

Study Bibles For Desktop or Laptop

In both print and software, selections abound.

Clearly, not all Bibles are created equal. Though the content is basically the same—the Word of God—there are many different formats to choose from based on your needs and preferences.

One of these is the study Bible, a version of the Bible supplemented by a set of special features such as introductions, outlines, references, notes, concordances, dictionaries, maps, charts and illustrations—all designed to help you read and study the biblical text. Study Bibles are available not only in print form but also as programs for personal computers and portable computing devices such as iPods, and in other electronic formats.

Whether you are considering a study Bible for yourself or for use as a gift, it is important to determine whom the Bible is for, how it will be used and the preferred translation. If the Bible is for you, then you probably have an idea of what you want. However, if you are searching for a study Bible to give to someone else, it is important to consider the personal preferences of the recipient.

When searching for a study Bible, an important consideration is whether the primary purpose for using it is interpretation or application. Though there is bound to be some overlap, the study notes will reflect the overall emphasis of the Bible one way or another. For example, interpretative study notes might include more helpful cultural, historical or archaeological information.

The most important feature of a study Bible is the translation of its text. Some of the more popular translations for study Bibles include the New International Version (NIV), the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the New Living Translation (NLT) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Print Study Bibles

One of the most useful features of a study Bible for analyzing the biblical text is its reference system, and one of the most popular reference systems available is The Thompson Chain-Reference Study Bible (Kirkbride Bible Co.), which is available in the KJV, NKJV, NIV and NASB. It not only identifies the topic that is referenced, but also keys it to a numbered topical index and directs the reader to the next verse in its chain of references.

As its name suggests, the Standard Full-Color Bible (Standard Publishing), formerly The Rainbow Study Bible, is an entirely color-coded Bible. One of the best-selling study Bibles on the market today, it features a highlighting system that uses a dozen different colors and is available in both the NIV and the KJV.

The Outline Bible (Tyndale House) is a collection of outlines covering the entire Bible and is billed as the most comprehensive set of Bible outlines available today. All the points and subpoints are arranged in a format that makes them easy to read and remember, making it an ideal resource for Sunday school teachers, church pastors and other Christian educators.

Another popular resource is Nave's Topical Bible (Zondervan), which is one of the most comprehensive Bible-study aids available today. It combines some of the best features of a Bible dictionary, concordance, handbook and commentary, all in one convenient place.

The Apologetics Study Bible (B&H Publishing Group), due out in October, is designed to help today's Christians better understand and defend their faith. Incorporating the Holman Christian Standard Bible, it includes more than 100 key articles placed throughout the volume, profiles of historic apologists such as Justin Martyr and C.S. Lewis, and contributions from modern-day apologists, including Chuck Colson and Ravi Zacharias.

For archaeology enthusiasts, there is the popular Archaeological Study Bible (Zondervan), which is available exclusively in the NIV. The study Bible features nearly 500 full-color photographs of places and artifacts that explain the historical context of the people and stories of the Bible.

Axis: A Study Bible for Teens (Thomas Nelson) is the only KJV study Bible specifically designed for teens, according to the publisher.

Also available in the NKJV, Axis includes articles written by youth pastors and features content relevant to teens, some reformatted from Thomas Nelson's popular line of magazine-format Bibles called "BibleZines."

The best-selling NIV Study Bible (Zondervan) has been updated and revised by the original team of scholars and includes more than 800 new study notes, expanded book introductions,

outlines and several other features.

For those interested in study Bibles with a charismatic emphasis, popular choices include the Holy Spirit Encounter Bible (Charisma House), the Life in the Spirit Study Bible (Zondervan) and the Spirit-Filled Life Bible (Thomas Nelson).

Electronic Study Bibles

Bible study software is widely available for use on personal computers and other portable computing devices. Choices include at least one created for the wildly popular iPod digital media player—the TNIV Bible for iPod (Zondervan), an interactive DVD-ROM.

The Nelson’s NKJV Study Bible CD-ROM (Thomas Nelson) includes Nelson’s NKJV Study Bible and NKJV Concordance. It is designed for the computer user who wants an inexpensive way to access NKJV products in a simple, electronic format.

Another unique product is The Original GoBible (GoBible LLC), which gives students of the Bible the ability to search the entire Bible in audio format and select passages at the verse level. The Bible, available in the KJV and the NKJV, is also the only preloaded, dedicated audio device that contains the user-friendly “Hear-In-A-Year” program, which organizes passages into daily segments, navigating the user through the entire Bible in one year.

Other electronic study choices range from the software version of printed study Bibles to entire libraries of Bible-study aids, such as BibleWorks, QuickVerse, Online Bible, Biblesoft’s PC Study Bible and Thomas Nelson’s eBible Bible

Study Library.

Whatever your study Bible needs, an abundance of print and electronic alternatives is available today. Researching the many options will help you make the perfect selection for you or someone you love.

Sean Fowlds is a professional writer, editor and speaker who resides in Mount Dora, Florida.