

BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE
STM 2 - Communicating God's Word

BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES AND REFERENCE BOOKS

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (2 Timothy 3:16 NIV)

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV)

Bible Study, like other forms of work, is made easier and more effective if one uses the right tools and uses them skillfully. In this lesson, we will look at some of the common Bible Study tools and the basics of how to use them effectively.

I. CONCORDANCE

- A. A Concordance is a list of the words in the Bible. If you know a word or phrase but not where it is found, you look for it in a Concordance. The Concordance will give you a list of places where that word or phrase is found in the Bible. An Exhaustive Concordance lists every word in the Bible. Other Concordances list the most common words or phrases and their locations. **A Concordance is specific to a translation of the Bible, such as KJV, RSV, NIV.**
- B. A Concordance should be your first Bible Study tool. You can use your Concordance to find the verse where a word is used, or you can use it to find all the places where a word or phrase is used so that you can compare the passages and develop your study further.
- C. Two Concordances you may want to consider are the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance for its completeness and the Cruden's Concordance for its ease of use. These are keyed to the KJV. Look for a concordance keyed to your intended study Bible.

II. BIBLE DICTIONARY

- A. A Bible Dictionary is a book that gives the meaning of words used in the Bible. You look up the word in the Bible Dictionary and it gives a definition. Bible Dictionaries vary greatly from each other in depth of detail and style.
- B. Some Bible Dictionaries give a great amount of detail in the definitions. They may give the spelling and meaning of the word in the original language ie, Hebrew or Greek, then give the meaning in English. Some Bible Dictionaries also give background on the use of the word and some of the detail you would expect to find in an encyclopaedia. There are some very technical Bible Dictionaries that require knowledge of Hebrew or Greek, but these are not practical for most of the Bible Study we would be doing.

- C. A Bible dictionary should be your second Bible Study tool. Choose one that has enough information to make its use worthwhile, but not so much technical information that you get bogged down in it. Visit a Christian book shop and look at some of the Bible Dictionaries on offer. Choose a particular word and look it up in more than one Bible Dictionary to compare the kind and amount of information they give.

III. BIBLE ENCYCLOPAEDIA

- A. A Bible Encyclopaedia is a book or set of volumes that goes beyond the information available from a Bible Dictionary. It usually gives word meanings and origin, but also gives background, geographical, and historical information.
- B. A Bible Encyclopaedia is a good study tool to have available, but you may not need to own one. Because they are usually in more than one volume, they can be quite expensive. Consider whether your church has a Reference Library or whether there is a public library nearby where you can use such reference books.

IV. BIBLE HANDBOOK

- A. A Bible Handbook is like a mini-encyclopaedia. Usually in one volume, a Bible Handbook gives a variety of information on many popular topics. Its information is not very detailed but can be very helpful for personal study and preparation.
- B. A Bible Handbook is probably your third Bible Study tool. Bible Handbooks vary greatly in style and quality. Before deciding on one, visit a Christian book shop or library and compare as many as are on offer to see which you prefer. Have a particular topic or item in mind to research and compare the information available and how it is presented in each of the Bible Handbooks.

V. COMMENTARY

- A. A Commentary is different from all the other tools we have discussed so far in that all the others deal with facts and information and a Commentary deals with interpretation and opinion.
- B. A Commentary is an exposition of what someone believes a particular passage of the Bible means and how it should be interpreted and applied. Obviously, a Commentary will express the doctrinal opinion of the person who wrote it.
- C. Commentaries vary in depth, detail, style, intent, and theology. Some are intended for academic study, some for sermon preparation, and some for personal insight and application.
- D. Commentaries can be purchased in multiple volumes sets, or as individual volumes covering specific books or sections of the Bible. Rather than

thinking of purchasing Commentaries, consider using those available in libraries or belonging to friends.

- E. Because Commentaries present a particular interpretation and doctrinal position, get advice from your pastor or other mature Christians whose opinion you value before making use of Commentaries.

VI. STUDY BIBLE

- A. A Study Bible is a personal Bible with a variety of built-in study helps and tools. Study Bibles come in all the popular translations, the most common being KJV, NIV, and NKJV. Study Bibles are commercial products developed and produced by the various Bible Publishing companies and vary greatly in style and emphasis. Cost comparative to the price of a good pair of shoes. Which walk?
- B. Some of the features common to Study Bibles are: Cross-References (centre column or margin); Concordance (not as complete as a stand-alone Concordance); Book introduction, outline, and background on each Book of the Bible; Explanation of some Bible Doctrines; Time-line charts; Maps; Commentary on selected verses (usually at bottom of each page)
- C. A Study Bible is highly recommended even for daily reading, because the supplementary information is at hand and its use will enhance your understanding of scripture. In purchasing a Study Bible, you first need to choose the translation of the Bible you want to use. The selection of a Study Bible is very subjective and because it represents a moderately expensive purchase, you should look at as many different Study Bibles as possible. Seek the opinion of friends who use Study Bibles and check to see what is available in the shops.

VII. COMPARATIVE TRANSLATIONS

- A. There are a few Bibles available that present all or part of the Bible in various translations in one volume. The page may be divided into columns and between two and four translations presented on the page.
- B. Other Comparative Versions may show how a verse is translated in various versions only when there is a significant difference in the way it is translated.
- C. These Bibles are helpful for occasional clarification of meaning of verses. The value to you depends on the translations available, whether you find those translations clearer to understand, and whether you take the time to read and compare the various translations.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCE BOOKS

There are many other types of Resource Books and Study tools available. Their helpfulness to you depends on your level of interest, how much time you have to do the study, and your budget.

Some of these additional references and tools are:

- Bible History
- Church History
- Biographies
- Bible Atlas
- Manners and Customs

IX. COMPUTER BIBLE STUDY SOFTWARE

- A. Computer Bible Study Software is the most rapidly developing area of Bible Study and research. There is a wide and growing variety of software presently available.
- B. Most Bible Study Software begins with one or more translations of the Bible that can be installed on your computer. The next level is a very powerful and flexible Concordance that allows you to search for words, phrases, or word patterns.
- C. Almost all the Bible Study Software available is designed so that additional modules can be added as your study requirements increase. You can add Bible Dictionaries, Bible Atlas, Commentaries, and many translations. The hardware requirements vary greatly between programmes. Some is designed for DOS and some for Windows.
- D. The choice of Bible Study Software is again very subjective. You need to look around at what others are using, try using it yourself, and then buy something you like. If you don't like it you won't use it!

X. RESEARCH AND REFERENCE BOOK SOURCES

- Pendlebury's Bookshop, Church House, Portland Avenue, Stamford Hill, London N16 0181-809-4922 New and Used Books
- Local Christian Book Shops can order reference books if not in stock.

Students will have been encouraged to bring one or two Bible Study resources they may have at home. Teacher will have brought samples of various study resources to class for display and hands-on use during the workshop part of the class time.

For class instruction we will look at the use of a Concordance and the use of Cross-references.

USING A CONCORDANCE

1. To find a verse using a known word or phrase:

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”

“My God shall supply all your needs”

2. To find scriptures relating to a word or theme:

Ponder, Pondered

Forgiveness

Submit, Submission

Peacemakers

USING CROSS-REFERENCES

Find a verse of interest. Note the cross reference letter. Find the first reference and follow the thread.

USING A BIBLE DICTIONARY:

Suggested word or topic to look up.