

Bible Study Methods | Bible Study Tools

There's a huge difference between reading and studying your bible. I mean, I think to a large extent anyone can read the bible...I mean, they're just words on a page. I think it's totally different to actually study the bible. Why? Because I think that in order to study the bible you gotta have some kinda desire to do it right? And that's what people throughout history have tried to do. It separates those who say "But the bible is boring, old, and boring" and those who say "What does the bible say about life? So this stuff *is* true"

But here's the thing, you don't just open the bible and bam! You know everything there is to know about everything. Like try flipping to a random place in the bible and see if you can relate that to another random place in scripture. But don't give up just yet...I got some tools for you to use. Just like a nice graphing calculator makes life easier for you in calculus, there are some things we use when we study scripture. What are they you ask?

- **Bible Translation:** Is there a difference between bible translations? Yes & No. Have you ever noticed when someone is reading and even though you're in the same passage it sounds kinda weird? It's because there are different versions of scripture. Wait what? In the overall scope of things, the message is still the same (you won't lose your salvation because you use the NIV). But it does matter when you start studying and examining scripture closely. There are 2 types of translations: 1. Word-for-Word (literal approach) and 2. Thought-for-Thought (paraphrase approach)
- **Bible Software:** It's like some person took a bunch of bibles, commentaries, dictionaries and stuffed it into a program so you don't have to buy books again. It's pretty smart. However, it's kinda expensive. The ones we use at seminary (BibleWorks, Libronix, and Accordance) are pretty stinkin' expensive but they open your world to bible study like none other. There are some online resources that are pretty good and there are some that are pretty bad. The key to finding a good bible software is based upon what kind of stuff they provide for you. Find a good software program that provides a good range of bible translations, commentaries, and dictionaries.
- **Dictionary:** A bible dictionary is exactly what it sounds like – a dictionary for the bible. Smart huh? So say you're digging around the book of 2 Kings 18:34 and you come across the word "Sepharvaim" what do you do? You can: 1) make up your own definition (not recommended); 2) skip the word (not recommended); 3) throw your bible at someone's face and walk away yelling "I don't need this!" (high not recommended); or 4) open your bible dictionary and look up the word. "But this might take a long time" Yes princess, this will take a long time...but again, this is for you to study and for you to learn more. It will take time and patience...but it's worth it.
- **Concordance/Lexicon:** Wiki says a concordance "Is an alphabetical list of the principal words used in a book or body of work, with their immediate contexts. Because of the time and

difficulty and expense involved in creating a concordance in the pre-computer era, only works of special importance, such as the Bible, Qur'an or the works of Shakespeare, had concordances prepared for them." Uhhh, someone took the key words of the bible and organized it in a book. So like say you're researching the word "love" and you want to know how the authors used it. So you bust out your concordance, flip to the word "love" and there it will give you all the passages in scripture that has the word "love".

A lexicon is like a concordance BUT the main difference is that instead of using English words, it uses the Greek and Hebrew words.

- **Bible Atlas:** Are places important? You better believe it. Why? Because events and people don't just occur in the air in your imagination. Location matters – esp. when you're talking about biblical truth. The good thing about a bible atlas is that it helps the reader visualize the setting and the location of the story. Like it helps me make sense of the geography of where things are taking place and it helps me realize that all this is taking place in the same world that I'm living in today.
- **Commentary:** What you'll be learning in Bible Study Methods is how you read scripture. The goal is that at the end of this course, you'll be able to take any passage of scripture, dissect it and be able to preach and teaching out of it. But the bible is very much like an onion (or a parfait) in that it has many layers. And the more you discover how to use certain tools and the more you're able to practice studying scripture...the deeper you can go. Commentaries are books that men and women in history have had the chance to spend hours upon hours digging and studying scripture and they wrote it down for us. Nice huh? But I challenge you not to use these commentaries until you have studied it yourself.