

# PocketBible for Windows Revisited

Like an Old Friend and More

—Rev. Dale Durnell, 1st United Methodist Church



I've been using Bible software since 1989. For the last decade or so, and always only a click away, was my copy of QuickVerse 4.0g which was quick to load, search, and use. It was an old friend. And, even though I have migrated through umpteen desktops (and other Bible software packages), QV4 always came with me. Although other companies offer more powerful programs with larger libraries, when I needed to perform a quick, simple, search of the Bible – I relied on QV4 to get the job done.

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No more. All that has changed. There's a new kid on the block, and it's called PocketBible for Windows from Laridian.

Five years ago, with two new mini-tower computers, and a new church appointment, I also bought a handheld computer and went looking for Bible software that would run on my PDA. In answer to my search, I found that the folks who originally created QuickVerse had started a new company (Laridian) and they now produced a Bible software product for portable Windows units. So, with a new piece of technology, in a new setting, I began using PocketBible for my PDA.

Recently, Laridian produced PocketBible for Windows and the same books that I owned and used on my PDA could be used in the new desktop version of Laridian's software. What a novel idea, what a blessing: a desktop that could talk to a PDA and vice versa.

When I fired up PocketBible for Windows, I found the interface a little different than many of the other programs I've used over the years. But, at the same time, I found the functionality of the program to be very familiar. No, it wasn't QV4 in a new coat

of paint, it was much more. Yes, it was still fast, and responsive (a really neat trick in a 32 bit environment). But it was also easy to use, and well let's face it - who reads the manuals anyway. It was just so intuitive.

## Some Really Neat Features

One of the really great things about a digital Bible is that you can almost instantly go to any location that you want. In many software programs (including PocketBible for Windows) typing Ctrl+G brings up a dialog box to get you where you want to go. And, if you would rather work through a series of mouse clicks, you could click the "Go To" icon on the toolbar, then click on the book of the Bible you want to go to, then on the chapter, and then the verse.

But (and this is really slick), without any wasted real estate on the desktop, without opening any dialog boxes, all I had to do was put my cursor in a Bible window on the desktop and type "Jn 3.16" or "Rev 3.7" and press "Enter." Et voila, I was where I wanted to be. Yes, you can see the text appearing on your desktop, in the title bar of the Bible translation that has the focus. And, since at least a couple of the Bible

translations available from Laridian include the apocrypha, typing “1 Macc 2.1” or “Bel” with my cursor on a Bible that includes the apocrypha immediately opens the appropriate book. And since I had two such Bibles available in a Bible window, and had “synchronize” turned on, both Bibles immediately went to the appropriate location.

I loved QV4, but searching was always limited to the current translation in the active window. Now, in PocketBible for Windows, I can either search in as many books as I have open (my normal desktop happens to have two Bible windows open with three translations available in each window, as well as several devotional works) or in all available books (the user sets that option themselves).

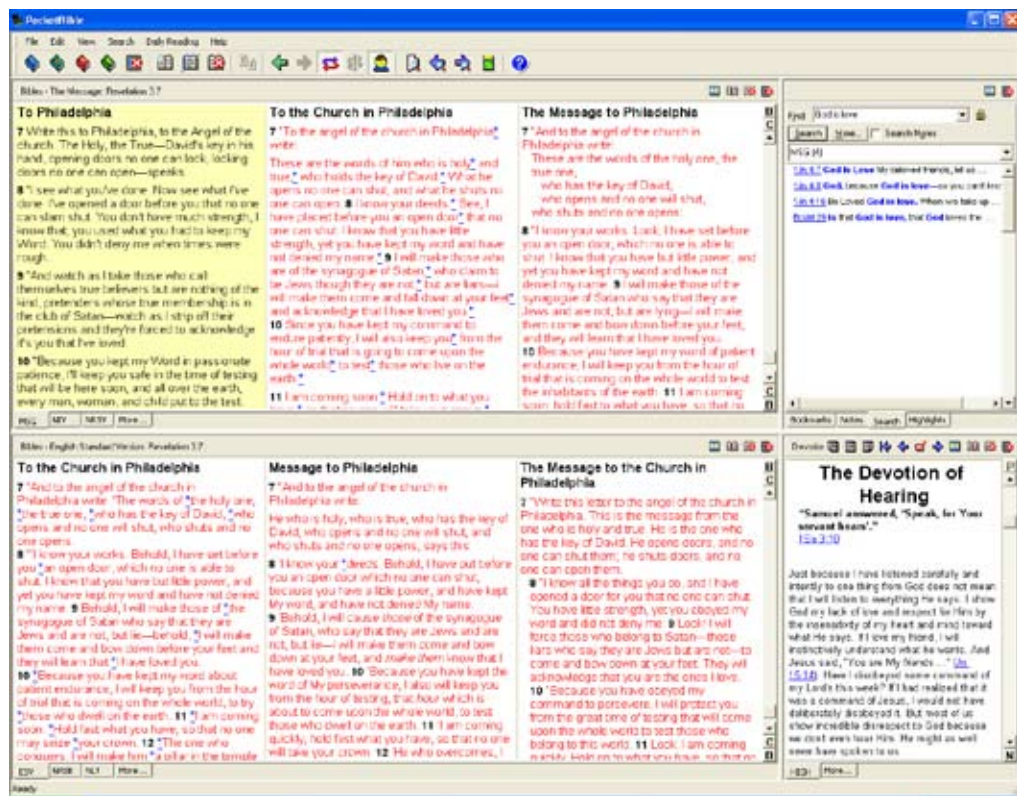
When I searched for “God is Love” I immediately found that phrase occurs 4 times in The Message, 3 times each in the ESV, the NASB, and the NRSV. It also occurs 2 times each in the NIV and the NLT as well as in one of the devotional books I have open. The search results were instantaneous which is not something I can say for some of the other programs I use.

Again I didn’t need a separate dialog box. Just like the Bible “go to” feature, I simply typed “find grace,” “John the Baptist,” or “find Peter & Paul.” When I hit enter, the “find” dialog box opened, the phrase I searched for immediately shows in the data input box. Again, the results are instantly revealed. And, if I want the results of that search in another document, I can simply click on the “Search” menu and click “Find Results to Clipboard.” Is that all too cool or not?

One of the primary uses I have for digital Bibles is to be able to copy Bible text for use in research papers, Bible studies, and even church bulletins or newsletters. Again, simply placing my cursor in an active Bible window and typing “Copy Jn 1.1-8” and pressing enter transfers the appropriate verses from the active translation into my clipboard. A simple Alt+Tab brings me to my word processing document and a simple paste puts those verses into my document. Now, that’s pretty slick by anyone’s standards.

I’m not a big fan of notes in Bible software (they don’t transfer from one program to another, and haven’t always transferred from one version of the same software as the program is upgraded). I say this knowing that at the same time I have colleagues who would argue that Bible software without a note taking capability is inadequate (or incomplete). PocketBible responds nicely to the needs of the user with the ability to not only create notes, but to search those notes (something others could learn from). And, the notes that are created can be everything from simple text to fully formatted documents using html code.

In addition to creating and searching notes, I can highlight text in my books and even search for those highlighted colors. For example, in the NRSV, I highlighted verse 2 of Bel and the Dragon, in Crimson. If I click the “Find” icon, and click the “highlight” tab in the dialog box, Bel 2 is immediately identified as being a highlighted text. I can search my open books for “any highlight” or only a specific color.



## The Ability to Self-Author

A feature many of my colleagues constantly ask for is a tool to “self author” works either for their own ben-

efit, or to share with others. Many of the big name Bible software programs have self authoring tools; the usability and price varies from company to company. Laridian offers two versions of their BookBuilder program – a basic version and a professional version that includes some additional tools to speed up the tagging process, and to aid in creating commercial setup programs for your books. So, do you want to build something for yourself, or do you want to create a book to sell. I tried both versions of Laridian’s BookBuilder programs and found them quite simple to use. However, as the User’s Guide for BookBuilder notes – “Tagging books is hard; running BookBuilder is easy.”

The User’s Guide for BookBuilder admonishes against trying to work with Word or other word processor generated html code when trying to compile for BookBuilder. And, since it’s been years since I manually created html code, I initially ignored that warning and became frustrated with myself. But, when I conceded the point, I found that the process of manually generating the code gradually came back to me. When I began to work with, instead of against, the program it became a much easier and less stressful process.

Working from a research paper I had created, I was able to self author that work as a PocketBible book and it is now readable on my desktop and on my handheld. I was able to embed the same graphics I placed in the original hard copy document, and the finished product contains all of my footnotes to document the many quotations throughout the paper.

## The Bible - Anywhere

Now, this is where PocketBible for Windows really excels. In the old days of 16 bit operating systems and .ini files in the Windows directory, you could move a Bible program fairly easily from one computer to another. This is what has made moving QV4 from one computer to another all these years, so easy. But, back then we didn’t have much capacity for portability (an external “Bernoulli Box” was relatively huge and very cumbersome by anyone’s standards).

However, with the advent of Windows 2000 and later operating systems that rely on the registry during installation, such portability is no longer very doable. For example, it was a major operation to install and move my Libronix DLS configuration and all of my resources from my desktop to my new laptop last month.

At the same time, I got a copy of PocketBible for Windows and easily installed the program (and all my books) on my desktop, and on a thumbdrive which I carry with me everywhere. With this flexibility and transportability, I can take all my books, notes and highlighting from my desktop (or my PDA) and put everything on the thumbdrive on my key ring.

Now, when I go to the library, or I travel to my son or daughter’s home, and I need to look up something in the Bible, or I want to work on a sermon while I’m away from home, I can simply plug my thumbdrive into someone else’s computer and I’m off and running. There are no registry settings to fool with, the Laridian specific fonts are installed with the program in the appropriate directory and the program itself gives you the ability to place the books for PocketBible in several locations, all of which are easily found by the program itself.



## PocketBible for Windows – Synchronized

One area that has long been missing in the world of Bible software is how to sync between our various desktops and laptops and handheld computers. Laridian has cracked the code, solved the problem, and provided the technology. I was privileged to get an early look at the synchronization tools between PocketBible for Windows and PocketBible (on my handheld). It is obvious that a lot of effort and thought has gone into the process.

Last night, I created a set of notes on my handheld, and a different set on my desktop. I created bookmarks and highlighted text on both my desktop and on my PDA. I then simply clicked to “Synchronize Personal Data” and in less than a minute my notes and bookmarks from on the desktop became part of the data on my PDA while the data I created on my PDA was now merged into the data on my desktop. Even my daily devotional reading was synchronized between where I was reading on my desktop and the handheld. Although it took me some time to understand the difference between verse highlight mode and word highlight mode on my Pocket PC, once I figured it out I found that my highlights were accurately being synchronized between my desktop and

my handheld. The program is smart enough to know that the data needs to flow both directions; both computers now held the same information.

What's missing you might ask? Being able to run from the USB drive is very convenient if you're constantly moving between machines. But, it would be nice if the synchronization feature could be used to make sure the occasional thumbdrive user can keep his database up-to-date with his or her desktop. Laridian says that such a feature would be possible in the future with their synchronization engine and technology.

Laridian has cracked the code on being able to sync between devices running PocketBible software. And, for the industry's sake, it is about time. The user community – regardless of which software package is being run, has long had to find work arounds to merge notes from office, home, or laptop to the handheld. Well done Laridian!

### Some Last Thoughts

Years ago, every software package on the market (including most shareware products) came with a users guide. The more elaborate the program, the more detailed the book. This killed a lot of trees, but gave the user something to fall back on when they could not figure out how to use the program. But, as I said early on, who ever reads the manual anyway? Today, all we get is a help system (that may or may not be useful). Or, we're referred to a website where there is a FAQ file (which also may not be anymore useful than the help file). Laridian has really excelled with PocketBible for Windows. The help file is extensive. It is well laid out and is very functional.

One final thought – I don't think many reviews ever talk about the EULA. Let's face it, there are probably more of us who read the user's manual than really read the EULA. But again, who reads the manual? Still, I am impressed with the forthright statement in the EULA that the program can be used on every computer I own, as long as I'm the only one using it. This is the most mature and enlightened statement I've seen in a long time. Some software packages are limited to one machine, and one machine only.

Occasionally, a company permits installation on a home and an office machine computer, or a desktop and a laptop. But, in my case, I have a home machine (in my study at the parsonage), and an office machine (in my office at the church), and a laptop for portability. Now, with my thumbdrive – I have access to the program anywhere. And, I have a license to freely use this software where ever I am, on whatever computer I happen to be using.

### In A Nutshell

PocketBible for Windows is a quick and simple Bible program with some unique features that make it easy to use and more powerful than it might at appear to the casual observer. Its clean installation process makes it easy to run the program from a USB thumbdrive for portability, and to move it from machine to machine as you upgrade. Synchronization of your personal data between your desktop and your PDA lets you take your Bible study with you wherever you go, and puts Laridian a step ahead of other Bible programs. Despite the emphasis on portability and mobility, PocketBible for Windows is a fully capable desktop Bible study program that anyone who studies the Bible would find useful. Thanks Laridian!!

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