



READ SCRIPTURE WORKSHOP

HOW TO READ A NEW TESTAMENT LETTER TEACHER'S NOTES

TEACHER'S NOTE: This is the teacher's notes. Not everything here needs to be said in the workshop. This is intended to prepare the teacher for the workshop.

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is a book over which there is much controversy, and it seems like everyone has their opinion on what it means. How do we make sense of it all? How do we know which interpretation is legitimate? Can we know? This workshop series aims to give an answer to those questions and equip you with the tools necessary to understand God's Word. The Bible is not a jumble of religious opinion or a mystical cryptogram that the contemporary reader sorts out according to whim or fad. On the contrary, God purposed to speak through human language and to be understood.

In this first workshop, we will be looking at 2 main things. We will look briefly at what is GENRE - categories of different types of books. Secondly, we will look at the question of HOW to interpret Scripture. Specifically, in this case, how to interpret a New Testament letter.

We'll go over some simple principles for interpretation in the first half of the workshop, then in the second half, we'll apply them as we work through a New Testament passage (the letter of Jude) together.

LITERAL INTERPRETATION

The term 'literal' comes from the Latin *littera* meaning "letter." To interpret something literally is to pay attention to the *littera* or to the letters and words being used. To interpret the Bible literally is to interpret it according to the normal rules of grammar, speech, syntax and context.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics states:

"We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text."

This is what we mean by saying, "we must interpret the Bible literally." It does not mean 'literalistically' - where one ignores the principles of context and speech, such as metaphors. For example, if I were to say, "that football player is a beast!" I do not mean that he is literally not a human, but some sort of brutish creature. To interpret the saying that way would be to misinterpret it 'literalistically' since you would be missing what was my intended meaning by employing a metaphor. To interpret the Bible literally means to interpret it according to what was the intended meaning by the original author to the original recipients.

To do this, we must have an understanding of genres in the Bible. The basic tool we will need is a good Bible translation. For the purposes of this class, we will be using the ESV - however, there are other

good Bible translations you could use such as the NASB, CSB, NIV or RSV/ASV. What we're essentially looking for in a Bible translation is one that tries to faithfully communicate what the original text is saying without adding to or taking away from it.

GENRE

The term genre means "kind," "sort" or "species." When we are talking about the genre of a piece of literature, we are talking about what 'kind' of literature it is. Is it poetry? Is it a legal document? Is it a letter? Etc. In order to determine what genre it is, we look at things such as literary form/structure, figures of speech and style.

Genre is important for interpreting scripture since the Bible is not one book, but a collection of several different 'kinds' (or genres) of books. It is a collection of 66 books, written by various authors over approximately 1500 years, that cover various genres such as legal, poetry, letters, biographies, proverbs, history, apocalyptic, etc. How we approach reading each of these different genres will be different and help us determine how to understand what they are intended to say to us.

The biblical genre we're dealing with in this workshop is that of the New Testament letters. This genre of biblical literature is also called epistolary literature and refers to the epistles of the New Testament, Romans through Jude.

THE COMMON STRUCTURE OF NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

New Testament letters or epistles generally follow a common structure. Recognizing this structure is helpful to us in making sense of an epistle. Below is the general form of New Testament epistles:

1. GREETING

Firstly, most epistles start off with some form of greeting. The greeting generally contains:

- The name of the writer (e.g. Paul, James, etc)
- The name of the recipient (e.g. to the church in Corinth)
- A greeting (e.g. Grace and peace to you from God our Father...)
- A prayer and/or thanksgiving (e.g. I always thank God for you...)

2. BODY

This is the main content of the letter. The epistles generally include two kinds of material:

A. DESCRIPTIVE DISCOURSE - which expounds certain truths or doctrines, often with logical support for those truths. Also called expository discourse or indicative material (i.e. it "indicates" something to us).

B. PRESCRIPTIVE DISCOURSE - which includes exhortations to follow certain courses of action or to develop certain characteristics in light of the truths presented in the expository discourse material. Also called hortatory discourse or imperative material (i.e. it contains imperatives or commands to us).

Distinguishing between descriptive and prescriptive discourse is vitally important to understanding biblical passages. If we read a passage that is descriptive as if it were prescriptive, we would be in danger of making some very wrong applications! For example, if we read a description of immoral

behaviour as if it were a prescription we would wrongly think we had biblical warrant for such behaviour.

3. CONCLUSION

Most New Testament letters end with final instructions, a final greeting and farewell. This is a very general structure, and not every epistle will strictly follow this pattern. Some epistles in the New Testament are more general in how they are written, and don't necessarily include a definite recipient, and so they seem to be more like 'tracts' which were meant to be distributed to many churches. However, knowing this general structure of epistles helps us to know what to expect when we're reading them. It also guards us from misinterpreting them because we know the function the different parts play.

For example, we would probably not make it such a big point of stress to pull out too much from the names of the writer or recipient (such as details like 'the church of God in Corinth' to mean that God's church was only in Corinth). We'd recognize that this information lets us know who it was from, and to whom it was originally written. So, it would tell us that it would perhaps be profitable to know a bit more about the history and context of the person/people who sent and received the letter in order to understand the whole letter.

And this leads us to the crucial point to note in reading the New Testament epistles: they are all what is called "*occasional documents*" - that is, they arose out of and were intended for a specific occasion in the first century church. A majority of the letters were written in response to something - sometimes a behaviour that needed correcting, a doctrinal error, or a misunderstanding needing further light. Understanding what was the occasion helps us put in context what the letter was meant to communicate.

This leads us to our next section in this workshop...

BEFORE MOVING ON: STOP – PRAY!

Prayer is the starting point of Bible Study. We need the Spirit to illuminate our hearts and minds to God's Word (Psa. 119:18; John 14:26 & 16:12-15; Eph. 1:17-18). You must press this point home with your group. Prayer is not some mystical guarantee that you will understand all mysteries of Scripture instantly, but it is admitting our dependence on God to give us His revelation of what Scripture truly means – and He helps us along in this as we mature in Christ. We need the Spirit to apply God's Word to our hearts and lives if we are to see true transformation.



3 BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE STUDY

Before we move on further, here are three big picture ideas for approaching interpreting the Bible. If we keep these 3 big concepts in mind, it will help us tremendously with rightly dividing the Word (2 Tim. 2:15).

They are simply:

1. Observation
2. Interpretation
3. Application

The correct flow of Bible study should be: **Observation -> Interpretation -> Application**

When many people approach the Bible, they jump from observation to application, skipping the essential step of interpretation. Or, they may try to interpret before making careful observations of the text. Or perhaps they observe and interpret correctly, but forget to apply the text and wind up with only head knowledge and no meaningful application to their own lives.

In observing what the Bible says, you discover, you look; in interpretation, you mull, you chew. Observation means depicting what is there, and interpretation is deciding what it means. The one is to explore, the other is to explain. Application takes into account what was learnt from observation and interpretation to then consider how to apply the truth taken out of Scripture to our own lives today. Application digests what you looked at and chewed over in the previous two steps.

We will be thinking of these 3 concepts in terms of questions we can ask as we study the Biblical text. These questions are: who, when, where, how, what and why.

We will be thinking of these 3 concepts in terms of questions we can ask.



1. OBSERVATION | WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

Primary take-away for this section: **CONTEXT IS KING**

A common danger people often do with the Bible is that they isolate a word or sentence or paragraph, and take it to mean what they think it means. Disregarding the context is one of the greatest problems in Bible interpretation. By disregarding the "total surroundings" of a Bible verse, we may completely misunderstand the verse. We need to take into consideration the sentences and paragraphs that precede and follow the verse and also to take into consideration the cultural setting in which the passage and even the entire book is written. Then consider how that fits into the Bible's message as a whole.

The context in which a given Scripture passage is written influences how that passage is to be understood.

Context includes several things:

- the verse(s) immediately before and after a passage
- the paragraph and book in which the verses occur
- the historical time period and cultural environment in which it was written
- the message of the entire Bible

It would be strange for someone to do with another book what some do with the Bible. Think of how weird it would be for me to try to read Shakespeare with my modern cultural understanding, or try to bake a cake but read the instructions out of order. It would clearly violate what the author's intention would have been and instead impose my own meaning on the text. Let us respect authors and keep the golden rule of reading, *"do unto authors as you would have them do unto you."* [John Piper, Think, 45]

Here are 2 categories of questions you can ask that will help you make good observations:

A. SATURATE

Read the passage and its context several times, perhaps even in various translations, to get yourself familiar with it.

The principle here is very simple. Read the whole letter through in one sitting or in multiple sittings close together. Read the passage and its context several times, perhaps even in various translations, to get yourself familiar with it.

Questions to ask:

- How familiar am I with this passage and the whole book it's in?
- Have I read the whole letter through in one sitting or close together in multiple sittings?
- How familiar am I with the Bible's message as a whole?

The goal here is just simply to saturate yourself with the content. This is a process that takes a lifetime of Bible reading - so don't think you need to do it all at once. However, it should be the ongoing goal of your daily Bible reading and study to become more and more saturated with God's Word. For the person just getting started reading the Bible, this is where having older, more mature believers around you will help as they have spent more time saturating themselves in the Bible and may be able to point out connections or parallels you might miss as a novice.

B. SETTING

The Bible is written in a time and land which is quite foreign to many of us, so understanding the setting helps us understand it rightly.

Every text has a birthplace, some better known than others, that tells us important things about it. The matters of authorship, date of the composition, and original readers frame the historical context of

a writing. When persons, places, and events are named in a passage, they point to a background that provides essential information for the interpreter. The Bible is written in a time and land which is quite foreign to much of us, so understanding the setting can help give us some valuable insight into understanding the text rightly.

Questions to ask:

- Who wrote this?
- Who was it written to?
- When and where was it written?

The goal here is to understand the setting in which the letter was composed. Knowing who wrote the text helps us understand that author's typical style or background from which they are writing. For example, Paul was well educated in Greek learning and was a Pharisee, an expert in the Jewish law, so his letters reflect his background. Peter was a Jewish fisherman, and what we learn of him from the Gospels and Acts informs us of his style of writing. Knowing who it was written to helps us understand the people who would be receiving the letter - were they Jews or Gentiles? Were the recipients one individual, a particular church or a group of churches in a letter meant to be circulated? When and where it was written helps us understand the historical context that the text was written in.

To answer all these questions, in addition to reading the Bible carefully, sometimes we may have to consult good Bible commentaries written by biblical scholars who can help us fill in the gaps of information about the context. We will later go through some suggestions for commentaries you can use to help you understand the contexts of biblical books.



2. INTERPRETATION | WHAT IS THE MEANING?

If we believe what we think the Bible is saying, and not what it is actually saying—it is not the Bible we are believing, but rather ourselves.

If we approach the Bible with preconceived notions which we are only looking for proof-texts to support, we are not submitting ourselves to the renewing of our minds through the Word but rather just looking for another way to approve our own will.

New Testament scholar D.A. Carson, says:

“Careful handling of the Bible will enable us to ‘hear’ it a little better. It is all too easy to read the traditional interpretations we have received from others into the text of Scripture. Then we may unwittingly transfer the authority of Scripture to our traditional interpretations and invest them with a false, even idolatrous, degree of certainty. Because traditions are reshaped as they are passed on, after a while we may drift far from God’s Word while still insisting all our theological opinions are ‘biblical’ and therefore true.” [D.A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies, 17]

It is therefore vitally important that we learn the principles of good Bible interpretation if we are to avoid simply reinforcing our errors we may have inherited from traditions and be continually

reformed and renewed in our minds through God's Word. Sometimes we can assume we already know what the text means and end up simply imposing our own thoughts on the text. So it is important to take a step back, distance ourselves from our preconceived interpretations and critically analyze them again.

Primary take-away for this section: MOVE FROM BIG TO SMALL

The basic rule for interpretation is to work from big to small. If we miss the big picture - the main point that the author meant to communicate, we've missed the whole thing. Focus on the big picture before you strain at the details. Start by seeking to interpret the big chunks of a text - structure - then move to the smaller units - syntax/sentences - then to the smallest units - semantics/ words.

Here are 3 categories of questions, from big to small, to ask after you have made observations:

A. PARAGRAPHS (STRUCTURE)

This has to do with major forms such as genre and smaller literary figures such as repetition, parallelism and chiasms.

A significant portion of meaning is carried by the written form that the author chose to use. This has to do with major forms such as law, narrative, poetry, wisdom, prophecy, parable, and epistle. It also includes smaller literary figures such as repetition, parallelism, and chiasm. These structural elements of the text can be intentionally used by the author to give attention to an important point or to frame the concept they are wishing to communicate. We should ask ourselves why a particular structure was used and how does it affect our reading of the text

Questions to ask:

- What is the genre of this passage?
- What words and themes are repeated?
- What structure can I see in the text? Are there parallel thoughts/concepts? Is it grouped or arranged a certain way? Why?
- Is this section telling me something descriptive or prescriptive? Is it telling me something about what has been done? Or telling me something to do?
(indicative vs. imperative)

B. SENTENCES (SYNTAX)

Syntax is the study of the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses to form sentences.

The foundation for understanding a text is that part of grammatical analysis called syntax: the study of the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses to form sentences.

Questions to ask:

- What does the grammar tell me?
- What is the main verb? Who is the subject? Is anything modifying the verb?
- What are the linking words? (conjunctions and prepositions - e.g. - and, or, but, then, therefore, so that, etc)
- How do the linking words connect the parts of the sentences (clauses)?

Identifying the main verb or clause can help frame the overall idea of a sentence or paragraph for us and make interpreting the rest of the elements in light of that main verb or clause easier. A simple tip for finding the main verb (as it may not be as obvious in English) is to ask "what is the intended outcome or take-away of the sentence?"

Linking words help us determine how the different parts of a sentence are related to each other. Sometimes this may not be readily apparent in English, so use of a good commentary will help you in this.

C. WORDS (SEMANTICS)

Semantics is the study of word meanings. A word's shade of meaning might be unclear, but the immediate context will usually make that meaning clear.

Semantics is the study of word meanings. This is where dictionaries and lexicons can come in handy to help us understand what an unfamiliar word means. A word's shade of meaning in a given text may depart from the lexicon's "range of senses," but the immediate context must make that meaning clear.

Questions to ask:

- What are the possible range of meanings for this word?
- What meaning makes the most sense in the context of this passage?
- Why does that meaning make most sense over other choices?

The task of determining the meaning of a word in the Bible sometimes carries the added difficulty that some may not have knowledge of the original languages (Hebrew & Greek) to determine for themselves what the original words mean. However, with the help of a good commentary - this too can be navigated!

For the majority of people, word studies can sometimes be helpful, but the best tool is context. If one wants to do word studies, they should read from a range of scholars of the original languages who would be more familiar with the idioms and workings of those languages to give proper insight. Watch out for those who would try to hang too much on just one word alone without proper warrant from its context and the entire testimony of scripture - remember the first rule: context is king!



WORD STUDIES DANGER: Watch out for those who would try to hang too much on just one word alone without proper warrant from its context - remember the first rule: CONTEXT IS KING!

TEACHER'S NOTES: Some Dangers of Word Studies to Avoid – you can decide if you need to go through this section on word study dangers with your group or not.

Sometimes the component parts of a compound word help reveal its meaning. This can be seen in the English word “hippopotamus,” which is derived from two Greek words—ἵππος [hippos] for horse and ποταμός [potamos] for river—and thus this animal is a kind of river horse. The Greek word ἐκκλησία [ekklēsia], usually translated “church,” comes from ek (“out of”) and kalein (“to call or summon”). Thus it came to refer in the New Testament to those who are called out from the unsaved to form a group of believers. Originally ekklēsia referred to an assembly of citizens in a Greek community who were summoned by a town crier for transacting public business.

The Greek word μακροθυμία [makrothymia], translated “patience” or “long-suffering,” consists of two Greek words makros, which means “long,” and thymia, which means “feeling.” In putting the two words together the letter s was dropped and the word means long-feeling, that is, having control of one’s feelings for a long period of time. “Patience” is a suitable translation.

Bad word studies

Sometimes a word in its development takes on an entirely different meaning from what it originally meant. The root derivation of a word is often an unreliable guide for the meaning of a word, because meanings change. For example, the word enthusiasm in its etymology means “to be possessed by a god.” Obviously the derived meaning today differs significantly from its root meaning, in which the two words in and god were put together. Also the English good-bye is a derivation of “God be with you,” and yet few people think of its original meaning when they tell someone “good-bye.”

The English word regard was derived from “guard,” but obviously regard and guard differ substantially in their meaning. The English word nice from the Latin nescius originally meant “simple” or “ignorant,” hardly related to its present-day meaning! As Cotterell and Turner have written, in the 13th century the word nice added the meaning of “foolish” or “stupid,” in the 14th century, “wanton,” and in the 15th, “coy” or “shy.” But each of these is now obsolete.

A Biblical word should not be explained on the basis of its English etymology. This is to read back into Scripture what is not there. For example the biblical word holy is not derived from the English word healthy. Etymologically the Hebrew and Greek words for holy do not mean being spiritually healthy. How many have heard that ἀγάπη [agapē] is different to φιλέω [phileō] for love? While this is perhaps well meaning—it is another example of a root word fallacy. There is a substantial overlap in the usage of these two words so that they are practically interchangeable. For example—in John 3:35—John uses the word agape to say that the Father loves the Son. In John 5:20, he repeats the thought, but instead uses phileo for the same meaning!

Here’s another funny example of a bad word-study application: “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7) – uses the word ἡλάρος [hilaros] for “cheerful” – however do we conclude that God loves a hilarious giver? Should we play laugh tracks while we collect tithes? Of course not! Yet some prosperity preachers misuse this to overemphasize that people should be overjoyed to give money to their ministry.

Word studies done correctly are invaluable! But beware of those who load words with too much baggage and make overly subtle distinctions.

Some common word study fallacies to look out for are:

Root fallacy – that every word has a deeper meaning bound up in its root shape or components.

Semantic anachronism – when a later use of a word is read back into its usage at an earlier time. For example, the Greek word for might or power is μ [dynamis] and is where our English word ‘dynamite’ is derived from. However, to read the English derivation back in to the ancient Greek text would be wrong (English didn’t even exist then!). Paul is not talking about the gospel being the dynamite of God unto salvation in Romans 1:16. We must understand what the word means in the time of the author to understand the meaning. Words in any language have a tendency to shift meanings over time.

Semantic obsolescence – this is the reverse of anachronism. Instead, the interpreter puts an old meaning that the word used to have on its later use in the text, but is no longer found within the word at that time.

Verbal parallelomania – where someone uses “parallels” of questionable worth. While it is sometimes true, not every verbal parallel in a body of literature means that there is a conceptual link or dependency.

Expanding or constricting a word’s semantic range – every word has a range of possible translated meanings. If we try to expand a word to every single possible meaning it could possibly be, or conversely try to restrict it too much to only one possible meaning without warrant from the word’s context in the thought being expressed, we may miss the point. Words have meaning in their context. So, we must first look at the context (big picture) to figure out which translated meaning or range of meanings is appropriate. This is more of a challenge translators from the original language will face though.

See D.A. Carson’s excellent little book “Exegetical Fallacies” for more examples of bad word studies.



3. APPLICATION | HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

After understanding what the passage meant to the original author and recipients, what does it mean for us today - how does God’s Word apply to our heart & life?

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.

(Luke 10:27)

PRIMARY TAKE-AWAY FOR THIS SECTION: DON’T BE UNMOVED BY GOD’S WORD.

After making observations by saturating ourselves with the material and noting the setting, then seeking to interpret by moving from big to small (structure, syntax, semantics), we now move to application.

There are 2 final steps for us to apply our study of scripture to our own lives.

A. SUMMARIZE

Review all that a passage has said and gathers it up to see how it fits together.

This is a review of all that a passage has said and gathers them up into a meaningful whole. Having dealt with various details in the biblical text, good bible study goes on to ask how these findings fit together, and how they impact us.

Questions to ask:

- What main point(s) has the text made?
- What is the overall thrust—the persuasive logic—in this passage?
- What is the overall tone of the passage? Rebuke? Encouragement?
- Is this passage descriptive or prescriptive? Is it describing something or prescribing something?

It is a helpful practice then, when studying a Biblical passage to write your own summary in your own words of what the main points are. This will help you to organize the thoughts and concepts in your own mind and also provide a nice summary outline for what you have read. Keep this as a reminder of what God has shown to you through your study.

B. SIGNIFICANCE

Remember: “Scripture is its own best interpreter.”

Find out what the passage means in light of all of Scripture.

Good bible study asks how the various particulars of the biblical text are understood as a unified message. The axiom “Scripture is its own best interpreter” reflects the fact that the Bible ultimately has One Author - the Holy Spirit - and thus, its message as a whole is entirely consistent. Whether a theology of Paul, the Psalms, or the Gospels, a similar procedure is used: Scripture interpreting Scripture in order to find a coherent message. God does not contradict Himself. After you figure out what does this scripture mean in its context in the paragraph, figure out what it means in that book, then look at what it means in light of all of scripture.

Questions to ask:

- What does this passage teach about ourselves, our relationships with others, and God?
- What does this passage tell me to believe?
- What does this passage tell me to do?
- Based on what it meant in its original context, what principle or truth can we apply to ourselves today?
- What theological concept(s) is taught in this passage? (e.g. justification, sanctification, atonement, God's sovereignty, etc.)




This step helps us to continually be adding to our overall understanding of the Bible's message from beginning to end. As you work your way through studying various books of the Bible, you'll be amazed how, over time, you end up building a robust systematic theology and how well you are prepared to give an answer for the hope in you (1 Peter 3:15-16).

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BIBLE STUDY METHOD CHEAT SHEET

The correct flow of Bible Study is from **OBSERVATION** to **INTERPRETATION** to **APPLICATION**.

STOP & PRAY! PRAYER IS THE STARTING POINT FOR BIBLE STUDY

 <p>OBSERVATION</p>	<p>1. SATURATE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How familiar am I with this passage and the whole book it's in? • Have I read the whole letter through in one sitting or close together in multiple sittings? • How familiar am I with the Bible's message as a whole?
	<p>2. SETTING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who wrote this? • Who was it written to? • When and where was it written?
 <p>INTERPRETATION</p>	<p>3. STRUCTURE (PARAGRAPHS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the genre of this passage? • What words and themes are repeated? • What structure can I see in the text? • Are there parallel thoughts/concepts? Is it grouped or arranged a certain way? Why?
	<p>4. SYNTAX (SENTENCES)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the grammar tell me? • What is the main verb? Who is the subject? • Is anything modifying the verb? • How do the linking words connect the parts of the sentences (clauses)?
	<p>5. SEMANTICS (WORDS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the possible range of meanings for this word? • What meaning makes the most sense in the context of this passage? • Why does that meaning make most sense?
 <p>APPLICATION</p>	<p>6. SUMMARIZE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What main point(s) has the text made? • What is the overall thrust—the persuasive logic—in this passage? • What is the overall tone of the passage? • Is this passage describing or prescribing something?
	<p>7. SIGNIFICANCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this passage teach about ourselves, our relationships with others, and God? • What does this passage tell me to believe? • What does this passage tell me to do? • What principle or truth can we apply to today? • What theological concept(s) is taught in this passage?



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BIBLE STUDY TOOLS

READING THE BIBLE

- Knowing Scripture (RC Sproul)
- How to Read the Bible Book by Book
- How to Understand and Apply the OT
- Taking God at His Word (DeYoung)
- Creature of the Word (Matt Chandler)
- How to Understand and Apply the NT

STUDY BIBLES

Study Bibles are a Bible Translation printed with notes alongside (or in footnotes) with the Scripture that helps give some depth or explanations to understand the text. They usually also include cross-references, maps, timelines, charts and illustrations to help the reader understand the biblical world better.

Here are a few recommended Study Bibles:

- ESV Study Bible
- Reformation Study Bible
- ESV Archaeology Study Bible
- ESV Systematic Theology Study Bible
- ESV Story of Redemption Bible

COMMENTARIES

Commentaries are an invaluable resource for Bible study. They help to explain the meaning of passages of Scripture and how it fits together with the Bible. They often help with understanding the original languages and, historical and cultural background of the biblical texts.

There are 3 types of commentaries:

SINGLE-VOLUME COMMENTARIES

- Believer's Bible Commentary (Nelson)
- The New Bible Commentary (IVP)

COMMENTARY SETS

- The Pillar New Testament Commentary
- The Expositor's Bible Commentary
- The New International Commentary (NICOT & NICNT)

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTARY SERIES

These are written by individual scholars on a single book of the Bible. They are best for the most in-depth, scholarly material on a particular book. Check out the "Top Commentaries Lists" at Challies.com or Ligonier.org for great recommendations!

OTHER TOOLS

Some other useful tools are: Concordances, Bible Dictionaries, Bible Atlases and New Testament/Old Testament Introductions, Bible Book Devotionals.

BIBLE SOFTWARE

- [LOGOS Bible Software](#)
- [BibleWorks](#)
- [Accordance Bible Software](#)
- [OliveTree Bible Reader](#)

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Bible.org
- BibleHub.com
- The Bible Project
- GotQuestions.org
- Ligonier.org/learn
- DesiringGod.org/labs
- Crosswalk.com
- WhiteHorseInn.org