



10

Book of Books

Lesson Ten: Bible Study Books
Complete and Keep



A General Introduction to the Bible

THIS BOOK [the Bible] contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand object, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibilities, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

~Author Unknown

Course: The Book of Books

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These lessons come from the kindness and diligence of those at Middletown Bible Church in Connecticut. The lessons are designed to be used with a King James Version of the Bible.

LESSON 10

BOOKS THAT HELP IN STUDYING THE BIBLE

Today the Lord has given us an abundance of excellent books that help us to study and understand the life-changing truths of the Bible. God has given us so much; it is 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 for using 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!

Always go first to the Word of God before you look at any other book. 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* by Merrill F. Unger

2. ENGLISH DICTIONARY

This is one of the most important tools for a Bible student. 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” (verse 6), “infirmity” (verse 11), “indignation” (verse 14), “hypocrite” (verse 15), “adversaries” (verse 17), “iniquity” (verse 27), “desolate” (verse 35). Do you know what all these words mean? If not, you need a dictionary!

Recommended:

- For Hebrew – *Old Testament Word Studies* by William Wilson
- For Greek – *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine

The Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, therefore it is sometimes helpful to have a dictionary that defines the original Hebrew and Greek words. Both of the above volumes are easy to use, even for those with no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew.

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 two ways in which a concordance can be of help to a Bible student:

- a. 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 that says, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” By using a concordance, you could find where that 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 that occur very frequently.
- b. A concordance helps in studying a word. Suppose you wanted to study the word “faith.” With a concordance, you could simply look up the word and find a list of all the places it is found in the Bible. You could then turn to each of these verses and see what you can learn about faith.

Many Bibles contain a concordance in the back, although they are not complete concordances. A complete concordance is a very large book, and it contains a list of every word in the Bible (even the common words) and every verse where those words are found.

Recommended:

- Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance by James Strong
- For Bible students who want to do word studies in the original language, see The Englishman’s Greek Concordance by George V. Wigram.

4. BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Here at the Plowman’s Academy, we use the King James Version for the lessons. It is advantageous that we all use the same version so that all students are filling in the blanks and reading from the same version. However, for personal Bible study, when studying a portion of Scripture, it is sometimes helpful to read the same passage in another reliable version.



Following are some examples of how 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 Savior, 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) – “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 withholds 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 that may be useful for comparison are as follows: The English Standard Version (ESV), New American Standard Version (NASV), and The New King James Version (NKJV). It is best to avoid paraphrased versions. The student should remember, however, that even though we have some very accurate versions, no translation is perfect. It is the original manuscripts (original autographs) that are God-breathed and inerrant.

5. STUDY OR REFERENCE BIBLE

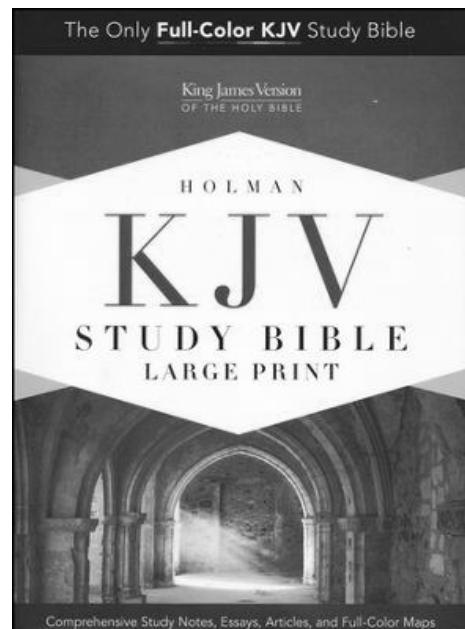
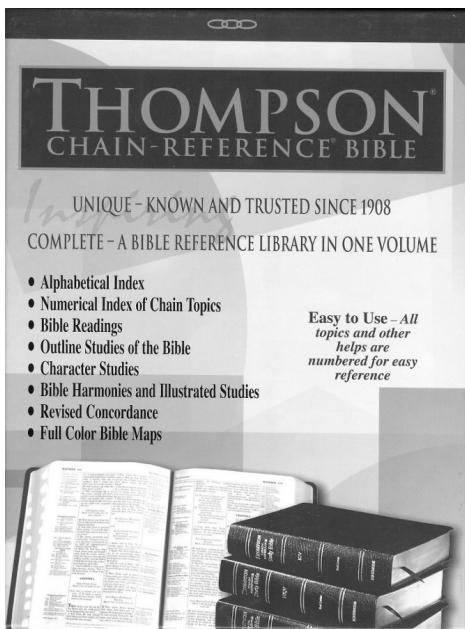
Some editions of the Bible are especially prepared for the serious Bible student. A good study Bible contains the following helpful features:

- a. 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);
- b. An introduction to each book of the Bible (giving the author, date, theme, purpose for writing, etc.);
- c. Margin notes throughout the Bible that define words, explain difficult passages, provide necessary background information, and whatever else is needed to make the Bible more understandable;
- d. A partial concordance; and
- e. A set of Bible maps.

Recommended:

- **The Open Bible** published by Thomas Nelson
- **Holman KJV Study Bible** published by Holman Bible Publishers
- **Thompson Chain Reference Bible** edited by Frank Charles Thompson, Ph.D.

The Thompson Chain Reference study Bible contains all the above features. It also has a unique chain reference system that your teacher or pastor can explain to you. It should be noted that not all study Bibles are recommended. They reflect the views of the person who wrote the notes, and these views may or may not be true to the Bible. Even good study Bibles may have certain notes that are not dependable. 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 correct. When we read anything written by uninspired men, regardless of how sincere or godly they may be, we must search the Scriptures 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 that can be found in a good dictionary of the Bible:

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

7. CHRONOLOGY CHARTS

Chronology assigns events to 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 chronology charts that have been especially prepared for Bible students.

Recommended:

- *Chart of Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges* by John C. Whitcomb
- *Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets* by John C. Whitcomb
- *New Testament Chronological Chart* by James L. Boyer

8. ATLAS

In Lesson 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 that are sufficient for most purposes.

Recommended:

- *Baker's Bible Atlas* by Charles F. Pfeiffer

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 doctrines on the following: 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:

- Systematic Theology by Lewis Sperry Chafer (highly recommended; a detailed study of all the major doctrines in the Bible)
- Major Bible Themes by Lewis S. Chafer
- The Mackintosh Treasury by C. H. Mackintosh

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* 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 that would discuss every verse in all four chapters of the epistle.

Recommended:

- *Believer's Bible Commentary* by William MacDonald (a one-volume commentary on the entire Bible)
- *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* by Matthew Henry (This is the classic commentary on the entire Bible, but 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 that 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 Lesson 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 that 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, 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.

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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