

Recommended Bibles and Bible Resources

Assembled by Pastor Andy Smothers

Updated February 9, 2022

Note: I include ISBN numbers below to help identify particular books. Generally, I've selected the hard cover version to locate the ISBN number. You might search for this ISBN number and look at the various covers available. You might appreciate a leather, imitation leather, soft cover, large print edition, one of a multitude of color combinations, or other format. Do note that there many Bibles available, and they can have very similar names. Searching for the ISBN number might be a good starting place. Do note that these books are updated from time-to-time, and you may want to, also, check whether there might be a new edition.

Modern English Bible Translations

As English-speakers, we have many recent translations. I strongly recommend that your primary Bible use a translation completed by a committee of translators as for any of those in this section. Some that I would recommend include...

- *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*
 - This is the version in many mainline church pews. It's used in many mainline churches and academic settings. It is written for about an 11th grade reading level so may not be as appropriate for children and youth or someone who has a first language other than English.
- *New International Version (NIV)*
 - This has been the most popular English translation for many years and is more readable than the NRSV. It was completed in 1984 but updated in 2011.
- *Common English Bible (CEB)*
 - This is a relatively new translation and becoming more common in mainline denominations.
- *New Living Translation (NLT)*
 - This is a less literal translation — translating more thought by thought than word by word. This generally makes it more readable.
- *English Standard Version (ESV)*
 - This is more common among evangelicals and a good, well-respected translation.

For children, I tend to recommend translations targeted for younger reading levels.

- *New International reader's Version (NIRV)*
 - This is based on the NIV above but simplified for children.
- *Good News Bible (GNB)*
 - This is given by some churches for children and is used in many parts of the world where English is not the first language (and an English Bible is given).
- *New Century Version (NCV)*

There are many picture/story Bible options for young children as well as devotional/study Bibles for youth with these translations.

Modern, Personal Bible Translations

A few scholars/pastors have taken on the task of translating the Bible themselves or with a small number of people they have chosen. I don't recommend this as a primary translation; however, it can be helpful as a secondary translation — to read in a year or to use as a secondary reference. These tend to be with more modern language and take more freedom in interpreting the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts.

- *The Message* by Eugene Peterson
- *The Bible for Everyone* by John Goldingay (Old Testament) and Tom Wright (New Testament)



Study Bibles

It's helpful to have a Bible with notes that help explain the passages and the culture in the time the various books were written. The following are some that I would recommend for general use...

- *NIV Study Bible* (ISBN: 0310448948)
 - With the New International Version translation
- *ESV Study Bible* (ISBN: 1433502410)
 - With the English Standard Version translation
- *The CEB Study Bible* (ISBN: 1609262166)
 - With the Common English Bible translation
- *The Life Application Study Bible* (NIV ISBN: 1496433831; NLT ISBN: 1496439309)
 - available with the NIV and NLT translations (among others)
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (ISBN: 019027607X)
 - This would be more appropriate for academic settings and is issued by the University of Oxford (England) Press. It generally has fewer but more academic study notes and guides.

Chronological Bibles and Study Bibles

The Bible is generally organized by type of book rather than with the various sections placed in chronological (date/time) order. It is very good to read the Bible in its natural order as one reads through consistent authors and more consistent genres. I have found it very helpful to read the Bible reorganized chronologically, also. This can be much easier to understand. I would recommend any of the following. A study bible version is recommended to help explain the text.

- *NLT Chronological Life Application Study Bible* (ISBN: 1414339275)
- *The Chronological Study Bible: New King James Version Hardcover* (ISBN: 0718020685)
- *The One Year Chronological Bible NIV* (One Year Bible: NIV; ISBN: 1414314094)
 - Note that this is not a study Bible but does organize the text in chronological order.

Electronic Resources

There are many phone and tablet apps with the Bible, and this can be a great way to study the Bible. I do not generally recommend a study Bible in eBook form as it can be very hard to navigate between the text and the study notes. A study Bible in Kindle or eBook form usually requires the reader to jump back and forth between the text and the back of the eBook to access the text and notes, which can be frustrating for me at least.

There are Bible apps for smartphone and tablet that can work rather well. I personally use Logos Bible Software apps (logos.com) for most of my electronic theology/Bible reading. Olive Tree Bible Software (<https://www.olivetree.com>) has a relatively good experience, also. Logos will have by far the largest selection of resources and tools including extensive highlighting and note-taking options. If you are just looking to read the Bible text and not use study notes or other resources, many options are available. YouVersion is a popular one with 2,626 Bible versions in 1,783 languages (currently) for free (including the NRSV, NIV, NIV, ESV, GNB, CEB, NCV, The Message, and many more).

Finally, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a daily prayer app that will include readings covering the Bible in two years (some sections multiple times). It, also, includes prayer and liturgy for up to 4 times a day. This can be an excellent way to complete Bible readings with prayer and some other short resources. You can find more information at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/daily-prayer/>. The app costs about \$2.99 (one-time) for the features most people would require. If you'd like to add readings of our denomination's confessions each day (and other material), there's an additional, small annual fee. The same Bible readings (but not the prayers and liturgy) can be accessed on our denomination's website at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/>. The app generally works well but is not necessarily updated regularly.





This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

For all other uses or cases, © Copyright 2022, Andrew Smothers, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

