A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

Trusting the Word of God

Growing Closer to God · Book 1



Reading Scripture with care and confidence

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

I want to understand what God has said before I decide how to apply it. That sounds simple, but it takes care. It means reading beyond a favorite sentence, asking who is speaking, and allowing the passage to challenge what I already think. Confidence in Scripture should make me a more careful reader. My purpose here is to help us approach God's Word with faith, humility, and a willingness to learn.

Over years of leading Bible studies and serving as a lay pastor, I have met believers who love the Lord but feel intimidated by their own Bibles. Translating the Steadfast Literal Bible convinced me that God's Word is clear when we read it carefully and take it at face value. I wrote this book to give everyday Christians tools to read Scripture with confidence.

1 Why Scripture matters

> *Every Scripture **is** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which **is** in righteousness.*
> **2 Timothy 3:16 (SLB)**

> *so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.*
> **2 Timothy 3:17 (SLB)**

Second Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB) describes Scripture as "God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which is in righteousness." Its purpose reaches into the life we actually live. God equips His people for good work

through His Word. I should expect that reading it will sometimes encourage me and sometimes correct me.

Second Peter 1:20-21 (SLB) also directs our attention to God's part in the giving of Scripture. Prophecy "was never borne by the will of man, but being borne by the Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke." I therefore approach the Bible as more than a collection of interesting religious opinions.

That confidence does not mean every interpretation I have heard is correct. Scripture and my interpretation of Scripture are not the same thing. I can believe the Bible is true and still need to reconsider how I have understood a passage. Humility belongs beside conviction.

When a passage makes me uncomfortable, I want to resist the urge to explain it away. I also want to resist the urge to make it say more than it says. Both habits put my preferences ahead of the text. A faithful reading begins by listening, and it continues by accepting correction when the passage calls for it.

There were years I knew the right church answers and still drifted into bad choices, because I was not letting Scripture shape my daily life. When my life hit a wall in 2020, willpower was not enough. Going back to the plain truth of God's Word helped anchor my recovery and the rebuilding of my marriage.

2 Context comes first

> *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth.*
> **2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)**

Before I ask what a passage means for my life, I need to understand what it is saying. Who wrote it? Who first received it? What comes before and after it? Is the writer giving a command, describing an event, presenting poetry, or explaining a promise? Those questions keep a single sentence connected to the message around it.

Exegesis means drawing out what the text communicates. Eisegesis means reading my own ideas into it. I want the first approach. A verse should not become evidence for an idea simply because a few of its words sound useful for my argument.

I read Scripture in its ordinary sense unless the context gives a reason to recognize figurative language. A figure of speech still communicates truth. The task is to understand that truth from the passage, rather than assigning a hidden meaning to every detail. Scripture should help explain Scripture.

This is why I do not build doctrine from the placement of English words, an acrostic that depends on a particular translation, or arithmetic performed on chapter and verse numbers. Those tricks can make an illustration easy to remember, but they do not tell us what the Bible writer meant. God's Word deserves

better than an argument that disappears when the wording changes.

3 From manuscripts to a printed Bible

The history of the Bible raises several questions, and it helps to keep them apart. Inspiration concerns God's giving of Scripture. The canon concerns the books received as Scripture. Manuscript history concerns the copying and transmission of the text. Translation concerns its rendering into another language. Mixing them up leads to careless answers.

The Protestant Bible contains 66 books, with 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Those are the books I follow. Telling how the church came to recognize these books takes more care than naming one meeting and saying it created the Bible. Recognition and inspiration are different matters.

The old manuscripts that survive show us how the text was copied and handed down. The Dead Sea Scrolls include ancient biblical manuscripts from the area near Qumran. According to the Smithsonian, the first seven scrolls, among them the great Isaiah scroll, were found between late 1946 and mid-1947. That discovery belongs to manuscript history; it should not be presented as the moment the biblical books were first written.

Printing later changed how books could be produced. The Library of Congress dates the Gutenberg Bible to 1454 or 1455 and describes it as the first large-format typographic Bible produced in Europe. That wording is more careful than calling it the first book

ever printed. Erasmus' first printed Greek New Testament was published in 1516. That places it in the sixteenth century, not the fifteenth.

Historical evidence can deepen appreciation for the text handed down to us. It should be checked with the same care I ask people to bring to interpretation. A nice story about the Bible does not become true just because it gets repeated in a lesson.

4 Understanding translation and textual notes

Translation means carrying a text's meaning into another language. Translations differ in how much weight they give the original wording, the grammar, and how today's reader will hear a sentence. Those differences require explanation. They do not mean that every unfamiliar wording is an attempt to hide the truth.

The Steadfast Literal Bible is a word-for-word English translation I prepared from the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I use it consistently here. A quotation from a different translation should not be given the SLB label simply because much of it sounds the same.

Textual notes also deserve attention. They may alert a reader to a difference among manuscripts, rather than a translator's personal objection to a teaching. Before accusing a translation of dishonesty, I need to examine the evidence and understand what the note actually reports. My preference for one edition is not a substitute for that work.

Careful reading pays attention to language, context, and sources. I want to understand both the words in front of me and the evidence behind any explanation of them.

For years I used the NASB 1995. Now I use the Steadfast Literal Bible, which I translated so readers can see a word-for-word rendering in plain English, and I use J.P. Green's Interlinear Bible to confirm the text. Seeing how translators handle hard Hebrew or Greek words has made me appreciate the precision of Scripture more, not less. Footnotes are a tool, not a threat.

5 Using study helps wisely

A study Bible can help with background, cross-references, and difficult words. Its notes are still the work of an interpreter. I should read the biblical passage first and then use the notes as help, rather than allowing the notes to replace the passage in my mind.

When choosing study helps, I want to know who wrote them and what approach they take. A commentary can provide useful historical information while reaching an interpretation I do not share. I need to distinguish the background information from the commentator's conclusion. A confident tone does not settle the issue.

Original-language work also requires care. A dictionary entry can show several possible meanings, but context helps determine which meaning belongs in a particular verse. I should not pack every possible

meaning into one English word, or use a Greek term to make a weak claim sound like it carries authority. When I cannot verify a point, it is better to leave it open than pretend it is settled.

6 Reading in order to respond

> *A lamp to my foot **is** Your word, and a light to my pathway.*
> **Psalm 119:105 (SLB)**

A manageable reading habit is more useful than a plan I abandon because it is unrealistic. I would rather read a passage with attention than rush through several chapters without understanding what I have read. A schedule should support faithful reading, not become another way to measure my worth.

I begin by reading the passage more than once. Then I look at its place in the chapter and book. I note what is clear, what needs further study, and what response the passage calls for. If I write down a question, I can return to it without forcing a quick answer.

At church camp and on youth trips to Baja, I saw how young people grow when they put Scripture into practice. In any Bible study, it is easy to fill a notebook and walk out unchanged. Be doers of the word and not hearers only (James 1:22).

Application should grow out of the meaning. A command to forgive calls for more than admiring forgiveness. A warning about pride calls for

examining the way I treat people. A promise about Christ's return should strengthen faithfulness while I wait. Understanding should lead to response.

I also need the help of other believers. A humble conversation can reveal an assumption I missed or a passage I overlooked. My aim is not to collect enough information to win every argument. I want to know the Lord more deeply and live more faithfully before Him. Careful reading and a willing heart belong together.

Trusting the Word of God

✦ ✦ ✦

Where did the Bible come from, and can I trust it? This book looks at why Scripture matters, why context comes first, how the Bible came to us from manuscripts to print, and how to use translations and study helps wisely. The goal is simple. Read carefully, then respond.

Every Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which is in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16 (SLB)

Book 1 of 9 in the collection Growing Closer to God

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