

INTRODUCTION



People turn to scripture for lots of reasons—for encouragement and challenge, for guidance and reflection, for study and prayer. For whatever reason you are opening the Bible today, undoubtedly you want not only to read the words of scripture but also to understand them. You’ve made a good beginning by choosing the Common English Bible, since it’s one of the most readable translations available in the English language. Even so, while reading the Bible we sometimes stumble over events we’re not sure about and customs that seem strange to us. Sometimes we need some help understanding the story line of a narrative or grasping an image introduced by a prophet. To address questions like these, we’ve asked experts on each book of the Bible to provide reliable help for reading that book.

Consider a story from the book of Acts. In chapter 8 we read about an encounter between a Christ-follower named Philip and an Ethiopian man who was on his way home after a visit to Jerusalem. Along the way, the Ethiopian was reading from the book of Isaiah. When Philip saw this, he asked, “Do you really understand what you are reading?” The Ethiopian responded, “Without someone to guide me, how could I?” (Acts 8:30-31). Many of us have had this kind of experience. We understand the words on the page well enough, but we need something more—some context, some background, a little guidance.

We’ve prepared *The CEB Study Bible* to provide ordinary Bible readers and reading groups with guidance for learning and understanding. We’ve worked to explain such things as the culture of these writers and books, historical background, the way biblical books relate to each other, difficult translation issues, and more. We’ve provided the kind of information that helps to make sense of texts but that isn’t actually mentioned by the text itself—the kind of information often assumed by the writers and early readers of the biblical texts. How do we understand a text within the larger book in which we find it? What background knowledge sheds light on a text? What are some of the important theological issues raised by these texts? Our study notes, cross references, maps, concordance, and introductory essays won’t do all of the work of interpreting a text. We think that the study helps in a Bible shouldn’t replace the biblical text but should help to open it up to our understanding as we seek to hear these texts speak today.

People turn to scripture for many reasons. Most of us come to the Bible because of its centrality to our faith. We trust God to use *The CEB Study Bible* as a tool to strengthen the faith of God’s people.

For the Editors
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