

The Best Fiction for Bible Teachers

A Special Report by Glenn Brooke, author
[Teach the Bible to Change Lives](#)

About the Author

Glenn Brooke has been teaching the Bible for more than twenty years and is the author of [Teach the Bible to Change Lives](#). Glenn is the husband of one wife (and he married 'up', way up!) and the father of two children. He is learning how to exercise his gifts every day as he walks with Christ and ministers in His name. Glenn's family calls the Johnston Evangelical Free Church (Johnston, Iowa) home.

Glenn's statement of faith agrees with the twelve points of doctrine from the Evangelical Free Church of America (<http://www.efca.org>). Contact him at info@teachtochangelives.com if you have questions.

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Why Fiction?

Bible teachers should invest themselves in the Bible as their primary reading. There are few people whom would not benefit from spending several more hours every week in the Word. We need to be people saturated, not only sprinkled, with the Scriptures.

And yet Bible teachers should not ignore fiction. Francis Schaeffer said that all the great stories we love have the gospel at their center.

Fiction has special powers upon our imaginations and hearts. Bible teachers have much to learn from quality fiction.

There are three reasons why fiction is useful and instructive for Bible teachers:

1. Fiction stokes the fires of the imagination, expanding our ability to create metaphors and illustrations.
2. We learn to use language to elicit intellectual, emotional, and heart-felt responses.
3. We gain new insights into spiritual truth and the human condition.

You also want to be in position to recommend quality fiction to the people touched by your teaching ministry.

Bottom line: Fiction is a powerful medium that connects with people and should be used intelligently to improve your teaching ministry.

Characteristics of the Best Fiction for Bible Teachers

Much fiction is enjoyable, and worth reading. Our days are short, so how do we select the best fiction? What criteria should we use? Fiction that helps Bible teachers become more effective has three specific characteristics:

1. Saturated with Scripture and biblical themes

Satan is well aware of the powers of fiction, and uses it to build his own slimy kingdom. So there is much fiction which is at best banal and a waste of time, and much that will sow seeds of false stories in our heads and hearts.

Therefore we must guard our time, hearts, and minds. Bible teachers are held to a higher standard (see James 3:1). Select fiction saturated with actual Scripture where possible. And select fiction that has clearly biblical themes. Do not seek entertainment only – satisfying that desire makes it easier to fall into temptations.

2. Excellent writing

There were many playwrights in Elizabethan England, but we remember only Shakespeare.

The skillful use of language is a primary asset for teachers. Reading great writing develops you as a teacher. Great Bible Teachers are lovers of language and students of communication. The quality of your writing and speaking will be affected by your choice of reading, for better or for worse.

3. Leads you into prayer

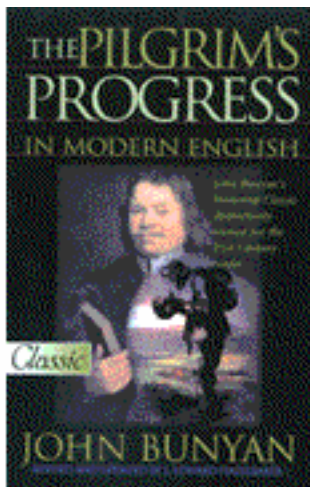
One of the ways to recognize great fiction is that you will be led into prayer. Some may say that sounds silly – let them. I have been moved to tears by fiction, and led into confession when I recognized my own sin or folly.

Glenn's Recommendations for Bible Teachers

Let me give you my personal recommendations.

The links below are to quality paperback editions, very reasonably priced. If you find that you really enjoy something, consider investing in hardback. How wonderful it will be for your children to inherit your marked-up books as a treasure! (I know some people reading this are on limited income – check out your local library and used bookstores.) As the Lord permits, why not buy additional copies of great books to give away or put in your church library?

[Pilgrim's Progress](#) (John Bunyan)



[Pilgrim's Progress](#) is the oldest Christian novel, and the best. Period. Pastors and teachers have used Bunyan's allegory for illustrations and examples for four centuries. Charles Spurgeon read this novel over 100 times and called it a major impact on his ministry. There are pastors today who reference stages of Pilgrim's journey to know how to counsel and disciple members of their flock. [Pilgrim's Progress](#) is passionately biblical, studded with actual Scripture verses.

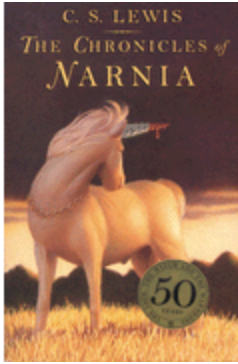
Banner of Truth has published a wonderful introduction to the book at

http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/articles_print.php?876

Read through this introduction first to sharpen your own reading of the book. This is a book to read humbly, attentively, prayerfully, and repeatedly. The novel remains fresh and exciting because it is so Scriptural.

A lot of people start reading this novel, and abandon it before finishing it. I recommend you get [Pilgrim's Progress](#) in a modern translation so you enjoy it more.

Chronicles of Narnia (C.S. Lewis)



I was delighted to read these to my children, and still read them myself periodically. These are wonderful stories. Read Lewis aloud and learn about the power of rhythm and tone in the writing. There are many direct biblical parallels in these seven stories. The depiction of Aslan singing Narnia into existence (in The Magician's Nephew) will stay with you forever. You'll gain good ideas about heaven from The Last Battle, a terrific view of the book of Revelation.

Don't be fooled into thinking these are just "children's stories." C.S. Lewis, like Jesus, speaks to audiences of all ages at the same time. These books are excellent to reinforce a biblical worldview. I have found these are excellent books for new believers to read, at any age, because the Gospel truth and sovereignty of God's power over the affairs of men are so clearly portrayed.

The Screwtape Letters (C.S. Lewis)



This novel will help you to understand the easily-corrupted nature of man, and outline Satan's stratagems and wiles clearly for you. I've laughed out loud, gasped at my own folly, and cried with joy that Christ has saved me – all reading this book. This is a terrific book to encourage teenagers to read – they're at just the right age to begin to see how Satan works to tempt and distract them.

[The Lord of the Rings](#) (J.R.R. Tolkien)



Yes, yes, you saw the movies. I enjoyed the movies thoroughly, but urge you to read the book for the real story. (That's book, not books; it was written as one book with six parts, not three books.) You'll find that Aragorn is never confused about his destiny, and all the characters are richer and fuller. The only thing that the movie may have brought out better than the book is the Smeagol/Gollum personalities. And be warned that this book is politically incorrect and declares the huge gulf between good and evil without apology. No one is sensitive to Orcs! The descriptive language is wonderfully rich. Try reading it aloud to experience its depth more fully. I have read through LOTR every year since I was in high school. While not studied with Scripture like the books above, LOTR has a biblical worldview.

[Angelwalk](#) (Roger Elwood)



Simply brilliant at outlining the spiritual realities of the war we are in every day. Elwood has tender writing. There are several passages which are good illustrations of how teachers can engage not-yet-believers about the nature of man and the need for Jesus Christ.

[Deadline](#) (Randy Alcorn)



Glenn's comments: Fast-paced mystery, terrific writing, contemporary setting. Alcorn has written several other novels, but this is the best. You can see that C.S. Lewis influenced Alcorn. There is excellent example material here for evangelism and apologetics.

Those are the recommendations from the top of my list. There are others I recommend, but I think these are particularly powerful for Bible teachers, using the criteria that I outline above. If you have specific fiction recommendations, send them to me at info@teachtochangelives. I'll be interested to hear your perspective.

Glenn Brooke
September 29, 2005



Interested in learning how to teach the Bible effectively? Weary of using those boring study guides over and over while people fall asleep? Feel like you are teaching to wooden dummies? Do you long to see people love the Bible and study it eagerly?

[Teach the Bible to Change Lives](http://www.TeachtoChangeLives.com) outlines the four key elements required in every Bible teaching situation. You'll learn a complete system for

- Matching lessons to people's real needs – these specific people at this specific time! (That Bible study booklet is fine, but the author couldn't have known your students and their needs this week.)
- Making sure your students are receptive to the lesson, and can't wait for you to teach.
- Preparing yourself to teach any kind of material. You are the tool that God will use.
- Using the teaching and discussion time most effectively, so that people really learn. This is how lives are changed through the power of God's word!

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