

## INTRODUCTION

**F**or many years now John Glynn's *Commentary and Reference Survey* has been a helpful resource to students, pastors, and Bible readers who need recommendations on which books to purchase to aid their study of the Scriptures. This 11<sup>th</sup> edition of that text carries on the tradition he started. Our goal for readers is the same as his: recommend useful, practical resources that enable better understanding of God's Word.

The changes in this edition from previous ones are both big and little. The most noticeable change is content, as this volume addresses only the New Testament; subsequent volumes will address the Old Testament and theological resources. Another very important change is authorship. Previous editions were all compiled and written by Glynn himself; indeed, we acknowledge that readers will readily see his work on every page. With this edition the list of contributors expands considerably. The present text was revised and written by myself and a small group of faculty from the New Testament Studies Department at Dallas Theological Seminary, colleagues I appreciate and value for their scholarship and ministry: Darrell L. Bock, Joseph D. Fantin, and J. William Johnston. Organization of the text remains essentially the same, but this revision introduces a new way to handle commentaries. We include what amounts to a mini-review, examining each commentary with regard to approach, format, and usability. The lists are in alphabetical order, ranked according to a simple system of good, better, and best. This procedure provides helpful assessment beyond what Glynn did originally with a simple list of recommendations.

There are some things in previous editions readers will not find here. Glynn thought it very important to classify texts according to theological stance. We have largely dropped that effort, hoping to provide any helpful consideration of that issue in the comments on each text. Certain chapters have been excluded, most noticeably those on computer-related resources. Bible software has fundamentally changed since Glynn started his work, and it continues to evolve apace. Any comments in a printed resource like this will certainly be outdated at the time of publication, so we have elected to remove that material from this edition.

Much that the reader will find here is in the same vein as what Glynn had done. Commentaries mentioned herein are organized into two categories: Technical and Semitechnical for those with more technical training, such as original languages and history, and Exposition for those with more general training. Defining a commentary as technical means that

it concentrates principally on the meaning of the original language, historical issues, and the like in the main text, whereas semitechnical commentaries generally relegate grammatical, textual, and historical problems to footnotes. Because the main text of semitechnical works is primarily expositional, these works often function as a bridge between technical and expositional categories, and they can also be used by the informed layperson. Commentaries with a special emphasis on application are subsumed under the Exposition rubric. These include titles from Zondervan's NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC), InterVarsity's *The Bible Speaks Today* (BST) and IVP New Testament Commentary (IVPNTC), the Interpretation series from Westminster John Knox (IBC), and *The Preacher's Commentary* (TPC; previously titled the *Communicator's Commentary*) published by Thomas Nelson. Lists of other important works for studying a biblical book, sometimes labeled generically as "Special Studies" and sometimes with headings relevant to particular issues, follow each list of commentaries; these focus on particularly useful monographs, but other works will be noted here as well. Footnotes throughout the survey indicate forthcoming titles, provide helpful information for assessment, or give other information of interest. The rest of the survey covers resources for other biblical disciplines related to the New Testament.

We have retained and updated a few special features to elucidate further specific recommendations. Throughout the text non-commentary titles considered especially worthy of consideration are highlighted. The chapter "On Commentary Series" provides the big picture of the individual titles referenced for each biblical book. Please read "Building a 'Must-Have' Personal Reference Library." When approaching the daunting task of assembling a library (which might cost the equivalent of a good used car), it is advisable to develop a workable consumer strategy. "The Ultimate Commentary Collection" recommends the best exegetical and expositional commentaries for each book. Throughout we have maintained notices of forthcoming works as Glynn did originally, although this is a bit tricky to do. There are often more commentaries in process than are feasible to list, and sometimes promised commentaries do not appear as scheduled, not to mention that any judgment of the value of a forthcoming work is premature. Consider these notes to represent the present state of affairs as of this writing with respect to works that we have heard are in process and that we judge to be worthy of some advance notice.

Contrary to prior editions, subtitles are included on the assumption that they often help explain a book's contents. Since this volume is primarily a buyer's guide, the city of the publisher is omitted while total page number is included. Short notes are occasionally included for explanation and assessment that would be helpful to a buyer.

The world of publishing itself is changing rapidly. Many books are now available in electronic format as well as print editions and can even be purchased (or rented!) a chapter at a time. Our goal in this text has been

to assess the current state of available scholarship. Undoubtedly the next edition will take into account the sea changes that are happening in the publishing industry. Even so, we trust that our work here helps the reader navigate what is presently available on biblical topics.

I wish to thank particular individuals for their help on this text. Joshua Bramer, Marjorie Cooper, Sarah Cramer, Chris Frost, Dan Pfeiffer, Lisa Robinson, Bradley Smith, Robin Thompson, Carl Wiltse, and Jeff Wiplinger were all interns of mine at various times over the last several years at Dallas Theological Seminary; each provided helpful assistance along the way and wrote the evaluations for various commentaries. John Dyer's website BestCommentaries.com was helpful throughout the process in assessing current commentaries and identifying forthcoming ones. Jeremy Pierce continues to update very helpfully what is essentially a blog post on forthcoming commentaries.<sup>1</sup>

Even though this text is the publishing equivalent of shooting a moving target, we pray it will be useful to readers and guide them in their search for the best secondary resources for biblical study.

—Michael H. Burer  
Dallas, Texas  
Reformation Day, 2017

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1. [http://parablemania.ektopos.com/archives/2005/08/forthcoming\\_com.html](http://parablemania.ektopos.com/archives/2005/08/forthcoming_com.html).



## BUILDING A “MUST-HAVE” PERSONAL REFERENCE LIBRARY

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**H**ow do you build a basic working reference library? Which books must you have when you find yourself in the perplexing position of no satisfactory solution to an apparent exegetical conundrum? What’s the best purchasing path to ensure that the books you buy provide continued depth for you and those to whom you minister?

Ministers often do not possess the essential tools necessary for quality Bible study because of time and money: It takes a lot of time to find the best tools, and then when found the tools are far from free. Consequently, many personal libraries are cluttered with titles destined to gather dust or disseminate inferior information while truly beneficial books remain few and far between. Thus, in attempting to determine a list of titles for an ideal “must-have” personal reference library, one must focus on purchases that will bear the most exegetical fruit over time. With this concern in view, we have tried to construct recommendations geared for the layperson, the student, and the pastor, each of whom lacks a nearby Bible college or seminary library on which to fall back.<sup>1</sup>

### FOR THE LAYPERSON

First, every Bible reader should purchase a core group of resources for the benefit of personal study. Such is the point of this first listing. To learn how to conduct an inductive Bible study, we would recommend that the informed layman begin by reading Duvall and Hays<sup>2</sup> or Hendricks and Hendricks.<sup>3</sup> For more advanced students, an excellent guide is Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard.<sup>4</sup> Then, having learned how to conduct an inductive Bible study, both layperson and student must acquire the minimum number of basic tools.

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1. One resource that all Bible students should use regularly is the local community library. Many participate in interlibrary loan programs which make good titles readily (if not immediately) available. The problem of course is planning ahead and getting texts in advance of when they are needed.
  2. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word* (3d ed.; Zondervan, 2012; 512 pp.); and idem, *Grasping God’s Word Workbook* (3d ed.; Zondervan, 2012; 208 pp.).
  3. Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living By the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* (Moody, 2007; 400 pp.).
  4. William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (3d ed.; Zondervan, 2017; 720 pp.).

### For Bibles we recommend the following:<sup>5</sup>

*English Standard Version* (Crossway, 2001). Cross between NASB and the RSV.

*The Christian Standard Bible* (Broadman & Holman, 2017). Completed revision of the Holman Christian Standard Bible. Strives for the middle ground between the NASB and NIV.

*New English Translation* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005). Copious notes with grammatical and textual information.

*New Living Translation* (Tyndale, 1996). Dynamic equivalence translation (thought for thought, somewhat periphrastic) which conveys general nuance.

*Zondervan NIV Study Bible: Updated Edition* (Zondervan, 2008). 2368 pp.<sup>6</sup>

### For reference tools we recommend the following:

Brisco, Thomas C. *Holman Bible Atlas: A Complete Guide to the Expansive Geography of Biblical History* (Broadman & Holman, 1999). 298 pp.

Elwell, Walter A., ed. *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. 4 vols. (Baker, 1997). 2226 pp.<sup>7</sup>

Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 3d ed. (Baker, 2013). 1200 pp. Or Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Zondervan, 1994). 1291 pp.

Marshall, I. Howard, et al., eds. *New Bible Dictionary*. 3d ed. (InterVarsity, 1996). 1298 pp.

Wenham, Gordon, et al., eds. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* (InterVarsity, 1994). 1468 pp.

## FOR BIBLE COLLEGE AND SEMINARY STUDENTS

Assuming that the previously mentioned titles have been secured, the next order of business for the student headed into ministry is to assemble language resources that will facilitate study while in school. For first-year Greek students, whether in Bible college or seminary, at least a basic grammar, a workbook, and a copy of the Greek New Testament will be required texts.<sup>8</sup> Once you have ascertained which school you will be attending, you

5. Other possibilities for strong consideration are John R. Kohlenberger III, ed., *The Essential Evangelical Parallel Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2007; 3072 pp.); and idem, *The Evangelical Parallel New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 2004; 1840 pp.). The first parallels the NKJV, ESV, NLT, and Msg. To these the second adds the NIV, HCSB, TNIV, and NCV.

6. Many prefer the NIV because so many commentary series are based on it (e.g., IVPNTC, NAC, NICNT [partial], NIVAC, Pillar).

7. Advanced students should instead purchase Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols., rev. ed.; Eerdmans, 1988; 4561 pp.).

8. Either Eberhard Nestle and Erwin Nestle, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.; eds.

might want to get started early by calling the school bookstore to determine if a standard text is used in all beginning Greek courses.

Many professors will also require the purchase of the BDAG lexicon (see the following list), if not a Greek-English concordance and an exhaustive concordance to the Greek New Testament (which lists every occurrence of a Greek word). Many may encourage or require the purchase of Bible software; if so, then the concordances could be omitted. In any case, all of these tools will continue to be of value in future ministry.

### **The titles that we suggest for a basic Greek reference set are as follows:**

Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (University of Chicago Press, 2000). 1188 pp.<sup>9</sup> Commonly referred to as BDAG.

Guthrie, George H., and J. Scott Duvall. *Biblical Greek Exegesis* (Zondervan, 1998). 192 pp. Intermediate, advanced; selected readings, grammatical and semantic diagramming, how-to-do exegeticals; companion to Daniel B. Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*.

Kohlenberger, John R., III, Edward W. Goodrick, and James A. Swanson. *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (Zondervan, 1995). 1072 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1997). 1152 pp.

Mounce, William D. *Basics of Biblical Greek*. 3d ed. (Zondervan, 2009). 448 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Basics of Biblical Greek: Workbook*. 3d ed. (Zondervan, 2009). 240 pp.

Then you will need to acquire a basic set of language helps to fertilize your growing knowledge of the New Testament in its original tongue. Elementary helps include an analytical lexicon, which indicates every form of a Greek word found in the New Testament, providing its lexical root and basic definition.<sup>10</sup>

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Kurt Aland, et al.; German Bible Society, 2012; 890 pp.; known as NA28), which gives the more comprehensive listings of variant readings which impact exegesis; or Barbara Aland, et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament* (5th ed.; United Bible Societies, 2014; 899 pp.; known as UBS5), which is the same text but with fewer variants, focused on those that affect translation. Both editions are now available with Barclay M. Newman Jr.’s *Concise Greek-English Dictionary*.

9. This is an expensive text, but definitely worth it.

10. Either William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Zondervan, 1993; 560 pp.), or Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Baker, 2000; 439 pp.), which is based on the NA27 and UBS4 texts.

An interlinear Greek-English New Testament also proves to be of inestimable help in a pinch, especially when double-checking your own translation and comparing the various ways Greek words have been translated in English versions.<sup>11</sup> A helpful companion to an interlinear translation is Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, eds., *Analytical Greek New Testament* (Baker, 1981; 869 pp.), which parses the Greek New Testament word by word. Nevertheless, learning New Testament Greek is nothing of which to be afraid (which, for that matter, is also true of Hebrew). By exercising diligence, one can master both Greek and Hebrew (and even Aramaic!), eventually rendering some helps no longer necessary. Arguably Bible software can mitigate the need for an interlinear, as most programs can duplicate these functions very well.

Two other Greek helps will produce dividends later in one’s ministry, yet they will be most beneficial during second- and third-year Greek while the student is preparing the daunting exegetical paper. These resources are an intermediate Greek grammar to explain the interrelationship of Greek words in phrases and sentences (i.e., syntax)<sup>12</sup> and a word-study reference.<sup>13</sup>

A student can of course borrow reference titles from other students or use copies in the school library. However, the same tools that assist in learning while the student is in training are the same tools that enable the graduate to persist in learning. So our strong recommendation is that you view these as the foundation for a library you will use for the rest of your life. Some of the tools you can sell secondhand (e.g., first-year grammars and analytical lexicons) before departing school once your fundamental language skills are in place.<sup>14</sup>

## FOR PASTORS

Students in seminary and Bible college should plan to acquire a working set of commentaries while they are still in school. By scanning for book sales on bulletin boards, trolling the used-book room at the school

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11. Options include J. D. Douglas, ed. *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (3d ed.; Tyndale, 1990; 927 pp.), which is based on the NA26, the UBS4 corrected, and the NRSV texts.
  12. Two excellent resources here would be Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, 1996; 860 pp.); Andreas J. Köstenberger, Benjamin L. Merkle, and Robert L. Plummer, *Going Deeper with New Testament Greek: An Intermediate Study of the Grammar and Syntax of the New Testament* (B&H Academic, 2016; 560 pp.). Wallace is available in an abridged edition (*The Basics of New Testament Syntax*), which could be helpful for pastors or those with less training in Greek.
  13. E.g., Moisés Silva, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols., rev. ed; Zondervan, 2014; 3552 pp.).
  14. Similar components will ensure future proficiency for Hebrew study. These will be discussed in the forthcoming Old Testament volume of *Best Bible Books*.

bookstore, and taking advantage of the occasional publisher discounts,<sup>15</sup> significant savings can be realized.

But why, you might ask, should I burden myself with so many books that I will rarely read from cover to cover? First, commentaries equip the pastor with a ready answer to most any biblical question. One never knows when an inquiry concerning Obadiah or Jude could come your way. Otherwise, you could end up ruining the day for lack of references. Second, commentaries can furnish comprehensive coverage against shaky sermons, if in a weak moment the pastor's usual caution gives way to a homiletic flight of fancy. Commentaries suggest not only a range of possible solutions to problem passages but also a wealth of theological, literary, and cultural background material to ensure that the general tenor of a pulpit message remains sound.

The kind of commentaries one buys should reflect the training that one has received. For the seminary-trained professional, a mix-and-match approach to commentary collecting is the best route to follow. Many complete testament or Bible series are uneven in quality and might cover a wider theological spectrum than that with which you are comfortable.

A pastor should have two technical commentaries (or one technical and one semitechnical) on each book of the Bible and an expositional commentary to provide a general overview of each book (with an eye toward application) if the budget allows. The pastor can assume that approximately two-thirds of the "must-have" library will consist of commentaries and commentary sets.

We recommend both the technical Word Biblical Commentary (WBC), presently published by Thomas Nelson, and the semitechnical New International Commentary on the New Testament published by Eerdmans (NICNT). It would be better to substitute deficient titles in either series with available titles from Eerdmans' New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC), the Eerdmans Critical Commentary (ECC), Broadman & Holman's whole-Bible New American Commentary (NAC), the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT), or the Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (ZECNT).

For Bible college or M.A. students with two to three years of Greek background, the best combination is WBC and NIGTC in the New Testament. For those with less Greek background NICNT, Eerdmans' Pillar New Testament Commentaries (Pillar) and BECNT are to be preferred.

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15. Worthwhile to note is that many publishers regularly have sales around regional societal meetings in March and national societal meetings in November, sometimes with very steep discounts, often around fifty percent. Accessing these sales is a great fringe benefit for becoming a student member of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Society of Biblical Literature.

Finally, for the pastor or layman without training in the original languages, several very worthwhile preaching, application, and expositional commentary series are available.<sup>16</sup> Of these, the best combination for the New Testament is the NIV Application Commentary (NIVAC) by Zondervan, Pillar, the Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (CSBC) by Tyndale, and a collection of four other series.<sup>17</sup>

Now that we have gone to the wire (and the limits of your expense account) in championing the fat commentary bookcase, we are compelled by our own convictions to extend a caveat. Commentaries are not intended to take the place of your own intensive Bible study (and use of language helps and references where applicable). They are meant to be an *aid* to study, such as gaining a perspective on background, or analyzing phrases with cultural, historical, or theological nuance, or as a last line of defense in double-checking the integrity of your own conclusions. Owning and soaking in your own message is vital to your own growth and that of your congregation. The last thing you need is a pre-packaged sermon rented from a commentary at the expense of the Holy Spirit. Having said all that, and having spent this much money, following are nine more titles that you should obtain because of their proven value in New Testament exegesis:

Alexander, T. Desmond, et al., eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture* (InterVarsity, 2000). 866 pp. Three parts: introductory articles, individual book theologies, 215 topics listed alphabetically.

Carson, D. A., and Douglas Moo. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2d ed. (Zondervan, 2005). 781 pp.

Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (InterVarsity, 2000). 1328 pp.

Green, Joel B., Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2d ed.; InterVarsity, 2013). 1088 pp.

Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (InterVarsity, 1993). 1067 pp.<sup>18</sup>

16. Expositional as opposed to technical, exegetically-based commentaries often succeed better at providing the general theological and applicational thrust of a given passage or biblical book. Therefore, they can be equally valuable to the seminary-trained pastor. Indeed, some series such as the NIVAC (Zondervan), Interpretation (Westminster John Knox), the IVPNTC (InterVarsity), and The Preacher's Commentary (Thomas Nelson) are designed specifically for preachers. Also, the *New Interpreter's Bible* (Abingdon) follows each block of commentary with a very helpful "Reflections" section.

17. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (TNTC) from Eerdmans, Black's New Testament Commentary (BNTC) from Hendrickson Publishers, NAC, and IVPNTC.

18. For a condensation of the four NT volumes, see Daniel G. Reid, ed., *The IVP Dictionary of the New Testament: A One-Volume Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (InterVarsity, 2004; 996 pp.).

- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (2d ed.; InterVarsity, 2014). 816 pp.<sup>19</sup>
- Martin, Ralph P., and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (InterVarsity, 1997). 1289 pp.
- McDonald, Lee Martin, and Stanley E. Porter. *Early Christianity and Its Sacred Literature* (Hendrickson, 2000). 736 pp.
- Treier, Daniel J., and Walter A. Elwell, eds. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 3d ed. (Baker, 2017). 976 pp.

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19. For a comprehensive, single-volume treatment of the cultural, political, and religious environment during New Testament times, another alternative is Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (2d ed.; Eerdmans, 1993; 648 pp.).