,6).

It is complete: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18,19).

It is authoritative: "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89).

It leads us into spiritual maturity: "...that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

It will accomplish what it promises: "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11).

It provides the assurance of your salvation: "He who is of God hears God's words ... " (John 8:47; 20:31).

It is the source of truth: "Sanctify them by your truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

It is the source of God's blessing when obeyed: "But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it'" (Luke 11:28).

It is the source of victory: "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

It is the source of growth + spiritual formation: "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

It is the source of power: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

It is the source of guidance: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

What Should Be Our Response to the Bible?

- Believe it (John 6:68,69)
- Honor it (Job 23:12)
- Love it (Ps. 119:97)
- Obey it (1 John 2:5)
- Guard it (1 Tim. 6:20)
- Fight for it (Jude 3)
- Preach it (2 Tim. 4:2)
- Study it (Ezra 7:10)

Reading Bible for All Its Worth

Also, when we approach Scripture we must approach it "on our knees" and rejoicing that we can know God, for we can only know God because He has chosen to know us. Had God not chosen to reveal himself to us, we would have never been able to know Him (Rom 1:19; 1 Cor 1:21, 2:4; 2 Cor 4:3-4). Who could find God if He so chose to hide from them?

As we approach God's word we must approach bent low, with adoration, reverence, and unspeakable joy for God has chosen to meet and speak with us.

"Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen." (Rom 11:33-36).

Lastly, if we are even to begin to study God's word the way he intended us to, we must also desire to be changed by what we study. And we must realize that the very Spirit of God who first inspired the Bible is the same Spirit who will guide us into a full understanding of it (1 Cor 12:12-13). So we must pray as we study the Scriptures, and we must ask the Holy Spirit to do his work of enlightenment in our hearts. The Spirit's presence is not given to us to make a careful and diligent study of the Word of God unnecessary; He is given to make our study effective!

Approach the Bible Just Like Any Other Book

The Bible + Moby Dick:

Approaching the Bible like other pieces of literature is very important if we are going to understand it. If we were reading an autobiography, for example, we would focus on what the author revealed about himself or herself. We would evaluate statements and events in light of what we already know about the period when the author lived, and we would be looking for new insights. Likewise, when we read the Bible, we should seek to understand the author and his message in the context of ancient history and culture.

When we consider the importance of language, culture, and context, our understanding is enhanced and we can save ourselves from painful misinterpretations and misrepresentations of the text.

Read, Read, + Re-Read!

The problem for most Christians isn't that they can't understand what the Bible says, it's that they don't read the Bible as much as they should! Laziness is your biggest enemy in understanding and studying the Bible!

Devote your mind and heart to this BOOK. Though it may, at times bring more questions than answers, it will never let you down. Its truth is too powerful and its Author is too glorious to ever let that happen!

Plus, there are many tools and resources to help you on your journey of discovering and experience God through the text of the Scriptures.

Dig in and pursue truth!

Which Bible Translation Should I Use?

The following is a list of the most popular modern English "translations:"

One of the best Bible study tools we have in the English-speaking world is our various English translations. Translation always requires some interpretation because words and phrases, from one culture to the next and from one era to the next, do not always have an exact fit. So, translators will always have to do some thinking about which word or phrase best captures the intention of the original language or speaker. This is why we have different Bible translations. Because, more times than not, there are different ways to say it!

So, a great tool (free through www.biblegateway.com) is to compare one version to the next. Sometimes, saying

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New International Version (NIV), completed in 1978, updated in 1984 and then again in 2011, is the product of 115 evangelical scholars. Within a decade it quickly became the best-selling English version. It combines contemporary, literary English with traditional biblical vocabulary. The NIV is copyrighted by the International Bible Society.

English Standard Version (ESV) is an "essentially new literal translation" follows the tradition of the King James, American Standard Version, and Revised Standard Version. Published in 2001 by Crossway, it was developed by a translation team of more than 100 scholars, with the goal of being very accurate (word for word), and yet very readable.

Good News Bible (Today's English Version) (TEV), completed in 1976, was translated by Robert G. Bratcher with six other scholars. This very free, though very accurate, translation avoids the use of traditional biblical vocabulary and communicates especially well with youth and the unchurched. Also published by the American Bible Society.

The Message (Msg) - Eugene Peterson completed this paraphrase of the entire Bible in 2002. Peterson takes great liberties with words in his attempt to effectively communicate both the original thoughts and tone of the Scripture. The result is a very earthy, informal language. Published by NavPress.

New American Standard Bible (NASB) - completed in 1971, was produced by 54 conservative Protestant scholars sponsored by the Lockman Foundation. This version is very literal in vocabulary and word order, although the resulting English is quite wooden. It often is preferred by those who want an English version that reflects the grammar of the original. An Update was published in 1995 which seeks to use more modern English while preserving the literal nature of the translation.

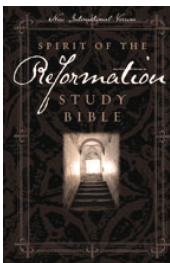
New King James Version (NKJV), released in 1982, involved 119 contributors. It updates the vocabulary and grammar of the King James Version, while preserving the classic style and beauty. Although it uses the same Hebrew and Greek texts as the original, it indicates where other manuscripts differ. Published by Thomas Nelson.

New Living Translation (NLT), published in 1996, is the product of 90 Bible scholars from around the world, from various theological backgrounds and denominations. This is a very readable translation, while remaining more faithful to the original texts than the Living Bible (see above). Also published by Tyndale.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) - published in 1989 by the National Council of Churches, revises the Revised Standard Version of 1952. While following the literal tradition of the RSV, the NRSV eliminates much of the archaic language. One distinctive is the use of gender inclusive pronouns to replace male pronouns when the original writers meant both men and women. The NRSV does not change masculine pronouns referring to God, however.

Finding the Right Tools

***These are examples of some of the right tools. Thankfully, there are many more! ***

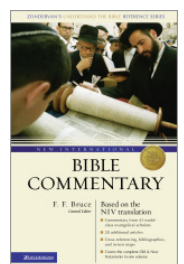


NIV Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible

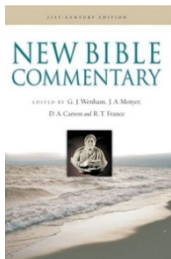
Now there's a Bible that incorporates the Reformation's theological heritage! (This Bible best represents many of theological distinctives of our church.) I encourage every household to have one of these study Bibles. This study Bible includes extensive study notes, articles on Reformed theology by some of the greatest teachers in the Body of Christ, complete texts of key Reformed confessions and catechisms, cross-references, a great concordance, introductions to each book of the Bible, maps, charts, and more! This study Bible (hard cover) costs \$30-\$40

New International Bible Commentary

This award winning commentary, published by Zondervan and edited by F.F. Bruce, is a phenomenal one! It is based on the NIV but can be used with any Bible version to help you understand a Bible text better. This commentary costs \$20-\$30.



Reading Bible for All Its Worth



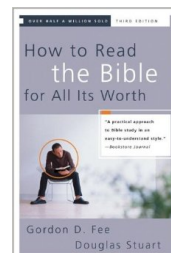
New Bible Commentary –21st Century Edition

This may be the best one-volume commentary available today! If you are just beginning a lifetime of Bible study, make sure you get a copy. It is an excellent tool for Bible study and very readable. This commentary is published by InterVarsity

Reading the Bible For All Its Worth

By Gordon Fee

Understanding the Bible isn't for the few, the gifted, the scholarly. The Bible is accessible. It's meant to be read and comprehended by everyone from armchair readers to seminary students. A few essential insights into the Bible can clear up a lot of misconceptions and help you grasp the meaning of Scripture and its application to your twenty-first-century life.



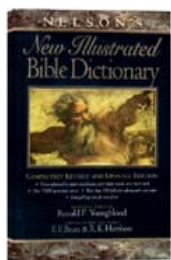
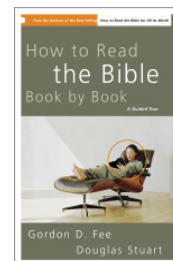
Zondervan's Handbook to the Bible

This helpful book has so many aids to help guide you through Scripture: a section-by-section outline of the Bible, 119 articles, a "Rapid Fact-Finder" to key people, places, events, and teachings, and more. Plus...it has pictures!

How to Read the Bible Book by Book

By Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart

This book helps people read the Bible as a whole; and even when the whole is narrowed to whole books, helps readers to see how each book fits into the grand Story of the Bible. In a sense, it's a "Guided Tour from Genesis through Revelation." This is a very helpful book by some very sound authors.



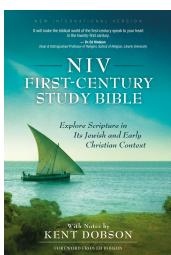
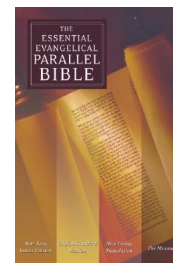
Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary

A Bible dictionary is very important for looking up not only key Biblical terms to help you understand an unfamiliar term, but this Bible dictionary has a vast amount of archeological & historical data, color pictures and maps, outlines and concise summaries for each book of the Bible and information about its authors.

Essential Evangelical Parallel Bible

The Essential Evangelical Parallel Bible enables readers to easily compare a quartet of modern translations that span the full range of approaches, from the most precise and literal to the most dynamic and reader-friendly. The New King James Version and English Standard Version permit close word-study, while the New Living Translation and The Message present the text as its earliest audiences might have experienced it. The complete texts of the four translations featured in this volume are conveniently displayed on facing pages with the same set of verses on each one. The EEPB is particularly noteworthy because it is the first parallel Bible to feature the updated NLT text.

(Or...you could just read the Bible with parallel versions for FREE at www.biblegateway.com.)



First Century Study Bible

The NIV First-Century Study Bible was created to help you understand God's Word in its original cultural context. It introduces you to an ancient world vastly different from your own, but rich in valuable life lessons. This Bible is designed with great tools to help answer your questions about life in Bible times. As you dive in, you'll see how the ancient past holds applicable truths for life today.