



English Standard Version - Reference Edition

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Everyone has questions about God. What is He like? Does He really care about me? How do I get to know Him?

On one occasion, a class of students were drawing pictures about people from the Bible. One youngster was especially intent in her work. "What are you drawing?" an observer asked. "Oh, I'm drawing a picture of God," she replied confidently. "Well, that's a nice idea," he answered, "but really no one knows what God looks like." "Oh, they will when I get done " she replied, and hurried on with her drawing.

Think about that for a moment: "They'll know what God looks like when I get done." An overstatement? Yes, for a four-year-old. But not for Jesus Christ. He came to show us God.

One of the names given to Jesus is "Emmanuel," which means "God with us." When Jesus was on earth, God was on earth. When Jesus healed, God healed. When Jesus forgave sinners, God forgave sinners. The Bible says that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

When Jesus came to earth, He revealed God through simple yet beautiful figures of speech. He said, "I am the good shepherd . . . I am the door . . . I am the bread of life."

A good shepherd is a tenderhearted person, seeking each lost man, each lost woman in our big, bustling world. He is the door. Through Him is the knowledge of God. He is the bread of life. He is to your soul what bread is to your body.

On the cross of Calvary Jesus fully revealed God's love. When He died, He was actually taking our place that we might live. There He took the punishment that you and I deserved for our sins. Why? The answer is divinely clear: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

By Christ's birth, His life on earth, His death, and His resurrection from the grave, we can know God. He promises: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6).

Do you know God? Or do you just know about Him? There is a big difference. You can know all the theological facts but not know Him. Knowing God requires personal faith in His Son and what He has accomplished for you. Coming to Him is your admission that you are turning from your sins to receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

Jesus Christ invites you: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20).

Come to Christ today. He is God's answer for your questions.

Adapted from an article by Harold J. Sala

English Standard Version - Reference Edition Details

Date : Published (first published January 23rd 2001)

ISBN : 9781581343205

Author : Anonymous

Format :

Genre : Christian, Religion, Reference, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review English Standard Version - Reference Edition for online ebook

Stanley Lee says

...

What can I say?

I've been reading since the freshman year of High School. I've never run out of things to learn or new ways to appreciate it. There've been highs and lows but in the end... it always comes back here.

Brian says

This was probably my fourth or fifth time through the entire ESV (partly reading, partly listening this year), though I've probably read through the ESV NT, Psalms, and a few other OT books closer to twenty times. While I was raised on the KJV and appreciate its majestic Elizabethan language, and though I enjoy the readability of the NIV — and even NLT, for that matter — I still think the ESV is the best translation I've read. It retains enough of the KJV / RSV to feel very close to the version I memorized in the first two and a half decades of my life, but is based on superior manuscripts and better evangelical scholarship.

Jenny says

Tomorrow I finish my first round of reading the Bible cover to cover. I've read it through in pieces of course, and all the way through the New then the Old Testament in college. But to read it through in a year was a privilege and a joy. Our church started reading through the Bible during this year, preaching from a selection of the previous week's readings.

At first I didn't want to read it because I instinctively balk at bandwagon things, and because I wanted to be too cool to do what everyone else was doing. But I realized this was the perfect opportunity to get in there and do it because there were so many things that would naturally keep me focused. Reading it as a church and with my husband and brother have been really amazing, and finding the YouVersion app for my iPhone and iPad made an enormous difference. It gave me the structure and flexibility I needed, and I could read with my eyes or my ears on any given day. I gave myself the flexibility to read ahead or get behind as long as I stayed within a few days of where the plan was.

This was also an answer to a prayer from a few years ago that I would find it easy to get into the word. And it really was easy. It was amazing to see how things came together for me to read it.

I am planning to do another read-through again, and I'd like to read through it chronologically and also read the M'Cheyne plan, which weaves Old Testament and New Testament together. I think *For The Love Of God* by D.A. Carson is an excellent companion to reading through the Bible, as it provides a fantastic commentary on history and application in a very do-able, 1-page read each day. He follows the M'Cheyne plan in either a one year or two year reading plan.

As to the content of this book, a few things have stood out in my mind. First, how amazing it is that God has so carefully preserved his word. His word, history and story cross the boundaries of culture, time and language. His people are fallable, not heroes. But his plan has endured from before the start of history. What an incredible, holy, loving God we serve.

Jen says

Since this is actually 66 books in one, perhaps I should review them as I go. This is my second go-round with the Bible, reading it cover to cover, but I'm trying to do it in one year this time rather than the nearly four years it took me last time. [EDIT NOTE: Okay, so it's taking me more than a year. We'll go for a year and a half.] I refuse to review this as a theological text, even though it is for me and that's why I'm re-reading it, as this is a book review website and not a church forum. Therefore, I will review these on entertainment and literary bases only.

Genesis: Five stars. And God said let there be stories, and there were, and it was good. It seems like half of what people know about the Old Testament comes from this one book, from Creation to Joseph. Some awesome stuff in here, with lots of crazy people, establishing everything that it takes to get the Jews to Egypt wishing for an

Exodus: Four stars. The actual going out of Egypt and the wandering around in the desert are really neat, and of course there are miracles friggin' everywhere, but the back half of the book gets a little slow going as we enter Tabernacle law.

Leviticus: Three stars. The book of laws given to the Hebrew people by God, with some interesting stories thrown in to see if you're paying attention.

Numbers: Three stars. It's slow going at first as we count everyone who is still onstage, but then it picks up as everybody starts bickering about being in a desert for forty years. I mean, I'd complain. I hate sand. So Moses has some more moments of "oh no you di'nt" to the Israelites who obviously have short-term memory loss as a people because the miracle yesterday will never save them today, you know, and God facepalms a lot. Also, Miriam and Aaron get bitchy and Miriam gets leprosy and I'm not really sure why Aaron doesn't.

Deuteronomy: Three stars. Moses is doing a "hey remember what's going on" type narrative, which feels a little draggy after having read the books in which that actually went on. Also, a whole lot of "YHWH is the one true God and we should leave all others alone", and we all know how well that went.

Joshua: Four stars. It's actually pretty dry, but we have the Battle of Jericho and the death of Moses and the prostitute Rahab and people get dead, yo.

Judges: Five stars. Awesome stories of the judges of the nation of Israel, with people like Samson and Deborah and there are some crazy moments of awesome like people's heads getting tent-staked to the ground. No really. It's an action film in writing.

Ruth: Five stars. Very short book about Ruth, whose life is the suck until she follows her mother-in-law Naomi back to the land of the Lord and meets a hunka burnin' love named Boaz. A good story about love and faith and why your mother-in-law is not as cool as Naomi.

1 and 2 Samuel: Since they're telling a story together, they get reviewed together. Four stars. Setting up the

story of David and Saul and why Israel should never listen to itself when it whines, "But all the OTHER kids are doing iiiiiiit!"

1 and 2 Kings: Three stars. There are a lot of things about these books that are cool, but there's so much packed into them that it gets a little dead after a while.

1 and 2 Chronicles: Three stars. Like the bad sequel to the books of Kings. The difference is in the writing of them, that I think Kings was written when the Israelites still had the temple and these were written after its destruction, or the other way 'round. Either or, the measurements for the temple get dry really quickly, and having the four books refer to each other all the time is kind of like reading a whole chunk of "The Cat Who" series; you're pretty sure you've already read each one. Some gems buried within, though, like Joash in 2 Chronicles 22-ish; you just have to dig for them.

Ezra: Two stars. King Cyrus decides that enslaving the Jews is getting old, so he allows some of them to head back home and rebuild the temple that got Hulk-smashed some 700 years earlier. It would be exciting, perhaps, if it was not a carpenter's list of materials and a priest's list of names--added because we all need to know what schmucks married outside the bloodline, bad Hebrews! Also, Ezra himself doesn't come in until ch. 7 (of 10) and then he can't choose between 1st and 3rd person narratives. Also, no one likes Nebuchadnezzar, even though his name rocks. Really, just read 6:11, which is a pretty epic threat.

Nehemiah: Three stars. Ezra gets more screen time in this than his own friggin' book, which is silly. Also, WHY DID NO ONE EVER TEACH BIBLE AUTHORS THE DIFFERENCES OF PERSON NARRATIVE?!?! Not cool to switch all the time, guys. So, continuing to re-build Jerusalem/the Temple, but with more bad-assness than Ezra who can't write a good narrative, and a listing to put baby name books to shame.

Esther: Five stars. Whoever thinks the Bible is filled with women-hating chauvinists is so very wrong. (It only has some women-hating chauvinists.) Esther is beautiful, tricky, and Jewish, which can happen. She saves her people and a guy named Haman gets hanged on his own scaffold and it's just generally an awesome book. Also, love the name Mordecai.

Job: Five stars. My favorite book of the Bible when I was a kid, which says something about what kind of kid I was. This is kind of an introduction into How Not To Be In Friendship, because Job's friends are the suck and his life is the suck and it's never really clear what God is up to, anyway, because all-powerful but gambling with people because Satan challenged...? Love trying to figure out how this all works, and the last three or so chapters are ROCKING.

Psalms: Four stars. I like the psalms, because once you get past the fact that they talk about things I don't so much have to worry about, like enemies slicing off my head or setting fire to me tower or something (well, at least I don't have to worry about that exactly), it's a whole book of someone complaining, rejoicing, and being very human. I can totally relate to it, and that's always good in a book. Not great to just waltz through, though; take your time with this one.

Proverbs: Three stars. Filled with great wisdom and wonderful one-liners, but it's a bit like reading a giant batch of fortune cookies with no coherent connections. Sorry, Solly, your dad was a better writer. Even if you are much smarter.

Ecclesiastes: Three stars. Sure, there's a ton of good wisdom in the scant 12 chapters, but it's depressing as hell. Or Sheol. Because all is vanity, it keeps saying. And wisdom is wonderful. Unless it's vain. Then, it's vanity. And all is vanity.

Song of Solomon: Five stars. Are you kidding? This is the *bowchickabowwow* of the Bible, and it's really sad it doesn't get more press these days. I mean, really? So many verses about Solomon's girlfriend's breasts. Betcha didn't think THAT was in God's holy Word, right? Right. Because Christianity is, in fact, full of sexy sexy foxes. Also, this is just really good love poetry, aside from the innuendos. Here we have the "my beloved is mine, and I am his" bit. You're much better at love poetry than proverbs, Solomon; way to go.

Isaiah: Four stars. Isaiah is sometimes called the mini-Bible, because it has NT and OT themes and it's 66 books and I suppose theologians just like comparisons. It is long, and at times (many times) I had no freaking idea what was going on, but there are some really great passages in here. The beginning puts Isaiah at the top of the list for Best Doomsday Preachers Evar, and I'm pretty sure he was part of the invention of fire and brimstone sermons. The rest I have a bit of trouble with because, you see, I've sung some stuff by this one dude named Handel, which has forever destroyed my ability to read a good chunk of this book without humming along. Very foundational and lovely, but I'm glad to get toward the minor prophets.

Jeremiah: Two stars. Death! Mayhem! Destruction! Really freaking long chapters! I like the premise of this book, how God finally says, "For serious? I've been TALKING TO YOU ABOUT THIS for an entire testament. That's it. I'm so over you guys being crap. Fine. Babylon can have you. I'll knock them over later, but for right now, they can own your asses and burn your temple." But this gets a little old after 30 chapters; 52 was just cruel.

Lamentations: Three stars. I bet this is beautiful poetry in Hebrew, because it's pretty beautiful and heart-breaking poetry in English. A city has fallen, been broken, become utterly desolate; there's a lot of resonance with some of the Psalms here, actually, about loss and pain. Sadly, though, I'm enough of a jerk that I read the five chapters thinking, *I am immune to your bitching because I just read 52 CHAPTERS about how you were warned this would happen. Get over yourself.* Hence why I am not a counselor.

Ezekiel: Three stars. I don't really understand this book; it starts out like Jeremiah, with the gloom and doom on Israel for being arrogant fools. But then there are beautiful extended metaphors for the love of God, an episode with zombies (dem bones dem bones...), and the last ten chapters or so read like Numbers. What? Minus a few stars for lack of narrative connection, but some really beautiful writing in here. Also, it would seriously suck to be Ezekiel.

Daniel: Four stars. This is such a strange little book; the first half is the stories that always get hashed up for kids, like the lions' den and the gold statue and the writing on the wall (I don't understand how people choose Bible stories for kids). The second half, though, is like Revelation: The Prequel starring Gabriel, the Chatty One. A very good book, but not a cursory read.

CONT. BELOW

Matthew: Five stars. The first of the four Gospels telling the life of Jesus; very concerned with showing how Jesus fulfilled all kinds of prophecies. A lot of the children's Bible stories we bandy about come from this one.

Mark: Five stars. Sort of the Jesus as action figure Gospel, with a lot of emphasis on the miracles and last week of the Christ.

Luke: Five stars. This is the historical, matter-of-fact Gospel. Feels very close to Matthew, although it is written on the same timeline as Mark. We get a lot of our popular parables, like the Prodigal Son, from this one.

John: Five stars. John, I feel, was the Zen pothead of the disciples. He's very interested in the universal

themes of Jesus's time on Earth, and not so much with what was going on day-to-day. The most theologically based of the four Gospels with a whole lot of effort in showing you the importance of Christ being who he was.

Acts: Five stars. Ta-Dah! Paul is introduced and the rest of the New Testament can get under way. We also have the beginning of the church as a body with the speaking in tongues and all (much cooler here than in the modern Pentecostal church, I'd think). Dear Paul--STOP GETTING ARRESTED. Though it's interesting, it becomes a predictable plot device.

Romans: Five stars. This is Paul's letter of everything he thinks the Romans need to know before he heads that way. Result? SO THEOLOGICALLY DENSE. Plenty of things to put on your coffee cup, but you'll have to drink the coffee before you really understand what they mean.

1 Corinthians: Five stars plus a disclaimer: whenever I come anywhere near the letters of Paul, I usually have the Eddie Izzard sketch in the back of my mind which makes things much more...something. But yes, this is a lot of foundational stuff and Paul definitely isn't boring. I wouldn't have minded being his pen pal.

2 Corinthians: Four stars. This was one of the letters that's totally a letter; Paul is explaining himself to his friends that he's corresponding with, and it's pretty cool to remember that Paul was a person with frustrations and joys and all that sort of thing, rather than just a Church Father Important Dude.

Galatians: Four stars. Yay for short letters! Only six chapters, and it's another Paul-as-a-person letter. Like it, but it's not my favorite.

Ephesians: Four stars. Ah, Ephesians. This is where a lot of people get verses they like to quote out of context, like the wives to husbands bit and children to parents and bearing with one another in love. It's nice to read where all of that comes from and how it actually was intended to work.

Phillipians: Four stars. Very short, very much a glimpse of Paul as pastor, just trying to tell people he loves to stop being morons.

Colossians: Five stars. Also very short, with great thoughts on what being remade means. Very good to read as a "stay the course" pep talk, in a way.

1 Thessalonians: Three stars. Apparently this wasn't that earth-shattering, as I didn't remember finishing it until I flipped to the NT and saw that my bookmark was at the end. Surprise! It does house one of the first verses I ever memorized, though--1 Thess.5:17, second shortest verse in the Bible. I'm a bit of an underachiever sometimes.

2 Thessalonians: Four stars. It would have gotten three stars, but chapter 3 is pretty awesome. Here's a summary for you: Ch. 1: Hi! Ch. 2: Revelation Light! All the Antichrist, half the dazed aftereffect! Ch. 3: Get off your lazy ass and work, guys, this ain't no Cluniac monastery, you know. (Ah, your brevity is inspiring, Paul.)

1 Timothy: Three stars. I have a kind of intense love/hate relationship with this letter, because it's a microcosm of how conflicted I can feel about Paul in general. Here, writing to his BFF Timothy, Paul lays out some seriously useful rules about what church elders should be, and says some great things about what it means to stay in the faith and deal with the faithful around you when the going gets tough. However, it is also Misogyny Ahoy, dealing with how women should be seen and not heard in the church and how we're all evil because Eve f*ed up so bad, yo, and we can be saved through childbearing and faithfulness (no, really, 2:15). NOT COOL. Adam was just as much of an idiot, thank you very much, because Woman may have

taken the fig, but Adam was dumb enough to say, "Hey, that's wrong," and then TAKE IT ANYWAY. We both fail. Deal with it, Paul.

2 Timothy: Three stars. This is one of the few letters that I really feel slightly voyeuristic in reading; it's a guy talking to his protégé about the brass tacks of being a preacher. Also, there are reminders to bring the cloak he forgot in BFE when he visits, and to say hi to Aunt Janie for him, and to tell Jeffrey to STFU when he's talking about what preaching is--I mean, there are some good things in the scanty four chapters, but it's really quite personal correspondence, even if Paul did intend it for some sort of publication.

Titus: Four stars. Dear Titus, Because I love you as a son, I left you in Crete, even though we both know Cretans are worthless idiots--so much so that their name will become an insult that only the overeducated will ever use properly. Also, I've given you the task of telling everyone how they should act, which should make you incredibly popular. Love and hugs, Paul.

Philemon: Three stars. I think this is the shortest book in the Bible (being only half a page long) and I have no real idea why it's in there, because it's mainly about how cool Philemon is and how he should take care of this Onesimus guy that Paul has picked up along the way. I mean, perhaps it's a lesson in friendship, or maybe guardianship, or something, but it's kind of...weird.

Hebrews: Four stars. A slow start, but then, I'm not the intended audience. This is the letter in which all is explained to the Jews why this one Jewish Dude is cooler than all other Jewish dudes, and here are the fundamental bits of practice you need to know now. Not being Jewish and already knowing most of the fundamental bits, it was a tad tedious at first, but it's good to see a lot of the "rules" in one place, clearly explained.

James: Four stars. This letter can feel a little restricting sometimes, but that's probably an indication that it's doing its job. There are some great passages on what faith is, what to do when the world sucks, and why one should be mindful of one's speech in this one.

1 Peter: Three stars. Oh Peter, I want you to be cooler than Paul, and then this! A passage on submission to authority AND a passage on marital power structures? I don't think we can be friends.

2 Peter: Four stars. You have redeemed yourself, Peter! Some interesting things about election, but beautiful prose about the Day of the Lord and the wide gap between the realm of the fallen and of the saved. Good descriptions. You can stay.

1 John: Four stars. There are a lot of good things in here, and SO MUCH LOVE. God is love, God loves us, we should love people, we accept God's love. A good book, but man, the love fest is a bit overwhelming for a crotchety sot like me.

2 John: Three stars. All of the 13 verses in this letter; I have no idea why it's in the NT canon. It's more love, because John the Zen pothead was really excited about not having to deal with spiteful Jehovah from the OT anymore, but there's not much here that wasn't said in his first letter. Repetitive sequel, won't really do well at the box office.

3 John: Three stars. Made it all the way to 15 verses in this one! Not that I'm complaining, after the ridiculously long nature of book like Proverbs or Isaiah (I say it with love, long-dead Jewish icons). However, I feel like this, more than a lot of the other letters, has NO CONTEXT to make this important. Yes, it has a few good things to say, and I do like it, but it's very much a placeholder from one guy to his spiritual pals, not a Letter of Divine and Enduring Wisdom.

Jude: Four stars. Yes, I did have the Beatles' song in my head the whole time I was reading this, so it's perhaps fortunate that it's only 25 verses. Very much a letter of "don't be an idiot, y'all", which is fine, and a good reminder, because it's true, idiocy is usually not the best choice.

Revelation: Five stars. This is trippy shit, man. John the Zen pothead has a revelation about the end of all things, and it's not going away into the West, it's TOTAL WORLD DESTRUCTION and angels with horns and plagues and scary scary endtimes, yo. Even though they're super cheesy, the Left Behind books did kind of get the craziness of this vision by taking it literally, but their cheesiness gets in the way of how truly unsettling this is. I mean, really, whole chunks of the world DIE. It's kind of A Big Deal. Really good descriptive writing, and fascinating images, but not really something to curl up under the covers with. Amen and amen, I hope the prophecy doesn't come true in my lifetime.

Brenda Funk says

Well, I did it! Read through the whole Bible this year. Many parts of it left me confused and dismayed. I must confess that my understanding of what this all means is not very complete. But -- one thing I have taken great hope and joy in is the underlying theme that runs through it all, that is the bottom line -- of the redemptiveness of God's love, of restoration and hope and healing that is coming. When I read these passages I am stirred almost to tears, I am filled with 'home-sickness' as I think of what this means to our broken and hurting world, including the worlds that are ours.

From Micah:

"It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and it shall be lifted up above the hills;
and peoples shall flow to it,
and many nations shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;
but they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig tree,
and no one shall make them afraid,
for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.
...but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

...Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over transgression
for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in steadfast love.
He will again have compassion on us;

he will tread our iniquities underfoot.
You will cast all our sins
into the depths of the sea.

This is the vision of God that I want to hold on to from my reading of the Bible this year.

Ryan says

George Mueller read the bible over 200 times in his life. One of my friend's preacher Grandfather read the bible right at 400 times before he died. I'd like to land somewhere in there if God lets me live long enough and Jesus waits to come back. I've been reading for the last 14 years and the things i have learned would take a book to explain. But it has made me a better preacher a better husband a better person in general.

"these are not mere words, they are your very life" Deuteronomy 32:47

Jeremy says

I decided to read the Bible, not in a year, but in less than 90 days. I started in January and ended in March (84 days). Blogging through it was helpful for me.

Deboreads says

My handbook to life and beyond. Not written by "Anonymous" this Holy Book was written by Godly people inspired by the Holy Spirit of the One True God - The God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. Leading us to the Messiah, God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Sean Morrow says

In Part I God makes a bunch of rules, and ruthlessly punishes his chosen people for not following said rules. In Part II God sacrifices himself to himself so that he doesn't have to punish people for breaking the rules any more. The rest of Part II is mainly about how most of the old rules don't apply any more, except for the ones that do (namely, don't be gay or a sorcerer). Then a bunch of weird apocalyptic shit happens.

Jenna Mills says

At 20% Joshua

Another deeply depressing book. I'd compare it best to violent computer games nobody ever wants kids to play. For some bizarre reason, it's ok that cities are destroyed (down to the last donkey, never mind the children), so long as God is on your side. The God in this book is heartless and vengeful, and even stoops so low as blackmailing Joshua towards the end! I'll continue helping you to kill people and take their land and

wealth for yourselves so long as you have nothing to do with anyone who isn't 'chosen' afterwards. I'm so bewildered as to what type of person would choose to worship such a God! Anyway, when it's not disgustingly violent, it's just plain boring with lists of which tribe is getting what (except for the poor old Levites who are doomed never to get any of the spoils).

At 22% Judges. More of the usual war, murder and rape, which is all ok so long as you are following the right god. Samson - what a fellow! Murdering (pretty standard, I know, and giving away his wife (who didn't get much of a choice in anything) to his 'best man'. A complete imbecile though. She's busy trying to find his weak spot using her womanly wiles, with the purpose of having others make use of the knowledge, and he tells her different things. People try it out and he doesn't seem to twig that she's in on it! Idiot! (of the murderous sort). This book does make my blood boil.

At 25% Samuel 1

David kills Goliath, Saul takes him as a son (and son in law - but there's a fair amount of wife swapping goes on there), David kills more and more people and collects some foreskins, Saul gets jealous that David has murdered more people than he has so tries to kill him (numerous times), David keeps running away and Saul keeps finding him, Saul likes David again and David decides not to kill Saul, Saul changes his mind, David goes to stay with the very people he was murdering and wonders why they don't like him, David murders some other people, Saul commits suicide and someone chops his head off. Very uplifting.

At 27% Samuel 2 More murdering. Most of it the 'Lord's' wishes.

At 30% 1 Kings Rulers of Israel are basically all pretty bad and incite the Lord to anger and killing...or proclaiming that he'll reap destruction on their sons instead.

At 33% 2 Kings. More murder, sacking and general nastiness. Wondering when the love bit kicks in...

At 35% 1 Chronicles. War, of course, dictated by the Lord. Evidently some people inferior to others (talk of 'aliens'). Would, however, highly recommend this book for those looking for an unusual name for a child or pet. Pages and pages of lists of unusual names - many very cool ones!

At 38% 2 Chronicles. The rulers of the house of David. Some doing right in the eyes of the Lord, but mostly not. Puzzled that battle can be right (particularly when against the Philistines), but dare to light some incense and you are struck down with leprosy.

At 39% Ezra. Again, some pretty abhorrent views. Interracial marriages not allowed, and those who married foreign women have to put away their wives. Still waiting for the love...

At 40% Nehemiah. Walls of Jerusalem. Lots and lots of lists of names (interesting when you still need a boy's name for your baby). The ending nicely reminds us that bigots are not a new thing and people have thought foreigners = bad for many, many years. Doesn't make it right though.

At 41% Esther. An interesting enough tale. Began with a display of horrendous sexual discrimination, followed by plots (the baddie got his comeuppance) - thankfully the one to kill all the Jews was foiled, but there was of course still an awful lot of murder. Finally festivals to finish it off.

At 44% Job. God gets into some stupid competition with Satan which results in thousands of animals being killed alongside a load of human beings. The end of the book says that Job ends up richer than he was with even more children. I don't think it works that way God. Seems to me that God, Satan and Job are all as horrible as each other in this book. Makes me pretty furious actually.

torque says

If I had taken notes while reading I would have a lot more to say. I was actually reluctant to reading the bible when I was younger as I was actually worried I would be believer. However, this book can make an atheist out of anybody. It's pretty obvious to me that these books were written at different times by different people, not inspired by one God (unless he's got many, many personalities), who have at least one thing in common, namely controlling other people using fear, although maybe for different reasons. Some wants to just threaten the 'wicked' into living more peacefully in order to have a more stable society. While others wants to make sure people don't rebel against authorities, don't eat or mix foods that are likely to make you sick (way back when there were now refrigerators and people were generally more unsanitary), women are lower than men, slaves listen to your owners. Masturbate, and God will strike you dead, at least he did once, and it made it to the bible. God can harden peoples hearts, just so that they behave badly, so that later he can punish them for it. There were of course some good advice here and there, but nothing other religions also doesn't provide. I think it was interesting that Jesus didn't know that stars are a little too big to fall down to the earth in "Revelation". When I see the preachers on tv that are scamming people for money, I realized that it's the same kind of preachers who wrote these books, just thousands of years ago. One thing I realized while reading this book is that: All prophets are false prophets. I could go on and on about the controversies throughout the bible, (which by the way also is super boring to read at times and just boring other times.) but I've got to read the book of mormon now. For anyone interested, google absurdity in the bible and several fun pages pops up as I just discovered.

Rebecca says

It's strange that one of the most important, most dangerous, and most misused books in the world could be so mind-numbingly boring.

Also, anyone who claims they live their life by the bible should actually read it and see exactly what it is they claim to do. I'm guessing most people ignore 90% of what it says to do. Really, you could just collect everything Jesus says into one slender manual and cut the rest, since Jesus's sermons are the only parts anyone should really be proud of. The rest of it is a chronicle of genocide, rape, war, destruction, and hatred, interspersed with a really boring catalog of everyone born to a single patriarch.

Since everyone should be familiar with the bible in order to be a well-educated member of Western society, I would recommend just reading the Wikipedia articles about the major biblical stories. No need to waste your time reading the stilted prose and insanely detailed descriptions of people's lineage and no need to wade through a slew of arcane, confusing, and disturbing rules dispensed from a cruel and jealous god to a gullible and fearful populace.

Matthew says

My review: Life.

What I am learning from this book: Salvation. Life. Joy. Truth. Hope. Courage.

Paul Bryant says

I thought of a very short summary for those who don't have the time to read the whole thing. It's along the lines of the synopsis of *Moby Dick* I read somewhere:

Boy meets whale; boy loses whale; boy gets whale back again

So for the Bible it's

God meets people; God loses people; God gets people back again

In theological terms that's covenant; apostasy; incarnation and atonement

I admit my summary misses out the part where the incarnated God is deliberately killed by people and then resurrects himself (and they do make rather a lot of that part of the story), but if I included that it wouldn't have been so neat.

Adam Calvert says

The best English translation of the Bible available.

The goal of the translators was to make this as readable as the NIV and as literal as the NASB. If that goal could ever have been achieved (translation in itself really is a difficult task), God used the translators of the ESV to do it.

The one place I have an issue with is Daniel 9:25. It seems clear from the text that "there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again..." should have been translated, "there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it shall be built again..." I'm still a little baffled as to why they used "then" instead of "and" and separated the structure like that.

But on the much more positive side, the rest of the translation is absolutely wonderful. While retaining deep theological terms such as transgression, atonement, propitiation, etc. (because until our English language develops modern words equivalent to those, I don't think we should settle for modern terms that do not get across those meanings), they make the Word of God very readable and even provide better insight into older terms that no longer support the value of the original languages.

For instance, in the translation, "All Scripture is inspired by God," the word "inspired" means much less today than it did when originally translated that way. So the ESV translators simply translated it for what it is: "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16).

I also especially enjoyed the fact that they leave sentences much more aligned with the length of the originals. While this is really impossible to do at times (especially with Paul's writings), it really helps a lot when studying the Scripture.

For instance, 1 Peter 5:6-7 in the NIV is translated this way:

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

This makes it seem like two separate thoughts. (1) Humble yourself, and (2) Cast all your anxieties on Him.

The ESV translates it this way:

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

Thus, it retains that one-thoughtness of Peter's original writing. (1) Humble yourself BY casting your anxieties on Him.

I don't want to pick on the NIV here. I think it is a great translation especially for younger people. However just as the NASB is criticized for being too literal, the NIV can certainly be too readable so as to lose the thought of the original.

Thus, I really do believe that God has used the ESV to fill that gap and really be as readable as the NIV yet as literal as the NASB.

While I certainly suggest reading multiple translations (or even the original languages if you can), if there is one Bible that you do your primary study from, I would recommend with my most earnest exhortation to use the ESV - especially in the NT epistles. When I first switched from the NIV to the ESV my spiritual world was drastically reawakened.

I pray this translation will help all who read it to know God better and grow deeper in their relationship with Him.
