

IN HIM WE LIVE

Enjoy the Bible

STUDY GUIDE



A 13-WEEK COMPANION STUDY
THROUGH E.W. BULLINGER'S CLASSIC
ON BIBLE INTERPRETATION

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Each week highlights one theme from Bullinger's *How to Enjoy the Bible*, moving from the simplest habits of study to the more advanced.

Read the teaching, walk through the worked example, try the exercise, then sit with the reflection questions in your own time and journal in the space provided.

There's no rush. Give each week its own space, and let the habits build one on top of the last.

FOUNDATION WEEK



WHY WE STUDY

THE WORD OF GOD AS A WHOLE

— / WHY WE STUDY

Before Bullinger ever gets to “how,” he starts with “why.” He opens his book with a line worth sitting with: the Bible isn't enjoyed because the Bible isn't understood. Not because we don't love God. Not because we're lazy. We just haven't been shown how the book actually works.

Bullinger lays out three foundational ideas before any study method. First, the Living Word (Jesus) and the Written Word (Scripture) reveal each other — you can't fully know one without the other. Second, the whole Bible has one great subject: Christ Himself, traced from promise, through rejection, into the church age, and on to final glory. Third — the phrase he built his life's work around — the Bible requires us to “rightly divide” it, from 2 Timothy 2:15.

This foundation week isn't a principle you'll apply verse by verse. It's the lens you'll look through for the next twelve weeks.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — 2 Timothy 2:15

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Bullinger notes “rightly dividing” is a workman's term — picture a mason cutting a straight line, or a farmer plowing a true furrow.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Open to Romans and skim the first eleven chapters. Notice how often Paul talks about “the Jew” and “the Gentile” as distinct groups, then how in chapter 12 the tone shifts to “we” and “brethren.” Just notice the seams — that's the beginning of rightly dividing.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

WHERE HAVE I READ THE BIBLE LIKE A LIST OF QUOTES, INSTEAD OF ONE UNFOLDING STORY?

WHAT WOULD CHANGE IF I TRUSTED THAT EVERY HARD PASSAGE HAS A PLACE IT BELONGS?

WEEK 1

1

SCOPE COMES FIRST

CANON I – THE MEANING OF WORDS IS
GATHERED FROM THE SCOPE OF THE
PASSAGE

1 / SCOPE COMES FIRST

This is the simplest and most foundational canon, so it's the right place to start. Before you look up a word in a dictionary or concordance, ask a bigger question first: what is this whole passage actually about? Bullinger calls this the “scope” — the one subject a passage is built around. Words don't have meaning floating in a vacuum. They have meaning inside a subject.

This matters because two people can read the exact same word and land in very different places if they've assumed different scopes.

Bullinger's own example is 2 Peter 1:20, where the word usually translated “private interpretation” has confused readers for centuries. Step back and ask what the whole passage is discussing, and the confusing word falls into place.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — 2 Peter 1:20-21

The verse is often read as a warning against personal interpretation. But the surrounding verses are entirely about the origin of prophecy — that it didn't come from man's will, but from men carried along by the Holy Spirit. The scope is source, not interpretation.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Pick a verse you've heard quoted often, out of context — Jeremiah 29:11 or Romans 8:28 are common ones. Read the whole chapter it sits in and write one sentence describing what the chapter is actually about. Then re-read your verse through that lens.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

HAVE I EVER BUILT A BELIEF ON A VERSE WITHOUT ASKING WHAT THE PASSAGE AROUND IT WAS REALLY ABOUT?

WHAT'S ONE "FAVORITE VERSE" OF MINE I COULD REVISIT THIS WAY?

WEEK 2

2

STRUCTURE REVEALS
SCOPE

CANON II – THE SCOPE OF A PASSAGE
IS GATHERED FROM ITS STRUCTURE

2 / STRUCTURE REVEALS SCOPE

If scope tells you what a passage is about, structure is how you find the scope in the first place. Bullinger noticed that biblical writers organized their material with intentional patterns — introductions and conclusions that match, ideas that build toward a center point, contrasts placed side by side on purpose. He wasn't inventing this; he was pointing out something original readers would have recognized instinctively.

This is a bigger step up in complexity than last week. The simplest version of structural reading is just this: read an entire passage start to finish, then ask what comes first, what comes last, and what sits in the middle. Often the center is where the writer wants your eye to land.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — 1 Peter 3:18-22

This is the famously confusing “spirits in prison” passage. Bullinger shows that verse 18 begins with “For,” tying the whole unit back to verse 17: it is better to suffer for well-doing than evil-doing. Once you see the structure (opening statement, supporting explanation, closing triumph), the strange middle section takes its proper, smaller place inside a bigger argument about Christ's resurrection.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Choose a short Psalm (Psalm 23 or Psalm 1 work well) and write out, in your own words, one line for each verse. Look at your list and see if you can find a turning point — a verse where the tone or direction shifts. That's often the structural hinge of the passage.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

DO I USUALLY READ WHOLE PASSAGES, OR DO I TEND TO LAND ON SINGLE VERSES?

WHAT DID I NOTICE BY READING SOMETHING START TO FINISH INSTEAD OF PICKING A VERSE OUT?

WEEK 3

3

WORDS CHANGE
MEANING OVER TIME

CANON III – THE BIBLICAL USAGE OF
WORDS IS ESSENTIAL TO CORRECT
INTERPRETATION

3 / WORDS CHANGE MEANING OVER TIME

Here's a simple but easy-to-miss problem: English changes, but our Bible translations are frozen in the era they were made. A word that meant one thing to a reader in 1611 can mean something very different — or nothing at all — to us today. Bullinger spends real time cataloguing old English words that have either disappeared or quietly shifted meaning.

The same is true, at a deeper level, of Greek words. Words like *pneuma* (spirit) or *parousia* (coming/presence) carry a range of biblical usage that a modern English word can't fully capture in one translation choice.

This week's discipline is simply: when a word feels odd, old-fashioned, or oddly repeated, stop and check its actual usage instead of assuming you already know what it means.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — 1 Corinthians 13:4, “Charity”

In the KJV, “charity” is used where we would say “love.” In 1611, “charity” meant self-giving love. Today it makes most readers think of donating money — a much narrower idea. Read with the modern sense in mind, you shrink one of the richest descriptions of love in Scripture down to a checklist of good deeds.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Read Philippians 4 in the King James Version, and circle any word that feels slightly “off” or old-fashioned. Look each one up in a Bible dictionary and jot down what it actually meant at the time.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

WHAT'S A WORD I'VE ALWAYS JUST ASSUMED I UNDERSTOOD, THAT MIGHT BE WORTH DOUBLE-CHECKING?

HOW DOES KNOWING THE OLDER MEANING OF A WORD CHANGE HOW A FAMILIAR VERSE LANDS ON ME?

WEEK 4

4

CONTEXT IS NOT
OPTIONAL

CANON IV – THE CONTEXT IS ALWAYS
ESSENTIAL TO THE INTERPRETATION OF
WORDS

4 / CONTEXT IS NOT OPTIONAL

This canon builds directly on the first two — scope tells you the big subject, structure shows you the shape, and now context fills in the immediate surroundings of a specific word or phrase. Bullinger's warning here is blunt: some of the most damaging misreadings of Scripture come from lifting a single line and ignoring everything around it.

He works through a long list of famous “proof texts” that get misused this way — verses like Romans 8:28 or Philippians 2:12 that sound like standalone promises, but actually depend heavily on what comes just before and after for their real meaning.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Philippians 2:12

Read alone, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” can sound like a call to earn salvation. But look at verse 13 immediately following: “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The near context flips the emphasis — this isn't about earning anything, it's about actively living out what God is already at work doing in you.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Take a verse you've seen on a coffee mug or wall decal — something short and inspirational. Read the ten verses before it and the ten after it. Write down whether the verse still means what you thought it meant once you see its neighbors.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

WHICH “INSPIRATIONAL VERSE” IN MY OWN LIFE MIGHT MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT IN CONTEXT?

AM I MORE TEMPTED TO SKIP CONTEXT WHEN A VERSE ALREADY SAYS SOMETHING I LIKE?

WEEK 5

5

WHAT COMES FIRST
MATTERS

CANON V – THE FIRST OCCURRENCE OF
WORDS IS OFTEN ESSENTIAL TO
INTERPRETATION

5 / WHAT COMES FIRST MATTERS

This is one of Bullinger's favorite tools, and it's a fun one to practice. His idea, sometimes called the "law of first mention," is that the very first time a word, expression, or type appears in Scripture often sets the tone and pattern for how it's used everywhere after. It's not a rigid rule that works on every word, but it's a genuinely helpful habit — go back to the root before you build on the branches.

This week is a step up in complexity because it asks you to do a bit of concordance work — tracing a word back to its earliest appearance rather than just reading the passage in front of you.

The payoff is worth it. It often reveals connections across the whole Bible you'd otherwise miss.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Genesis 20:7, the first use of "prophet"

The word "prophet" first appears describing Abraham, specifically in the context of prayer — God tells Abimelech that Abraham "is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee." The very first prophet in Scripture is defined not primarily by predicting the future, but by interceding before God on someone else's behalf.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Pick a word that matters to your faith walk — "faith," "rest," "covenant," or "glory" are good starting points. Use a concordance to find its very first appearance in Scripture and write down what it teaches you before it's used anywhere else.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

WHAT SURPRISED ME ABOUT THE FIRST TIME THIS WORD APPEARS IN THE BIBLE?

DOES THE FIRST OCCURRENCE AGREE WITH HOW I'VE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THIS WORD, OR CHALLENGE IT?

WEEK 6

6

LOCATION, LOCATION,
LOCATION

CANON VI – THE PLACE WHERE A
PASSAGE OCCURS IS OFTEN ESSENTIAL
TO ITS FULL INTERPRETATION

6 / LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Where a verse sits in the overall shape of Scripture — which book, which testament, spoken by whom, to whom — changes how it should be read. This is Bullinger's dispensational instinct showing up directly: the same general truth can carry a very different weight depending on whether it's spoken to Israel under the Law, to the disciples during Christ's earthly ministry, or to the Church after Pentecost.

This one takes practice because it asks you to hold two things at once: the timeless character of God, and the time-bound audience of a specific passage. Both matter.

Ignoring either one causes real confusion.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour”

This beloved invitation is spoken by Christ during His earthly ministry, to a Jewish audience under the burden of the Law and religious tradition. That doesn't mean it has no application for us today — but Bullinger would ask you to notice its original placement first, so you understand exactly what “rest” was being offered before applying it more broadly.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Choose a red-letter passage from one of the Gospels. Before applying it to yourself, ask: who is Jesus speaking to, and what is happening around Him? Write down the audience and setting first, then write down how it applies to you today.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

HAVE I EVER ASSUMED A PROMISE WAS WRITTEN DIRECTLY TO ME WITHOUT CHECKING WHO IT WAS SPOKEN TO?

DOES KNOWING THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE TAKE ANYTHING AWAY FROM A PASSAGE, OR ADD DEPTH?

WEEK 7

7

SCRIPTURE DOESN'T
CONTRADICT ITSELF

CANON VII – NO ONE PASSAGE IS TO
BE INTERPRETED IN A SENSE
REPUGNANT TO OTHERS THAT ARE
CLEAR

7 / SCRIPTURE DOESN'T CONTRADICT ITSELF

When you come across a passage that seems to contradict something crystal clear elsewhere in Scripture, Bullinger's rule is simple: the unclear passage needs to be re-examined, not the clear one thrown out. Scripture is meant to be read as a unified whole, so a confusing or ambiguous text should be interpreted in harmony with the plain, repeated teaching of the rest of the Bible — not used to override it.

This is a maturing skill. It asks you to hold your interpretation of a hard passage a little more loosely.

Be willing to say “I must be misreading this one” rather than “this one overturns everything else.”

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Luke 16:19-31, The Rich Man and Lazarus

This parable has been used to build entire doctrines about the afterlife. But Bullinger points out it's told in the form and language of a parable, using imagery common in the rabbinic teaching of the day, sitting among a string of other parables in Luke 15-16 about lost things being found.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Think of a passage that has always felt confusing or troubling to you. Instead of resolving it alone, look up two or three other clear, repeated passages on the same topic and read them side by side.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

**IS THERE A HARD PASSAGE I'VE BEEN CARRYING AROUND,
UNRESOLVED, FOR A LONG TIME?**

**WHAT WOULD IT FEEL LIKE TO HOLD THAT PASSAGE LOOSELY
INSTEAD OF NEEDING TO RESOLVE IT TODAY?**

WEEK 8

8

SMALL DETAILS, BIG
ACCURACY

CANON VIII – THE IMPORTANCE OF
ACCURACY IN THE STUDY OF THE
WORDS OF SCRIPTURE

8 / SMALL DETAILS, BIG ACCURACY

This is the longest and most detail-heavy canon in Bullinger's whole book, so expect this week to take more time and patience than the others. His core point: precision matters. Small differences — was it Ammonite or Moabite, did Paul hear the voice or not hear it — aren't nitpicking. They're often exactly where real, lasting truth is hiding.

You don't need to master Greek grammar this week. The goal is simply to build the habit of slowing down on details you'd normally skim past.

This is especially true when two passages describing the same event seem to say slightly different things.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Acts 9:7 and Acts 26:14

In Acts 9:7, Paul's companions heard a voice but saw no one. In Acts 26:14, all of them fell to the ground. These aren't contradictions once you look closely at the Greek — different verbs and cases are used for “hearing” in each account, and “stood” and “fell” can both be true at different moments of the same event.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Find two Gospel accounts of the same event (the feeding of the 5,000 is a good one). Read them side by side and list every small detail that's different, asking whether it's a true contradiction or simply a different angle.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

DO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GOSPEL ACCOUNTS UNSETTLE ME, OR HAVE I LEARNED TO EXPECT THEM?

WHAT'S ONE SMALL DETAIL I NOTICED THIS WEEK THAT I WOULD HAVE SKIMMED PAST BEFORE?

WEEK 9

9

LEARNING TO READ THE
PICTURES

CANON IX – FIGURES OF SPEECH

9 / LEARNING TO READ THE PICTURES

Scripture is full of figures of speech — metaphor, hyperbole, personification, idiom — and Bullinger actually wrote an entire separate volume cataloguing over two hundred of them. His point in this shorter section is that figures of speech are not decorations added on top of the truth; they are often the most emphatic, precise way the truth could be stated. When the Bible says something figuratively, it's usually saying it more strongly, not less literally true.

This week's discipline is learning to notice figurative language for what it is.

Without dismissing it as “just a metaphor” or over-literalizing it into something strange. Both mistakes cause real confusion.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Matthew 5:29, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out”
Read woodenly literal, this verse has led some readers into self-harm. But this is hyperbole, a recognized figure of speech used throughout Scripture to communicate extreme seriousness through deliberate overstatement. It's using exaggeration to drive home how seriously we should deal with sin.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Read Psalm 18 and underline every phrase that can't be taken literally. For each one, write a sentence describing what real truth the picture is communicating.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

**HAVE I EVER FLATTENED A FIGURE OF SPEECH INTO SOMETHING
CONFUSING BY TAKING IT TOO LITERALLY?**

**WHAT'S A FIGURATIVE IMAGE IN SCRIPTURE THAT ACTUALLY MOVES
ME MORE THAN A PLAIN STATEMENT WOULD?**

WEEK 10

10

FROM MEANING TO
APPLICATION

CANON X – INTERPRETATION AND
APPLICATION

10 / FROM MEANING TO APPLICATION

Here's a distinction Bullinger insists on that's easy to blur: interpretation asks "what did this mean, to its original audience, in its original context?" Application asks "what does this mean for me, now?" Both are valid and both matter — but application should always follow interpretation, never replace it. A passage can have one correct interpretation and many faithful applications.

This canon pulls together everything from the previous nine weeks: scope, structure, word usage, context, first occurrence, place, harmony, accuracy, and figures of speech.

This week is about using all of them together before you ask "what does this mean for my life."

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Jeremiah 18, The Potter's House

The original interpretation is specifically about God's dealings with the nation of Israel — His right, as the potter, to reshape a covenant nation according to their obedience or rebellion. The application — God shaping our individual lives — is a faithful extension, even though it wasn't the original subject. Knowing the difference keeps both honest.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Choose a passage you've applied personally many times. Write two paragraphs: one describing what it meant to its original audience, and a second describing how you've applied it in your own life.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

DO I USUALLY JUMP STRAIGHT TO “WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME” WITHOUT ASKING WHAT IT MEANT ORIGINALLY?

HOW DOES KEEPING INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION DISTINCT CHANGE HOW I'D TEACH THIS TO SOMEONE ELSE?

WEEK 11

11

WHAT INSPIRATION DOES
(AND DOESN'T)
GUARANTEE

CANON XI – THE LIMITS OF
INSPIRATION

11 / WHAT INSPIRATION DOES (AND DOESN'T) GUARANTEE

This is one of the more advanced and nuanced canons, so take it slowly. Bullinger makes a distinction that's easy to miss: the Bible is the inspired, accurate record of everything it records — including things that are not themselves inspired or true. Satan's lies are recorded accurately. Job's friends' bad theology is recorded accurately. That doesn't mean they were right — it means Scripture gives us a trustworthy transcript of what was actually said.

This distinction protects you from two opposite errors.

Dismissing something as unreliable because a “bad guy” said it in Scripture, or treating every quoted statement as if God Himself is endorsing it.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — Job 4-25, The Speeches of Job's Friends

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar speak for chapters, and much of what they say sounds wise on its own. But at the end of the book, God directly states they have not spoken what is right about Him (Job 42:7-8). The record is fully accurate; the content is not automatically true or endorsed.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Find a place in Scripture where someone other than God is speaking at length. Read it and ask: is this passage endorsing what's said, or simply recording it?

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

HAVE I EVER QUOTED A VERSE AS “TRUTH” WITHOUT CHECKING WHO WAS ACTUALLY SPEAKING?

DOES THIS DISTINCTION CHANGE HOW I READ THE BOOK OF JOB, OR OTHER WISDOM LITERATURE?

WEEK 12

12

WHERE OUR ENGLISH
BIBLE CAME FROM

CANON XII – THE PLACE OF VARIOUS
READINGS

12 / WHERE OUR ENGLISH BIBLE CAME FROM

This final, most advanced canon is really an honest look at how the Bible reached us. There is no single original manuscript sitting in a vault somewhere — we have thousands of ancient copies, and scholars compare them to reconstruct the most accurate text possible. Occasionally, these copies have small differences — what's called “variant readings.”

Bullinger's aim here is not to shake your confidence in Scripture, but the opposite.

The sheer volume and consistency of these ancient manuscripts, and the careful work of textual scholars over centuries, gives us remarkable confidence in the text we hold today.

A WORKED EXAMPLE — 1 John 5:7-8, “The Three That Bear Record”

Some older translations include a phrase about the Father, Word, and Spirit bearing witness in heaven. Nearly all modern textual scholars agree this phrase was not in John's original letter — it appears to have been added centuries later. This doesn't touch the doctrine of the Trinity, which stands firmly on other clear passages.

TRY IT YOURSELF THIS WEEK

Open a modern study Bible to 1 John 5:7 and read the footnote about manuscript evidence. Notice the translators being transparent with you.

REFLECT & JOURNAL

Sit with these questions in your own time this week. Let the Holy Spirit apply what you've read to your own walk.

DID LEARNING ABOUT TEXTUAL VARIANTS UNSETTLE ME, OR BUILD MY TRUST IN HOW CAREFULLY SCRIPTURE HAS BEEN PRESERVED?

LOOKING BACK OVER THESE TWELVE WEEKS, WHICH SINGLE CANON CHANGED THE WAY I READ MY BIBLE THE MOST?

Words That Changed Meaning

Some KJV words don't mean what they seem to say today

WORD	THEN (KJV, 1611)	NOW (TODAY)
Conversation	Behavior, way of life — Phil. 1:27	Talking, discussion
Charity	Selfless, God-like love — 1 Cor. 13:1	Giving to those in need
Prevent	To go before, precede — 1 Thess. 4:15	To stop from happening
Let	To hinder, restrain — 2 Thess. 2:7	To permit, allow
Suffer	To permit, allow — Matt. 19:14	To endure pain
Comprehend	To seize, overpower — John 1:5	To understand
Peculiar	One's own treasured possession — Titus 2:14	Odd, strange
Replenish	To fill completely — Gen. 1:28	To refill, restock
Carriage(s)	Luggage, baggage — Acts 21:15	A wheeled vehicle
Instant	Urgent, insistent — Rom. 12:12	A brief moment
Leasing	Lying, deceit — Psalm 4:2	Renting property
Meet	Fitting, proper — Mark 7:27	To encounter someone

Christ: The Thread Through Every Book

Part One — The Old Testament

Like a single red thread woven through a tapestry, Jesus runs through every book of Scripture. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Combined books (like 1 & 2 Samuel) are kept together as Bullinger himself would treat them — as one witness.

Genesis — The seed of the woman, the ram in the thicket

Exodus — Our Passover Lamb, the Rock that was struck

Leviticus — The perfect sacrifice, our great High Priest

Numbers — The bronze serpent lifted up for our healing

Deuteronomy — The Prophet greater than Moses

Joshua — Our true Joshua, who leads us into rest

Judges — Our righteous Judge and Deliverer

Ruth — Our Kinsman-Redeemer

1 & 2 Samuel — The anointed King after God's own heart

1 & 2 Kings — The King whose reign never fails

1 & 2 Chronicles — The true King-Priest who restores worship

Ezra — The one who rebuilds and restores

Nehemiah — The builder who repairs what's broken

Esther — The unseen hand behind every deliverance

Job — Our living Redeemer and Mediator

Psalms — The suffering, and reigning, Messiah

Proverbs — Wisdom itself, made a person

Ecclesiastes — The meaning the Preacher searches for

Song of Solomon — The Bridegroom who loves His bride

Isaiah — The Suffering Servant and coming King

Jeremiah — The righteous Branch, the weeping intercessor

Lamentations — The man acquainted with grief

Ezekiel — The Good Shepherd, the true Temple

Daniel — The fourth man in the fire, the Son of Man

Hosea — The faithful husband to an unfaithful bride

Joel — The one who pours out His Spirit

Amos — The restorer of what has fallen

Obadiah — The deliverer who stands on Mount Zion

Jonah — The sign of three days and three nights

Micah — The ruler to be born in Bethlehem

Nahum — The Lord, slow to anger, mighty to save

Habakkuk — The righteous One who lives by faith

Zephaniah — The King in our midst who rejoices over us

Haggai — The desired of all nations, filling the temple with glory

Zechariah — The pierced one, the humble King on a donkey

Malachi — The Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings

Christ: The Thread Through Every Book

Part Two — The New Testament

The thread that ran quietly through the Old Testament comes into full view here: the Word made flesh, walking among us, dying, rising, and reigning. “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Matthew — The promised King of the Jews

Mark — The suffering Servant who came to serve

Luke — The compassionate Son of Man, Savior of all

John — The eternal Word made flesh, the Son of God

Acts — The risen, reigning Christ building His Church

Romans — Our righteousness by faith in Christ alone

1 & 2 Corinthians — Christ our wisdom, our resurrection, our unity

Galatians — Our freedom in Christ, apart from the law

Ephesians — Our identity and inheritance in Christ

Philippians — Our joy and example, who emptied Himself for us

Colossians — The fullness of God, preeminent over all

1 & 2 Thessalonians — Our returning King

1 & 2 Timothy — The faithful Shepherd of shepherds

Titus — Our great God and Savior

Philemon — Our Mediator who reconciles us to one another

Hebrews — Our great High Priest, better than every shadow

James — Living faith, at work through Christ in us

1 & 2 Peter — Our suffering, and glorified, Shepherd

1, 2 & 3 John — Our Advocate, the love of the Father made known

Jude — Our Keeper, able to present us faultless

Revelation — The Lamb who is King of kings forever

Words That Changed Meaning — Part Two

More KJV words that don't mean what they seem to say today

WORD	THEN (KJV, 1611)	NOW (TODAY)
Halt	Lame, limping — 1 Kings 18:21	To stop
Nephew	Grandson, descendant — 1 Tim. 5:4	Brother's or sister's son
Room	A seat of honor — Luke 14:7	A chamber
Bowels	Seat of compassion — Phil. 1:8	Intestines
Silly	Weak-willed, easily led — 2 Tim. 3:6	Foolish, comical
Wealth	Well-being, benefit — 1 Cor. 10:24	Riches, money
Occupy	To conduct business — Luke 19:13	To fill a space
By and by	Immediately — Matt. 13:21	Eventually, later
Cousin	Kinsman, relative broadly — Luke 1:36	A specific first cousin
Ghost	Spirit — “give up the ghost”	A specter

Words That Changed Meaning — Part Three

The last of the KJV words that don't mean what they seem to say today

WORD	THEN (KJV, 1611)	NOW (TODAY)
Communicate	To share, give — Gal. 6:6	To talk
Ensnare	To pursue, follow after — 1 Pet. 3:11	To result from
Admire	To marvel at, warily — Jude 1:16	To respect, look up to
Demand	Simply to ask — Matt. 2:4	To ask forcefully
Mansions	Dwelling places, rooms — John 14:2	Large, grand houses
Quick	Alive, living — “the quick and the dead”	Fast
Doctor	Teacher — Luke 2:46	A physician
Closet	A private inner room — Matt. 6:6	Storage for clothes
Damnation	Judgment generally — Rom. 13:2	Eternal hell specifically

Thee, Thou & Ye — A Quick Grammar Guide

The KJV pronoun and verb system, decoded for modern readers

PRONOUNS

KJV FORM	MODERN EQUIVALENT	EXAMPLE
Thou	You (subject, singular)	"Thou art my son" = You are my son
Thee	You (object, singular)	"I have chosen thee" = I have chosen you
Thy	Your (before a consonant)	"Thy kingdom come" = Your kingdom come
Thine	Your / Yours (before a vowel)	"Thine eyes" = Your eyes
Ye	You (subject, plural)	"Ye are the salt of the earth" = You all are...
You	You (object, plural)	Reserved for the plural object in the KJV
Your	Your (plural)	"Your Father which is in heaven"
Yours	Yours (plural)	A less common form

VERB ENDINGS

KJV FORM	MODERN EQUIVALENT	EXAMPLE
-EST ending	You + verb (regular)	"Thou sayest" = You say
-ETH ending	He/She/It + verb (regular)	"He loveth" = He loves
Art	Are	"Thou art" = You are
Hast	Have	"Thou hast" = You have
Hath	Has	"He hath" = He has
Shalt	Shall / will	"Thou shalt not" = You shall not
Wilt	Will	"What wilt thou?" = What will you do?
Didst	Did	"What didst thou?" = What did you do?
Dost / Doth	Do / Does	"Dost thou..." = Do you...

Words We Don't Use Anymore — Part One

KJV words that have vanished from English entirely

WORD	MEANING	WHERE IT APPEARS
Wist	Knew	Luke 2:49
Wot	Know, realize	Genesis 21:26
Trow	Think, suppose	Luke 17:9
Peradventure	Perhaps, by chance	Genesis 18:24
Howbeit	However, nevertheless	John 6:23
Verily	Truly, certainly	“Verily I say unto you”
Wherefore	Why / for this reason	Common throughout
Whither	To where	John 13:36
Hither	To here	John 4:15
Thither	To there	Genesis 19:20

Words We Don't Use Anymore — Part Two

The last of the KJV words that have vanished from English entirely

WORD	MEANING	WHERE IT APPEARS
Betwixt	Between	Luke 16:26
Anon	Soon, at once	Matthew 13:20
Holpen	Helped	Luke 1:54
Spake	Spoke	Common throughout
Brake	Broke	Common throughout
Sundry	Various	Hebrews 1:1
Forasmuch	Since, because	Luke 1:1
Notwithstanding	Nevertheless	Acts 20:23
Twain	Two	Matthew 5:41
Nigh	Near	Common throughout

Frequently Asked Questions About the KJV

Honest answers to the honest questions

WHEN WAS THE KJV FIRST PUBLISHED, AND WHO TRANSLATED IT?

In 1611, commissioned by King James I of England. He didn't translate it himself — a team of 47 scholars, working in six committees, spent about seven years translating from the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

IS THE KJV THE “ORIGINAL” BIBLE?

No single translation is “the original.” The KJV is an English translation, drawing on earlier ones like Tyndale's. The actual original writings don't survive in any language — every translation works from ancient copies.

WHAT MANUSCRIPTS WAS IT TRANSLATED FROM?

The New Testament came mainly from the Textus Receptus, a Greek manuscript tradition compiled by Erasmus and others. The Old Testament came from the Masoretic Text, the standard Hebrew manuscript tradition, with some Latin and Greek influence.

WHY DOES THE KJV USE “THEE,” “THOU,” AND “YE”?

These were simply the normal singular and plural forms of “you” in Early Modern English, not special “holy” language. See the grammar guide earlier in this section for the full breakdown.

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY WORDS I DON'T RECOGNIZE?

English has changed a great deal in over 400 years. Some KJV words have vanished from everyday use entirely; others still exist but now mean something different. Both kinds are covered in the word lists in this section.

WHAT ROLE DID NOAH WEBSTER PLAY IN KJV STUDY?

Webster's 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language was written in close dialogue with the KJV, citing Scripture thousands of times and shaping many definitions around biblical usage. Many Bible teachers still use it today to recover what a KJV word actually meant when it was written. Webster also published his own lightly modernized revision of the KJV in 1833.

WHY DO SOME VERSES APPEAR IN THE KJV BUT NOT IN MODERN TRANSLATIONS?

The best-known example is 1 John 5:7-8. Most modern translations omit or footnote this phrase because it doesn't appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts. This reflects which manuscripts translators had access to, not a hidden agenda on either side.

IS THE KJV THE MOST ACCURATE TRANSLATION?

This is genuinely debated among sincere believers. Some value the KJV's careful translation process and traditional manuscript base. Others prefer modern translations built on manuscripts discovered since 1611, or aim for more contemporary readability. Both approaches are used by serious, faithful scholars today.

WHAT IS “KJV-ONLYISM”?

The view that the KJV is the only accurate or divinely preserved English translation, and that all others contain errors. It's a minority position, held with real conviction by some and considered mistaken by many other KJV-loving pastors and scholars. Worth studying prayerfully, and holding with humility toward those who land differently.

SHOULD I READ THE KJV OR A MODERN TRANSLATION?

Many people benefit from both — the KJV for its literary richness and centuries of devotional use, a modern translation for everyday clarity. This is a personal choice, not a test of faithfulness.

IS THE KJV PUBLIC DOMAIN?

Yes, everywhere except the United Kingdom, where the Crown holds a perpetual copyright on it, though it remains freely used there for religious purposes.

WHAT READING LEVEL IS THE KJV?

Studies using the Flesch-Kincaid scale, which measures sentence length and syllable count, commonly place the KJV around a 12th-grade reading level — higher than most modern translations. Results vary by method; some analyses score it as easier because of its many short, one-syllable words. Either way, its archaic vocabulary remains the real hurdle for most readers today.