

AIDS TO BIBLE STUDY

Texts: 2 Tim. 4:13; 1 Tim. 4:13

INTRO: The Christian is admonished to be able to give an answer to those who ask him of his reason for hope, 1 Pet. 3:15. Paul's statement to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:2 indicates that faithful Christians are to equip themselves to teach others. Heb. 5:12 says that this is something we ought to be able to do after we have been Christians for a length of time.

With these passages in mind, we set ourselves to consider some Bible helps that will aid us in doing what God has commanded of us. Of course a word of warning is in order: our study must be 1st & fore-most of the Scriptures themselves. If other writings are of help in that study, so be it, but keep in mind that there is a world of difference be-tween God's inspired word & the uninspired human helps that may assist us in our study of that word.

One more thing. I'm not trying to sell books. If you want to purchase any book I mention, I am willing to order it for you, or I can give you a toll free number where you can order it, and they will bill you for it. My only interest is in helping you select helps that will really help in your Bible study. Books are not cheap, but good books are good tools, and like any good tool, worth what they cost. Some books are worse than worthless, therefore, I hope to help guide you toward some that will be of value in your study and not waste the money you spend on them.

I. THERE ARE SEVERAL AIDS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED.

A. The English translation. If we had to read & understand the Bible in its original Hebrew & Greek languages, we would be severely "out of luck." The English translation is an aid to our understanding God's will. The translators were NOT inspired men.

B. Chapter & verse divisions. Only the Psalms were divided into "chapters." All other divisions are human aids. They are extremely helpful in finding certain statements, but are sometimes abused by those who expect to find the entire plan of salvation in one verse, or who think that the subject matter changes automatically with a change of "chapters." Such is frequently not the case.

II. ONE AID THAT IS VERY USEFUL IS A GOOD REFERENCE BIBLE IN A STANDARD TRANSLATION.

- A. Standard translations include KJV, NKJB, ASV, NASB. Perhaps RSV, NRSV, of lesser value, NIV.
- B. There are a number of good reference editions: Dickson, Thompson, World, Imperial. NOT SCOFIELD!!!
- C. It must be remembered that the notes & references in a good reference Bible are selected by uninspired men but at least, they are Bible verses.

III. EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE A GOOD CONCORDANCE. There is no substitute short of memorizing...

- A. For many students, Crudens Complete Concordance is good and easy to use. Cost, \$16.
- B. The American Bible Society has a hard cover concordance that is extremely economical. Not quite as good as Crudens, but well worth the money & probably sufficient for the average student.
- C. For those who are interested in researching the Greek & Hebrew roots, the best, most usable concordance is Strong's, \$30. Young's is good, but Strong's is more usable.

NOTE: I doubt that I've ever worked up a sermon outline without consulting Cruden's Complete Concordance.

IV. AS THE CHRISTIAN DEVELOPS HIS STUDY HABITS, HE WILL FIND A FEW WORD STUDY TOOLS TO BE OF MUCH HELP.

- A. A good English dictionary. I recommend Oxford American Dict. (\$13). Be aware that an English dict. defines PRESENT ENGLISH usage, & will not necessarily accurately define how a word was used in the Bible,

esp. if we use the old KJV or ASV.

- B. For those who are interested in a reference work that will help them understand original Greek & Hebrew words without having to know the Greek or Hebrew alphabet, W.E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of the Old & New Testament is an excellent tool. It costs about \$20..

V. EVERY CHRISTIAN WOULD FIND A GOOD BIBLE DICTIONARY USEFUL IN HIS STUDY. This is not as important a tool as the others that have been mentioned, but it can be very useful.

- A. Contrary to its name, a Bible dictionary usually does not define words. Technically, it is more like an encyclopedia describing persons, places, etc. There is little in the average Bible dictionary that a person could not eventually find by using his Bible & a good concordance, but the Bible dictionary will help him locate it in much less time.

- B. Good Bible dictionaries include Smith's (\$10), Nelson's (35), Hastings (15).

--Harper's is not very good.

VI. FINALLY, A GOOD COMMENTARY, PROPERLY USED, CAN BE A VALUABLE STUDY AID.

- A. As always, a word of warning should be heeded. Always remember that the commentator is uninspired & his opinions are no better than the Scriptural arguments he uses to sustain them. Also remember, however, that he has studied for many years, may have some knowledge of the original languages, has access to many study tools you do not have, etc. But he is still uninspired.

- B. Most commentaries are either too complicated & involved, or too denominationally slanted & watered down to be of much value to the average Christian. There are several good commentaries, but I strongly recommend

that (if you're new at this) before you shell out money for a commentary, you seek the advice of one or more sound, mature Christians .

- C. I recommend that every family have one or more copies of B.W. Johnson's People's N.T. With Notes. It contains the KJV, RV of 1885, footnotes as in a good reference Bible plus Johnson's comments, which usually are both accurate & understandable. His notes on Revelation leave much to be desired, but otherwise his book is very usable. \$20, & well worth it.
- D. There are several other commentaries that are of value to the average reader, including Zerr's *(2 vol. O.T., \$24 each; 1 vol. N.T., \$24). The entire set is \$70. Barnes is pretty good (N.T. in one volume, \$50),
- E. I, personally would not be without a Harmony of the Gospels. A.T. Robertson (\$21), I also recommend A Harmony of the Life of Paul by Frank Goodwin (\$10) and A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles by William Crockett (\$12).

CONCLUSION: Again, let me underscore that it is not my purpose to sell books. I hope simply to stir your interest in a further study of God's word. If you will invest a little of your coffee/coke/cigarette/chewing gum money into Bible study tools & learn to use them, you will be greatly blessed, & you will thank me for these helpful suggestions. The order in which I suggest you acquire these study helps:

1. A good concordance. Learn to use it. There is no substitute short of memorizing the whole Bible.
2. B.W. Johnson's notes. This will suffice for a reference Bible as far as the N.T. is concerned & will supply 2 good translations, plus his notes.
3. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old & N.T. Words.
4. A commentary that will correspond with what we are currently studying. Acts, McGarvey* (\$13.50); Harmony of Sam., Kings, Chron. by

Crockett (\$12). Romans, Whiteside* (\$12);
Turner* (\$7). :Lard* (\$12)

6. A good Bible dictionary.

7. When your present Bible wears out--surely, you will
wear it out--replace it with a good reference
Bible in a standard translation. \$20 up, up, up.

By the time you have acquired these study aids & learned to
use them properly, you will have a good working knowledge of how
to study, & will be in a much better condition to evaluate for yourself
what other Bible study tools you want to purchase & use.

La Porte, TX, June 17, 1979

La Porte, TX, April 10, 1983

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, September 10, 1995

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, January 2, 2000