

ESSENTIAL BOOK LIST FOR BIBLE STUDENTS

These suggestions cover a wide variety of needs, from a theology student to an earnest young believer, so not all books are suitable for all people; some are intense, others are simple. It seems sensible to include 'heavier books' to help students move on as they progress and at least one book from each key section is required. I have avoided some categories of reading like: sermons, and counselling. If a person studies using these suggested tools they will soon be able to make their own judgments.

Choosing a Bible Translation

An important note on texts

NT translations stem from two sources: Alexandrian or Byzantine texts (= 'Received Text', 'Textus Receptus' or 'Traditional Text'; the Majority Text is very similar. There is also the 'Western Text' which Roman Catholics use and which contains slightly longer readings than the Received Text.). For nearly 2,000 years virtually all translations were from Byzantine texts which comprise 80-90% of the NT manuscripts; today most translations are from Alexandrian sources.

The change began with the hypothesis of Westcott and Hort in the late 19th century. They suggested that a revision of scripture texts occurred in the 4th century and only a very few recently discovered manuscripts represent earlier and more accurate sources than the traditional text. Two key problems with this: first that there is no historical evidence for this revision and secondly, the quotes in the early church Fathers (which cover virtually all the NT) clearly refer to Byzantine texts. There are good reasons to suspect that the Alexandrian texts are corrupted, despite being more ancient, especially as worn out old manuscripts were usually destroyed when new copies were made and the few manuscripts supporting the Alexandrian text often disagree with each other.

Why is this important? Although no major doctrine is affected by one or the other, there are very many differences between the two, the text of the revised versions (RV, RSV, NRSV NIV, NASB, Living Bible, Good News Bible etc) is missing verse portions roughly equating to the length of both Peter's letters, including 50 whole verses. Also, key verses supporting: Trinitarian doctrine, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, atonement and hell are lost. Versions based on Byzantine texts are KJV and NKJV (plus old versions like Geneva Bible, Matthew's Bible etc.).

A note on translations

There are two approaches to translating scripture texts. The first is to translate literally - word for word, the second is to paraphrase - to translate a verse to be more understandable to modern people (called dynamic equivalence). In the latter case, a study may be undertaken on a word in the English translation which may not even appear in the original. Some versions are total paraphrases (like the Good News Bible, Phillips NT, or the Living Bible), while others are less of a paraphrase (such as the NIV). Literal translations include the KJV, NKJV, RSV and NASB.

It is important to know about this background in order to choose your Bible translation. Reading various translations can help form a better understanding of passages, but accurate study can only be undertaken from a literal translation based on an accurate text.

My personal suggestion would be to use the *New King James Version* which is based on the Byzantine text and is uses the literal translation method.

Bible Study Aids

Study Bibles - these are Bibles which have marginal notes of variable quality. As they are uneven, they are not recommended. The most sound Reformed notes are found in the *New Geneva Bible*. Some of the study Bibles available are truly dreadful and follow vested interests - be warned. Some Bibles have additional technical references which are very useful like *The Thompson's Chain Reference Bible*. Others like: *The Newberry Study Bible* and *The Zodiates Hebrew-Greek Study Bible* (both KJV) have lots of help to understand the original languages accessed via marginal symbols and notes.

Concordances - alphabetical listings of Bible words showing where and how often these occur, and what they mean in Hebrew and Greek.

Young's Concordance is extremely helpful in its layout but *Strong's* has all Biblical words coded which helps in the use of other reference works which use the same code. Both are based on the KJV. [New editions of

Young's have added Strong's numbers.] Other translations have their own concordances. A topical concordance lists verses under subject matter rather than actual words. Examples would be: *Holman's*, *Nave's* and *Zondervan*. The *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* gives cross-references and parallel passages to every chapter in the Bible.

Bible Dictionaries - alphabetical listings and explanations of Bible topics.

Smith's Bible Dictionary, the original three-volume work is now available cheaply in one volume.

Baker's Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible

Unger's Dictionary of the Bible

Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia

The Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible

Baker Encyclopaedia of the Bible

International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia

Westminster Dictionary of the Bible

Theological dictionaries - alphabetical listings of Biblical teaching.

The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (pub. Baker)

The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (pub. Baker)

The New IVP Dictionary of Theology

Some advanced theological dictionaries are based upon the Greek or Hebrew words and are listed in those languages: *Kittel's Theological Dict. of the NT* (10 vols or 1 vol summary), *Brown's Dict. of NT Theology* (pub. Paternoster), *Van Gemeren's New International Dict. of OT Theology & Exegesis* (pub. Paternoster).

Bible languages - books to help you identify what words mean in the original text

Greek: Some reference works are based upon the books of the Bible like: *Vincent's Word Studies in the NT*, *Robertson's Word Pictures* or *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek NT*. Others are arranged like an English dictionary like: *Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words* (some editions include some OT words), and *Bullinger's Critical Lexicon and Concordance*. For advanced study, some lexicons are listed according to the Greek alphabet like: *Thayer's Greek English lexicon* (some editions coded to Strong's), *Baur's Lexicon* and various analytical Greek lexicons (which also identify tenses etc.). With these one really needs an interlinear NT which has the Greek words printed under the English text. There are a variety of these. The Nelson edition of the NKJV Eng/Gk is excellent (*NKJ Greek-English Interlinear NT*) as it has many useful notes and identifies words which are connected in Greek to one English word. Some books discuss various important Greek words such as: *Girdlestone's Greek Synonyms*, *Trench's Synonyms of the NT* and *Earle's Word Meanings of the NT*.

Hebrew: This is more difficult to study and requires more work. The basic Hebrew lexicon is that of *Gesenius* supplemented by the *Brown-Driver-Briggs*. Easier to access is the *Wigram's New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance* (all available coded to Strong's). Interlinear Heb/Eng works are available. *Wilson's OT Word Studies* is helpful but much similar material can also be found in *Young's Concordance*.

Recent CD Rom works and websites have made the study of Greek and Hebrew texts much easier. These come with some of the above mentioned works connected to search engines for use with a variety of Bible translations. The best ones will identify syntax as well as word meanings.

Interpretation

EXEGESIS is the method of discovering what the text actually says by using principles of grammar, translation, comparison and so on. PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION (HERMENEUTICS) are the Biblical rules for determining what this actually means.

Principles of Interpretation, Berkhof

Interpretation of the Scriptures, Pink

Exegetical Fallacies, Carson

Bible Hermeneutics, Terry

Mention should also be made of Bullinger's *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* which identifies all the variations of this important aspect of grammar which can revolutionise one's approach to a passage.

Bible Handbooks

Background on Biblical matters (history, geography, culture etc.)

Simple

Understanding the Bible, John Stott
Unger's Bible Handbook
The Lion Handbook of the Bible
Baker's Pictorial Introduction to the Bible
Christian Handbook, Peter Jeffrey

More complex

The New Bible Handbook, Manley (IVP)
The Bible Handbook, Angus
Bible Handbook, Halley

Introductions to the Bible

Summaries of the Bible's message.

Simple

The Message of the OT, Ellison
The New Testament, Gresham Machen
The Message of the NT, FF Bruce
The Teaching of the NT, Guthrie
Know Your Bible, Scroggie
Survey of the Bible, Hendriksen

More complex

Introduction to the OT, Young
A Short Intro. to the Pentateuch, Aalders
NT Introduction, Guthrie
NT Survey, Tenney
Survey of the NT, Gundry
New Intro. to the NT, Carson et. al.

Biblical typology

The figurative, symbolical and metaphorical in scripture.

Christ in All the Scriptures, Hodgkin
The Tabernacle, Priesthood and Offerings, Soltau
The Vessels and the Furniture, Soltau
The Tabernacle, Brown
The Temple, Edersheim
Christology of OT, Hengstenberg
Preaching From the Types, Keach
The Shadow of Christ, Poythress

Manners and Customs

Illustrated Dictionary of Manners and Customs (pub. Lakeland)
Everyday Life in NT Times, Barquet
Everyday Life in OT Times, Heaton
Everyday life in the Holy Land.
Ancient Israel, Its Life & Institutions, De Vaux
Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Edersheim
Manners & Customs of the Bible, Freeman

Bible History

Israel and the Nations, FF Bruce (explains the 400 year interval between the OT and NT)
History of Israel, Davis & Whitcomb
Historical Survey of the OT (now entitled *A Kingdom of Priests*), Merrill
Survey of Israel's History, Wood
OT Bible History, Edersheim
Works of Josephus

Bible Geography

Baker's Bible Atlas
Holman's Concise Bible Atlas
Moody Atlas of Bible Lands
Zondervan Pictorial Bible Atlas
Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands
Historical geography of the Bible, Smith
The Land and The Book, Thomson
Nelson's Book of Bible Maps and Charts

Apologetics

The defence of the faith in practical terms.

General

Many Infallible Proofs, Morris
Handbook of Christian Apologetics, Kreeft & Tacelli
Evidence That Demands a Verdict, (Vol 1 & Vol 2) McDowell
Defence of the Faith, Godet
Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible, Haley
The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, Thiele
The Doorway Papers (Vol 1-10), Culance

The resurrection

Who Moved the Stone? F. Morrison
Easter Enigma, Wenham

Creation vs evolution

The Genesis Flood, Whitcomb & Morris
Man's Origin Man's Destiny, Wilder Smith
Early Earth, Whitcomb
The Collapse of Evolution, Huse
The Answers Book, Ham
The Long War Against God, H Morris
The Biblical Basis of Modern Science, H Morris
The Lie: Evolution, Ham
Biblical Creationism, H Morris
Ape-Man, Fact or Fallacy, Bowden
The Rise of the Evolution Fraud, Bowden
True Science Agrees With The Bible, Bowden

Theology

Doctrinal summaries of what the Bible teaches.

Sound Creeds and confessions of faith - these expressions of the church sought to explain their basis of faith ('Confession'), give a short summary of Christian belief ('Creed') or disciple the young via a series of questions and answers ('Catechism'). There are very many of them; the best include:

The Westminster Confession of Faith (Anglican Puritan)
The Larger and Shorter Westminster Catechisms (Anglican Puritan)
The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith (UK Baptist)

The Heidelberg Catechism (European Calvinism)
The Savoy Declaration (Congregationalism)
The Canons of the Synod of Dordt (European Calvinism)
The Belgic Confession (European Calvinism)
The Nicene Creed (Ancient Christian)
The Apostles' Creed (Ancient Christian)
The Athanasian Creed (Ancient Christian)

Simple systematic theology

Summary of Christian Doctrine, Berkhof (US Presbyterian)
The Westminster Confession of Faith, Williamson
The Shorter Westminster Catechism, Williamson
Truth for All Time, Calvin
Elemental Theology, Bancroft (US Baptist)
Essentials of the Christian Faith, Sproul (US Presbyterian)
Foundations of the Christian Faith, Boice (US Presbyterian)
Know the Truth, Milne (UK Baptist)
What the Scriptures Teach, Kevan (UK Baptist)

More complex systematic theology

A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith, Reymond (Modern American)
Systematic Theology, Berkhof (Dutch American Presbyterian)
Systematic Theology, Dabney (Southern States American Presbyterian)
Body of Divinity, Watson (Anglican Puritan)
Outlines of Theology, AA Hodge (American Presbyterian)
Systematic Theology Charles Hodge (American Presbyterian)
Manual of Theology, Dagg (American Baptist)
Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Turretin (European Calvinism)
Institutes of the Christian Religion, Calvin (European Calvinism)
Reformed Dogmatics, Hoeksema (Dutch American Presbyterian)
Dogmatic Theology, Shedd (US Presbyt.)
Discussions, Dabney

Key specific doctrines

The Doctrine of God, Bavinck
The Attributes of God, Pink
The Trinity, Bickersteth
The Person & Work of Christ, Warfield
The Virgin Birth, Machen
Christ Before the Manger, Rhodes
Christ Our Penal Substitute, Dabney
Christ Ascended, Donne
The Office & Work of the Holy Spirit, Buchanan
The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Smeaton
The Sovereignty of God, Pink (unabridged edition - Baker, USA)
Predestination, Boettner
Chosen by God, Sproul
The Sovereignty of Grace, Custance
God's Everlasting Covenant of Grace, Hanko
The Unfolding Mystery, Clowney
The Deeper Faith, Girod
Imputation of Adam's Sin, J Murray
Redemption Accomplished & Applied, J Murray
Justification, Buchanan
Atonement, Martin
The Five Points of Calvinism, Dabney & Dickinson
The Five Points of Calvinism, Steele & Thomas
Hyper-Calvinism & the Call of the Gospel, Engelsma
Repentance, Watson
The Bondage of the Will, Luther
Regeneration, Charnock

Five Views of Sanctification, (Various)
Sanctification, Pink
The Church, Clowney
Paul's Idea of Community, Banks
The Healing Promise, Mayhue
Satan Cast Out, Leahy
The Doctrine of Endless Punishment, Shedd
The Momentous Event, Grier
Meaning of the Millennium, Clouse
Prophecy & the Church, Allis
The Bible on the Life Hereafter, Hendriksen
The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, Warfield
Thy Word is Truth, Young
The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, Pache
Accuracy of Translation, Martin
Early Christian Doctrines, Kelly

Key Bible commentaries

Explanations about Bible books.

Whole Bible or Testament

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible (unabridged version)
Barnes Notes on the Bible
Calvin's Commentaries
Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Faussett and Brown
Commentary on the Holy Bible, Matthew Poole
Studies in the OT & NT, Godet
OT Bible Characters, FB Meyer
Commentary on the OT, Keil & Delitzsch
Lenski's NT Commentaries
Wilson's NT Commentaries
Hendriksen's NT Commentaries
Kistemaker's NT Commentaries
Eerdman's New International Commentary on the Old and New Testament
Paternoster's Commentary on the NT Greek Text

Specific Bible books

God Spake by Moses, Allis
The Five Books of Moses, Allis
Genesis, Calvin
Types in Genesis, Jukes
Genesis, Aalders
Gospel in Genesis, Law
The Genesis Record, H Morris
Genesis Studies, Candlish
Genesis, Leupold
Gleanings in Genesis, Pink
Gleanings in Exodus, Pink
Exodus, Gispem
Leviticus, Bonar
Leviticus, Nordtzu
Sacrificial Worship, Kurtz
Law of the Offerings, Jukes
Deuteronomy, Ridderbos
Joshua, Woudstra
Elijah, Krummacher
Elisha, Krummacher
Elijah, Pink
Life of David, Pink
Psalms, Horne
Psalms, Perowne

Psalms, Plumer
Proverbs, Arnot
Proverbs, Bridges
Ecclesiastes, Bridges
Eccles. & Song of Solomon, Olyott
Isaiah, Alexander
Isaiah, Leupold
Ezekiel, Fairbairn
Daniel, Young
Jonah, Martin
Minor Prophets, Hailey
12 Minor Prophets, Henderson
Haggai-Malachi, Moore
Zechariah, Leupold
Four Gospels, Brown
Harmony of the Gospels, Boettner
Life & Times of Jesus the Messiah, Edersheim
Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Ryle
Matthew, Ridderbos
Matthew, Carson (Expositors Series)
Luke, Geldenhuys
John, Leon Morris
John, Pink
John, Meyer
Beatitudes, Pink
Sermon on the Mount, Pink
Sermon on the Mount, Lloyd-Jones
Lord's Prayer, Watson
When I Survey, Hoeksema
Acts, Alexander
Life & Epistles of Paul, Conybeare & Howson
Harmony of the Life of Paul, Goodwin
Paul, Apostle of the Free Spirit, Bruce
Acts, Stott
Acts, Alexander
Romans, Haldane
Romans, Lloyd-Jones (series)
Romans, Hodge
Romans Leon Morris
1 Corinthians, Leon Morris
2 Corinthians, Hughes
Galatians, Ridderbos
Galatians, Luther
Ephesians, Hodge
Ephesians, Lloyd-Jones (series)
Ephesians-Colossians, Bruce
Philippians, FB Meyer
Colossians, Eadie
Thessalonians, Eadie
Hebrews, Pink
James, Johnstone
Peter & Jude, Luther
1 Peter, Leighton
Jude, Manton
John's Letters, Candlish
John's Letters, Findlay
Behold, He Cometh, Hoeksema
Revelation Spiritually Understood, Alexander
Revelation (More Than Conquerors), Hendriksen

Church history

Simple overviews

The Lion Handbook of Church History
The Pilgrim Church, Broadbent
Five Pioneer Missionaries (pub. Banner of Truth)
Five English Reformers, Ryle
Five Christian Leaders, Ryle
The Great Reformation, Jones
The Spreading Flame, FF Bruce
A Short History of the Early Church, Boer
A History of Protestantism, Wylie
A Short History of the Church, Hurlet

More complex overviews

History of the Christian Church, Walker
Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity, Ferguson
The Reformation, D'Aubigne
The Reformation in England, D'Aubigne
Ecclesiastical History, Von Moshier
Historical Theology, Cunningham

Specific aspects

The Reformers & Their Stepchildren, Verduin
The Anabaptist Story, Estep
Foxe's Book of Martyrs
Men of the Covenant, Smellie
The English Reformation, Dickens
The Welsh Revival, Evans
Jonathan Edwards on Revival
Evangelical Revival in the 18th century, Haykin
Revival & Revivalism, Murray
The Great Awakening, Tracy
A Short History of the Baptists, Vedder
A Popular History of the Free Churches, Horne
The Puritans, Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Biographies (various authors)

The Life of Calvin (esp. Beza's)
John G Paton
John Bunyan
David Brainerd
William Carey
George Muller
Adoniram Judson
Hudson Taylor
George Whitefield
Robert Murray M'Cheyne
Charles Haddon Spurgeon
Martin Luther
John Wycliffe
William Tyndale
William Grimshaw
John Wesley
Henry Martin
J O Fraser
CT Studd
Mary Slessor
Joni Eareckson

Polemical

Works which are controversial or which contend for the faith.

Christianity in Crisis, Hanegraaff
Counterfeit Revival, Hanegraaff
No Place for the Truth, Wells
God in the Wasteland, Wells
Seduction of Christianity, Hunt & McMahon
The New Spirituality, Hunt & McMahon
Kingdom of the Cults, Martin
Drift into Deception, Lawless
Romanism, Zins
Roman Catholicism, Boettner
Signs & Wonders Mvt. Exposed, Glover
Power Religion, Carson
The Agony of Deceit, Horton
The Toronto Blessing, Mikhael

Practical issues

Principles of Conduct, Murray
Evangelical Ethics, Davis
How to Overcome Evil, Adams
The Pilgrim's Progress, Bunyan
Keeping the Heart, Flavel
Trusting God, Bridges
Pursuit of Holiness, Bridges
Sanctification, Pink
Prayer, Bunyan
Guide to Fervent Prayer, Pink
The Normal Christian Life, Nee
What Shall This Man Do? Nee
The Mystery of Providence, Flavel
Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices, Brooks
Practical Christianity, Pink
The Life of Faith, Pink
Fundamental Questions of the Christian Life, Sparks
What is Man, Sparks

Devotional

Revival Sermons, Burns
Handbook of Revivals, Fish
The Christian In Complete Armour, Gurnall
Discovering God's Will, Ferguson
Our Sufficiency in Christ, MacArthur
All Things For Good, Watson
Profiting From the Word, Pink
Guide to Fervent Prayer, Pink
Great Themes of the Bible, Henry
Communion With God, Henry
Communion With God, Owen/Law
Shadow of Calvary, Martin
The Letters of John Newton
Towards Spiritual Maturity, Still
What is Faith, Machen
Knowledge of the Holy, Tozer

Finally

Some practical advice:

- Many of these books can be found in second-hand bookshops. Good Christian second-hand bookshops include: Geneva Books (mail order, London), Academy Bookshop (Southsea), Gowan Books (<http://www.gowanbooks.com/>).
- Check Amazon and The Book Depository on the Web.
- Search charity shops, you'll be amazed what you can find.
- Discounted Christian bookshops include: The Metropolitan Tabernacle (South London: <http://www.tabernaclebookshop.org/>), and ICM Discount Books (<http://www.icmbooks.co.uk/>).
- Books that are sound on one subject may contain doctrine which is erroneous in other areas. For instance: Hunt and McMahon's books give valuable information on modern errors and yet are fiercely anti-Calvinistic, pro Charismatic (of the 'moderate' variety) and pro Dispensationalism.
- Some authors who are criticised by many Reformed writers still have valuable things to say on the Christian walk, such as: Richard Baxter, Watchman Nee, AW Tozer, T Austin Sparks.
- Read widely, check everything.

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