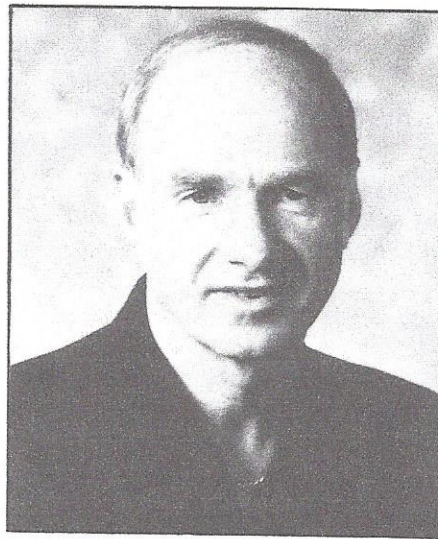


What Books Are Necessary for Your Library?

By Jamie Buckingham



Jamie Buckingham, senior minister at The Tabernacle Church, Melbourne, Florida, is one of the most widely read Christian writers of his generation. He is an award-winning magazine and newspaper columnist and has served in editorial positions for *Guideposts* magazine, *The National Courier* and *Logos Journal*. At present he is on the board of directors and is editor-at-large for both *Charisma* and *MINISTRIES* magazines, and an editorial consultant for Wycliffe Bible Translators. He has authored 33 books.

With book prices skyrocketing these days, it is imperative for the minister to buy carefully. Nothing is as useless as an expensive book that does nothing more than collect dust on a shelf. When the publisher of *MINISTRIES* asked me to take a hypothetical \$250 and go out and purchase a basic library I never dreamed my money would purchase only 12 books, and even then that I would come in at \$10 over budget.

But while the price of books has gone into orbit, the quality has improved also. The bookshelves of any well-stocked Bible and book store represent a gold mine of knowledge and inspiration.

As any minister knows, nothing is more valuable (apart from the Holy Spirit) than a library of good books which, like old friends, are ready to share their treasures with the inquiring mind.

I have chosen only those books which have ministerial appeal. That means I have not listed those books of my trade which I keep close to my elbow. These are my writing companions: *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* which is as thumbed as my dictionary, *Roget's Thesaurus*, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, Rudolph Flesch's books on writing, and other old favorites such as Joel Chandler Harris' *Uncle Remus*, all those hilarious stories by James Thurber, my treasured 50 volumes of *The Harvard Classics* left me by my daddy, and my 75-cent copy of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* which I try to read at least once a year.

What I have listed are those books which I, as a minister, feel are essentials for any ministerial library. I have not tried to satisfy those who prefer books with Latin titles nor those who refuse to look at a book unless it has cartoon pictures. I have merely listed the books which are meaningful to me. So, in case you're interested in what turns me on in the way of basic books, here is my \$260.35 list of books which sit as printed elders on the front pew of my own personal library, encouraging, correcting, teaching and sharing with me from their vast reservoir of spiritual knowledge.

I begin with the *Bible*. I cut my teeth on the King James Version

and when I quote Scripture it sounds like I lived back in 1611. However, for my personal reading and when reading from the pulpit I invariably turn to the *New International Version of the Holy Bible*. It is the finest of all the translations. And although I have not included it in my list of books (for it is far more than a book, it is The Book) be prepared to spend at least \$50 if you want a good, leatherbound copy of NIV.

Next on the list is a good concordance. I still return to *Cruden's Complete Concordance* to best meet my needs. It is published by Zondervan and sells for \$13.95. However, I am still stinging from a remark made by one of my seminary professors. "Strong for the strong, Young for the young, Cruden's for the crude." So, if you want to go first class (and have good eyes to read the fine print and time to handle the cross-references) you'll want *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Abingdon), for \$19.95.

The best one-volume Bible commentary is probably *The New Bible Commentary: Revised* (Eerdmans), \$24.95.

Eerdmans also has the best new dictionary. *The New Bible Dictionary* edited by J. D. Douglas sells for \$24.95.

There is no way to build a good library without a Bible handbook. The standard is *Halley's Bible Handbook, New Revised Edition* (Zondervan), which sells for \$8.95. Rather than stopping there, however, why not move on up to *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible* for \$23.95?

Every serious Bible student will want a good *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* for word studies. I recommend the one published by Zondervan at \$19.95.

Unless you are an archaeological buff as I am, don't spend a lot of money on a Bible atlas. You can purchase *Student's Atlas of the Bible* for \$2.95 in paperback.

Invaluable to me are two books of quotations. One is *Familiar Quotations* by John Bartlett (Little, Brown and Co.), which now sells for \$24.95. The other is perhaps the best buy in books today. It is called *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* and contains more than 2,000 of the world's greatest poems. It is edited by James D. Morrison, published by Baker Books and sold for \$9.95. It is out of print.

Every minister needs a good dictionary. The handiest and best is *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* published by G & C Merriam Co., for \$11.95.

Any study of the New Testament demands A.T. Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels* (Harper), for \$10.95. And for \$7.95 you can purchase *Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim (Eerdmans). Although it was written 100 years ago it remains the classic book on the life and times of Jesus.

To these books I add one more. Peter Lord has prepared an excellent

prayer guide which should be used by every Christian minister. Called *The 2959 Plan*, it is a loose-leaf notebook calling for 29 minutes and 59 seconds of disciplined prayer each day. It can be ordered from Agape Ministries, Titusville, FL, 32780, for \$5 plus postage. That runs our total cost to \$260.35. However, unless a leader spends as much time in prayer as he spends with his books, he'll emerge from his study a grotesque figure with enlarged head and shriveled heart.

Balance will tune both intellect and spirit to the will of God.
