

## — 50 BOOKS FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN —

by Dennis Swanson, Director of The Master's Seminary

One of the most frequently asked questions we receive, both at the seminary and in our personal ministry, is for recommended books that will help people understand the Bible more clearly. In an effort to answer that question I have compiled two lists consisting of 25 books. The first 25 I feel are essential for every believer and the second 25 are those which are important, but can be added as personal study progresses. While I have listed important works on specific aspects of Christian living, in these lists I have avoided generalized books on the Christian life, biographies and books of sermons.

One great hindrance to personal Bible study and growth in knowledge of the great doctrines of the Bible is often what I call the "myth of the reading level." That is, people have been conditioned to believe (sometimes by publishers) that they have a particular level of reading and are pretty much stuck there. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no reason that reading comprehension and vocabulary should not continue to advance throughout one's life

If this listing of books and the prospect of reading them is intimidating, let me suggest two things. To begin with I want you to buy another book, a classic work by Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren entitled, *How to Read a Book* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1972). This work is a practical explanation of how to read with comprehension and how to improve your reading ability. Of course you should also have a good English dictionary at hand. I recommend *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, third edition, 1993).

The key to getting a good start on your own personal Bible study is to begin to read the Bible. A regular and systematic reading schedule of the whole Bible is the single most important part of Bible study. There is a suggested schedule in *The MacArthur Study Bible* (p. 2189). Also, get *How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself* by Richard L. Mayhue (Number 8 on the list below) and begin to implement the principles he details into your study of the Bible. They will enrich your personal study and serve to ease whatever self-doubts you may have about your ability to study the Bible for yourself.

### The First 25 Books for Every Christian's Library

1

#### A Text Only Bible

This may seem self-evident, but every Christian should own a Bible that is simply text so it can be read without the mental interruption that study Bible notes can cause. There is a place for the Study Bible, as we note below. The myriad of English versions can be confusing to say the least; but we recommend one of the following: (1) The New American Standard Version of the Bible; (2) The New King James Version; (3) The Holy Bible New English Version. These versions have as their goal an exact or "formal" equivalence; that is, they attempt to render the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament into English in a word for word manner.

2

#### The MacArthur Study Bible by John MacArthur

A good study Bible is a gold mine of information on the text in terms of content, backgrounds, comparisons with other passages, and theological issues. Beyond the textual notes, The MacArthur Study Bible also has maps, charts, and diagrams, along with several useful appendices. It uses the New King James Version of the Bible as the text.

3

### **New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance**

edited by Robert L. Thomas

A Concordance is a work which lists every word in the Bible individually (normally excluding common prepositions) and directs the reader to the verse where that word appears. When selecting a concordance the important thing to remember is to make certain that the one you choose matches the Bible version you are using. For example if you decide to use a New American Standard Bible for your text Bible, then you will want to purchase the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance, Robert L. Thomas, General Editor, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002)

4

### **The MacArthur Topical Bible**

by John MacArthur

The topical Bible is a valuable tool for Bible study. All of the passages on particular subjects are collected enabling the reader to quickly view a compendium of Scripture references. This work has over 100,000 references divided into 20,000 subject categories.

5

### **Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words**

by W.E. Vine

This tool enables the English reader to begin to grasp the full meaning of Greek and Hebrew words of the Bible. The words are "transliterated" into English and excellent definitions are provided. Examples of the same words in other passages and other cross-references are added.

6

### **Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible**

edited by Walter A. Elwell

A Bible dictionary or encyclopedia is an essential tool for study. This excellent work provides information on virtually every person, place, event, theme in the Bible; and every piece of historical and background information related to the Bible.

7

### **The Moody Bible Atlas**

by Barry Beitzel

This well written work contains a host of full color maps detailing Israel's geography, topography, weather patterns, history and other vital information. The author's text is well-written and clear.

## 8

### How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself

by Richard L. Mayhue

Every Christian should be involved in regular personal reading and studying of the Bible. This excellent book details the reasons why personal Bible study is vital for ones spiritual growth and also details practical steps to begin or enrich those studies. A "how to" book that is easily understood full of practical advice.

## 9

### The Greatness of the Kingdom

by Alva McClain

Perhaps one of the best books written on the subject of the Kingdom. Understanding the theme and material in this book will give you a framework for understanding the larger themes of the Bible and God's purposes and plans in history.

## 10

### Bible Exposition Commentary

by Warren Wiersbe

This well known Bible teacher has created a two volume commentary based on his popular "BE" series. They will provide the reader with practical insights from the texts and excellent outlines of the Biblical books.

## 11

### Wycliffe Bible Commentary

edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison

Long a favorite one volume Bible commentary, this work differs from that of Wiersbe in that it is slightly more technical and deals with issues of authorship, composition and the meaning of each book of the Bible.

## 12

### Survey of Old Testament Introduction

by Gleason A. Archer

This work will provide a more in depth discussion of each book of the Old Testament. Material covered includes the authorship and date of each book, the general theme and outline of the book, specific background material and each books relation to the Old Testament as a whole.

## 13

### New Testament Survey

by Merrill C. Tenney

As with the Old Testament survey book, this work provides a more in depth introduction to each of the books of the New Testament. Issues of authorship, background, date of writing and general themes are discussed. A helpful outline of each book of the New Testament is included and the relationship of each book to the whole of the New Testament is discussed.

## 14

### A History of Israel

by Walter C. Kaiser

The Old Testament was written within a particular historical period that many people are not familiar with. Keeping the people, places and dates clear is necessary to properly understand the Old Testament text. The author provides an excellent and readable text covering the history of Israel, particularly in relation to the world events around her in the ancient time.

## 15

### New Testament History

by F. F. Bruce

The author covers the wide scope of the history of the New Testament era. He details the Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures and immediate history leading up to the beginning of the New Testament as well as the history of the peoples and regions detailed during the first 70 years of the Christian era.

## 16

### Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands

edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos

One of the most helpful books available to detail the geography of the Biblical world. This work is richly illustrated and well-written, detailing the major geographic regions of the Biblical world, their immediate history, major cities and the role of geography in setting the stage for the Biblical world.

## 17

### The Moody Handbook of Theology

by Paul Enns

The author provides a clear and even-handed introduction to the various theological systems that exist. It deals with the differences of Biblical interpretation that lead to each system and provides information on theological terms and concepts.

## 18

### Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties

by Gleason A. Archer

Every student of the Bible will soon realize that there are seeming contradictions and many passages which are difficult to understand. This work by Archer works book by book through the Bible, examining difficult passages, discussing principles of proper interpretation and providing answers to those difficulties.

## 19

### The Battle for the Beginning

by John MacArthur

The issue of creation is of utmost importance for Christians. To accept evolutionary theories, at any level, is to deny the clear teaching of the Bible. This work deals with those issues from a precise examination of the text of Scripture with illustrative material from creation scientists.

## 20

### Scripture

by Robert Saucy

The doctrine of the Bible and the affirmation of the inspiration, inerrancy, authority and sufficiency of Scripture is a foundational doctrine for Biblical Christianity. This book details and defends the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

## 21

### Seeking God

by Richard L. Mayhue

This book promotes a spiritually healthy style of living by approaching God through His word. It is study of the fundamentals of spiritual intimacy and maturity that will draw you closer to God and cultivate a true spiritual relationship with your heavenly Father.

## 22

### The Gospel According to Jesus

by John MacArthur

There is nothing more important for the Christian than a proper understanding of the Gospel. In this work MacArthur details the true nature of saving faith, the Biblical understanding of the Gospel, and the Gospel message as Jesus preached it. It deals with the issues of Lordship versus the non-Lordship positions centering on the issues of repentance and discipleship in relation to salvation.

## 23

### Who Am I?

by Robert L. Thomas

For the Christian it is vital to understand who he is in relation to God. "How we think has everything to do with how we behave." This book deals with all aspects of the Christian life from a Biblical viewpoint.

## 24

### Our Sufficiency in Christ

by John MacArthur

This work deals with the issue as to whether Christ and the Word of God are sufficient for the needs of people, or does the Christian need to be supplementing their life with other methodologies and philosophies to achieve fulfillment and spiritual growth. Dealing with the issues of psychology, secular business methodology and mysticism MacArthur demonstrates that believers are sufficient in Christ to deal with all aspects of life and ministry.

## 25

### The Church in God's Program

by Robert L. Saucy

One of the best introductions to the nature of the New Testament church. The author, the long-time professor of Theology at Talbot Theological Seminary, presents the New Testament teaching about the church, its functions, officers, ordinances and role in God's program today.

## The Second 25 Books for Every Christian's Library

1

### Commentaries for Biblical Expositors

by James Rosscup

As you move on to more in depth Bible study or even prepare to teach a Sunday School class or home Bible study lesson, you will want to consult commentaries on individual books of the Bible. Before spending money on commentaries that don't meet your needs you should refer to this excellent tool by James Rosscup. He details different commentaries and gives a brief annotation about each of them. He classifies them according to their type and general usefulness.

2

### Think Biblically

by John MacArthur and the Faculty of TMC

This book encourages Christians to "think biblically"—to distinguish which voices lead toward a godly life and which lead astray, to embrace a mind-set absolutely and exclusively dedicated to an understanding of the world based on biblical truth. The authors discuss the outworkings of that worldview in issues of postmodernism, gender, worship, psychology, science, education, history, government, economics, and the arts and literature. Each writer also suggests resources for further study.

3

### The Bible and Archaeology

by J. A. Thompson edited by Robert L. Thomas

The subject of archaeology is important to Biblical studies in terms of history, culture, and Scripture manuscripts. This book gives an overview of important archaeological discoveries related to the Bible, and introductory information as to the actual work of archaeology.

4

### Harmony of the Gospels

by Robert L. Thomas

The four gospels are written from different perspectives and to different audiences. This important book brings all four gospel accounts together, putting the material in a chronological order, bringing parallel passages together for easier study. The authors also have prepared several essays in the back of the book dealing with issues of interpretation and historical criticism.

5

### Evangelical Hermeneutics

edited by Robert L. Thomas

This book builds and advances the concepts in *How to Interpret the Bible for Yourself*. The author details the importance of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation and the concept of the "single meaning" of any portion of Scripture. This work provides principles for interpretation and the Biblical logic behind those principles.

## 6

### *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*

by Walter A. Elwell

This is one of the best reference works available for the student of theology. The entries include key theological terms and concepts as well as key individuals and movements. All of the entries have listings of additional material for further study with excellent indexes and clearly written articles.

## 7

### *No One Like Him*

by John Feinberg

The old catechism declares that the "chief end of man is to know God and enjoy Him forever." This book is one of the best resources in print detailing the "Doctrine of God." The author discusses the person and nature of God, the relationship of God to His creation and creatures, and the attributes or character of God.

## 8

### *The Love of God*

by John MacArthur

Dr. MacArthur deals with the significant issues about the love of God. He details the Biblical teaching that God's love is defined by what He hates, and that the love of God and the wrath of God cannot be understood properly when they are isolated from one another. This is an important book for the Christian to gain a proper understanding of the nature of God.

## 9

### *Ten Lies About God*

by Erwin Lutzer

The author debunks the "made in our own image" God and reveals the truth of who God is, the nature and significance of His relationship with mankind, and His plan for the world.

## 10

### *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*

by B. B. Warfield

This is perhaps the definitive book on the doctrine of the Bible, detailing the issues of verbal plenary inspiration, the authority of the Bible in the life of the believer and dealing with challenges from skeptics to the Bible.

11

**Ashamed of the Gospel**

by John MacArthur

The subtitle of this book is "When the Church Becomes Like the World." Dr. MacArthur draws a parallel between the life and times of the famous English pastor Charles Spurgeon and his fight against modernism and what is occurring in the American church today. He says that, "The signs of compromise are all around us: Numbers have become more important than the message. . . Pastors have turned to the marketing industry to help them draw people rather than relying on the sovereign power of God."

12

**Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God**

by J. I. Packer

In this classic work the author deals with the question of a true Biblical evangelism in the light of the sovereignty of God. Packer deals with the Scripture and theology of God's absolute sovereignty in relationship to the Christian's responsibility to spread the gospel.

13

**Understanding Spiritual Gifts**

by Robert L. Thomas

This is an exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14 centering on the important issue of spiritual gifts. Dr. Thomas examines the nature of spiritual gifts, their source and their purpose in the church. This work will help believers understand the nature of their own service to one another and the church at large.

14

**Charismatic Chaos**

by John MacArthur

The charismatic movement remains one of the largest and most influential groups in Christianity. This book examines the various practices and interpretations in the movement in light of Scripture. It deals especially with tongues, signs and wonders and the supposed miracles displayed within the movement.

15

**The Healing Promise**

by Richard L. Mayhue

This book deals with the important issue of the "whys" related to physical healing. Deals especially well with the issue of "healing in the atonement" and the application of James 5. The author refutes the common "faith healer" message prevalent in the Christian media today.

16

**Understanding End Times Prophecy**

by Paul Benware

It is one of the best overviews of Biblical prophecy available. The author deals with the basics of all the systems and details their strengths and weaknesses in properly handling the text of Scripture. Excellent charts to help follow the details.

17

**The Second Coming**

by John MacArthur

An excellent exposition of the Olivet Discourse in the Gospel of Matthew. Emphasizes the importance of adhering to a Scripturally driven eschatology as opposed to a system that is theologically driven. A clear presentation and exegesis of this vital passage of Scripture.

18

**Sketches from Church History**

by S. M. Houghton

For the reader who wants to get a grasp of the history of the church from the beginning to the present time. Gives an excellent overview of the spread and development of Christianity in the west. This work is particularly strong in the Reformation era.

19

**A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada**

by Mark A. Noll

A clear and well-written history of Christianity in the United States and Canada. It deals with the development of the denominations and the issues which led to their various divisions. This work is particularly strong in Pre-Civil War era material.

20

**The Biblical Basis for Modern Science**

by Henry M. Morris

Despite what the critics may claim, there is no conflict between true science and the properly interpreted Scripture. This work details the proper relationship between scientific endeavors and the Word of God. It emphasizes the source of true knowledge and how to understand supposed conflicts between the Bible and the "discoveries" of modern science.

21

**Creation and Change**

by Douglas F. Kelly

One of the excellent works in which the claims of evolution are refuted with the text of Scripture and the latest findings in the world of science itself. Evolution continues to lose credibility in the scientific world; but, despite the evidence, is being retained by the unbelieving world as the basis of their philosophy and worldview.

22

**Kingdom of the Cults**

by Walter Martin with Hank Hanegraff

Not all groups who either have the word "Christian" in their title or who call themselves "Christian" actually are. There are cults who are empowered by Satan and operate according to the "doctrines of demons." This excellent book details the history of the major cults in America, identifies their specific teachings and exposes their errors.

23

**Apologetics to the Glory of God**

by John Frame

An excellent book dealing with the issues of apologetics, or defending the Christian faith. Presents the Biblical approach to presenting the existence of God, the uniqueness of Scripture, and the necessity of the Gospel for salvation to unbelievers.

24

**Whose Money is it Anyway?**

by John MacArthur

Of all of the demands in life perhaps the central one is that of money and personal finances. This book details what the Bible says about money, giving, and the proper attitude for Christians regarding the acquisition, accumulation and dispensing of wealth.

25

**Holiness**

by J.C. Ryle

A classic work on personal holiness in the Christian life. Should be read once a year by every Christian.