

AlbertMohler.com

How to Use a Study Bible

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One of the most memorable purchases I made as a teenager was *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible* in its original *King James Version* edition, complete with blue leather cover. I still have it, of course, though it now finds itself surrounded by a host of other Bibles on the shelf nearest to my desk. That study Bible opened the Word of God to me in a whole new way, helping me to make connections in the text and to see how subjects and themes run throughout the Bible.



That was my introduction to a study Bible. The chain-reference notes in that Bible took me throughout the Scriptures, reading text alongside text. I recognized this as a great improvement on Bibles that contained only a minimal index and a few maps in the back.

Today, there are several significant study Bibles, ranging from the most minimal, offering only cross-references, to others that offer the equivalent of several hundred pages of supplemental helps.

How should a study Bible be used?

1. Read the text of the Bible first. Meditate upon the text and read it with care. Apply your own knowledge of the Bible in order to understand the particular text within its context and place in the biblical story-line. Consider and note other texts that come to your mind as directly related to this text. Read the text with full attention and conviction.
2. Look carefully at the cross-references that the study Bible links to the text you are reading. Do not look only to the citations, but read the actual passages. This assistance is still the main contribution of a study Bible — making related and parallel passages more accessible. A first principle of interpreting the Bible is to interpret the Bible by the Bible. In other words, to allow the Bible to interpret itself text by text.
3. As a third step, take full advantage of the notes, articles, and other helps printed alongside the text. In some cases, short articles will help in understanding contested issues or matters that might otherwise require a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. Where appropriate, maps can be very useful, along with tables of measurement and similar points of reference. The very best of the study Bibles will also offer some level of commentary within the notes.

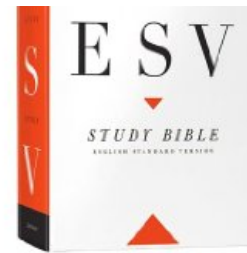
Of course, it is the Bible itself that is inspired, inerrant, and infallible — not the study materials included in study Bibles. Therefore, judge the notes by the biblical text, and never the other way around. Where possible, use more than one study Bible in order to maximize this learning process.

I am often asked for recommended Bible translations and study Bibles, so I offer this list in the hope that some will find it helpful. For the sake of simplicity I will recommend three excellent study Bibles representing the three translations I most eagerly commend.

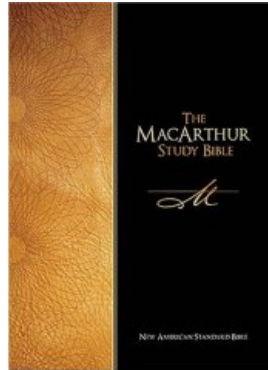
The ESV Study Bible — This long-awaited study Bible redefines the category in terms of its sheer heft. Its 2750 pages (plus maps) represents a massive resource for personal Bible study. Based on the *English Standard Version* [ESV] of the Bible, this is a truly worthy contribution to the world of study Bibles. Under the



direction of General Editor Wayne Grudem of Phoenix Seminary, the scholars who wrote and edited this study Bible have blended practical insights with keen theological reflection. The introductions to each book are well done, as is the pleasing and useful layout of the text and materials. This new study Bible will be warmly welcomed by those who pray to see more Christians grow in understanding the Bible. This is a study Bible for the serious Bible student and will serve any Bible reader well.

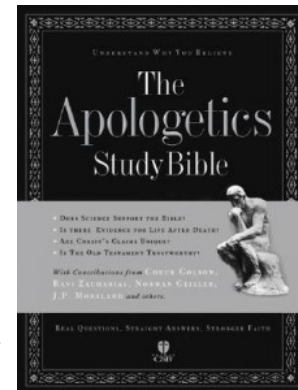


The MacArthur Study Bible — This well-known study Bible flows from the preaching and teaching ministry of Dr. John MacArthur, one of the most respected expositors of our era. I find this study Bible consistently helpful. Dr. MacArthur's clarity and the simplicity of his explanations make this study Bible accessible to anyone, while the preacher or Bible teacher will find great usefulness as well. One key feature of this study Bible are his notes on the texts, especially the Old Testament, on which Dr.



MacArthur has not yet written commentary in other forms. *The MacArthur Study Bible*, first released in the *New King James Version* [NKJV] of the Bible, is now (gladly) available in the *New American Standard Bible* [NASB] version.

The Apologetics Study Bible — This unique project is a study Bible that devotes particular attention to the apologetic issues that are confronted within the Biblical text. Under the general editorship of Dr. Ted Cabal of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a team of scholars contributed, not only cross-references and the usual helps found in study Bibles, but also short articles on issues of current concern. *The Apologetics Study Bible* is based on the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, another very trustworthy translation. I was honored to write one of the articles in this study Bible, and I commend it especially as a wonderful resource for students at the high school, college, and university levels. Those on the front lines of the apologetic confrontation will find great help here.



There are other worthy study Bibles, but these are the three I most heartily recommend. Any of these would make wonderful gifts at Christmas or any time of the year.

