

A Few Notes on my Philippians Commentaries

I have purchased a handful of commentaries to help in my study of Philippians. If I had to start over, there are some commentaries I would buy again and some I would not.

Commentaries I would buy again

Hansen, G. Walter. The Letter to the Philippians. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. 2009.

Despite being in the PNTC, this is not a very technical commentary at all; even so, I really like it. Hansen is about as no nonsense as it comes. He gets to the point, discusses the issues, and helps me understand the text. I think a lot like he thinks, so I find his explanations are almost always helpful. This is a very good commentary, the best one here for those without a Greek foundation.

O'Brien, Peter. The Epistle to the Philippians. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. 1991.

This is also an excellent technical commentary. It uses the Greek even more than the NICNT; those who haven't had Greek before shouldn't bother. O'Brien is often gospel-centered in his writing here. This is definitely one of the better NIGTC commentaries.

Fee, Gordon. Paul's Letter to the Philippians. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. 1995.

This is an excellent technical commentary. Its help with the Greek language and the structure of the text is very good. Fee provides a lot of details, and I wish all the commentaries in the NICNT were this good. Fee does have a tendency to question traditional interpretations and come up with new ones, so you have to be on your toes.

MacArthur, John. Philippians. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. 2001.

MacArthur's commentaries are all very consistent, and this one is much like his others. It's pastoral in nature, a port from his sermons. It includes illustrations and applications, which are rarely found in the more technical commentaries. It's not amazing and has too many rabbit trails, but it's good.

Thielman, Frank. Philippians. The NIV Application Commentary. 1995.

I'm almost borderline on this commentary; I'm fairly certain I would buy it again. If I knew someone in my family was studying Philippians, I would definitely buy it for

them. To be fair, there certainly have been places where it has been really helpful to me, but like most in the NIVAC, it's a bit lightweight and lacking in details—the explanation for 2:2-4 was only one paragraph! Even so, Thielman's writing is clear and concise, and he does have good insight into the text. It's a decent commentary; very good for those who are newer to Bible study.

Commentaries I would not buy again

Melick, Richard. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. The New American Commentary. 1991.

This is among the worst of the otherwise excellent NAC commentaries. It's lightweight, it's concise, and it rarely seems to focus on the main idea of the text. If you're looking for a technical commentary, try Fee or O'Brien.

Silva, Moises. Philippians. The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. 2nd ed. 2005.

Let me be up front: I don't get Silva. When I read him, I spend a lot of time wondering what he's talking about or why he's talking about that here. It seems to me that he has a lot of information yet often doesn't deal with the main issues of the text or the problems areas that I have questions about. Honestly, though I know he's very smart and has a good reputation, I wouldn't buy anything from this author again.

Lightfoot, J. B. St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. 1868.

This commentary is classic Lightfoot, and it leans heavily on the Greek. Unless you're fluent in the language—and I'm not—don't bother. If you can deal with it, it's good info, though too concise for my tastes.