

Becoming a Bible Writer



The story goes like this. A man walks into a Links Fellowship. Likes it. Walks out and thinks to himself, *I need to get a Bible.*

Next day, the man walks into a Bible bookstore. Scores of Bibles are laid out on a vast counter. He doesn't know where to begin. Clerk comes over and asks if she can help.

funny story!

"Yes," the man says. "I'm looking for a Bible."

"Well, what do you want to do with it?"

"Read it."

From similarly humble (and true!) beginnings, we all have stepped into the practice of those who open Scripture and see what we might find there. Even if you were brought up as a child learning the stories of the Bible, your beginnings came with innocent questions and uncertain reactions.

As a treasure store of history, law, poetry, prophecy, eyewitness

accounts, doctrines, and visions, the Bible has something for everyone. Even hardened atheists use common expressions derived from the Bible without knowing it. The oldest book lives on.

what the Bible contains

And it should. For we read in the letter to the Hebrews that "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

how God's word lives on

Still, the volume of the book and sometimes the terminology can be daunting. Even if you recognize all the words, some passages are difficult to understand. And theologians and pastors have been unable to agree over certain lines and expressions since the earliest efforts were made at explaining what meanings they carry. How are you and I as common lay readers

article by Jeff Hopper

not just a reader but a writer — is this me?

purposes of Scripture

supposed to get a handle on the words of Scripture if they aren't easy even for the experts?

One way is to move from being Bible readers to Bible writers.

Links Players president Jeffrey Cranford has encouraged those in his fellowships and studies to do this very thing for years. What he finds is that those who commit to marking up their Bibles gain a good sense of what's in the Scripture. And when they increasingly know what's in Scripture, they increasingly know the author of Scripture, who is the Holy Spirit: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Here are some approaches to becoming a Bible writer.

Tools

The first thing you'll need is a

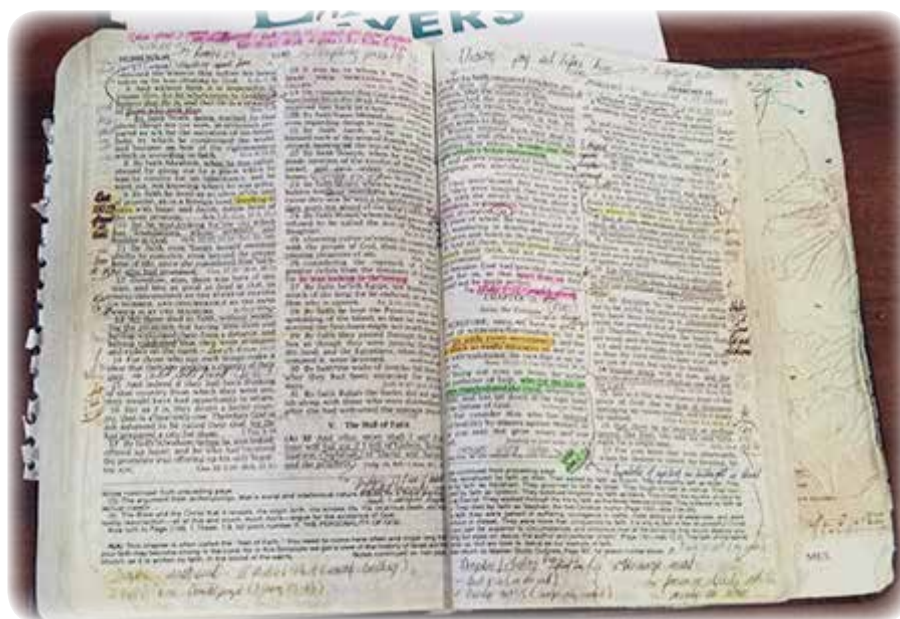
Bible. The Bible you use for Bible writing may not be the same as the Bible you carry around with you from place to place, but it can be. Good Bibles for writing have extra space in the margins and their pages are often thicker than the onion skin you'll find in some Bibles. Note: You can also look into special "journaling Bibles," which are designed with notetakers in mind.

Next, you'll need a good writing instrument. The key here is that it not be so dark or so inky that you have trouble reading the page on the other side. You may also want something with a fine tip, to help you write smaller. One more thing: don't be afraid of pencils. They allow you to fix mistakes, they can be sharpened to a good point, and the graphite typically holds its own through the years.

Finally, you may want some highlighters. If you are making thematic notes, as Jeffrey encourages, the different colors

I need a bigger Bible!

stay away from Sharpies (LOL!)



Well-noted pages from the Bible of Links Players president Jeffrey Cranford.

allow you to trace those themes from one place in your Bible to another.

Quotes and summaries

One way to take notes in your Bible is to write quoted words or summary statements in the margin. While most translations include subheadings to help you find your way more quickly, summaries in the margin can break down the material even more closely. When you return to these pages, a scan of your notations will help you recall the gist of the passage. You may also add summaries of each chapter at the top of the page.

This kind of notetaking can also help you remember where to find meaningful passages in your Bible. Many people who have been reading regularly in their same Bible for many years will tell you that while they may not remember the exact reference for a Scripture, they remember that it is on the upper right of a the righthand page (for example). When you start adding summaries to the pages, it can speed the process of returning to familiar passages with ease.

Questions and probes

If you are taking notes alongside the columns of Scripture, you might find you still have some space along the bottom (or at the ends of books). You can use this area for questions you have—either of the passage or of yourself. *What does the writer mean by x? When will I know I have reached a place of holiness*

in this matter? As the years progress, you may find yourself noting responses to those questions as God brings you answers.

Themes

Stepping up to themes can be a powerful tool not only for your own study, but in your conversations with others. If a friend asked you for some counsel because of doubts he was facing, what if you could help him by tracing a path of trust-sparking scriptures for him to read? The way to do this is to mark themes in your Bible.

Some Bibles will already have this built in via the concordance or cross-reference resources included with Scripture, especially if you own a study Bible (a Bible featuring helpful notes and visuals). But when you build your own “concordance” of themes, you do so in the course of your own study, which gives the passages greater meaning to you personally.

Here’s how it’s done. Let’s say you land on John 3:16, where Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” In the margin you might write “God’s love” and highlight it in blue. Now in the front or back of your Bible, where you find extra blank space, you can begin a list of themes by writing “God’s love – John 3:16” and highlight it in blue.

Now each time you encounter a verse or passage which touches up against God’s love, you can highlight it in blue. You may also

*ncil down
the central
point of the
passage*

*wow, I'd
like to get
here someday*

*this fits
me: full of
questions*

*hmm, not
sure if my
Bible has
these*

God's love

choose to add that reference to your growing list under "God's love."

Paths

Finally, you can jump up another level by creating verse-by-verse paths through Scripture right there in your Bible. You've started with God's love in John 3:16. Now when you encounter another passage displaying God's love (maybe Exodus 34:6), you write "God's love" in the margin, highlight it in blue, then do one more thing: return to John 3:16 and add the note "Exodus 34:6"). Now you have begun to build a thematic path, and you only have to remember (or look up on your master list) John 3:16.

God's love
Exod. 34:6

Here's the next step. This time you read of God's love in 1 John 4:10. You may not remember Exodus 34:6, but you don't have to. You only have to remember John 3:16. You go there, see Exodus 34:6, and turn to Exodus. Next to Exodus 34:6, you add the note, "1 John 4:10." And the

path gets longer, with each verse highlighted and chained to the next. Now whether you are leading a small group discussion or a friend just asks, "How can I be sure God loves me?," you can start at John 3:16 and walk down your path of scriptures about God's love.

Securing the Word

Teachers have long known of the studies that show how to better cause something to stick in a learner's brain. When we only read or hear or see something, we do not remember very much of it. But when we combine these experiences or add to them writing and conversing and even teaching them ourselves, our memory of the material greatly improves. When you become a Bible writer and not just a Bible reader, the benefit of your study—and your growing in knowledge of the God of Scripture—leaps forward. So get out that pen and make a glorious mess of your Bible!

*I get it!
this is a bit
of work,
but it will
really help*

*the power
of adding
writing to
reading*



Jeff Hopper is the editor of the Links Daily Devotional and Links Players magazine, as well as the author of *Go for the Green* and more recently, *My Hundred Helpers*, the story of God's provision through people told in the context of Jeff's cancer treatments and surgery. • This article may be reproduced and freely distributed, as long as no modifications are made and nothing is charged for its distribution. • Copyright © 2017 Links Players International • Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), Copyright ©1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation Used by permission. www.Lockman.org • Art credits: Pens - MicroOne/bigstockphoto.com; Highlights - samui/bigstockphoto.com