

CHAPTER 10

BOOKS WHICH HELP IN STUDYING THE BIBLE

Today the Lord has given us an abundance of excellent books which help us to study and understand the life changing truths of the Bible. God has given us so much; it's a shame that we know so little. Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever _____ is given, of him shall be _____ required" (Luke 12:48). In other words, if God has given us something, then we are responsible to use it wisely and well. For example, if you have been given an excellent map and fail to use it, don't complain if you get lost. If you have been given a helpful cookbook and don't consult it, don't be surprised if the cake is a flop. Likewise, if you continue to be ignorant of the Bible, then you have not taken advantage of all that God has given to you!

We shall now consider some very helpful Bible study books:

1. BIBLE HANDBOOK

A good Bible Handbook is a simple and concise reference book dealing with the Bible in general and covering subjects such as those treated in this set of notes. A Bible Handbook will also give a general survey of the 66 books of the Bible, briefly summarizing the contents of each chapter. For example, if you wanted to know the content and teaching of 1 Corinthians chapter 7, a Bible Handbook would give you this information in a few concise paragraphs. RECOMMENDED: *Unger's Bible Handbook*.

2. ENGLISH DICTIONARY

This is one of the most important tools that a Bible student has. Make sure you have a good one. One of the reasons we have difficulty understanding the Bible is that we do not know the English language as well as we should. For example, in Luke chapter 13, an English dictionary would certainly help in understanding the following key words: "parable" (v.6), "infirmity" (v.11), "indignation" (v.14), "hypocrite" (v.15), "adversaries" (v.17), "iniquity" (v.27), "desolate" (v.35). Do you know what all these words mean? If not, you need a dictionary!

Since the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, it is sometimes helpful to have a dictionary which defines the original Hebrew and Greek words. Here are two recommendations:

For Hebrew: *Old Testament Word Studies* by William Wilson

For Greek: *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine

Both of these volumes are very easy to use even for those who have no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. See also our study on [How To Do Word Studies](#).

3. CONCORDANCE

A Bible Concordance is an alphabetical index of the words found in the Bible, listed in **their context** (the sentence or phrase in which they are found). There are basically two ways in which a concordance can be of help to the Bible student:

1) **A concordance helps in locating verses.** This is the best book to have when you do not know where a verse is found in the Bible. For example, there is a verse which says, "the love of money is the root of all evil." By using a concordance, you could find where this verse is located in the Bible (book, chapter and verse). Helpful hint: look up the word that is the least common (such as "root" or "money"). Don't look up common words such as "the" or "all" or "is," because the list will be so large that you will never find the verse unless you search all day. Some small concordances do not even include the very common words which occur so frequently.

2) **A concordance helps in studying a word.** Suppose you wanted to study the word "faith." With a concordance you could simply look up this word and it would immediately give you the places where this word is found in the Bible. You could then turn to each of these places and see what you can learn about faith.

Many Bibles contain a concordance in the back, although these are not complete concordances. A complete concordance is a very large book, and it contains a listing of every word in the Bible (even the common words) and every verse where those words are found. **RECOMMENDED: Strong's Exhaustive (Complete) Concordance.** For Bible students who want to do word studies in the original language, see *Englishman's Greek Concordance*.

4. BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Here at the Middletown Bible Church, we use the King James Version in the pulpit and in the classrooms, and we encourage our people to use the KJV during the services of our local assembly of believers. It is advantageous that we all use the same version when we are gathered together as one body, so when our Pastor reads a phrase or a sentence, we are all looking at the same text. However, for personal Bible study, when studying a portion of Scripture, it is sometimes helpful to read the same passage in another reliable version. Here are some examples of how the use of other translations might help to clarify the meaning of the original text:

1)	Acts 19:2 (KJV)--"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (This translation may suggest that a person can believe on Christ and then receive the Spirit at some later time.)	Acts 19:2 (NASV)--"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (This translation correctly indicates that a person receives the Holy Spirit the moment he believes.)
2)	2 Peter 1:1 (KJV)--"through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (This translation may suggest that Peter was talking about two Persons: God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.)	2 Peter 1:1 (NASV)--"through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (This translation correctly shows that Peter was talking about only one Person: the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here said to be GOD!)

3)	Revelation 4:6 (KJV)--"four beasts" (When we think of "a beast" we usually think of a wild, savage animal.)	Revelation 4:6 (NASV)--"four living creatures" (This is a better description of these angelic beings.)
4)	2 Samuel 14:26 (KJV)--"And when he polled his head (for it was at every year's end that he polled it...)"	2 Samuel 14:26 (NASV)--"And when he cut the hair of his head (and it was at the end of every year that he cut it...)"
5)	Deuteronomy 28:26 (KJV)--"No man shall fray them away."	Deuteronomy 28:26 (NASV)--"There shall be no one to frighten them away."
6)	Proverbs 13:24 (KJV)--"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."	Proverbs 13:24 (NASV)--"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently."
7)	2 Thessalonians 2:7 (KJV)--"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."	2 Thessalonians 2:7 (NASV)--"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way."

Some of the reliable, word for word Bible translations which may be used for the purpose of comparison are as follows: The New American Standard Version (NASV), The New King James Bible (NKJV), and The Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). It's best to avoid paraphrased versions. The student should remember, however, even though we have some very accurate versions, yet no translation is perfect. It is the original manuscripts (original autographs) that are God-breathed and inerrant. See our discussion in [Chapter 4](#).

5. STUDY OR REFERENCE BIBLE

Some editions of the Bible are especially prepared for the serious Bible student. A good study Bible contains the following helpful features: 1) a system of cross references (for example, if you were studying Ephesians 6:1-2, the cross reference system might direct you to Colossians 3:20 and Exodus 20:12); 2) an introduction to each book of the Bible (giving the author, date, theme, purpose for writing, etc.) 3) marginal notes throughout the Bible which define words, explain difficult passages, provide necessary background information and whatever else is needed to make the Bible more understandable; 4) a partial concordance; 5) a set of Bible maps.

RECOMMENDED: *The Scofield Reference Bible*. This study Bible contains all the above features. It also has a unique chain reference system which your teacher or Pastor can explain to you. It should be noted that not all study Bibles are recommended. They each reflect the views of the person who wrote the notes, and these views may be true to the Bible or they may not be. Even good study Bibles may have certain notes that are not dependable. For example, the Scofield Study Bible (which we recommend) presented the Gap Theory which is erroneous. [See our study on [The Gap Theory](#). If Scofield were alive today he probably would not hold to this view, in light of new light that has resulted from the research of Bible believing men.] We must always keep in mind that the sacred text is inspired and infallible, but the notes at the bottom of the page or in the margin are not inspired, and may or may not be on target. When we read anything written by uninspired men, regardless of how sincere or godly they may be, we must search the Scriptures daily to see whether the teaching lines up with what God has said (compare Acts 17:11).

6. BIBLE DICTIONARY

A good Bible Dictionary contains a wealth of information for the serious Bible student. Many Christians fail to use a Bible Dictionary as often as they should (and some do not even have one). If properly used, the Bible Dictionary is one of the most valuable tools available to the student of God's Word. Here are some examples of the kind of information which can be found in a good dictionary of the Bible:

1)	Places	Where was Mesopotamia ?
2)	Cities	What happened to the city of Sodom ?
3)	Persons	Who was King Jehoahaz ?
4)	Animals	What is a coney ?
5)	Plants	Why was the olive tree so important to the children of Israel?
6)	Minerals	What kind of precious stone was the amethyst ?
7)	Occupations	What work does a fuller do?
8)	Doctrines	What is the true meaning of justification ?
9)	Buildings	What were the various articles of furniture found in the tabernacle ?
10)	Musical Instruments	Was the harp that David played the same as the modern instrument called by the same name?

Simply look up the words in bold letters in a good Bible dictionary, and all these questions should be answered.

Read Matthew 12:1-9, and list the words or names which you could look up in a Bible Dictionary to help you to better understand this passage.

RECOMMENDED: There are several good Bible Dictionaries. Recommended: *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Others may be as good or better, but seek to obtain one whose contributors are Bible-believing men.

7. CHRONOLOGY CHARTS

Chronology is that study which deals with time and which assigns to events their proper dates. Bible chronology deals with questions such as these: "When was the book of 2 Timothy written?" "When Ahab was king of Israel, who was the king of Judah?" "When was the southern kingdom of Judah destroyed by the Babylonians?" "When did Ezekiel give his great prophecies?" "Who was Pharaoh of Egypt during the Exodus in the days of Moses, and who was the Pharaoh that Joseph served?" "Who was the Roman emperor when Christ was born?"

The answers to most of these questions can be found in a good study Bible, Bible Handbook or Bible Dictionary. One of the most helpful ways to learn about Bible chronology is to examine certain chronology charts which have been especially prepared for the Bible student. Three such charts are RECOMMENDED:

1.	<i>Chart of Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges</i> by John C. Whitcomb.
2.	<i>Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets</i> by John C. Whitcomb.
3.	<i>New Testament Chronological Chart</i> by James L. Boyer.

Additional charts are also available, but the three listed above are probably the ones that would be the most helpful and most needed.

8. BIBLE ATLAS

In Chapter 5 we saw the importance of understanding the geography of Bible lands (the mountains, rivers, seas, deserts, countries, cities, etc.). A good Bible Atlas is quite helpful, although most study Bibles contain a good set of maps in the back which are usually sufficient for most purposes. Recommended: *Baker's Bible Atlas*.

9. DOCTRINAL BOOKS

There have been many excellent books written on the important doctrines of the Bible. For example, some books have very clearly set forth the following doctrines: GOD, CHRIST, THE HOLY SPIRIT, SALVATION, LAW AND GRACE, THE CHURCH, SATAN, THE BIBLE, PROPHECY, THE KINGDOM, EVANGELISM, CREATION, etc. If you are interested in studying any of these doctrinal subjects, ask your Pastor to recommend which book or books would be best. Of course, the best book to study for any doctrine is the Bible itself.

Recommended: *Major Bible Themes* by Lewis S. Chafer and *The Mackintosh Treasury* by C. H. Mackintosh. A detailed study of all the major doctrines of the Bible is *Systematic Theology* by Lewis Sperry Chafer (highly recommended).

Here are some other recommendations for certain specific doctrines:

Prophecy: *Things to Come* by J. Dwight Pentecost
 The Kingdom: *The Greatness of the Kingdom* by Alva McClain
 Dispensationalism: *Dispensationalism* by Charles Ryrie

10. COMMENTARIES

A commentary is someone's written comments on an entire book of the Bible, verse by verse and chapter by chapter. For example, you could obtain a commentary on the book of Philippians which would discuss every verse in all four chapters of this epistle. Our recommendation for a one volume commentary on the entire Bible would be *Believer's Bible Commentary* by William MacDonald. The classic commentary on the entire Bible is by Matthew Henry, but this usually comes in more than one volume. It is a spiritual treasure in many ways.

CAUTION: A commentary should be the **last** book you study. No human author has a perfect understanding of the Bible, and often a commentary will make a statement or reach a conclusion which may not be correct. If you read the commentary first, you may quickly accept what the author has written without knowing all the facts. It is much better to let GOD be your TEACHER, and not any man. Always go **first** to the Word of God before you look at any other book. The following is a recommended procedure for personal Bible study:

1.	Carefully and prayerfully read the Bible (see Chapter 3).
2.	If necessary, read the passage in another reliable translation carefully and prayerfully.
3.	Carefully and prayerfully study the cross references in your Bible.
4.	Use your English dictionary to find the meaning of difficult words.
5.	Use your Bible dictionary to learn about unfamiliar persons, places, etc.
6.	Use your concordance to study the key words and how they are used elsewhere in the Bible.
7.	Consult a Bible atlas or the maps in your Bible to become familiar with the geography of the passage under study.
8.	Consult the chronology chart which would pertain to the passage under study.
9.	Prayerfully read the notes in your study Bible, remembering that the notes are not inspired. They are often very helpful, but they are not always correct.
10.	Prayerfully read your Bible Handbook and commentary (if you have one), asking the Lord to teach you through what other believers have written, and to protect you from any error which may be found in books written by fallible men.

A final exhortation:	"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).
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