

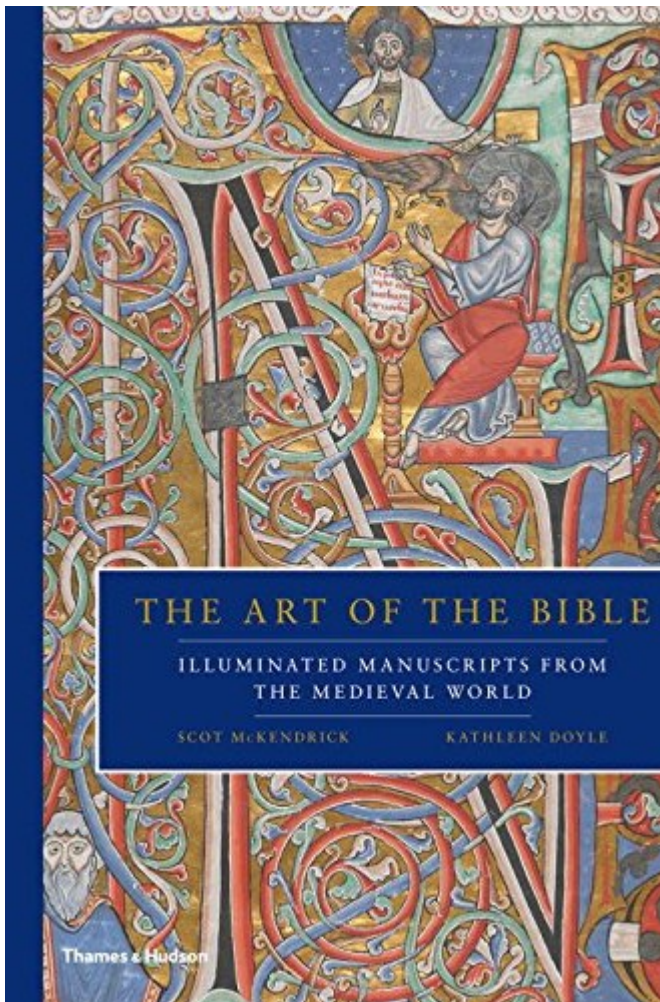
Christmas picks: Bible edition

Looking for a Bible-related gift for a friend? Here are my recommendations.

By [Elizabeth Palmer](#)

December 12, 2016

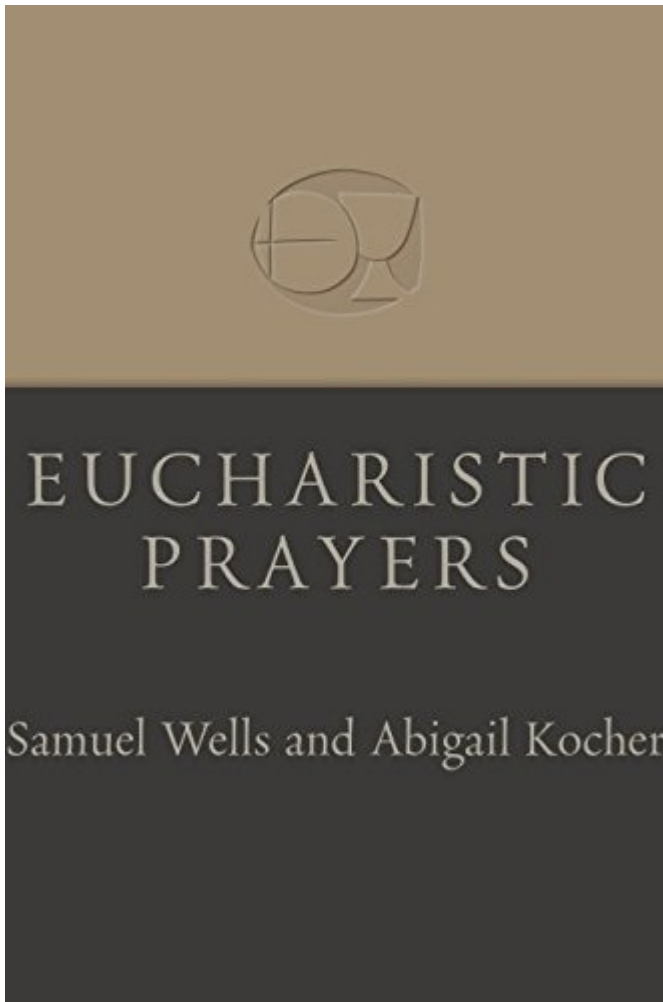
In Review



The Art of the Bible

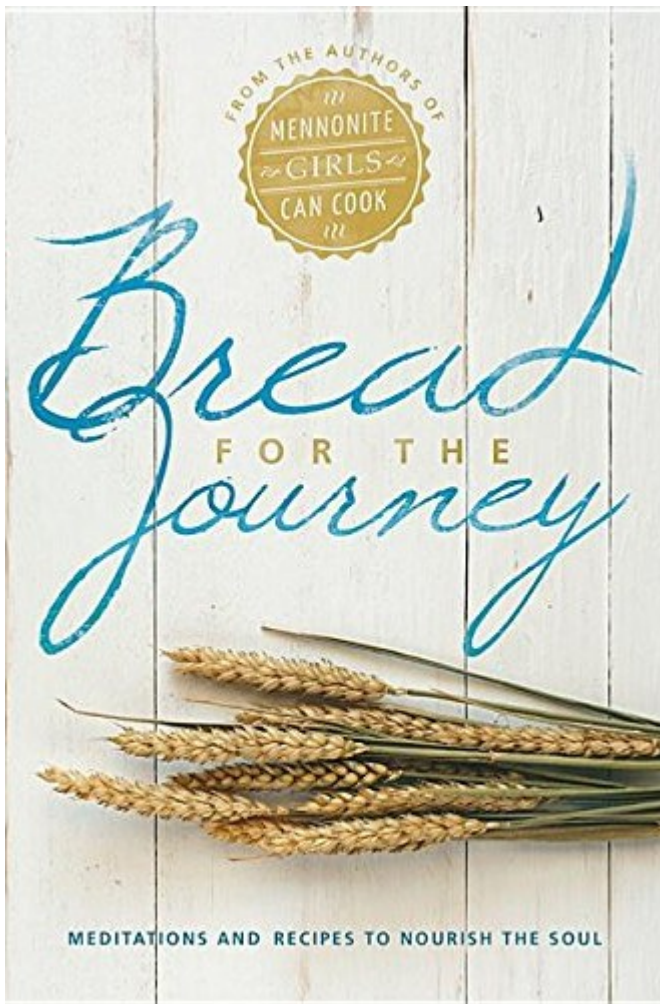
Illuminated Manuscripts from the Medieval World

by Scot McKendrick and Kathleen Doyle
Thames & Hudson



Eucharistic Prayers

by Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher
Eerdmans

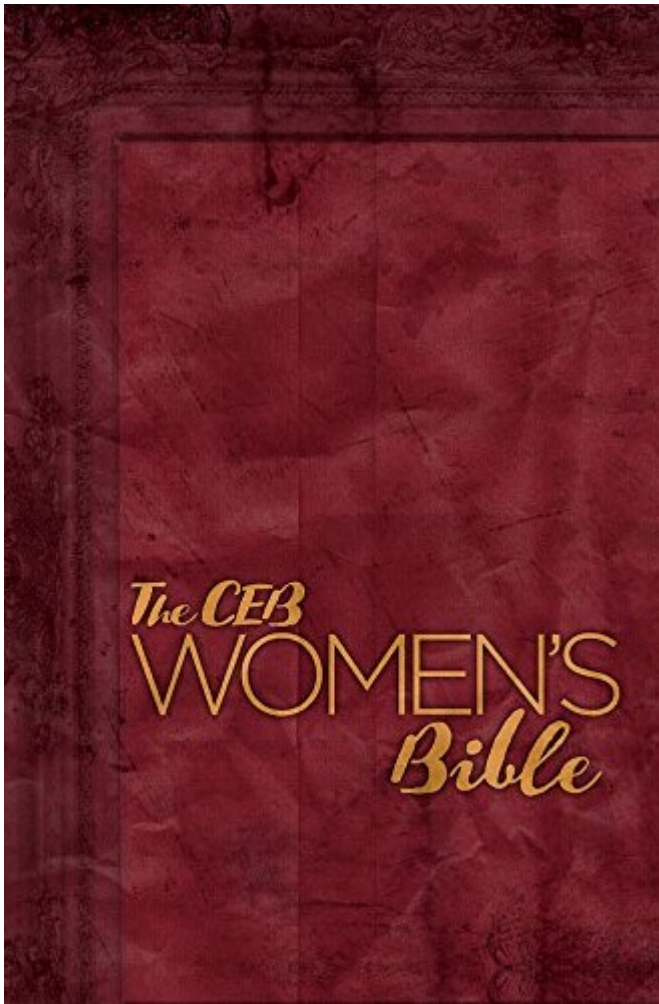


Bread for the Journey

Meditations and Recipes to Nourish the Soul

by Lovella Schellenberg

Herald Press

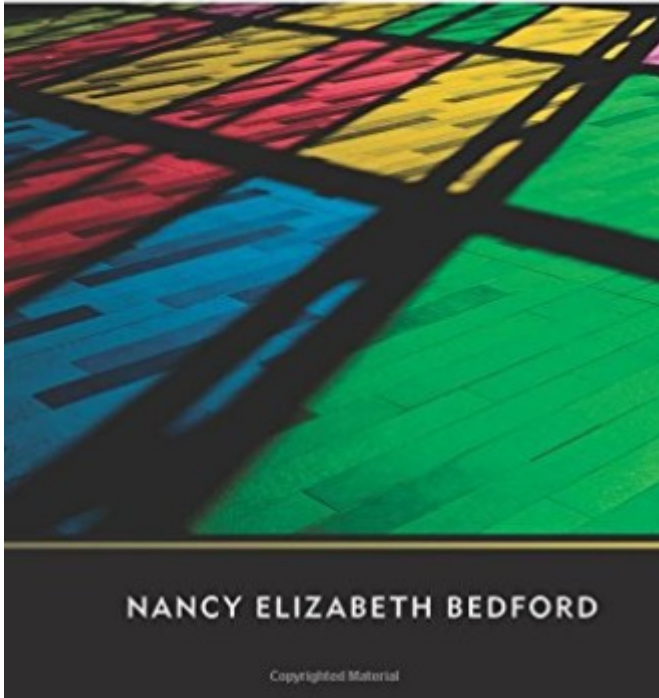


The CEB Women's Bible

Edited by Jaime Clark-Soles, Judy L. Fentress-Williams, Ginger Gaines-Cirelli,
Christine Chakoian, and Rachel Baughman
Common English Bible

BELIEF
A THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE

GALATIANS



Galatians

Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible

by Nancy Elizabeth Bedford
Westminster John Knox Press

The Art of the Bible (Thames & Hudson). This gorgeous oversized book shows how the Bible functions as art, [art as interpretation](#), and interpretation as evangelism. Rarely have I held such a beautiful book in my hands. Vivid colors pop out in full-page reproductions of medieval illuminated manuscripts from the British Library's [collection](#). The accompanying commentary by scholars Scot McKendrick and Kathleen Doyle highlights the manuscripts' history and artistic details. The 45 manuscripts in the book span a thousand years and a wide geographic swath of the early Christian world. They also span much of the Bible's narrative: Adam and Eve eat the fruit while the serpent lingers; Boaz observes as Ruth threshes; Jesus is born

in a stable; flames adorn disciples at the first Pentecost; the seven-headed beast looms. The cover price, which at first glance may seem high, averages out to only \$2.11 for each manuscript covered in the book. That's a bargain for such rich history of visual interpretation.

Eucharistic Prayers (Eerdmans). This resource book will be refreshing for leaders of lectionary-based worship with holy communion who don't feel strictly bound to their own denominational resources. Samuel Wells and Abigail Kocher offer Eucharistic prayers tied to the [Revised Common Lectionary texts](#) for every Sunday in the three-year cycle as well as feast days and other occasions for communal worship like marriage and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Even worship leaders who don't use full Eucharistic prayers will find here evocative images of salvation history, like this one from the prayer for Advent 4, Year A: "Fearless God, who came in a dream to Joseph, dream through us anew today. Speak into our places of fear. Transcend and transform all that keeps us from living your dream." Those are just the words I needed to hear (and speak) this Advent.

Bread for the Journey (Herald). I'll admit that I was skeptical when I learned that the authors of this devotional book have a blog called "[Mennonite Girls Can Cook](#)." The term *girls* seemed infantilizing, and the connection of women with cooking seemed just too cliché. But when I opened the book I found a lovely collection of reflections on biblical texts, prayers, questions for discussion, and sumptuous recipes that even a non-cook like myself can make. (My favorite is the baked oatmeal, which you can find [here](#).) The authors tell stories of persecution and migration, hope and community, suffering and faith. The discussion prompts that follow each devotion are provocative: "Imagine yourself in the arms of God. How does it change your outlook today?" "How does the fact that God lived in a human body change your daily life?" "What one thing could you do this week to build community in your neighborhood?" Rich food for thought.

The CEB Women's Bible (Common English Bible). The Common English Bible was completed in 2011 with the cooperation of several mainline Protestant denominations. It was intended to be "a translation to touch the heart and mind." The CEB's updated language aims at both clarity and accuracy (so, for example, *Son of Man* is translated as *Human One* and *Lord of hosts* as *Lord of heavenly forces*). Over 80 Biblical scholars, theologians, pastors, and novelists contributed to this [new edition](#) of the CEB, written and marketed primarily (but not exclusively) for women. Well-written introductions, provocative marginal reflections, and brief articles

interspersed in the text acknowledge both the Bible's patriarchal context and the graciousness of a God who overcomes human barriers to authentic relationship. Interesting juxtapositions arise: "Same-Gender Love" and "Threshing" appear on facing pages in Ruth, and "Childless" and "Menopause" accompany Genesis 18. The book ends with a comprehensive index of every women mentioned in the Bible, named and unnamed.

Galatians (Westminster John Knox). Do we really need more Bible commentaries these days, when so much is available [online](#) and on library shelves? This new volume in the *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* series prompts me to answer "yes." Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, who teaches theology at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, dives deeply into the "reservoir of meaning" that resides in Paul's letter to the Galatians. I opened the book randomly and landed on Bedford's interpretation of [Galatians 5:16-21](#) (a text that plagued me more than once during my preaching days). Within those seven pages, I found discussions of Kathryn Tanner's writings on the Spirit, Jerome's asceticism, waterboarding and the history of paramilitary interrogations in Latin America, Kelly Brown Douglas's critique of Platonic dualism, Christology, human sexuality, Theodore of Cyrus on idolatry, misogyny, racism, heterosexism, and the *imago dei*. Bedford concludes: "for supposed followers of Jesus to treat others with disdain and simultaneously to claim with impunity the inheritance of God's kingdom would put God in a position of complicity with oppression and injustice." Amen.

See my original (and not at all Bible-related) Christmas picks [here](#).