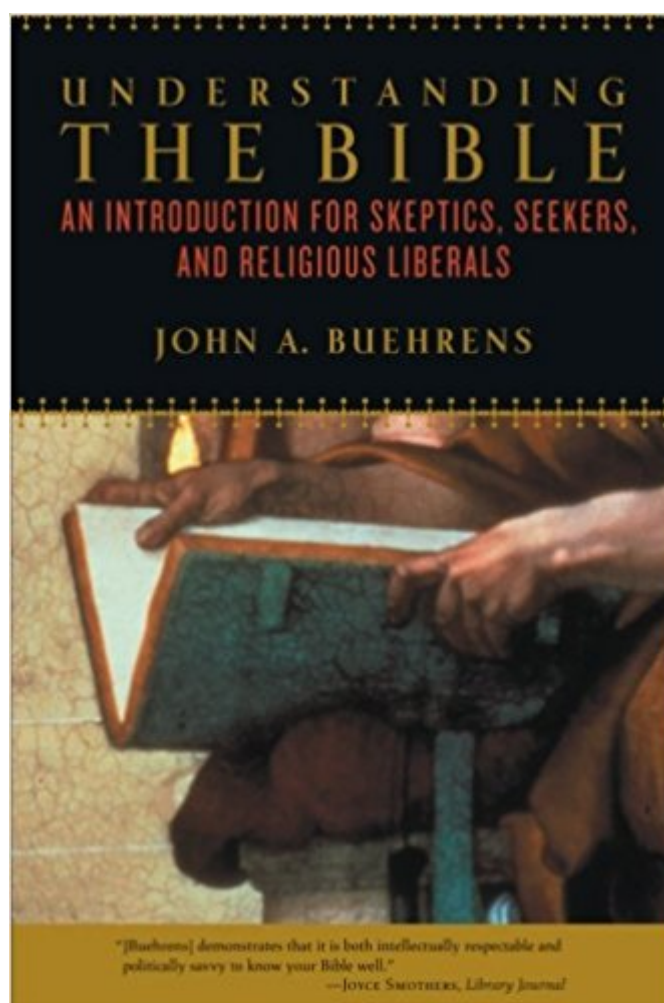


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# Understanding The Bible: An Introduction For Skeptics, Seekers, And Religious Liberals



## Synopsis

A thoughtful, warm, and witty introduction *Understanding the Bible* is designed to help empower skeptics, seekers, nonbelievers, and those of a liberal and progressive outlook to reclaim the Bible from literalists. In making accessible some of the best contemporary historical, literary, political, and feminist readings of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, it encourages all who would find in the biblical heritage an ally and not an enemy in the quest for a more just and humane world. Brief and to the point, it can easily be used to stimulate group discussions and personal reading of the biblical texts themselves, and is an excellent introduction to the Judeo-Christian tradition for those of other faiths. *Understanding the Bible* includes four preliminary chapters on the why, who, which, and how of biblical understanding, followed by eight brief thematic chapters covering the core of the Hebrew Bible and six covering the Christian scriptures, plus chronologies, maps, and helpful suggestions for further reading.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

According to this engaging but not always convincing liberal gloss on the Good Book, biblical literalism is an idolatrous departure from the Bible's "enduring but non-literal wisdom," which progressives can reclaim through informed interpretations of biblical metaphor and symbolism. Drawing on historical and contemporary Bible scholarship, Buehrens, a Unitarian minister and co-author of *A Chosen Faith*, gives an illuminating if brief rundown of each book in the Bible, one informed by feminist, literary and lefty political critiques. The results are mixed. Themes of liberation

and social justice emerge in the Exodus narrative, the Prophetic books and the Gospels. But on fundamentalist hot-button issues like homosexuality and women's rights, the Bible's clear statements defy interpretive rehabilitation. Faced with outright prohibition on a man "lying with a man as with a woman," Buehrens suggests that "the inner spirit of what is intended" there might be different. He champions "reading against the grain": with that interpretive strategy, the New Testament's urging of submissiveness on wives and servants, for example, attests to husbands' and masters' anxiety over the egalitarianism of Church congregations. And his anti-literalist, Bible-as-metaphor approach sometimes throws the religion out with the bathwater, as when nonbelievers are reassured that stories of miracles and resurrections can also be seen as metaphorical rather than actual events. Unfortunately, Buehrens's laudable attempt at "reading the Bible to overcome oppression" drains away much substantive content. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

In his introduction, Buehrens offers several compelling reasons for studying the Bible. You aren't fully literate without it; if you can't or won't understand it, others will interpret it for you. And to his mind, most importantly, you can't be spiritually mature by simply rejecting the Bible as oppressive. Buehrens, who is affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist church, offers humanist or liberal interpretations solidly based on the original texts, and he also draws on other historical and literary sources to bolster his explanations. Although this is by necessity an overview, Buehrens does a masterful job of coursing through both Testaments, placing events and pronouncements in context of both prevailing theology and the times. An interesting balance to biblical interpretations that are weighted in the other direction. Ilene Cooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

This book is excellent if you want a summary. If you want depth, you should use another source. The author doesn't "preach at the reader." He encourages people to read the book and THINK about what is being said.

Useful overview of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. A rational, evidence based look at the context at the time the stories developed and were written. A good place to start.

I have read enough of the Old Testament to realize I'm not willing to spend my time reading all of it. This book gives valuable background and summaries that are way better use of my time. The

reader gets to know what's in there (the Bible) and what is known about how it got there. It's a lot better than focusing on various "special" bible verses or stories.

The writer shares his view of understanding and learning from the other great religions and finds compromise with the other sages, Mystics and prophets. A good read!

This book presents a brief and rather spotty overview of the Bible. It is in fact an introduction only to a very complex set of writings with a few bits of insight here and there. If one is to understand that the Bible is a collection of writings done by various communities of people and or individuals within certain historic circumstances, then I think the book succeeds. This is a very broad-stroke approach.

Very difficult reading and packed full of errors. Needs an editor.

An excellent introduction to the Bible through a liberal point of view.

I recommend this book to everyone I know, no matter what their religion or lack there of! Rev. Buehrens helps open up the Bible and educate you enough to read it and come to your own conclusions, whether you agree with everything he says or not. I'm a new Muslim and highly recommend this to all people because the Bible truly is part of literature and history and should be read and known by all. I was actually recommended this book by a rabbi friend who believes that despite it covering the ENTIRE Bible (Old and New Testaments), he points out that it shows the literary importance and historical importance of the work as a whole, no matter what your(dis)beliefs are. Take the time and READ THIS BOOK!

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