



The Future Seminarian's Reading Guide

AN INTRODUCTORY LIST TO SERVE YOU AS
YOU CONTEMPLATE PASTORAL MINISTRY

Dr. J. Ligon Duncan



INTRODUCTION

“What books should I read before I come to seminary?”

That’s a great question prospective and future seminary students often ask us at RTS. The most important answer is: The Bible! God’s holy, inspired, profitable, inerrant and infallible Word. And it would be wise to have a plan for doing that.

As we talk to theological educators all over the country and world, we find that more and more seminary students are embarking on theological studies with less Bible knowledge than seminarians had in the past. So aim to be a lifelong student of the Bible.





HERE ARE THREE SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU START BEFORE YOU COME TO SEMINARY.

1. Make sure you are sitting under the faithful exposition of God's word as a member in a Bible-believing local congregation where you are learning and living the Christian life in a context of mutual love, support, responsibility and accountability.
2. Aim to be a lifelong student of the Bible. Start by deliberately reading all the way through the Bible as a future teacher of it.
3. Aspire to having an outline of the whole Bible story and of each Bible book, as a future theological student of it. The sooner you start the better, and now is always the time. To help you do this, pick a Bible reading plan and use some helps to study the Bible (and maybe outline the Bible for yourself using the plan and helps).

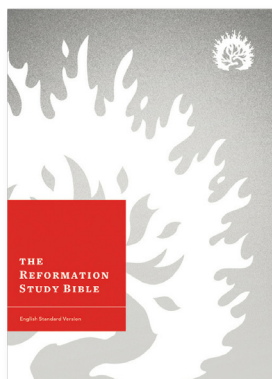
RTS alumnus, Crossway Vice President, and TGC blogger, Justin Taylor, has some great suggestions on [Bible reading plans](#). I'd encourage you to check them out.



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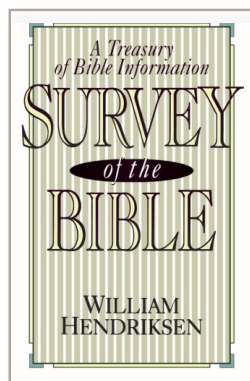
FOUR GREAT BIBLE STUDY
RESOURCES THAT WILL BE
HELPFUL TO YOU AS YOU READ
the Bible

CLICK ON EACH BOOK TO LEARN MORE.



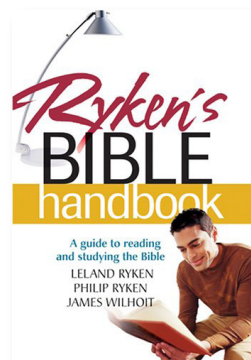
Reformation Study Bible

Ligonier • Reformation Trust



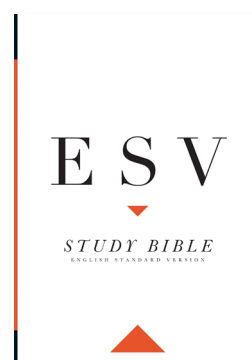
Survey of the Bible

William Hendriksen • Evangelical Press



Ryken's Bible Handbook

Phil Ryken • Tyndale



ESV Study Bible

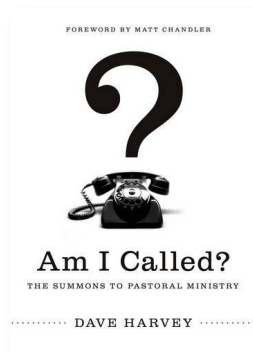
Crossway



WHERE TO START

In addition to reading your Bible, these three books will serve your heart as you contemplate serving the Lord and his people, and as you prepare for the seminary experience.

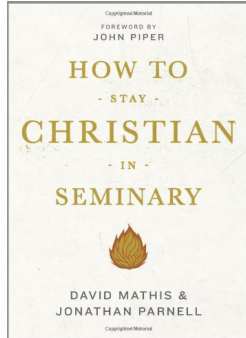
CLICK ON EACH BOOK TO LEARN MORE.



Am I Called? The Summons to Pastoral Ministry

Dave Harvey • Crossway

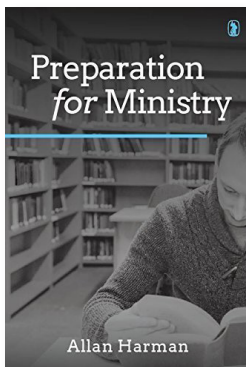
Many students get to seminary still uncertain about their call to the ministry. Does the Lord want me to be a pastor? This book will help students examine key factors in assessing one's vocation to pastoral ministry.



How to Stay Christian in Seminary

David Mathis & Jonathan Parnell • Crossway

One of the best ways to prepare for seminary is to be aware of some of the spiritual challenges and opportunities that graduate theological study may present, and how to approach them. This little book helps. The title is a play on words from the book by J. Budziszewski called *How to Stay Christian in College*. David is a graduate of RTS Orlando.



Preparation for Ministry

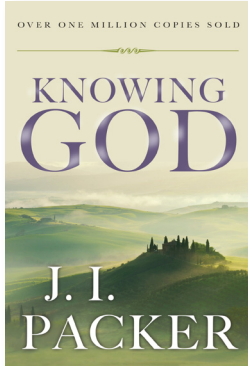
Allan Harman • Banner of Truth

This is another good book for thinking through a range of issues relating to preparation for the pastoral ministry. Dr. Harman has taught Old Testament at RTS Jackson and led a seminary in Australia.



DEVOTIONAL READING

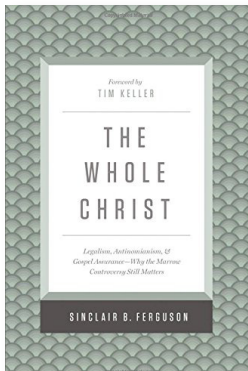
CLICK ON EACH BOOK TO LEARN MORE.



Knowing God

J.I. Packer • IVP

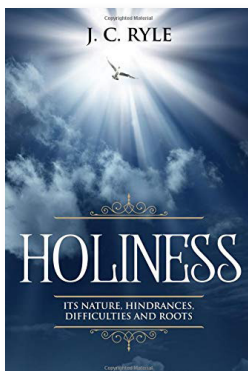
This classic devotional work embodies the RTS commitment to cultivate “a mind for Truth and a heart for God” as we prepare students to live “a life for ministry.” That is, we not only want students to know the Truth, and understand and believe it, we want to see their hearts, their desires and wills, shaped by the Truth, and then live that Truth out in the whole of life. Truth is the Spirit’s instrument to help mature us in Love. This book will introduce students to “Big God Theology”



The Whole Christ

Sinclair Ferguson • Crossway

This book will give the student a feel for the RTS approach to theology, the Christian life and ministry. How do you grow healthy Christian disciples in grace? What do we want a local church to be characterized by in terms of Christian experience? Dr. Ferguson, Chancellor’s Professor at RTS, really explains those things via this riveting study of the “Marrow Controversy.”



Holiness

J.C. Ryle • Evangelical Press

There is nothing more important to faithfulness in pastoral ministry than the minister’s personal godliness. Ryle’s book articulates the classic Reformed view of sanctification. Growth in holiness is something that every seminarian ought to want to pursue. This book will provide motivation and reflection for transformation.





THE BASIC READING LIST

Beyond this, take a look at this abbreviated list of pre-seminary reading. The list is basic, not advanced, and is not comprehensive, but is merely intended to provide a great start on some key areas. It also features a number of authors from the RTS family.

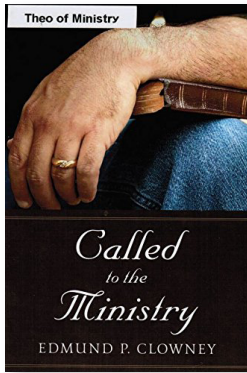
It emphasizes biblical piety, the doctrines of grace, a Reformed view of Church, ministry and the Christian life, and is designed to be a challenge to the student to consecrate the whole heart and life (not just the mind) to ministerial preparation.

It covers issues such as fundamental doctrinal commitments and understanding, ministerial call and godliness, basic Bible knowledge, and some critical contemporary concerns.

These recommended volumes are intended to help the beginner “catch up” quickly on reading which will feed the soul, strengthen the mind, encourage a godly walk, warn of pitfalls, and prepare you for a new world of ideas and terminology that you will meet in seminary training.

[CLICK ON EACH BOOK TO LEARN MORE.](#)

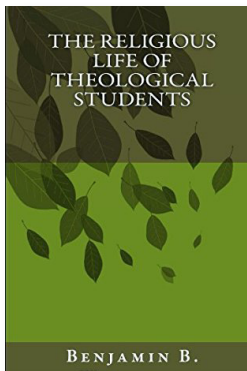




Called to the Ministry

Edmund Clowney • P&R

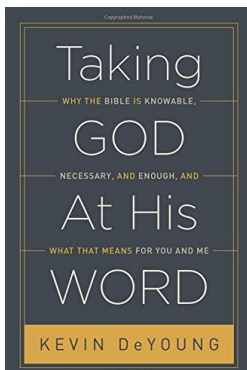
More help for discernment of one's calling to Christian service.



The Religious Life of Theological Students

B.B. Warfield • P&R

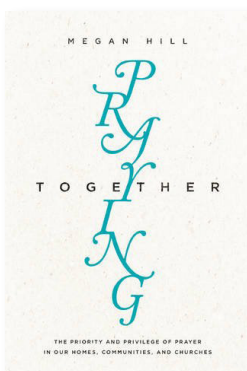
A classic address on healthy spiritual life and Christian experience for seminarians, by the Princeton giant.



Taking God at His Word

Kevin DeYoung • Crossway

The best popular introduction to the historic Protestant and Reformed view of Scripture, by an RTS professor.

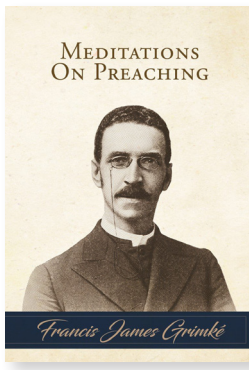


Praying Together

Megan Hill • Crossway

A pastor's wife (her husband graduated from RTS Jackson) encourages us in the practice of prayer.

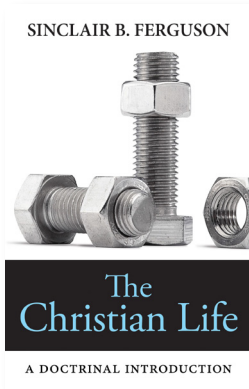




Meditations on Preaching

Frances Grimké • Log College Press

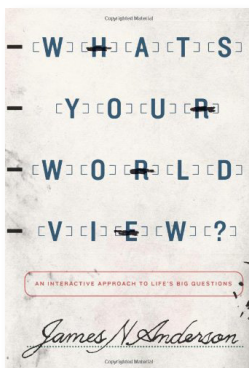
One of our great African American Presbyterian heroes reflects on the crucial task of preaching.



The Christian Life

Sinclair Ferguson • Banner of Truth

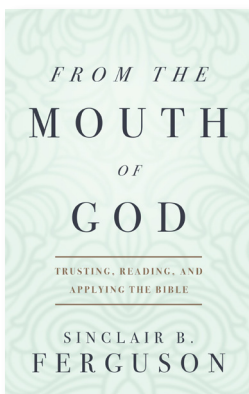
An RTS Chancellor's professor gives a popular introduction to doctrine and Christian experience.



What's Your Worldview

James Anderson • Crossway

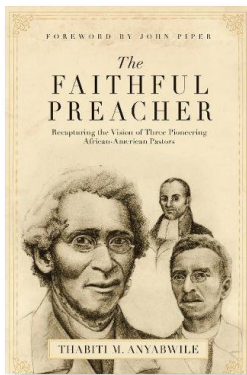
A basic treatment to help the student think through the issue of worldview, by an RTS professor.



From the Mouth of God

Sinclair Ferguson • Banner of Truth

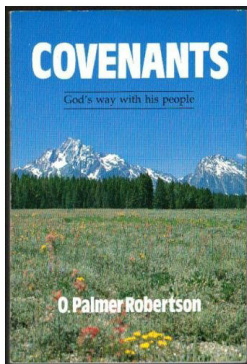
A good popular introduction to the doctrine and interpretation of Scripture, by an RTS professor.



The Faithful Preacher

Thabiti Anyabwile • Crossway

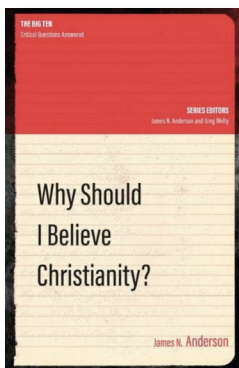
All RTS students should know about the rich heritage of African American pastors in the Reformed tradition.



Covenants: God's Way with His People

O. Palmer Robertson • Great Commission

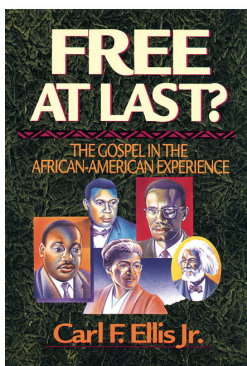
Dr. Robertson taught OT at RTS Jackson, this is a simplified version of his classic "Christ of the Covenants."



Why Should I Believe Christianity?

James Anderson • Christian Focus

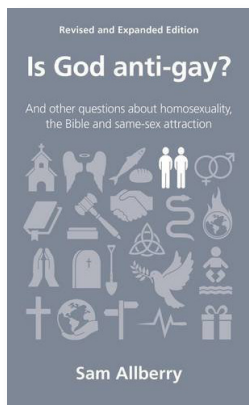
A popular exposition of apologetics (defense of Christian truth claims) by an RTS professor.



Free at Last?: The Gospel in the African-American Experience

Carl Ellis • IVP

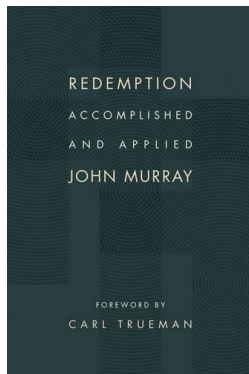
Dr. Ellis is Provost's Professor at RTS and the grandfather of the modern Black and Reformed movement.



Is God Anti-Gay?

Sam Allberry • The Good Book Company

Faithfulness to the Bible's teaching on gender, marriage and sexuality is of vital importance in our time.



Redemption Accomplished and Applied

John Murray • Eerdmans

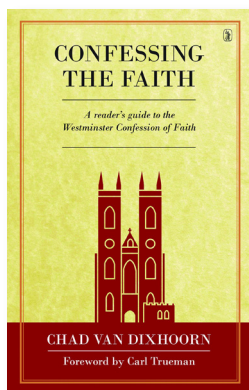
A little book, originally given as Sunday School lessons, beautifully expounding Reformed soteriology.



Westminster Confession of Faith

Banner of Truth

The classic 17th century Reformed Protestant confession of faith. All professors at RTS teach from the perspective of the theology set forth in this statement.



Confessing the Faith: A Reader's Guide

Chad Van Dixhoorn • Banner of Truth

Dr. Van Dixhoorn taught Church History at RTS DC. This is a good, basic exposition of the Westminster Confession of Faith, by the leading scholar of the Westminster Assembly.