



By

Mark McGee

Many of the books I read and review are “large” books with hundreds of pages. This series of books is not one of them, but it doesn’t mean there’s not a lot of great material worth reading and sharing.

The title is *IVP Academic’s Little Books* and currently has four books in the series: *A Little Book for New Theologians* (2012), *A Little Book for New Scientists* (2016), *A Little Book for New Philosophers* (2016), and *A Little Book For New New Bible Scholars* (2017).

“These are books to put in the hands of beginning students. Take them to a high point to catch a view of the horizons beyond. Orient them to true north. Empower their imaginations. And kindle the virtues they will need to prosper in the field.” (Publisher)

I’ll begin by reviewing the newest addition to the *Little Books* set, then share some information about other books in the series.

A LITTLE BOOK
FOR NEW
BIBLE SCHOLARS

WHY AND
HOW TO
STUDY
THE BIBLE

E. RANDOLPH RICHARDS
& JOSEPH R. DODSON

The full title of the newest Little Book is *A Little Book For New Bible Scholars: Why And How To Study The Bible* (IVP Academic, 2017). The authors, E. Randolph Richards and Joseph R. Dodson, do a great job getting so much wisdom into just 126 pages.

Richards (PhD, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is provost and professor of biblical studies in the School of Ministry at Palm Beach Atlantic University. Dodson (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is associate professor of biblical studies at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

If you love studying and teaching the Bible, you will love this little book.

Christianity needs more scholars. Why? As the authors explained –

“Rather than rushing into ministry, we must prepare ourselves to face the enemy, who delights in leading believers and unbelievers alike to misunderstand and

misuse the Bible. In studying Scripture we seek proficiency in demolishing the arguments raised up against the knowledge of God. Through studying the Bible, we train to take captive every teaching and submit it to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-6). Good exegesis must exist because bad exegesis must be answered.” Chapter 3, p 39

I cannot count the number of people I know or have heard about who have fallen for Satan’s deceptions because of a lack of knowledge and understanding of what God’s Word really means. Some have fallen for the deception of atheism or agnosticism. Some have fallen for the deception of New Age beliefs and practices. Some have fallen for the deception of heresies that deny the Lord Jesus. Some have fallen for the deception of so-called “progressive” theology, “emerging” theology and “prosperity” theology. Whatever the deception, the reason is often the same: a misunderstanding and misuse of God’s Word.

The answer? According to the authors the answer is “exegesis.” They warn that “bad exegesis” can abbreviate or even dilute the Gospel. That is so true, and sadly, so much of what we find in western Christianity today. As the authors remind us, we need to “keep the main thing the main thing.”

This Little Book costs less than \$10 and will be a great addition to any Christian’s library.

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Conclusion: Don't Miss the Forest For the Trees

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Scripture Index

Publisher: About The Book

Many young Bible scholars are passionate for the Scriptures. But is passion enough?

In *A Little Book for New Bible Scholars*, Randolph Richards and Joseph Dodson encourage young students of the Bible to add substance to their zeal—the kind of substance that comes from the sweat and toil of hard study. “Just as we should avoid knowledge without love,” they write, “we should also avoid love without knowledge.”

Aimed at beginners, this concise overview offers a wealth of good advice, warns of potential pitfalls, and includes wisdom from a variety of other biblical scholars as well as stories from the authors’ own long experience in the guild. Full of warmth, humor, and an infectious love for Scripture, this book invites a new generation of young scholars to roll up their sleeves and dig into the complex, captivating world of the Bible.

Reviews & Endorsements

“Richards and Dodson give us all a profound gift, shining light on the ‘narrow way’ to sweet satisfaction in biblical scholarship. It is found not in exploiting a career for personal gain, social approval, or vanity, but in enjoying the riches of God’s Word among God’s people. This is a rich store of wisdom.” Timothy Gombis, professor of New Testament, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

“A Little Book for New Bible Scholars is a fun and challenging look at the joys and realities of the academic study of the Bible. Richards and Dodson offer wise yet practical advice, peppered with words of warning, about studying the Bible academically. Not only is their advice for new scholars, it is also full of valuable reminders about the benefits and pitfalls of biblical learning for those of us who are no longer beginners.” Benjamin E. Reynolds, associate professor of New Testament, Tyndale University College, Toronto

“Whether starting out in formal biblical studies as a freshman at a Christian college or completing a PhD in Old or New Testament, students of the Bible need to read this little gem of a book. A veteran biblical scholar joins hands with a younger peer to offer all the right advice about how to approach one’s career, what to avoid, and how to keep the main thing the main thing. Laced with humorous and incisive real-life stories and choice quotes from other scholars who have trodden the same path, this work represents Christian wisdom at its finest.” Craig L. Blomberg, distinguished professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary

“To snorkel or to dive? That is the question this little book asks its readers to consider. In a well-written and personally engaging reflection on the vocation of biblical studies, Richards, Dodson, and a collection of scholars invite would-be Bible students to consider anew the importance of the discipline of academic Bible study for the benefit of both one’s personal life and the ministry of the church. The church of our time is desperate for the pastor-theologian who has the skill and the theologically chastened intuition to

wrestle with the significant challenges of a twenty-first-century world with its lightning-fast revolutions in science, sexuality, and globalization—to name just a few. This kind of leader is increasingly becoming the most significant commodity for the twenty-first-century church. The authors are seasoned guides as well as cheerleaders for a new generation of lifelong students of Scripture for the sake of the Messiah Jesus' church.” Joel Willitts, professor of biblical and theological studies, North Park University

“A delightful read and absolutely on target, *A Little Book for New Bible Scholars* gets my highest praise and recommendation. It should be required reading early in the program for all students preparing for ministry.” J. Daniel Hays, Ouachita Baptist University

“Plotting a course of study or even a career in biblical studies can be fraught with many trials and temptations. In this charming little book, Joey Dodson and Randy Richards offer some sage advice to budding students of the Bible on how to keep their egos intact, how to keep their faith authentic, how to use their vat of new biblical knowledge to

serve others, and how to grow as Christians through biblical studies. Everyone should read this book before seminary!” Michael F. Bird, lecturer in theology, Ridley College, Melbourne, Australia

“This delightful volume is full of wit and wisdom not only for biblical scholars and theologians but for all students of the Word. The stories, anecdotes, and insights will encourage you to discover more deeply the riches of God’s Word and the heart of Christian ministry.” Mark L. Strauss, university professor of New Testament, Bethel Seminary San Diego

“Dodson and Richards have given young biblical scholars a book that charms while it instructs. Their combined years of wisdom are presented with whimsy and honesty that will be helpful in discernment for emerging biblical scholars. This book gets at not only the head knowledge, but also the heart. The interspersing of other biblical scholars throughout the book adds diversity, breadth, and weight to each chapter. As an advisor for students pursuing work in biblical scholarship as their vocation, this is precisely the kind of book I will gladly recommend to them!” Beth M.

Stovell, assistant professor of Old Testament, Ambrose Seminary

A Little Book For New Bible Scholars: Why And How To Study The Bible, IVP Academic, 2017, 126 pages

Other Little Books

A Little Book for New Theologians

Whenever we read, think, hear or say anything about God, we are doing theology. Yet theology isn't just a matter of what we think. It affects who we are.

In the tradition of Helmut Thielicke's *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, Kelly Kopic offers a concise introduction to the study of theology for newcomers to the field. He highlights the value and importance of theological study and explains its unique nature as a serious discipline. Not only concerned with content and method, Kopic explores the skills, attitudes and spiritual practices needed by those who take up the discipline. This brief, clear and lively primer draws out the relevance of theology for Christian life, worship, mission, witness and more.

“Theology is about life,” writes Kopic. “It is not a conversation our souls can afford to avoid.” (Publisher)

A Little Book for New Scientists

Many young Christians interested in the sciences have felt torn between two options: remaining faithful to Christ or studying science. Heated debates over the past century have created the impression that we have to choose between one or the other. The result has been a crisis of faith for many students.

Josh Reeves and Steve Donaldson present a concise introduction to the study of science that explains why scientists in every age have found science congenial to their faith and how Christians in the sciences can bridge the gap between science and Christian belief and practice. If Christians are to have a beneficial dialogue with science, it will be guided by those who understand science from the inside. Consequently, this book provides both advice and encouragement for Christians entering or engaged in scientific careers because their presence in science is a vital component of the church's witness in the world.
(Publisher)

A Little Book for New Philosophers

What's the point of studying philosophy when we have theology? Is philosophy anything more than a preparation for apologetics?

Often called “theology’s handmaid,” philosophy has sometimes suffered from an inferiority complex in the church. Many Christians see little point in it at all. But as Paul Copan contends, it is possible to affirm theology’s preeminence without diminishing the value and contribution of philosophy.

In *A Little Book for New Philosophers*, Copan offers a concise introduction to the study of philosophy. Aimed at newcomers, this brief overview is both a survey of philosophy’s basic aims and categories and an apology for its proper function in the life of the Christian. “By God’s grace,” Copan writes, “philosophy can enhance our understanding and worship of God . . . and assist us in defending the coherence of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Publisher)

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