

Lesson 3 Notes – 01/22/2008

OVERVIEW OF BIBLE REFERENCE WORKS:

BIBLES

1. Various translations. Should always have access to more than one to learn how the Hebrew and Greek scholars believe the original text should be translated.
2. Text Bibles – essentially just the biblical text with little or no study helps or references
3. Reference Bible – cross references to other passages in center column, outer column, or after each verse; perhaps an abbreviated concordance and maps in back.
4. Study Bible – like Reference Bible plus book introductions, notes and comments at the bottom of each page, and added helps in the back. Examples: NIV Study Bible, Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible.
5. Focuses more on helps designed for one certain group of people or one type of subject. Examples: Archeology Study Bible, Women’s Devotional Bible, Recovery Bible.
6. Wide-Margin Bible – some of above study helps plus wider margins made for the Bible student to make handwritten notes.

How to Evaluate Reference Works

1. *Date of Copyright – particularly important in Bible background books, Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. New discoveries often enrich and even change our knowledge. Older works would not be able to reflect new discoveries.*
2. *Scholarship – look at the names, titles and background of those listed as author(s) or editor(s). What are their qualifications? Multiple authors/editors may be preferable to a single author or editor because of a wider knowledge and expertise. Get recommendations.*
3. *Perspective or Bias – Can you determine if the author believes in the inspiration of Scripture? What religious affiliation does he/she have? Is the school, organization, or church considered very liberal, conservative, or moderate on fundamental topics such as inspiration, the canon of Scripture, deity of Christ, etc.?*
4. *Usefulness – can you use the reference work easily and understand how its contents apply to your study needs?*

BIBLE DICTIONARIES & ENCYCLOPEDIAS

1. Look of detailed, up-to-date (prefer copyright no more than 20 years old), easily understand material. Beware of presentations of multiple authorship of Books of Moses, the “Q Theory” of the Gospels, etc.
2. Examples of overall good books: *New Bible Dictionary, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary.*

BIBLE BACKGROUND BOOKS

1. While dictionaries (above) focus on things specifically mentioned in the biblical text (people, places, events, objects, topics), Bible background books focus more on the general historical, cultural, and geographical background. They often draw from other sources of information like archeology, world history and culture, natural history, ancient documentary

sources, and geography for their information, and help fill in information we would not otherwise have access to.

2. Examples might include ancient nations and empires, plants and animals of biblical lands, and marriage and funeral customs of the Near East in ancient times. This would also include Bible atlases and maps.

LANGUAGE STUDIES

1. These fall into a number of categories for Bible students like us. They help us discover and understand the underlying Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek words and literary structure from which our English translations were made.
2. ***Exhaustive English Concordances*** list every occurrence of every English word in the Bible. Probably every major translation has an accompanying exhaustive concordance. You should prefer the one for the translation you use. Besides listing the English word and each reference, most also use a numbering system to indicate the Hebrew or Greek word used. This is important because one word in Hebrew or Greek may be translated in different passages by different English words.
3. ***Exhaustive Hebrew and Greek Concordances*** list every occurrence of the Hebrew or Greek words. This is important because a Hebrew or Greek word may be translated by more than one English word, depending on the context and Bible version.
4. ***Interlinear Bibles*** give both the original language and an English translation in alternate lines. Some also will give the Strong's Number.
5. ***Expository Dictionaries and Lexicons*** are the word definition dictionaries for Bible research. Lexicons are usually more detailed and scholarly in their presentation, while expository dictionaries are written more for the person who does not know Greek or Hebrew.

OTHER REFERENCE WORKS

With time you will want to add other reference sources to your library which will have special value. Examples might be books focusing on Bible history, charts and maps for teaching, and books on specialized aspects of the original languages such as figures of speech or grammar.

Effective Bible Study

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