

Bibles and Serious Study Resources

by Donald Edwards

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Bibles

Choosing a Bible translation today can seem daunting, especially to the neophyte. In fact it is an excellent idea to have a number of different translations at your disposal. My favorite study bible for decades has been *The Open Bible* (TOB) in the New American Standard Version (NAS or NASB)¹.

- ♦ *The Open Bible* gives you comprehensive informational introductions on the author, dating, Christology, etc. It also gives you great chapter notes, many by Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) theologians. The Open Bible is a word-for-word translation from original language manuscripts and it is written at about an 11th grade level.
- ♦ *The English Standard Version* is also an excellent translation. It too is a word-for-word translation from original language manuscripts. It is a little more contemporary in its use of English and written at about a seventh grade level.
- ♦ The *New International Version Bible* (NIV) is quite popular. While it is translated from original language manuscripts it is a priority to word translation rather than meaning verse for verse – that is, it doesn't adhere as closely to translating exact words, but rather the thought verse to verse.
- ♦ A variation of the above is *Today's New International Version* (TNIV). To me this is the "politically correct" version. It *gender neutral* and is not a Bible you need on your shelf in my opinion, even for daily study and certainly not for serious exegetical or hermeneutical study.
- ♦ The (KJV) is a direct translation, but is just too archaic in its 17th Century vocabulary and word order. Some of the English words utilized when it was translated now mean the exact opposite. I believe it is written at about a 12th grade level.
- ♦ The *New King James Version* (NKJV) is a direct priority to word translation and while the language is more contemporary it maintains some 17th Century sentence structure which doesn't flow as well. It maintains about a 9th grade reading level.

In my opinion paraphrases are good for devotions and secondary sources of study, but as they are *not* direct translations I don't recommend them for study. A couple of good ones are:

- ♦ *The Living Bible* with about an 8th grade vocabulary and translated by Kenneth N. Taylor. It was written with the intent of personal devotional use only.
- ♦ *God's Word* has about a 5th – 6th grade level with a priority to meaning philosophy.

¹ Thomas Nelson, ed. (World Publishing).

Reference Library

Primary sources are really **must haves** for every Christian. It means spending some dinero, but the right resources are critical.

Clearly this list not all inclusive list and is merely the compiler's opinion, but it is opinion derived from recommendations from seminary professors (as in PhD's) and empirically. As a general rule books from faculty and graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), and Southern Evangelical Seminary for the most part come from a conservative biblical perspective. Most books from Liberty University and Seminary are also good and possibly Biola University. These general suggestions are obviously broad sweeps, but just because a book is sold in a Christian bookstore doesn't mean its theology or doctrine is solid.

Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

A good basic "how to" book for learning correct methodology for interpreting Scripture is *Living by the Book*, Howard Hendricks & William Hendricks, (Moody Press).

Primary:

- ♦ *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (needs to match the translation of the Bible you study with)
- ♦ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, Warren Baker, Eugene Carpenter, (AMG Publishers)
- ♦ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates, (AMG Publishers)
- ♦ *The Hebrew-Greek Keyword Study Bible*, ed. Spiro Zodiates (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers).

Secondary:

- ♦ *When Critics Ask*, Norman Geisler & Thomas Howe (Baker Books)

Commentaries

Primary:

- ♦ *The Bible Knowledge Commentaries, Old Testament*, John Walvoord & Roy Zuck, (Chariot Victor Publishing)
- ♦ *The Bible Knowledge Commentaries, New Testament*, John Walvoord & Roy Zuck, (Chariot Victor Publishing)

Theology

- ♦ *Systematic Theology*, vols. 1-8 (now combined into 4 volumes), Lewis Sperry Chafer (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 1976). *Chafer is a conservative, dispensational scholar.*
- ♦ *Systematic Theology*, vols. I-III, Charles Hodge (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). *Theologically Hodge comes from the Reformed tradition.*

Apologetics

Primary:

- ♦ *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999). Classical Apologetics
- ♦ *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999). Classical Apologetics
- ♦ *The Kingdom of the Cults* (updated), Walter Martin, Ravi Zacharias, ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2003) The title says it all.

Secondary:

- ♦ *Faith Has Its Reasons*, Kenneth D. Boa and Robert Bowman Jr., (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2001). Classical Apologetics
- ♦ Francis Schaeffer is also good, however he comes from a Reformed background theologically and takes Presuppositional apologetics stance, as opposed to Classical Apologetics.

General

- ♦ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, gen. ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vols. 1-4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1979), also available on CD.

Software

[Logos Bible Software](#) is also an excellent resource and has various levels and pricing.