
NOTES ON

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

*3 lessons on how to grow
more confident and diligent
in Bible Study*



GIPPS ST
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

LESSON 1 – CHOOSING THE RIGHT BIBLE

Introduction

Personal Bible Study is essential to Christian growth and faithfulness

- 1 Peter 2:2
- 2 Peter 3:18
- Prov 18:15
- Prov 15:14
- Col 2:2-3

We do not come to worship to be fed our spiritual diet for the week. A Christian should use worship to encourage/edify brethren and to give praise to God. Sermons and Bible Classes are a Christian's dessert – it is a great bonus, but it cannot be your main diet.

My Commitment

I will do Bible Study on _____ (day) for _____(time)

Choosing the Right Bible

- The Bible was originally written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek
- It has now been translated from those original languages into 1218 languages
- In English, there are at least 1714 different translations
- The first step to Bible Study is owning a Bible, but there are many different considerations when choosing a Bible

A) Accuracy

- When translating from one language to another, there are several methods that can be used
 - **Word-for-word:** The translators will translate the original words into their closest English equivalent. It may not always read smoothly, but it will remain most accurate to the original text.
 - **Thought-for-thought:** The translators will loosely try to be literal to the text, but will change the wording into a more understandable phrase as they deem necessary. They will aim to capture the thought of the writer even if they have to use different words.

- **Paraphrase:** No special attention is given to translating the original words. The translators are only trying to paraphrase the ideas. These translations read more like a commentary than a Bible.
- As Christians, we believe that the Bible is not written by human authors but by God through the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16-17)
 - In fact, we know that God actually gave the apostles the exact *words* that they wrote, not just the *thoughts* (1 Cor 2:13)
- Therefore, if we want to understand God's word best, we should aim to have versions that are more 'word-for-word'

Bible Translation Comparison



B) Reading Competency

One problem with literal versions is that they can be challenging to read. If you are a competent reader, you don't need to worry about this. If you are new to English or are not confident in reading, you may wish to start with a more easy-to-read translation. (Note: The more easy to read versions are usually less literal.)

The following table lists the approximate Reading Level of the most common translations. Compare the reading level in this chart with the accuracy from the previous chart.

Translation	Reading Level
King James Version (KJV)	12
New American Standard Bible (NASB)	11
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	9
New King James Version (NKJV)	9
English Standard Version (ESV)	8
New International Version (NIV)	7
New Living Translation (NLT)	6
Contemporary English Version (CEV)	5
The Message (MSG)	5
International Children's Bible (ICB)	3

C) Appreciating Different Translations

You don't have to limit yourself to one translation.

- Reading other translations can give you a better understanding of a text
- You can purchase parallel Bibles that have several versions side-by-side
- Many apps can do this too (See YouVersion)

D) After Choosing the Translation

Once you have chosen which translation is best, it is important that you find a well made Bible in that translation. Here are some important factors in what to look for in a Bible:

- Easily readable font size, page thickness
- Margins for note-taking
- Buying pens/highlighters/notebooks
- Cross references
- Study Bible
- Using an App
- How can I make Bible Study as appealing and easy as possible?

Conclusion

- Bible Study is an essential for the Christian
- We need to study outside of congregational meeting times
- The first step is to understand what Bible you will use
- Christians should find a Bible that is literal in translation but that they can competently read
 - Bible Study will involve having several translations

HOMEWORK

1. Read the Preface/Introduction to your Bible

Understand what translation philosophy the translators of your Bible used. Were they concerned with being *literal* or being *readable*?

Note: The phrase '**dynamic equivalence**' means the translators are trying to convey the *thought* or *idea* of the text.

The phrase '**formal equivalence**' refers to a literal word-for-word translation.

2. Read Joshua 1

Note or highlight all of the times it says courage/courageous/strong

LESSON 2 – THE RIGHT TOOLKIT

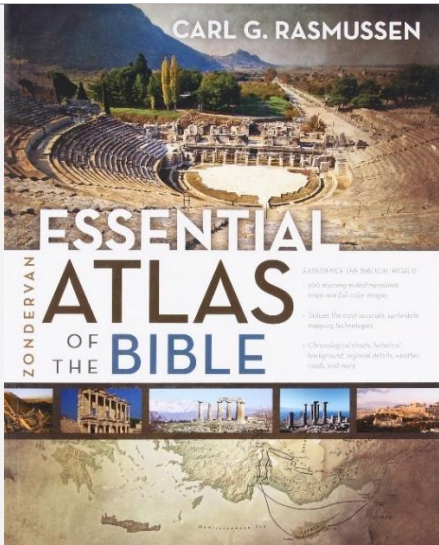
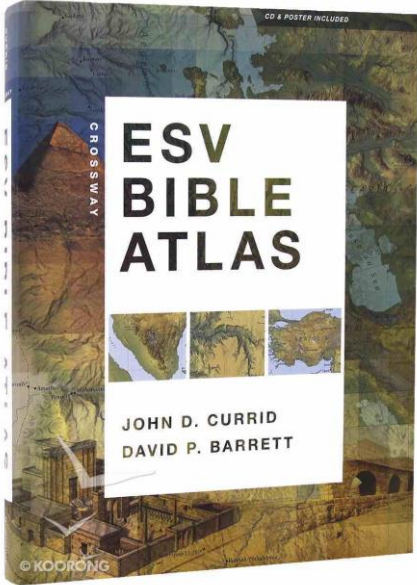
Introduction

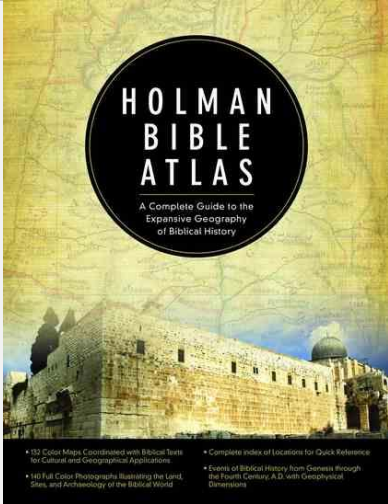
We live in an age of information. We can understand and analyse the Biblical text better than anyone in history since it was first written. Sadly, many do not take advantage of this or do not know how to. Bible Study is an art, and to do it well you will need the right tools.

The following tools are helpful and

The Right Toolkit

Atlas/Timeline/Charts

NAME	COVER	PRICE	DETAILS
Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible		\$20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 300 maps and images• Compact and brief• New and up-to-date
ESV Bible Atlas		\$50	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 175 Maps• 70 Photographs• 3D Reconstructions• Additional Internet resources available

Holman Bible Atlas		\$38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 132 Full Colour Maps • 100 Photographs • Timelines • Charts • Lots of Extra-Biblical information • Info about other world empires and world history
Lion Concise Atlas of Biblical History		\$12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tells Bible history through main stories • Maps, pictures, summaries • Brief and concise

Concordance

There is no better commentary on the Bible than itself. The first step to analysing a passage is being able to check cross references. This is what a concordance does.

- A Concordance alphabetically lists words used in the Bible and all of the verses in which those words appear
 - E.g. Love, Noah, Faith, Bethlehem, Knowledge
- Most Bibles have a small concordance in the back
 - However, this is often very concise and many words are missing
- Concordances are helpful for:
 - Word Studies – Choose a word (e.g. “faith”) and read through all of the places it is mentioned in Scripture
 - Finding a verse – If you can’t remember where a verse is but you know one or two of the words, you will be able to find it through a concordance
 - Understanding an idea – If you want to understand
- The type of concordance you have doesn’t matter
 - Just try to get one that aligns with your Bible translation

- o Common concordances are “Youngs”, “Strong’s” and “Crudens”
- Most Bible apps have a search function which does this

Topic	Verse	Strong's Number
HELL	and shall burn unto the lowest h	Deut 32:22 7585
	The sorrows of h compassed me	2Sa 22:6 7585
	deeper than h	Job 11:8 7585
	H is naked before him, and	Job 26:6 7585
	The wicked shall be turned into h	Ps 9:17 7585
	thou wilt not leave my soul in h	Ps 16:10 7585
	The sorrows of h compassed me	Ps 18:5 7585
	and let them go down quick into h	Ps 55:15 7585
	my soul from the lowest h	Ps 86:13 7585
	the pains of h gat hold upon me	Ps 116:3 7585

Dictionary

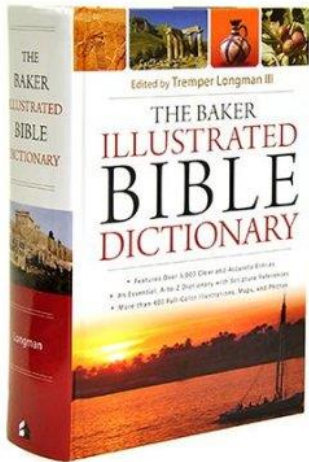
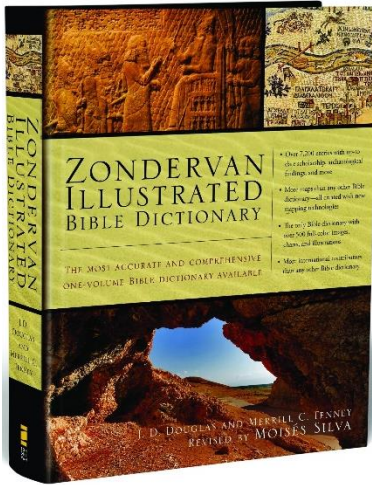
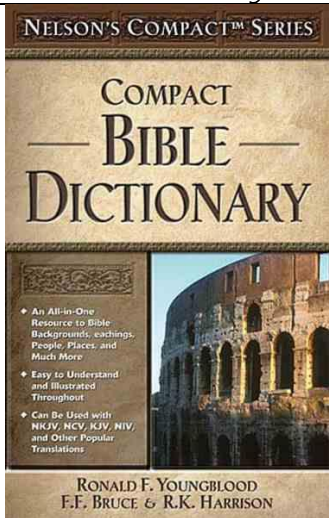
There are two types of Bible Dictionaries:

1. A Biblical Dictionary
 - a. A Bible dictionary defines words, topics, names, and places in the Bible. Most consist of brief articles, arranged alphabetically, containing a summary of information about various subjects.
 - b. For example, if we look up ‘Joshua’ in the “New Bible Dictionary” we find the entry seen on the right.

JOSHUA. 1. Joshua ben Nun, grandson of Elishama chief of Ephraim (1 Ch. vii. 27; Nu. i. 10), was called by his family *Hoshea*, ‘salvation’ (Dt. xxxii. 44; transliterated *Oshea*, Nu. xiii. 8, av); this name recurs in the tribe of Ephraim (see 1 Ch. xxvii. 20; cf. 2 Ki. xvii. 1; Ho. i. 1). Moses added the divine name, calling him *y^hhōshua*, normally rendered in English *Joshua*. The Gk. *Iēsous* reflects the Aramaic contraction *Yēšū* (cf. Ne. iii. 19, etc.).

At the Exodus Joshua was a young man (Ex. xxxiii. 11). Moses chose him as personal assistant, and gave him command of a detachment from the as yet unorganized tribes to repel the raiding Amalekites (Ex. xvii). As the Ephraimite representative on the reconnaissance from Kadesh (Nu. xiii. xiv), he supported Caleb’s recommendation to go ahead with the invasion. (Caleb (*q.v.*), the senior and leading figure, is sometimes mentioned alone in this connection; but it is unlikely that there was a tradition of the reconnaissance excluding Joshua, or that any later historian denied, or did not know, that he too escaped the curse on the unbelieving people.)

1. A Bible Dictionary will tell you the background of people, places and themes in the Bible.

The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary	Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary	Nelson’s Compact Dictionary
		
\$32	\$55	\$20

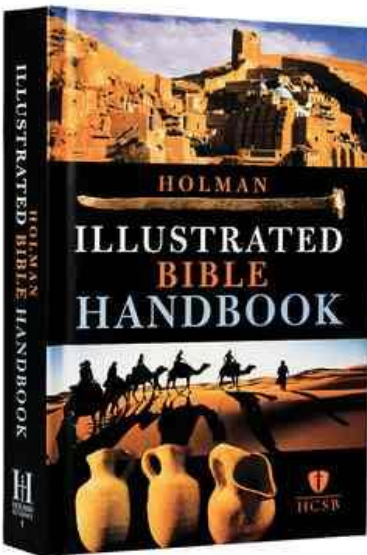
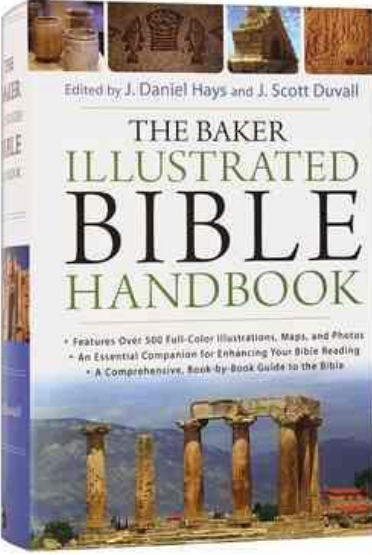
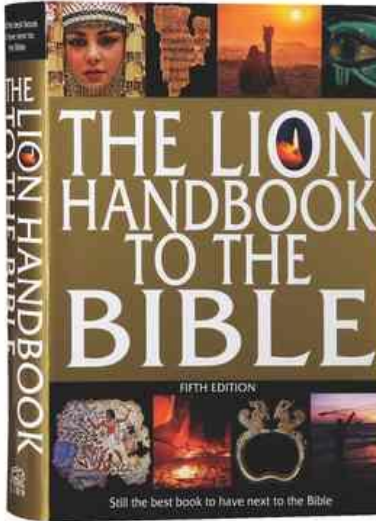
2. A Dictionary of Greek/Hebrew Words

- This lists words that are used in the Scriptures and gives them the most accurate definition
- Sometimes called 'lexicons'
- Will give the word in its original language and the origins of the word.
- Helpful for very in-depth study (i.e. knowing exactly what is meant by the original Greek word 'Agape')

Bible Handbook

A Bible Handbook is a very simple yet very important tool.

- Bible Handbooks usually go through the Bible in order and give details and summaries about the events and books
- For example, if you want to read Hosea, a Bible Handbook will tell you who it was written by, when they wrote it, why they wrote it, how to summarise the book, any other background information and finally an application
- Often these are small reference books that are a great place to start if you're not confident with understanding what the different books are about

Holman Bible Handbook	Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook	The Lion Handbook to the Bible
		
\$20	\$32	\$24

Commentary

Commentaries are like reading the Bible with a knowledgeable friend. They will try to help you understand what difficult passages and words mean.

- This is very helpful if the author of the commentary is a sound teacher
- However, if they have a faulty belief system then you will be told false information
- If using a commentary, it is best to use ones written by members of the church
 - Whatever commentary you use, remember that it is simply the comments of a human author and their opinion is not authoritative
- Be careful not to allow a use of commentaries to make you a lazy Bible student

Conclusion

- You do not need to acquire all of these tools to begin Bible Study
- If you haven't done personal Bible Study before, start with one or two of these and once you are comfortable with it work up to the deeper and more challenging tools
- You are not expected to be an expert Bible Scholar overnight
- But you are expected to grow in your abilities
- Remember the man who buried his master's talents in the ground (Matt 25:14-30)

HOMEWORK

1. Read back through Joshua 1

Use whichever tools you have to study through the chapter

Atlas: Find where the nation of Israel were located in Joshua 1 before they entered Canaan

Timeline: See where Joshua's life fits in with the history of the OT

Concordance: Look up all of the Bible passages that mention courage

Dictionary: Read the dictionary entry on the life of Joshua

Greek/Hebrew Dictionary: Look up the Hebrew word that is translated 'law'

Bible Handbook: See if there are any charts, outlines or background information to the book of Joshua

Commentary: Read the commentary that was written for this chapter

LESSON 3 – THE DISCIPLINE OF STUDY

Introduction

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land— not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

- Amos 8:11

Amos predicted a time when the word of God would be rare. We live in a time where God’s word is in abundance, yet we still starve ourselves.

I am convinced that the greatest obstacle to diligent Bible Study is neither ignorance nor inability, but sheer laziness. We have more resources available than anytime in history and we have the word of God more easily accessible than anytime since it was written, yet we live in a time of great Biblical ignorance. We can’t force Bible Study on anybody – except ourselves. We need to win the battle for personal Bible Study in our lives. This lesson will look at several ways we can go about winning that battle.

Personal Bible Study is a Command

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:15).

Scripture is living and powerful (Heb 4:12). It has the power to transform your life – do we perhaps neglect Bible study because we do not want to be transformed?

Scripture is to be our daily bread (Matt 4:4), a lamp for our feet and a light to my path (Psalm 119:105) and the sword in our armour (Eph 6:17). Therefore, without the word in our lives, we are malnourished, in darkness and defenceless. Is that a good description of the church that Christ died for? Does that truly describe the soul who is living a transformed life? Remember that faith only comes through the word of God (Rom 10:17).

Utilising Congregational Bible Study

- Christians are commanded to “instruct one another” (Romans 15:14).
- We instruct one another when we assemble together and hear a message from God’s word
- Sermons and Bible Classes are not designed to be *endured*

- How are you making best use of this time?
- Suggestions
 - Blank Notebook
 - Specific Sermon-taking Notebook - \$15
 - One single application

There's a Time and a Place...

Bible Study is something that requires diligence. It will not happen accidentally. Ask yourself these questions:

- Have I set aside time this week to study?
- When/where will I do it?
- How am I going to be accountable?
- How am I going to persist?

Goals

Short Term Goals:

- Study a small book (e.g. Philemon, Colossians, Obadiah, James)
- Do a word study on each of the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
- Study a Bible character – make notes, do background research
- Study a chapter of the Bible

Medium Term Goals:

- Study a larger sized book (e.g. Mark, Romans, Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, Esther, Hosea, Ecclesiastes)
- Make a timeline of certain Biblical events (e.g. The life of Paul, Book of Genesis, Book of Acts, Life of Christ)
- Find a difficult passage of Scripture (either a verse or a chapter) and study it thoroughly

Long Term Goals:

- Study through an entire section of Scripture (e.g. the Gospels, the Minor Prophets, Paul's letters)
- Make a full Bible timeline – this can be continually added to
- Grow in confidence until you are ready to study a book that is more challenging (e.g. Revelation, Ezekiel, Daniel)

Conclusion

Christians need to hunger for spiritual food and thirst for spiritual drink. Remember:

- Personal Bible study is a necessity for the faithful Christian
- We must take advantage of the study we do in assemblies
- Bible study takes discipline and diligence – we must focus and persist