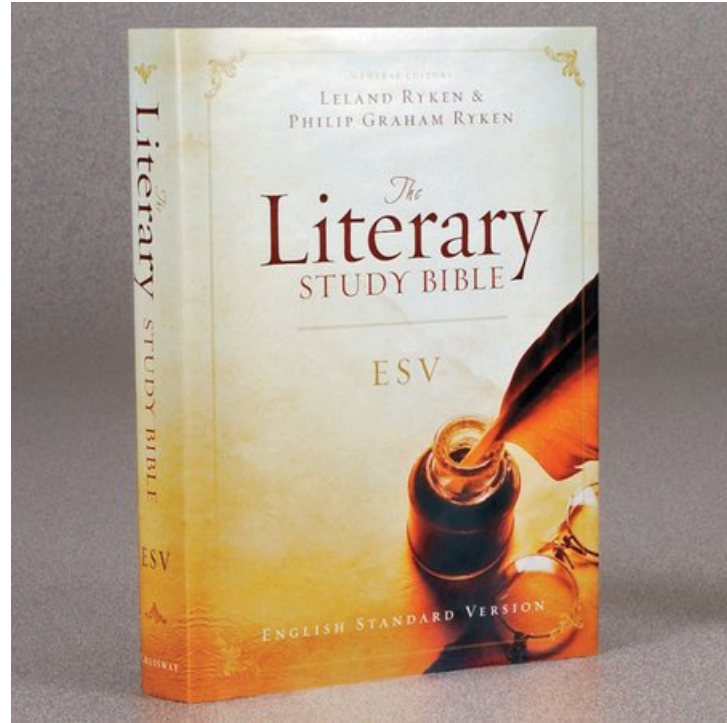


The **LITERARY**
Study Bible
ESV

edited by Leland Ryken and
 Philip Graham Ryken

Review by Brian Utermahlen

This is not just *any old Study Bible...*
 and it's not Old.



The **ESV Literary Study Bible** came available on September 23, 2007
 It's **THAT** new!

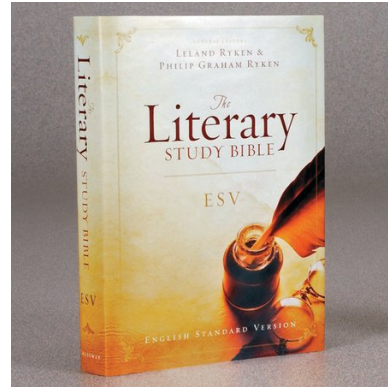
Just being new doesn't necessarily make it worth having - it's the **truly unique** study material within. In the August 2006 edition of **SIMPLY THE GOSPEL** we highlighted the **Historical-Grammatical** hermeneutic principles for the Interpretation of Scripture meaning: reading the Bible in not only the **Historic, Grammatical** and **Analogy of Other Scripture** contexts, but in the context of the **Type of Literature**.

The Study Notes, Helps and Literary Glossary in this Bible make that easier.

The twofold goal of the **ESV Literary Study Bible** is clearly stated:

- (1) to make the Bible reader friendly, and
- (2) to show how application of literary tools of analysis helps in reading and understanding the Bible"

The **LITERARY** Study Bible - ESV



The Editors

The study note content is the work of a father-son team:

Leland and Phillip Ryken. Dr. Leland Ryken is the Clyde S. Kirby Professor of English at Wheaton College and has written more than two dozen books including: *The Literature of the Bible*, *Words of Delight: a Literary Introduction to the Bible*, *How to Read the Bible as Literature*, *Dictionary of Bible Imagery*, and *Ryken's Bible Handbook* which he also co-authored with his son, Dr. Phillip Ryken, the senior minister at the historic Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia where James Montgomery Boice pastored for many years. Dr. Phillip Ryken is also a prolific writer as well as pastor. He has written numerous books and commentaries including Exodus, Jeremiah and Lamentations in the *Preaching the Word* Commentary series, Galatians in the *Reformed Expositor Commentary* and the book *Doctrines of Grace* which he co-authored with James Montgomery Boice and R.C. Sproul.

Scripture as Literature

The Unique and Primary benefit of the **LITERARY Study Bible** is viewing Scripture as literature, without reducing Scripture to the level of *mere* literature.

The co-authors explain in the extensive INTRODUCTION that viewing Scripture *as literature*:

- (1) does not show a liberal bias;
- (2) does not contradict Scripture's view of itself (as literary in form);
- (3) does not reduce any part of Scripture to fiction;
- (4) does not reduce Scripture to just another piece of mere human literature;
- (5) does not deny the inspiration of Scripture.

The editors maintain that, in fact, an accurate interpretation of Scripture first requires an understanding of the many literary features of Scripture, the same point made in the August 2006 **SIMPLY THE GOSPEL**.

The **LITERARY** Study Bible - ESV

The co-authors also say:

“To approach the Bible as literature as this literary Bible does is not like dessert — something pleasurable to add to more important aspects of the Bible. The literary approach is the first item on the agenda — the starting point for other approaches to the Bible. This has been a point of neglect among Bible readers and Bible scholars that this literary Bible aims to correct”

because, the editors contend, ***“meaning is conveyed through form, starting with language itself but moving beyond that to a whole range of literary forms and genres”*** and ***“There is no meaning without the form in which a piece of writing is expressed”***

In other words: Forms directly impact interpretation. That’s good hermeneutics.

According to the editors, Ryken and Ryken, the number of identifiable genres in Scripture ***“...exceeds one hundred”***. The Scripture really is an incredibly diverse collection of literature as one would expect of an ANTHOLOGY written by more than forty God-inspired writers of varied backgrounds writing from various places to a variety of audiences over the span of more than 1500 years.

But use of this Study Bible doesn’t require an advanced degree in English or literature. Every term from ***“antithetic parallelism”*** to ***“hero story”*** and ***“hyperbole”*** to ***“stream of consciousness”*** to ***“worship song”*** is defined in the 17-page glossary of key literary terms in the back of this edition.

A Reader– Friendly Format

The editors’ goal clearly was not to swamp the reader with literary definitions and genres, motifs and nuances but to provide help in comprehending Biblical texts as the original authors intended them to be understood.

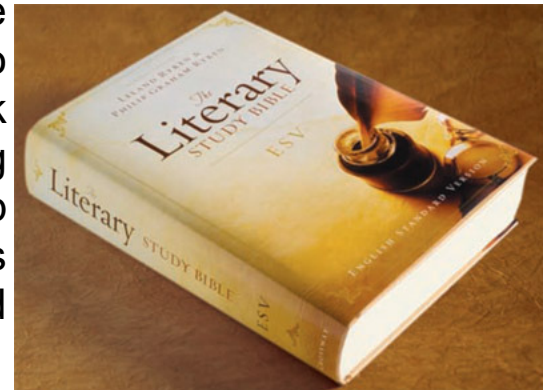
The **LITERARY** Study Bible - ESV

Many features make this an excellent reader's Bible.

Format. The ESV text is single-column, black text (this is not a Red-letter Bible) set in 8.5-point *Veritas* font. It is well organized and easy to read. Good quality Bible paper. Better than average margin space for your personal note taking. Currently available in hardback only.

Introductions and overviews. Each book of Scripture has a detailed introduction with content overviews focused primarily on overall literary genres and styles and how that impacts interpretation. There seems to me to be a **good balance** between the literary context and the theological content/outline of Scripture.

Subsection “prenotes” (not footnotes) Before each subsection of Scripture (normally one chapter in OT and every half chapter in NT), the editors provide significant literary notes and an overall snapshot of the upcoming content. These **pre-notes** serve more than one purpose. The editors say: ***“This literary Bible is a guide to the Bible that pushes the reader into the text instead of providing mere summaries of the content that readily become substitutes for reading the Bible.”*** These chapter notes really don't seem to slow down reading like traditional footnotes can often do. They do help to reinforce the literary styles mentioned in the book introductions, provide overviews of upcoming Scripture content, and do in fact seem to help (this reader at least) to chomp through large bites of Scripture in single settings—my preferred and recommended way of reading books of the Bible.



Go here: <http://www.esvliterarystudybible.org/>

or here: <http://www.gnpcb.org/assets/bibles/lb.brochure.pdf> for a hands on tour of this Bible. The **LITERARY Study Bible** retails for \$49.99 but you can get it for \$32.99 at Amazon.com with free shipping - it takes about a week.