LEE LEATHER CO.

Leather Care for Bible Owners

Plain-language edition — what conditioning can and cannot do

Leather is skin. It dries out, it wears, and it can be helped — up to a point.

Written by a working Bible rebinder, in plain language.
No jargon. No tools needed. Just your Bible and five minutes.

What conditioning can do

Conditioning puts moisture and oils back into dry leather. It can make a stiff, dry cover feel softer and more flexible, and it can slow down further drying.

It works best as regular, gentle care on leather that is dry but still sound — not as a rescue for leather that is already failing.

What conditioning cannot do

Conditioning cannot mend a cracked hinge. It cannot glue a loose page back in. It cannot save leather that has gone brittle and rotten, and it cannot undo years of damage in one application.

More is not better. Over-conditioning can darken leather, soften it too much, and leave it sticky. A little, gently, is the rule — and if you are unsure, ask your rebinder first.

> *This guide names no conditioner or leather product. Products differ, and what suits one leather can harm another. Ask your rebinder what is safe for your cover before you buy anything.*

Why the flesh side matters

Every piece of leather has two sides: the smooth outer grain, and the flesh side underneath. On a Bible cover, how the flesh side is finished affects how the cover feels and wears.

A flesh side that is finished clean and tight stays smooth inside the cover and does not shed fibres onto your pages. A rough, loose flesh side will feel fuzzy and wear faster. When you are choosing a leather, ask how the inside of the cover will be finished — it matters as much as the outside.

A single-piece cover vs. a lined cover

Some Bible covers are made from one thick piece of leather, with no liner inside. Others have a liner — a second layer inside the cover.

A single-piece, no-liner cover behaves differently: it is one piece doing all the work, so it breaks in as one piece, and there is no liner to peel or come loose over time. A lined cover can feel softer at first, but the liner is one more thing that can fail.

Neither is wrong. But if your cover feels different from what you expected, the construction — not just the leather — is often the reason. Ask your rebinder how your cover is built, so you know what to expect from it.

Burnished edge vs. rough-cut edge

The edge of a leather cover is finished in one of two main ways.

A burnished edge is smoothed and polished. It looks neat, resists fraying, and is easy to wipe clean. It can show wear over years of handling, but it is simple to touch up.

A rough-cut edge is left as cut. It looks natural and rugged, and it wears in with use. It may feel less finished at first, but many owners prefer it.

Care is the same for both: keep the edge dry, do not pick at it, and wipe dust off with a dry cloth. Do not paint or seal an edge yourself — a home fix on an edge is very hard for a rebinder to undo.

A simple care routine

- Dry cloth wipe, now and then, to remove dust.
- Store upright, away from heat, damp, and sun.
- Condition only if the leather is dry but sound — gently, sparingly, and only with something your rebinder has said is safe.
- Check the hinges, corners, and edges at the same time as your seasonal check.
- When in doubt, ask before you act. A question costs nothing. A wrong product can cost a cover.

This guide gives general care advice. It does not replace a rebinder's judgment on a damaged Bible. If you are unsure, ask a rebinder before you act.

Lee Leather Co., Corryton, Tennessee — Bibles made by hand.