

Using Electronic Resources for Bible Study
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Introduction: Think about the analogy of a toolbox. Think of spending \$200 to get a copy of a Strong's Concordance and a Matthew Henry commentary because of the high cost of international postage. Don't leave home without your tools.

A Survey of Top Bible Study Software Packages

Commercial Windows-based Packages

1. **Logos Bible Software 3** (<http://www.logos.com>). This is by far my favorite Bible Study Software package. It is cutting-edge and multilingual. There are packages for all users, with a variety of prices. The list price for the libraries ranges from \$149.95 to well over \$1,000. The price one pays is for the electronic books in the packages, and generally cost just a fraction of what the equivalent print copies would cost. I'm writing this on a four pound laptop. Tomorrow I will travel to Chile, South America, carrying over 1,500 books in my four pound package. The software includes Reverse Interlinear Bibles, for both the Hebrew OT and the Greek NT. Linking an original language word to a lexicon is a matter of a mouse click. For serious original language linguists, Logos pushes the envelope with original language syntactical databases that utilize computer technology to analyze grammatical clauses, rather than merely analyzing the morphology of a single word. That lights my fire, but likely leaves you asking, "Huh?" For basic studies, however, the software is so easy to use that one only needs to type in a Bible reference, or a Bible word, and click a button that says *Go*. You owe it to yourself to go to the company website and check out their demo videos (<http://www.logos.com/demo>).
2. **BibleWorks 7** (<http://www.bibleworks.com/>). I bought my first package from the BibleWorks people back in 1990, as the program they offered at the time allowed the display and search of both Hebrew and Greek fonts on a DOS-based computer. BibleWorks specializes in the study of the Bible in the original languages. It is much easier to use today with the Windows graphical user interface. BibleWorks comes with 112 Bible translations spanning 30 languages, 14 original language texts with 18 morphological databases, 12 Greek lexicons, 5 Hebrew lexicons, 30 practical reference works, maps, charts, etc. The list price is \$349. Users who own earlier versions may upgrade to version 7 for a reduced price.
3. **PC Study Bible by Biblesoft** (<http://www.biblesoft.com>). PC Study Bible offers a number of libraries for Bible students of all levels. The prices range from \$35.95 to \$299.95. This library offers a wide variety of electronic books. One criticism of this program is the prior to Version 3.2D it was not possible to print directly from within the program. The user needed to copy to the clipboard and print from a different application, say from a word processor. Printing directly from the program was implemented in Version 4. The current release of the *PC Study Bible* is Version 5.
4. **QuickVerse 2007** (<http://www.quickverse.com>). QuickVerse was the very first Windows-based Bible software package that I purchased. The fact that it came with the NIV text was a plus. The QuickVerse library has continued to grow, and offers many of the same reference works the programs above use. QuickVerse offers a variety of packages that range from \$59.95 to \$799.95.
5. **Zondervan Bible Study Library by Pradis** (<http://www.zondervan.com/software>). The Zondervan Bible Study Library offers a variety of packages, ranging in price from \$49.99 to \$349.99. The biggest plus of this package is that it is the only place many of the excellent Zondervan resources are available in electronic format. The biggest minus is that the software interface, designed by Pradis, is cumbersome and difficult to use. During 2007, Zondervan released Version 6.0 of the Pradis engine, improving the interface slightly. Zondervan would benefit by allowing other electronic publishers (such as Logos) to publish their books.
6. **iLumina by Tyndale** (<http://www.ilumina.com>). iLumina Bible software is a beautiful multimedia package that features products published by Tyndale House Publishers. iLumina is based around the KJV and the NLT. Included are notes from the Life Application Study Bible and New Testament Commentary. In addition to these electronic books, iLumina offers a growing number of state-of-the-art animations. I have used maps from iLumina software frequently in preparing PowerPoint presentations for my classes. The iLumina Gold Premium edition costs \$89.99. Owners of earlier versions may upgrade for a smaller fee.

Free or Nearly Free Windows-based Packages:

7. **E-Sword** (<http://www.e-sword.net/>). When the price is FREE, the price is right. For several years, students have been telling the virtues of E-Sword. This Windows-based program offers a good graphical user interface. By offering books for free, however, it is necessary to use older texts that are not under current copyrights. E-Sword now offers newer texts for an unlock fee. A common denominator is that with the use of any Bible software program, the user is actually paying for the books.
8. **Free Bible Software by E4** (<http://freebiblesoftware.com/e4>). Free Bible Software is a venture sponsored by Bob and Lisa Brown. Bob started E4 while he was in seminary out of a passion to equip people around the globe with excellent Bible teaching. The earliest offerings of the E4 group used the Logos Library System version 2.1 system.

For the past several years, their offerings are licensed by QuickVerse. Periodically, E4 offers a free CD loaded up with Bible software. It is "free", but a small fee is required to pay for shipping and handling. When the software is installed, a version of QuickVerse 2007 is installed, as well as a STEP-reader, to make the electronic books compatible with a number of other software packages. In addition to the free CD(s), several previously offered packages are available for purchase at modest prices. Over the past several years, I have acquired some excellent resources from the E4 group.

Hand-held Packages (Palm or Pocket PC):

9. **BibleReader by Olive Tree Bible Software** (<http://www.olivetree.com>). BibleReader software is available for free in versions for either Palm OS or for Pocket PC. One pays a small fee to download commercial versions of Bibles currently under copyright. On my Pocket PC, I use BibleReader for two English translations, three Spanish translations, and Gramcord Lite, with the Greek New Testament. Olive Tree Bible Software recently has added a number of cutting-edge reference works, including a version of iLumina mobile.
10. **MyBible (Palm) or PocketBible (Pocket PC) by Laridian** (<http://www.laridian.com>). The founder of Laridian, Craig Rairdin, was the original programmer for QuickVerse. When Rairdin tired of the sale and resale of the company that marketed QuickVerse, he left and founded his own company, specializing in Bible software for handhelds. I have used both of these programs, as I used to have a Palm OS, and migrated to a Pocket PC. On PocketBible I now have about ten commercial English translations, several commentaries, and one Spanish Bible. Either of these packages can range in price from \$49.99 to \$99.99. There are additional books that can be added on. The handheld programs are so useful, that when I go to church or chapel, unless I am preaching, the only Bible I carry is my handheld computer.
11. **New Hand-held Devices (SmartPhones, iPhone, iPod Touch, Blackberry) are not left out.** There are now Bible Study packages available for the widely varied hand-held devices. Laridian recently began marketing *iPocket Bible* for the iPod. There is a version with both text and audio, and a cheaper version with text only (<http://www.laridian.com/ipod/>), and a web-based subscription interface called *iPocketBible.com* for the iPhone and iPod Touch series (<http://www.laridian.com/iphone/>). Olive Tree Bible Software partnered with Tyndale House Publishers and has released *iLumina Mobile* for both the Palm OS and Pocket PC (<http://www.olivetree.com/ilumina/>). For the Blackberry, Laridian markets a limited program called *Noah Bible Study Viewer* (<http://www.laridian.com/blackberry/>). Olive Tree Bible Software also has a number of applications for the Blackberry (<http://www.olivetree.com>).

For the growing number of Macintosh users:

Many of the programs that I have highlighted above have or plan to have a Macintosh version. If you are a Macintosh user, I encourage you to visit the websites listed above, to check on Macintosh versions. According to scholars whose reputations I trust, the best currently available Bible software for the Macintosh is Accordance (<http://www.accordancebible.com>). Darrell Bock of Dallas Seminary likens Accordance software to a famous credit card, saying "I don't leave home without it."

Mac users continuously tell me how great their computers are, compared to my *buggy* Microsoft Windows-based PCs. I am so heavily committed to Bible Software in the Windows environment (of which there is much more than native Macintosh applications). Macs that run an application called *Parallels Desktop* allows a Mac OS X machine to run Windows, Linux and the native system at the same time. One student told me that Logos Bible Software runs faster on his Mac running *Parallels* than it did on his PC. Mac users certainly should consider that option.

Where to purchase stuff like this at the lowest discounted price:

Our institution has a 2-week purchase program every semester where faculty & staff can purchase Logos Bible Software at 50% off, and students can purchase the software at 40% off. If a particular course (at a Bible college or seminary) requires the purchase of the software, students may then acquire it at a 50% discount. One can usually purchase the software for 25% off the list price. Discount Christian Software (<http://www.discountchristian.com>) and Rejoice Christian Software (<http://www.rejoicesoftware.com/>) offer excellent prices on a variety of Bible study software packages for distinct computer platforms. Readers of Doug Lucas' *Brigada Today* have been informed that Logos Bible Software offers special discounted prices for missionaries, using the coupon code BRIGADA (<http://www.logos.com/brigada>).

In closing:

Recently when I commented to students that I don't play computer games, because I consider a computer to be a tool for work, they told me that Bible software was the computer game I play. Electronic books are generally cheaper than their print counterparts, and their portability adds to their value. If you have not used such tools, I encourage you to consider them. Try it, you'll probably like it!