

# *Heartsburn: A Year in the Bible*

2011

Some Choice and Useful Resources in our  
First Presbyterian Church Library.

*The left-hand column gives the library call number of each resource.*

## **1. Bible 101: Some Basic Introductions to the Bible**

- 220  
Lay     **Introduction to the Bible: Volume 1 of “The Layman’s Bible Commentary.”**  
You’re looking forward to our HeartsBurn program, but are perhaps also feeling the need for a brief refresher before tackling the whole Bible. This little volume provides an absolutely splendid general introduction and is the first volume in a series that has commentaries on every book in the Bible. The five chapters in this volume provide you with the basics to get started – What is the Bible? The History of the People of God, The Message of the Bible, How We Got the Bible, and How to Study the Bible. These chapters are all written by recognized Presbyterian scholars with a gift for making their material to the point and easy to grasp.
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McK     **How to Read the Bible**, by Steven L. McKenzie. The author is a professor at Rhodes College in Memphis who has taught thousands of beginning freshmen in required Bible courses. He points out that the Bible contains material that is history, prophecy and literature, and the reader needs to know the differences in purpose and style to avoid misunderstandings. For example, the books of Jonah and Isaiah are both in the Old Testament, but quite different as pieces of literature.
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How     **Fascinating Bible Facts: People, Places, and Events.** This is a good beginning book for someone to see the richness of material that is in the Biblical story. It is in fact a picture book, easy on the eyes and easy on the brain that displays the varieties of life style and people that one encounters in the scriptures. This might be an excellent choice for a family with children to browse through that would stimulate an interest in exploring the contents of the Bible.
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Lan     **Everyday Biblical Literacy: The Essential Guide to Biblical Allusions in Art, Literature, and Life**, edited by J. Stephen Lang. A book filled with hundreds of brief explanations about people, things, and terms found in the Bible. Want to know more about the Day of Pentecost, Salome (the dancer), or Maundy Thursday? You’ll find clear and simple explanations here, and hundreds more.

220.6 **The Westminster Guide to the Books of the Bible**, by William M. Ramsay. Let's say you want a quick and ready description of a book of the Bible – the prophet Micah, for example. You want to know something about the author, when it was written, what the basic purpose of the book is, and any major sub-sections within the text. I can think of no better guide than this one. In a few pages Ramsay will sum up a book of the Bible to make it understandable. And some of our older members may recall the author personally, for he taught at King more than thirty years ago and preached in our sanctuary.

## 2. The History of the Bible

You will certainly enrich your reading experience as you learn more about the history and background of the Bible. How did this book come about? When did it first emerge as a single volume? Who were its authors? When did they live? What were the original languages? How were these books selected as the word of God, and when did that process take place? Why does the Roman Catholic Bible include books not in our Protestant versions? The following two selections are not only excellent scholarly histories of the Bible, but they are also fully illustrated, and reading them can become a delightful experience.

220 **The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible**, edited by John Rogerson. Highly authoritative and with dozens of illustrations, many of them in color, this book is divided into three major sections: The Making of the Bible, The Study and Use of the Bible, and Contemporary Interpretation.

220 **The Book: A History of the Bible**, by Christopher de Hamel. This book begins with the first manuscript Bibles and carries the story through the Middle Ages and Reformation to our own times, including Bibles prepared for use by missionaries around the world. The illustrations are virtually all in color and are lavish.

The following two volumes tell the specific story of the English Bible, the early efforts to make a translation in the Middle Ages, then the dramatic story of the formation of several English versions during the Reformation, lead up to the King James Bible.

220.5 **In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture**, by Alister McGrath. An English scholar at Oxford, McGrath tells the story simply, clearly, and with a good sense of humor. If you don't know the story of the English Bible in the sixteenth century, you'll be entranced. It's better than a good mystery thriller!

220.5 **The Bible in English: Its History and Influence**, by David Daniell. This book not only details how the English versions arose, but also covers the evolution and use of the Bible in America. For example, did you know that Noah Webster (the man who made our dictionary) also prepared a translation of the Bible? And he considered it more important than the dictionary – his greatest work! You'll find all about it here.

### 3. Some Contemporary Views of the Bible

- 220  
Wri     **The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture**, by N. T. Wright. The author is a well known English scholar, until recently serving as Bishop of Durham. What do we mean when we say the Bible is authoritative? His response is clear and straight forward to set forth Biblical authority at a time when some critics downplay the importance of the scriptures.
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Gom     **The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart**, by Peter J. Gomes. The popular minister of the Memorial Church at Harvard for many years, Gomes has the task of making the scriptures relevant to undergraduates whose views may often display gross personal ignorance or even hostility. You may not agree with all of his positions, but he writes to make the Bible meaningful in our daily lives.
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Arm     **The Bible: A Biography**, by Karen Armstrong. In her early years, Armstrong was trained to become a Roman Catholic nun, but rejected the monastic life (famously described in The Spiral Staircase) and turned to a life of serious scholarship. Author of many books on religion, this is a thoroughly modern and scientific view which points to the many ways in which scripture has been read through the ages.

### 4. Everyday Life in Biblical Times

Our reading of the Bible will certainly be enhanced by knowing something about how people lived in the days of the Old and New Testaments, and this is not always clear from the Biblical texts. Here are some books that would be helpful.

- 220  
Wil     **The Bible Is History**, by Ian Wilson. So often we read the Bible without considering just what life must have been like two thousand years ago. This volume will fill in any need you might have from a pictorial sketch in color of an Israelite house to a graphic plan of Solomon's temple, and many others. Aerial photographs will make your reading of the Bible come alive!
- 220.3  
Avi     **Our Living Bible**. Here is a classic book first published in 1962 that has remained in print ever since. You'll find pictures of costumes of ancient Israelites, pictures of people making bread, maps galore, representations of ancient warfare, and just about everything you need for a clear mental picture of ancient life.

## 5. Commentaries

Everybody needs commentaries! They are indeed essential elements in understanding difficult parts of scripture, of discovering interesting nuances in the use of Hebrew or Greek that help us understand a passage more clearly, or in showing how the use of words may have changed over the years. We have lots of commentaries, and the following are some of the best.

220 Lay **The Layman's Bible Commentary.** Published by John Knox Press in the 1960s this 25-volume set remains the best for a simple commentary which explains in a few words the meaning of each section of a text. It's non-technical and a good place to begin if you want a basic approach. Select the volume for the book you are reading.

R220.7 In **The Interpreter's Bible.** This set of 12 volumes was published in the 1950s by Abingdon Press of Nashville. Each page of the commentary is in three parts: an upper part which includes both the King James and Revised Standard texts, a middle part which contains a critical and scholarly interpretation, and a lower part with a more general commentary.

R220.7 Int **The New Interpreter's Bible.** Also in 12 volumes this set is an update by Abingdon Press offering a critical commentary that includes the latest biblical scholarship. This set is currently in production, and not all volumes have been published. It has abandoned the three-fold division of each page and offers for each book of the Bible an introductory section, often an overview, several pages of commentary, following by a general section called Reflections. It is clearly written and provides good accessible scholarship.

R220.7 Bi **Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.** This set, produced by John Knox Press, is also in production, but most volumes are now available. Each volume covers one or more books of the Bible, and authors representing the best of current scholarship have been invited to write the texts. Each book of the Bible is divided into relevant sections, and the author makes comments that are both general and specific. This is a good choice if you are looking for the best in contemporary scholarship that is also soundly Biblical.

220.7 Bar **The Daily Study Bible.** This is a grouping of commentaries on the New Testament only, written by the popular British scholar William Barclay in the 1950s. Although they are now a half-century old and some of the scholarship may be dated, Barclay has always been popular for the clarity of his literary style and the many illustrations he uses. He is also useful because he often gives us the original Greek of a passage and shows the many shadings of meaning possible when translated into English.

Number Varies **The Anchor Bible.** We have only certain volumes of this set, originally 58 in all, which appeared about forty years ago. Although the scholarship may be a bit dated, many of the volumes were edited by the best commentators of the time, and they may still be used meaningfully. Each section of a biblical book contains a new (Anchor) translation, followed by scholarly note, and then by brief commentary.

## 6. Dictionaries and Concordances

Bible dictionaries and concordances are two very useful reference sources for Bible study. Dictionaries are just what their name suggests; they define names, words, and concepts dealing with Biblical subjects. Some dictionaries have very brief and concise entries; others will feature longer and more explanatory mini-essays. Let's say you are reading in the New Testament and find yourself confused about the several Herods who were rulers in and around Judea. A Bible dictionary will provide a quick and ready answer to your needs. Here are some in our church library.

220.3      **The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible.** Here's a one-volume classic that has  
Wes        been a standard since first published by Presbyterians in 1898. Constantly  
             updated in later editions, it is an excellent reference.

R220.3    **Dictionary of the Bible**, edited by James Hastings. Very similar to the  
Has        Westminster with short concise definitions. Authoritative.

R220.3    **The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.** Published in four massive volumes,  
Bu        with an additional appendix, longer essays will provide answers to almost any  
             questions about the Bible,

220.3      **The Oxford Companion to the Bible**, edited by Bruce Metzger, long-time Biblical  
Oxf        scholar at Princeton University. This one features longer essays on more general  
             topics.

220.3      **Harper's Encyclopedia of Bible Life.** The title describes it well; if you want to  
Har        know something about the lives of the people in Biblical times this one has good  
             illustrated essays aimed at non-scholars.

A concordance is a specialized tool for studying the Bible. It helps the reader to find where words and phrases appear in the Bible. For example, in the Old Testament the patriarch Abraham entertains Melchizedek, a rather mysterious ruler of some significance. Reference is made to Melchizedek again by a writer of one of the New Testament books. Where is that reference? A concordance will pin-point the exact location.

R220.2    **Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments**, by Alexaner  
             Cruden. First published in 1737, Cruden's valuable work has become famous and  
             remains in print to this day. You'll find it a good source. Obviously, a  
             concordance must be specific to a particular version of the Bible, as Cruden is to  
             the King James. There are other concordances published in recent years suitable  
             for other translations.