

## Bible Commentaries

When I was a student at the Master's College, I was so privileged to sit under the teaching of Dr. Charles W. Smith, who proved to be the most influential man I've ever met. During that time, I had the opportunity to learn a great deal about biblical studies reference works in general, Bible commentaries in particular. While a student at the Master's Seminary, I took a Th.M course in "Evaluating Commentaries," which allowed me even more time to survey many of the Bible commentaries available today. Over the years, seminary students, pastors and lay people alike have asked my opinion about what commentaries they should purchase for their biblical studies library. Since there are so many different commentaries to choose from and all at varying levels of technicality, it can be difficult to choose the right resource for your particular purpose. Therefore, I've put together an annotated list of Bible commentaries for non-Seminary students that might be helpful to those of you who are looking to build your biblical studies library. As of this writing, I have only compiled a list of New Testament commentaries but will plan to put together a similar list on the Old Testament in the future. Since every Christian is at a different place in their understanding of the Bible, I've put together a rating system that should help you to identify whether that particular resource is appropriate for you:

*Beginning to Intermediate* – This level is appropriate for those who are young believers and those who have a bit more than a basic knowledge of the Bible.

*Intermediate Plus* – Intended for those who want a fuller, more in-depth handling of the text including discussion of the original languages.

*Advanced* – Intended for the well-informed lay member who can handle a bit more technical information, especially in the discussion of the original languages.

Personally, I believe that **every** Christian (not just pastors) should have at least one Bible commentary on every book of the Bible sitting on their shelf. By the way, don't think that because I have left off certain commentaries from this list that I therefore wouldn't recommend them. Not at all. Only that if you are building your biblical studies library from scratch, these would be the foundational resources that I would suggest for you to buy.

Bible Commentaries for Non-seminary Students
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#### Matthew

1. The Gospel According to Matthew, by Leon Morris. Pillar New Testament Commentary Series. Good, comprehensive coverage, with technical information relegated to footnotes. Written from a Covenant/Reformed perspective. Intermediate to Advanced students.
2. Matthew, by Craig Blomberg. The New American Commentary Series. Very helpful for short, concise comments. Cannot be used alone for serious study. For beginning to intermediate students.
3. Matthew 1-7, 8-15, 16-23, 24-28, 4 vols, by John MacArthur. Comprehensive commentary, written in expository format. Does not skip over difficult passages. Written from a Premillennial Dispensational perspective. Beginning to intermediate students.
4. The Gospel of Matthew, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary Series. Anything written by Hendriksen is usually reliable, and so is this commentary. Written from a Covenant/Reformed perspective. Intermediate to Advanced students.

#### Mark<sup>1</sup>

1. The Gospel of Mark, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary Series. Good commentary that avoids source and redaction criticism. Intermediate to Advanced Students.
2. The Gospel of Mark, by William Lane. NIC. A fairly good commentary, but ignore comments that are based upon redaction or source criticism. Intermediate to Advanced students.
3. The Gospel of Mark, by D. Edmond Hiebert. Staunchly conservative writer, who does not buy into all the hooey of redaction criticism. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.

#### Luke<sup>2</sup>

1. The Gospel of Luke, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary Series. Good commentary that avoids source and redaction criticism. Intermediate to Advanced students.

#### John

1. The Gospel According to John, by Leon Morris. NIC Commentary Series. One of the best commentaries ever written on the gospel of John, written from a staunchly conservative perspective. Most of the technical information is relegated to footnotes. A must buy for your library. Intermediate to Advanced.

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, there are not many *excellent* commentaries that are written from a conservative perspective. Most of the commentaries on the Gospel of Mark are written with the presupposition of the Q hypothesis.

<sup>2</sup> There is a likewise dearth of great commentaries on the Gospel of Luke that is written from a conservative perspective.

2. The Gospel According to John, by D. A. Carson. Pillar Commentary Series. Usually very thorough; probably too technical for the young believer. Intermediate Plus to Advanced students.
3. The Gospel of John, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary Series. Good comments on most passages. Intermediate to Advanced Students.
4. John, by Merrill Tenney. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Very readable, with many helpful comments. Intermediate level.

#### Acts

1. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles, by F. F. Bruce. NIC Commentary Series. Bruce is considered one of the modern day authorities on the book of Acts. An excellent scholar, but very readable. Intermediate to Advanced students.
2. Acts, by John Polhill. New American Commentary Series. Many good comments that are compacted into a small amount of space. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.
3. Acts 1-12, 13-28, by John MacArthur. 2 vols. Intermediate Level.
4. Acts, by Richard Longenecker. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Generally pretty good. Always use caution however, when reading Longenecker. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.
5. Acts, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. One of the better commentaries written by Kistemaker. Written from a Covenant/Reformed perspective. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.

#### Romans<sup>3</sup>

1. The Epistle to the Romans, by Leon Morris. Pillar Commentary Series. Extremely thorough, excellent comments, with most of the technical information included in footnotes. Definitely a buy for your library. Intermediate to Advanced.
2. Romans, by Charles Hodge. One of the best commentaries written on the epistle, but is a bit technical at times. No footnotes, so all the discussion on the Greek is included in the body of the text. Written from a Covenant/Reformed perspective. Intermediate Plus to Advanced level.
3. Romans 1-8, 9-16, by John MacArthur. 2 vols. One of the better commentaries by MacArthur. Intermediate level.
4. Romans, by Everett Harrison. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Very reliable, but not very in depth due to space constrictions. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.

#### I Corinthians

1. I Corinthians, by Charles Hodge. Excellent commentary in every respect. One of the few commentators who tackle chapters 12-14 correctly, without reading too much into the text. A bit technical however. Intermediate Plus to Advanced.
2. I Corinthians, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary Series. Fairly reliable expositional comments. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
3. I Corinthians, by Albert Barnes. Barnes' Notes. Many good comments can be gleaned by reading through Barnes, though not always exhaustive. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.

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<sup>3</sup> Romans is probably the best served epistle in terms of excellently written commentaries.

4. I Corinthians, by John MacArthur. Not one of the better commentaries by MacArthur, but still worth consulting. Do not like his treatment on chapters 13-14.

#### II Corinthians

1. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, by P. E. Hughes. New International Commentary Series. One of the better commentaries written on this epistle, as this is not one of the better-served epistles. Written from a Covenant/Reformed perspective. Intermediate to Advanced.
2. II Corinthians, by Charles Hodge. Everything from Charles Hodge is both good and reliable. As in all his work, this is a bit technical. Intermediate Plus to Advanced.
3. II Corinthians, by Murray Harris. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.

#### Galatians

1. The Epistle to the Galatians, by Ronald Fung. New International Commentary Series. Written under the supervision of his mentor F. F. Bruce, Fung has produced a very good commentary. I particularly like his treatment of chapter 3. Intermediate to Advanced level.
2. Galatians and Ephesians, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary Series. Very reliable commentary as you come to expect from Hendriksen. Intermediate to Advanced level.
3. Galatians, by John MacArthur. Good concise expositional comments.

#### Ephesians

1. The Epistle to the Ephesians, by F. F. Bruce.<sup>4</sup> New International Commentary Series. Written in typical F. F. Bruce style, very reliable and readable. Intermediate to Advanced level.
2. Ephesians, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Brief, but helpful. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
3. Ephesians, by Charles Hodge. One of the better commentaries on Ephesians, but can be rather technical. Very helpful on chapter 1. Intermediate Plus to Advanced.

#### Philippians

1. Philippians, by Richard Melick.<sup>5</sup> New American Commentary. Melick demonstrates a good understanding of the flow of the book. Helpful grammatical comments are relegated to footnotes. Very readable. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.
2. Philippians, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced level.
3. Philippians, by Homer Kent. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Written by the former president of Grace Theological Seminary. Although Kent was a scholar, he had the gift of writing at the level of the layman. Though brief due to space constrictions, it is still worth consulting. Intermediate level.

#### Colossians

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<sup>4</sup> This volume also includes Colossians and Philemon.

<sup>5</sup> This volume also includes Colossians and Philemon.

1. Colossians, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Good detailed exposition. Intermediate to Advanced level.
2. Colossians, by F. F. Bruce.<sup>6</sup> New International Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced level.
3. Colossians, by John MacArthur. In my estimation, this is one of the better MacArthur commentaries. Intermediate level.
4. Colossians, by Richard Melick.<sup>7</sup> New American Commentary. Not as good as his Philippians commentary, but still worth consulting. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.

#### Philemon

1. Philemon, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced.
2. Philemon, by F. F. Bruce.<sup>8</sup> New International Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced.
3. Philemon, by John MacArthur.<sup>9</sup> Intermediate level.

#### I Thessalonians

1. I Thessalonians, by Robert Thomas. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Strict adherence to detail. Excellent lexical information. Written from a Premillennial Dispensational perspective. Intermediate to Advanced level.
2. I Thessalonians, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Written from an Amillennial perspective. Intermediate to Advanced level.
3. I Thessalonians, by D. Edmond Hiebert. Excellent attention to lexical and grammatical detail. Might be too technical for some. Written from a premillennial perspective. Intermediate plus to advanced.
4. I Thessalonians, by Leon Morris. New International Commentary. Not as detailed as some of his other commentaries, but still worth consulting. Written from an Amillennial perspective. Intermediate to Advanced.

#### II Thessalonians

1. II Thessalonians, by Robert Thomas. Expositor's Bible Commentary. See comments on I Thessalonians. Intermediate to Advanced.
2. II Thessalonians, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced.
3. II Thessalonians, by Leon Morris. New International Commentary. See comments above.

#### I Timothy<sup>10</sup>

1. I Timothy, by John MacArthur. One of the best commentaries that MacArthur has produced thus far. Excellent exposition on chapters 2 and 3. Intermediate level.

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<sup>6</sup> This volume also includes Philippians and Philemon.

<sup>7</sup> This volume also includes Philippians and Philemon.

<sup>8</sup> This volume also includes Philippians and Colossians.

<sup>9</sup> This volume also includes Colossians.

<sup>10</sup> The pastoral epistles are not well served on the commentary market. Many more works need to be produced in this area.

2. I Timothy, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced.
  3. I Timothy, by Ralph Earle. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Not bad for a quick, short reference. I can't say that I'm in love with this particular work but there are not many commentaries on I Timothy that is written at the layman level that I can heartily recommend. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
- 2 Timothy
1. II Timothy, by John MacArthur. Again, one of the best commentaries that MacArthur has produced thus far. As you would expect, a lot of good information on 3:16-17.
  2. II Timothy, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced.
  3. II Timothy, by Ralph Earle. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Same comments as above.
- Titus
1. Titus, by William Hendriksen. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced level.
  2. Titus, by D. Edmond Hiebert. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Hiebert was gifted at writing in laymen's terms, even though he interacted with many of the top scholarly works. Anything written from him is usually detailed, accurate, and staunchly conservative. Good word-study information is included. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
  3. Titus, by John MacArthur. Definitely worth consulting. Intermediate level.
- Hebrews
1. The Epistle to the Hebrews, by F. F. Bruce. New International Commentary Series. A very good commentary, but a bit short on detail sometimes. Not a lot of information on word meanings. If used in conjunction with another commentary, much benefit can be derived. Intermediate to Advanced level.
  2. Hebrews, by Leon Morris. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Very good grasp of the epistle. Especially like his comments on the problem passages in 6:4-9, and 10:26-27. Intermediate to Advanced.
  3. Hebrews, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. One of the better commentaries written by Kistemaker. Intermediate to Advanced.
- James
1. Commentary on James, by D. Edmond Hiebert. "A lucid evangelical work that looks at every verse, discussing exegetical matters, views, supports, and the relevance to a practical spiritual life."<sup>11</sup> As you come to expect from Hiebert, great exegetical insights written in language that laymen can understand. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
  2. The Letter of James, by Douglas Moo. Not as much attention to the meaning of words as Hiebert, but still much insight into the flow and meaning of the verses. Most of the technical issues are relegated to the footnotes. Intermediate.
  3. James, by Donald Burdick. Expositor's Bible Commentary. A short but helpful work. Particularly like his comments on chapter 2. Intermediate level.
  4. James, by John MacArthur. Many good expositional comments, but a bit uneven in treatment of verses at times. Intermediate.

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<sup>11</sup> James Rosscup, Commentaries for Biblical Expositors (Sun Valley: Grace Book Shack, 1993), p. 288.

5. James, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. Much less detailed than the ones by Hiebert and Moo but still worth consulting. Intermediate level.

#### I Peter

1. I Peter, by Peter Davids. New International Commentary. Comments are usually brief, but good. Definitely one of the better commentaries written on I Peter. Intermediate to Advanced.
2. I Peter, by D. Edmond Hiebert. This is one of the better commentaries on I Peter, and overall I probably prefer it over David's. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
3. I Peter, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. Not one of the better commentaries by Kistemaker, but still better than most. Intermediate to Advanced.

#### II Peter

1. II Peter, by D. Edmond Hiebert. This is probably one of the better commentaries by default. I don't care for most of the commentaries on II Peter. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus level.
2. II Peter, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. Intermediate to Advanced.

#### I John

1. I John, by D. Edmond Hiebert. Excellent blend of exegetical and expositional comments. Very helpful in tracing the argument of the epistle. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.
2. I John, by I. Howard Marshall. New International Commentary. Fairly thorough, with good background information. Always be cautious however when reading Marshall, as he tends to have certain liberal leanings. He is also Arminian in his theology. Intermediate to Advanced.
3. I John, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. Kistemaker is good at explaining the evidence of a saved life. Intermediate to Advanced.
4. I John, by Glenn Barker. Expositor's Bible Commentary. Good grasp of the epistle, with many pertinent comments. Intermediate level.

#### II & III John

See comments on I John.

#### Jude

1. Jude, by Simon Kistemaker. New Testament Commentary. I especially like his sane approach in interpreting verse 6, which a great deal of commentators goof up. Intermediate to Advanced.
2. Jude, by D. Edmond Hiebert. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.

#### Revelation

1. Revelation, by Charles Ryrie. Everyman's Commentary. Very concise, but offers an accurate interpretation of last book of the Bible. Written from a Premillennial Dispensational perspective. Beginner to Intermediate.
2. Revelation, by John Walvoord. One of the leading writers on prophecy this century, Walvoord presents a standard Premillennial Dispensational approach. Intermediate to Intermediate Plus.

1. Scripture Truth – [www.scripturetruth.com](http://www.scripturetruth.com). Although they don't have the largest selection, and their stock changes monthly, when they do have the book it is usually at a very good price.
2. CBD – [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com). A much larger selection than Scripture Truth, but slightly more expensive on most books.
3. Amazon – [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Has everything that Scripture Truth and CBD has but is usually less expensive. Commentaries tend to be cheaper at CBD but prices have dropped considerably in recent times so check the prices here first.