

How to Study the Bible



What is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of books,
written by many authors over roughly
1,500 years.

The word "Bible", comes from the
Greek **τὰ βιβλία**, which literally
means:

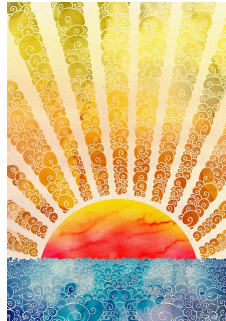
"the books."

Think of it as a kind of library:
God's library for humanity!

Why is reading the Bible
important to the follower of
Jesus Christ?

For the prophecy came not in old
time by the will of man: but holy
men of God spake as they were
moved by the Holy Ghost.
2nd Peter 1:21

Wherewithal shall a young man
cleanse his way? by taking heed
thereto according to thy word.
Psalm 119:9



For the word of God is quick, and
powerful, and sharper than any
twoedged sword, piercing even to the
dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and
of the joints and marrow, and is a
discerner of the thoughts and intents of
the heart.
Hebrews 4:12

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.
Psalm 119:105

In the beginning was the Word, and
the Word was with God, and the
Word was God.
John 1:1

Where to start?

Read

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
2 Timothy 3:16-17

Read

Read!

Try the 30 day challenge if not already with other sisters and brothers, reading 30 minutes a day.



There is no ‘right answer’ on ‘where to start’, but the Gospels are a great suggestion. Try the Gospel of John first. Why? Because other than being full of spiritual insights into the Christian faith and the life of Jesus, it has some of the most straightforward language in the New Testament.

After the Gospels, these are great suggestions:

Ephesians

1st John

1st Peter

1st & 2nd Timothy

1st & 2nd Thessalonians

Philippians

The Book of Acts

Psalms

Genesis

Get into a habit of reading everyday.

For some this might be a challenge, especially if you were not particularly keen readers before being born again. The 30 day challenge will help with this, where communal support is provided. Alternately, set your own goal of reading perhaps three chapters a day, or two chapters and a psalm. Done quickly, this might take 10-15 minutes. Reading in the morning means you have completed your goal before the workday has begun. Obviously, the primary recommendation is to read as much as you can daily. Indeed, as you develop as a Christian, naturally you will take more time to study your Bible (even hours at a time!) – but for a beginner, just getting a habit of regular reading (ideally every day) is important.



Once you have read all the books, and have a very good grounding in the Gospels and Paul's letters such as 1st John and Ephesians (reading multiple times), then reading the Bible from cover to cover is a great way to become familiar with the full story of humanity and redemption. A full reading will give you the historical foundation to understand much of the New Testament's imagery and subtext.

Keep in mind: while the Gospels and some of Paul's letters will resonate with you profoundly at first (being born again and filled with the Holy Spirit), do not expect to understand everything in the Bible more generally - indeed, expect to be perplexed and challenged by much of the Bible's literature. Nevertheless, keep reading!

The overall aim is to read the **entire** Bible. Once you have acclimated yourself with the foundational books, it's okay to switch between books. Make a list on which books you have already read, and aim to complete the books you haven't. Taking notes on what you have read is very helpful.

Important! When reading, be led by the Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit help interpret the language of the Bible and its moral precepts. Prayer while reading is the healthy addition which will help the process of understanding.



Once you have read the Bible, then it's time to slow down your reading a little.

What do I mean?

At first, quantity is important – it's good to get a grasp of God's full message presented in the Bible, and to be well acclimated with the Gospel stories and Paul's letters.

However, once this is achieved, a more thoughtful, studied, and 'meditative' approach is necessary.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
2nd Timothy 2:15.



Beginner Summary

The Bible is designed to teach people how to know God and how to live in a way that pleases Him. It provides guidance for Christian morality by showing God's character, giving His commands, offering wisdom for daily life, and providing the example and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Or even more simply:

The Bible is a guide for Christian morality because it teaches what is right and wrong, explains why it matters, and shows believers how to love God and love others.

You can think of it in four parts:

- 1. It reveals God's character** – Christians learn what is good by seeing who God is: holy, just, loving, faithful, and merciful.
- 2. It gives moral instruction** – Through laws, wisdom literature (such as Proverbs), the prophets, and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, the Bible teaches virtues like honesty, humility, forgiveness, compassion, and justice.
- 3. It provides examples** – The lives of biblical figures show both faithful obedience and the consequences of sin, giving positive and negative examples to learn from.
- 4. It points to Christ** – Jesus is the perfect example of how to live. We know that following His life and teachings is the foundation of Christian morality.

The Next Level

As you get deeper into biblical precepts you will naturally have more questions. These questions will usually concern aspects on Christian living, Jesus' moral teaching, the dangers of sin, the history of the faith, etc. This is a natural step, and deeper study is therefore required.



Cross-referencing: how Scripture interprets Scripture

Cross-referencing is the process of tracing related verses throughout the Bible to gain a fuller understanding of a passage by seeing how God's revelation develops and remains consistent across Scripture.

Start with **Psalm 23**:

"The Lord is my shepherd."

Cross-reference:

- **Ezekiel 34** – God promises to shepherd His people.
- **John 10** – Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd."
- **Hebrews 13:20** – Jesus is "the great Shepherd of the sheep."
- **1 Peter 5:4** – Jesus is the "Chief Shepherd."
- **Revelation 7:17** – the Lamb shepherds His people forever.

Together, these passages reveal a unified biblical theme: the Lord who shepherded Israel is revealed in the New Testament as Jesus Christ.

Memorisation

1. Choose Short Passages First - Start with one or two verses rather than whole chapters. Build confidence before tackling longer passages.

2. Understand Before You Memorise - Study the verse first. Knowing its context and meaning makes it much easier to remember.

3. Repeat Aloud - Read the verse aloud several times. Speaking engages different parts of your memory than silent reading.

4. Break It into Sections - Learn one phrase at a time, then join the phrases together.

Example:

"The Lord is my shepherd"

→ "I shall not want."

→ Then combine both parts.

5. Write It Down- Writing the verse by hand reinforces memory and helps you notice every word.

6. Review Regularly - Review yesterday's verse before learning today's. Regular revision is more important than learning large amounts quickly.

7. Use the Verse in Prayer- Turn the words into prayer. Personal engagement helps move the verse from your memory into your heart.

8. Recite Throughout the Day - Repeat the verse while walking, driving, or doing household tasks. Frequent, brief reviews are very effective.

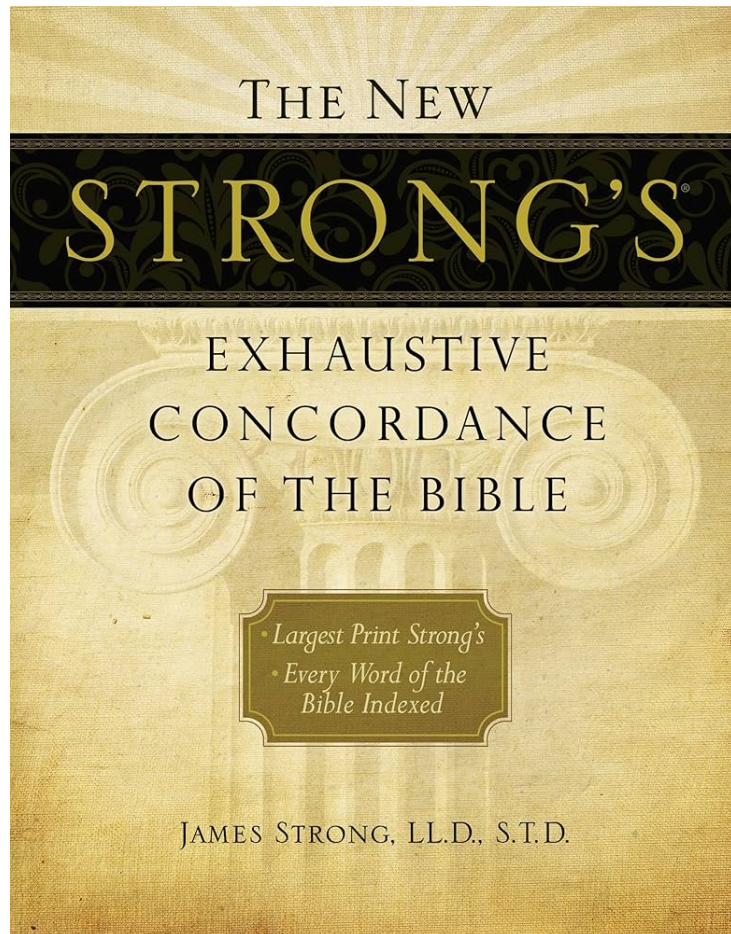
9. Connect Related Passages - Memorise verses on the same theme together (e.g., faith, hope, forgiveness). This creates meaningful associations.

10. Aim for Application

Ask:

- What does this teach me about God?
- What does it teach me about myself?
- How should I live differently today?

Applying the verse strengthens both understanding and recall.



Biblical Themes:

Themes are recurring truths—such as covenant, kingdom, sacrifice, redemption, or holiness—that develop throughout Scripture and help us understand how the Bible's books fit together.

A concordance helps you find Bible verses by looking up key words, making it easier to study what the Bible says about a particular subject.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible is a classic.

Word Studies:

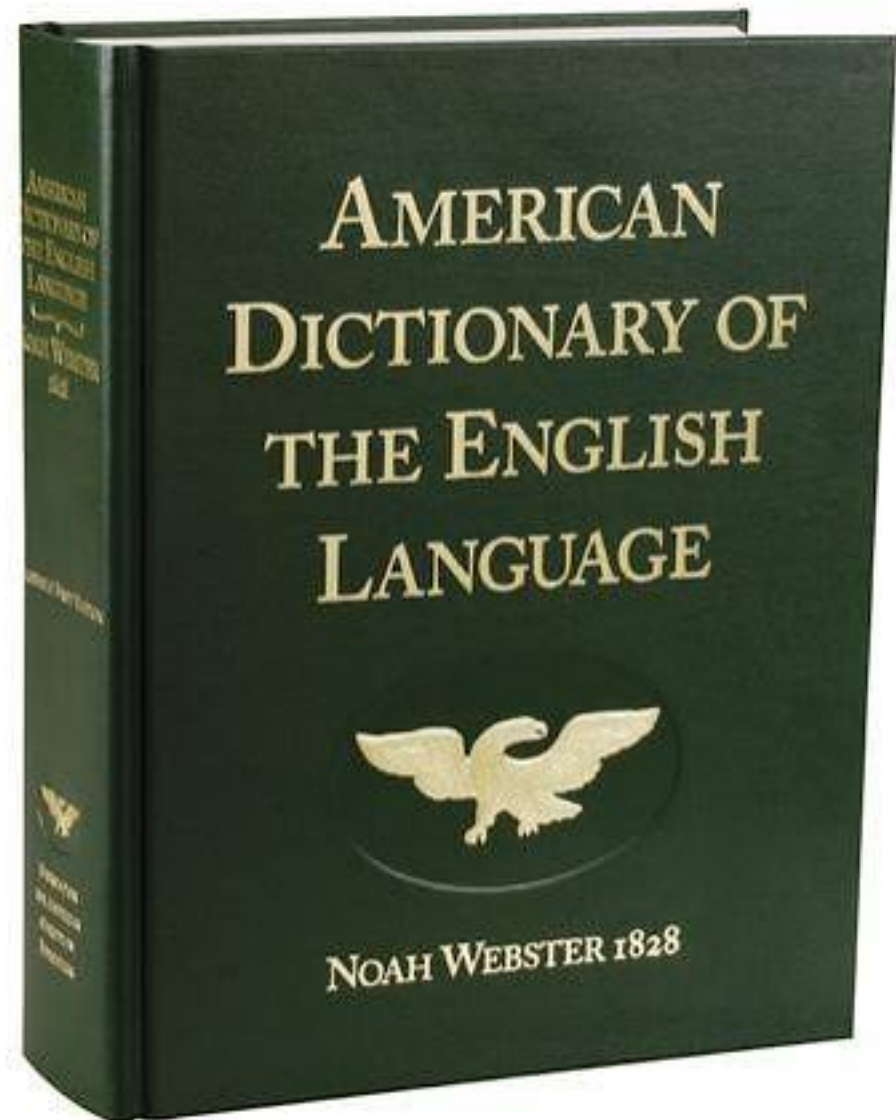
The Bible was first written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Having a good dictionary can help understand Biblical words.

Noah Webster's 1828

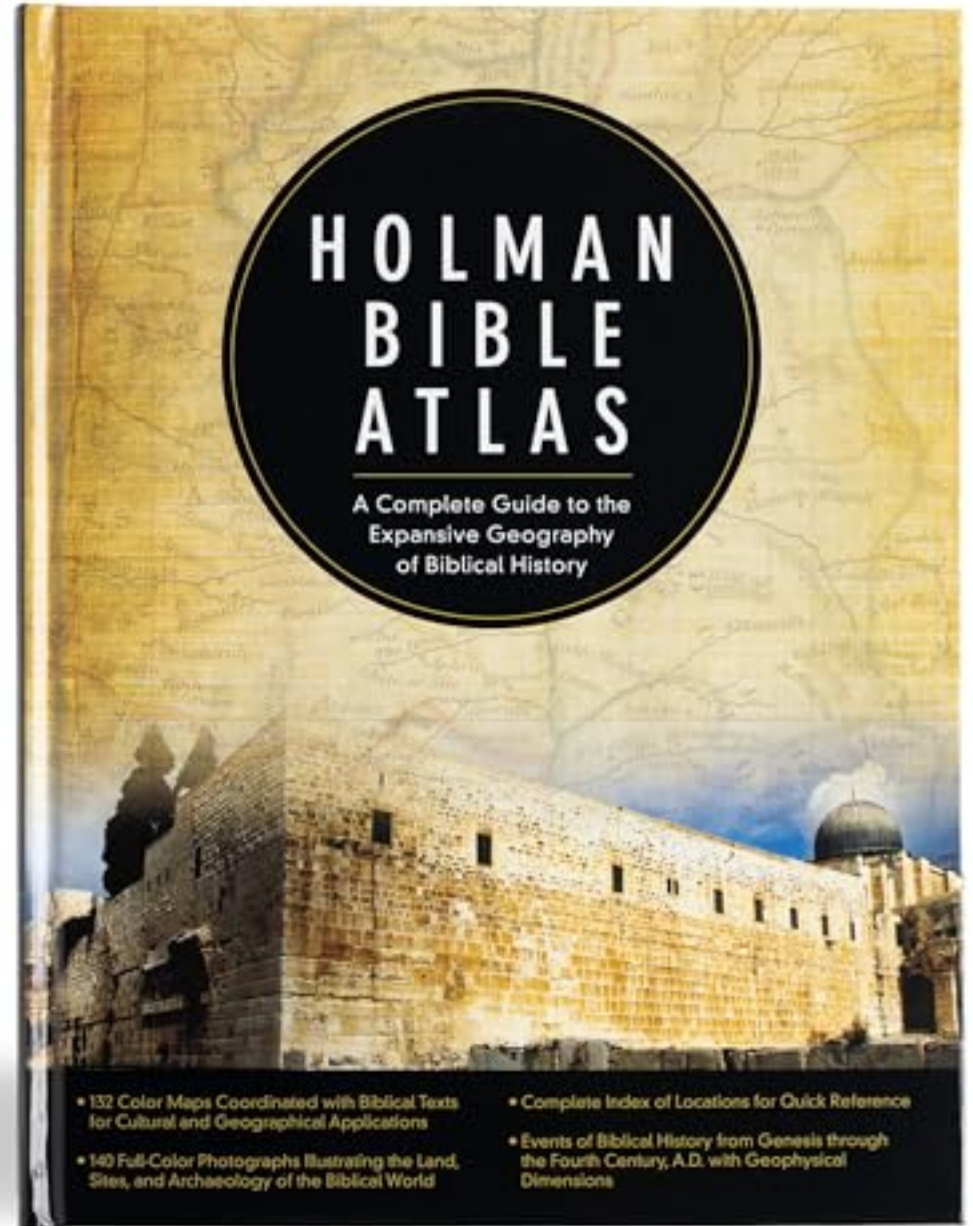
American Dictionary of the English Language is a great place to start.

It will give you the etymology of the words of the Bible (KJV).



Bible Atlas:

The Holman Bible Atlas is a great entry level atlas which will help you understand the geography of the biblical narrative.



Bible Commentaries

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible is a massive, classic commentary series written by the American Presbyterian minister and theologian Albert Barnes (1798–1870).

Joseph Benson's (1749–1821) Biblical Commentary is written by the excellent Methodist scholar.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers is a classic, multi-volume Bible study set edited by Charles John Ellicott featuring verse-by-verse explanations written by 28 different Victorian scholars.

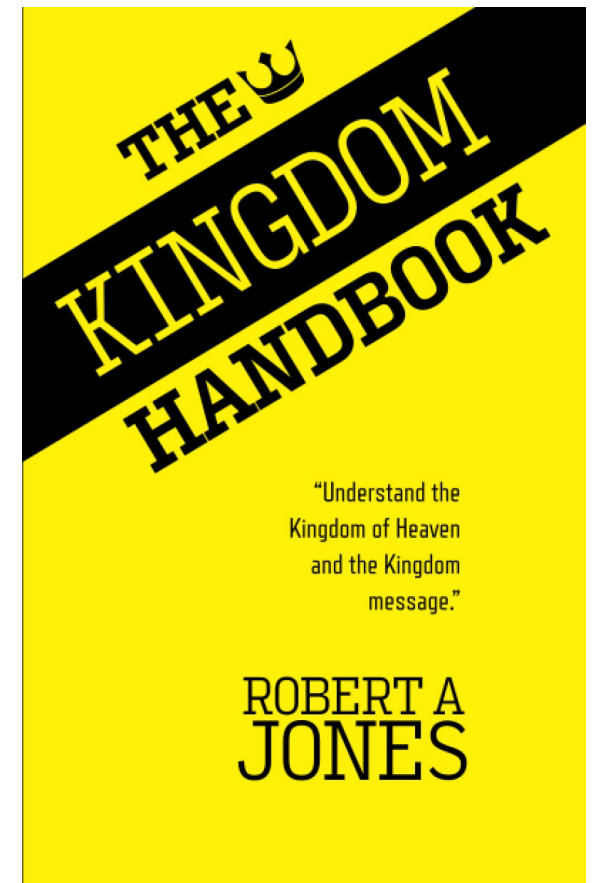
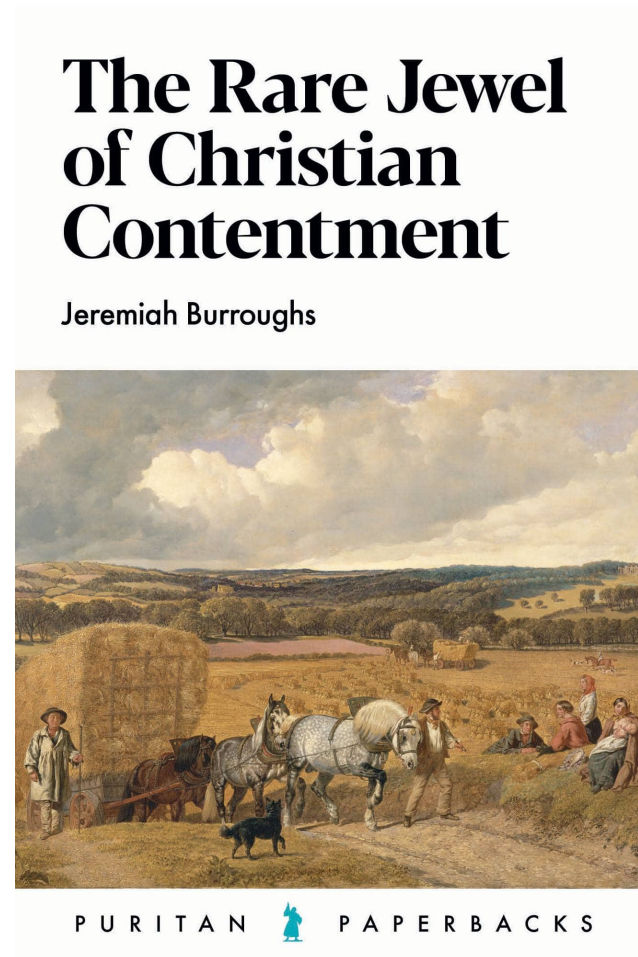
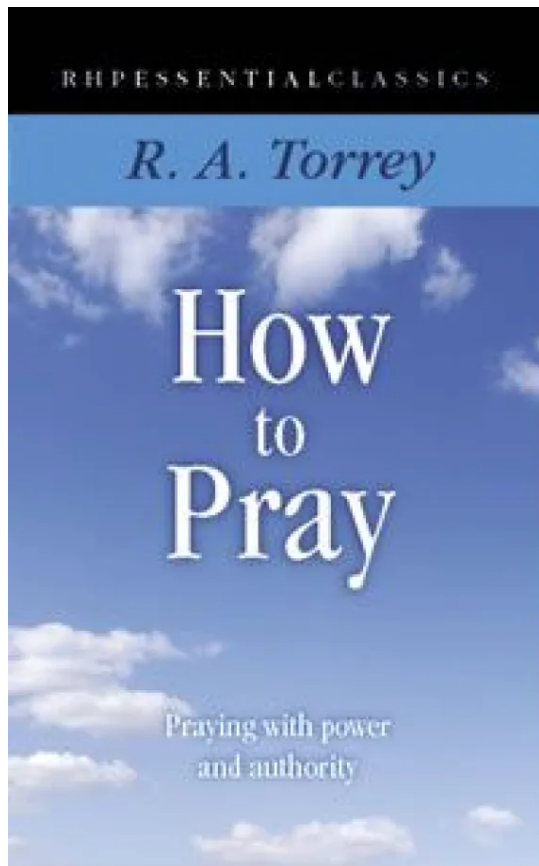
Matthew Poole's Commentary (properly titled *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*) is a classic, verse-by-verse English biblical work written by the 17th-century English Puritan theologian Matthew Poole.

biblehub.com

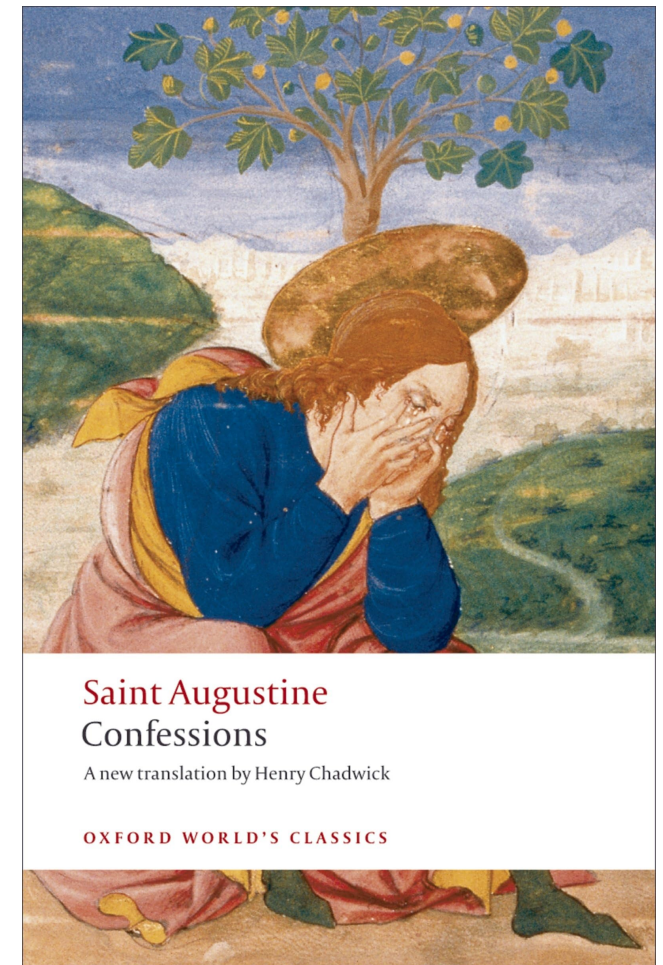
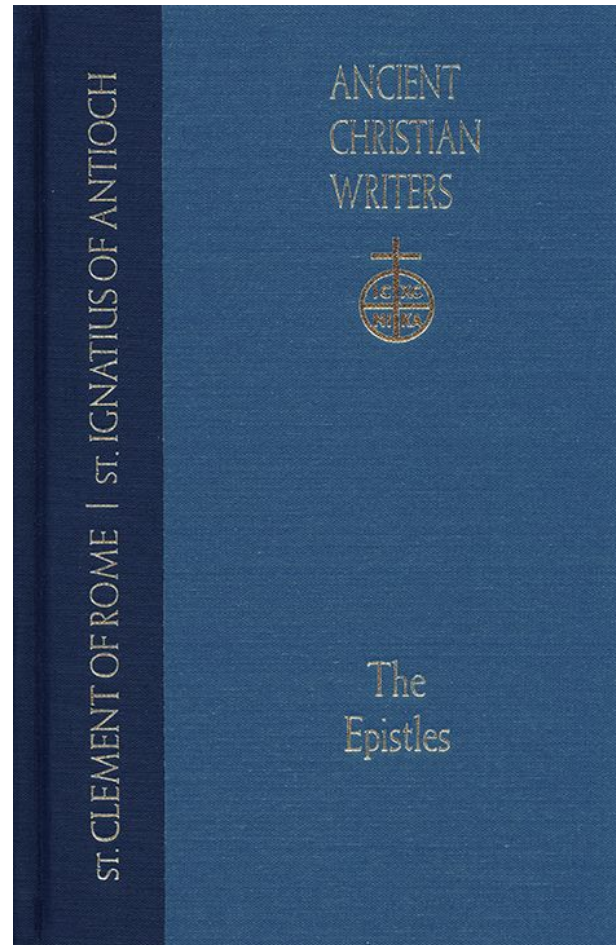
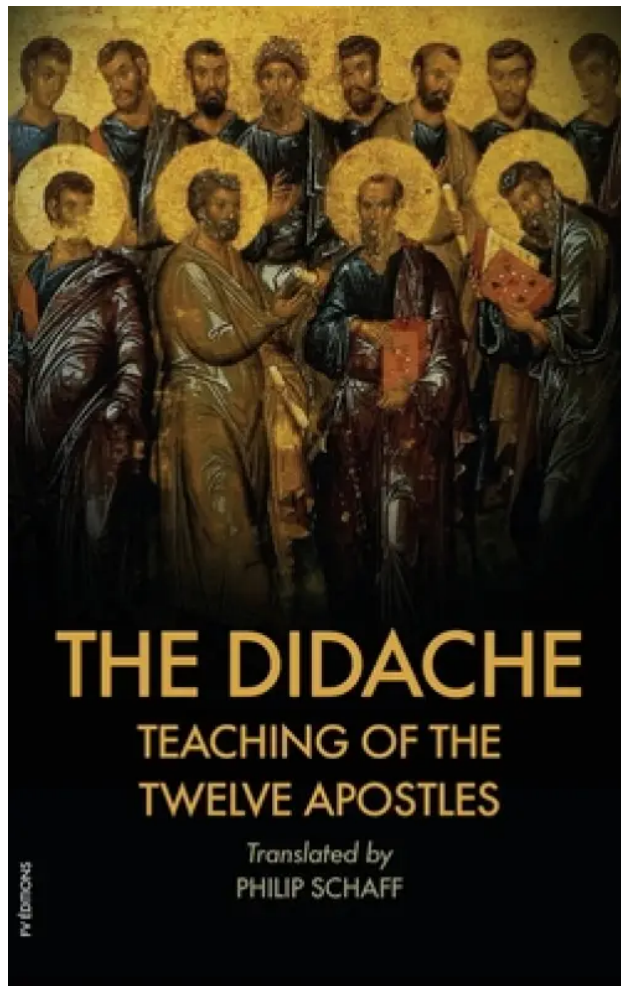


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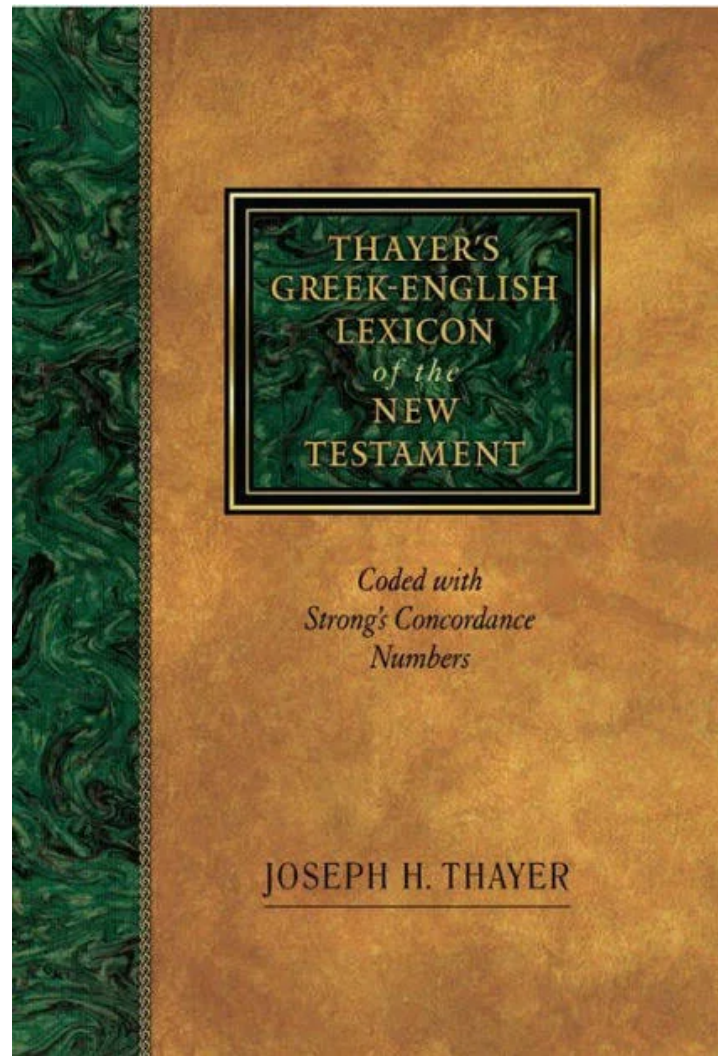
Christian Literature



Christian Literature (Ancient tradition: more advanced)



Lexical Studies



Biblical Meditation

Biblical meditation is the deliberate prayerful pondering of Scripture so that its truths move from the mind to the heart, producing love for God, repentance from sin, stronger faith, and obedient living.

Traditionally, meditation is understood as involving these steps:

1. Read – Carefully read a passage of Scripture.
2. Think – Reflect deeply on its meaning and implications.
3. Apply – Ask how it exposes sin, strengthens faith, comforts, warns, or directs your life.
4. Pray – Turn those reflections into prayer and communion with God.
5. Obey – Put what you have learned into practice.

V. Showing how Meditation differs from STUDY.

The student's life looks like meditation—but does vary from it. Meditation and study differ three ways.

1. They differ in their **nature**. Study is a work of the brain, meditation of the heart; study sets the mind on work, meditation sets the heart on work.
2. They differ in their **design**. The design of study is notion, the design of meditation is piety. The design of study is the finding out of a truth; the design of meditation is the spiritual improvement of a truth. The one *searches* for the vein of gold; the other *digs* out the gold.
3. They differ in the outcome and **result**. Study leaves a man never a whit the better; it is like a winter sun that has little warmth and influence. Meditation leaves one in a holy frame: it melts the heart when it is frozen, and makes it drop into tears of love.

A Treatise Concerning Meditation

By Thomas Watson (1620–1686)

Using Languages for Deeper Study

Reading the Bible in a foreign or secondary language:
This slows the process of reading while you acquire the language.

Reading the Bible in the original languages can be very insightful, but can also be time consuming.



Closing Considerations

The overall aim is **not simply to know the Bible, but to know the God of the Bible and be transformed by Him.** Scripture presents knowledge and obedience as inseparable.

A concise summary would be:

The aim of becoming well versed in the Bible is to know God more deeply, grow into the likeness of Christ, discern truth from error, and faithfully live out and share His Word.

Or, expanded into five simple aims:

1. **Know God** – Understand His character, will, and saving work.
2. **Grow in Christlikeness** – Be transformed in your thoughts, character, and conduct.
3. **Discern truth** – Recognise sound doctrine and avoid error.
4. **Live faithfully** – Apply God's Word in everyday life through love and obedience.
5. **Teach and encourage others** – Use Scripture to build up the Church and share the gospel.



James 1:22-25 (KJV)

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

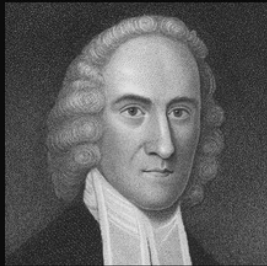
23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Discernment

Naturally, as you increase in knowledge of the Bible your discernment will increase. This can bring great joy (for overcoming old spiritual issues), and can also bring a certain sorrow (while you observe the rest of the world and its lack of understanding). Discernment is also important when reviewing extra-biblical literature.



Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility.

~ Jonathan Edwards

AZ QUOTES

When you increase in knowledge and spiritual stature, the devil will offer you a prideful disposition to go with it: resist this – it's a trap!

[The Scriptures] are the golden mines in which alone the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy all the digging and pains we can bestow on them.

—Robert Leighton, A Commentary upon the First Epistle of Peter, in Whole Works

Men that dig in mines for any treasure, even for the hope of gain, labor [much] before they find any vein and many times miss, but when they find the silver vein, with what cheerfulness do they labor; it makes them forget their pain and otherwise tedious [labor]. Now we who study the Scriptures are even in the vein of heavenly treasure, how much [more] then should we be encouraged?

—Ezekiel Culverwell, Time Well Spent



Those that care not for the word are strangers to the Spirit, and they that care not for the Spirit never make a right use of the word. The word is nothing without the Spirit, and only animated and quickened by Him. The Spirit and the word are like the veins and arteries in the body that give life to the whole. And therefore, where the word is most revealed, there is most of the Spirit.

—Richard Sibbes, Divine Meditations and Holy Contemplations,

Typology

Typology is the study of God's recurring patterns in Scripture, where real people, events, and institutions in the Old Testament serve as divinely intended foreshadowings of their greater fulfilment in Christ and the New Testament.

The Old Testament cannot be fully understood apart from Jesus Christ, because He is the fulfilment of its promises, the substance of its shadows, the reality behind its types, and the goal toward which its history and message have always been moving.



*"ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED UNTO THEM
FOR ENSAMPLES [OR, TYPES]."
(1 CORINTHIANS 10:11)*

Level	Level	Purpose
Beginner	Read through a book	Understand the flow of the biblical story.
Beginner	Chapter summaries	Write one sentence summarizing each chapter.
Beginner	Observation method	Ask: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
Beginner	Character study	Study the life of a biblical person (e.g., Peter, David, Ruth).
Beginner	Word study	Trace a key word such as "faith," "grace," or "kingdom."
Intermediate	Theme study	Follow a theme through Scripture (covenant, sacrifice, temple, kingdom).
Intermediate	Cross-references	Let Scripture interpret Scripture.
Intermediate	Historical background	Learn about the culture, geography, and customs behind the text.
Intermediate	Biblical theology	See how one theme develops from Genesis to Revelation.
Intermediate	Book study	Examine the structure, purpose, and message of one biblical book.
Advanced	Expository study	Analyse every verse in context, paying attention to grammar and argument.
Advanced	Original languages	Study Hebrew and Greek to understand the text more precisely.
Advanced	Lexical studies	Investigate the range of meaning of Hebrew and Greek words.
Advanced	Historical theology	Compare how Christians throughout history have interpreted a passage.
Advanced	Systematic theology	Explore what the whole Bible teaches about a doctrine.
Advanced	Canonical theology	Study how individual books contribute to the Bible's unified message.