

Equip: Resources on the Book of Philippians

July 7, 2025

A couple of years ago, our church spent about nine months walking through Paul's letter to the Philippians. As I prepared sermons through that series, I routinely utilized the resources below as my companions in study.

I offer these resources not necessarily because they are the best of the best, but because they served me well during my journey through Philippians.

Missing from my list are a host of wonderful resources, including two I dare not fail to mention: David Garland's *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* commentary in the revised edition of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* and Gordon Fee's *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* in the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* series.

***Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Philippians* by George H. Guthrie**

The *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* series offers a commendable approach to the Scriptures.

As any decent commentary does, the introduction of each volume addresses the background matters of authorship, audience and other foundational matters, but the series offers its distinguishing features in the discussion of the particular biblical passages.

For each passage under discussion, the author provides the literary context of the passage in narrative and outline forms, the main idea, a translation, the structure of the passage (the flow of thought), an outline, and a thorough but not overly technical explanation of the entire passage in verse-by-verse fashion.

Each chapter concludes with a survey of theological principles derived from the passage for application to contemporary life. The approach not only yields helpful insights into the text at both granular and macro levels, but also invites the reader into the process of interpretation rather than offering only conclusions.

Guthrie's volume on Philippians exemplifies the best of this approach. His discussions in the "Explanation of the Text" sections are thorough, engage substantively with other scholars, and reflect a strong command of the Greek text and the historical context behind Philippians.

Guthrie also includes diagrams and charts to aid his explanations and excurses on critical topics in Pauline studies. I recommend this volume highly.

The Story of God Bible Commentary: Philippians by Lynn H. Cohick

I received some wise counsel a few years ago: "If all of the authors of the resources in your library are like you, your library is deficient."

No doubt this counsel could be misapplied to introduce into one's study of the biblical text diverse authors for diversity's sake alone. More problematically, diversity for diversity's sake risks a corresponding diversity of approaches to Scripture.

As someone who regards the Scripture highly and pastors a church who

regards the Scripture highly, I rarely have either the time or the inclination in a typical week to engage with sources that undermine the Scripture as God's word. This is why I appreciate Cohick's contribution to the *Story of God* series.

The series reflects the evangelical disposition toward the Scripture that Zondervan is known for. That is, authors in the series regard Scripture highly.

Along with these evangelical commitments, as a top-shelf scholar, Cohick brings to the table her expertise in New Testament studies and her extensive knowledge of the first-century world. As a result, she delivers accessible but rich content in the "Explain the Story" sections in her discussions of the Philippian letter.

In the "Live the Story" sections, though, Cohick offers what the wise counsel I referenced above seeks to impart. In these sections, Cohick brings the passage to bear on the modern audience in compelling ways that occasionally employ examples and illustrations from her lived experience as a woman, such as lessons from pregnancy.

Lest one mistakenly characterize this commentary as sort of a "women's Bible study," however, one should remember Cohick's impeccable credentials, and the fact that half the congregants in the typical church service are female.

A preacher would be wise to listen carefully to someone not necessarily like oneself. If one desires to expand one's library in this direction, this commentary is a sound choice.

B&H Exegetical Guide to the Greek

***New Testament: Philippians* by Joseph H. Hellerman**

This resource includes a brief treatment of the matters typical to the introduction of a commentary, but the real merits of this volume come in the discussion of the various passages.

Hellerman begins the discussion of each passage with a structural outline of the passage in which he writes out the Greek text phrase by phrase, left-justifying the subject/main-verb clauses and aligning subsequent phrases in positions relative to what they modify.

Though this structural outline offers no labels or explanations, a cursory scan of this outline reveals the key assertions and exhortations of the passage along with the supporting points, all based on the Greek text of Philippians.

The subsequent discussion of the passage explains in detail the grammar and syntax of the various words and phrases in the text. Herein lies the downside to this resource—the technical language—but an upside as well.

For someone interested in maintaining and even improving Greek proficiency, this resource paired with a second-year grammar and some language tools can sustain, as well as develop, one's capacity to engage the Greek text of Philippians meaningfully—and Paul's other letters, for that matter.

Hellerman's discussion is not limited only to overly technical aspects of the Greek text, though. Similar to other strong commentaries, he offers keen insights into the text accessible to anyone.

He concludes the chapter with "Homiletical Suggestions," some sample outlines for one preaching the text, and a bibliographic list of resources for

further study.

This resource may not be open to everyone, but it invites those willing to stretch themselves into the study of Philippians in the original language.

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