

Use of Study Aids

2 Timothy 2:15 “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”

The use of study aids can help the Bible student gain a better understanding of God’s word. There are no scriptural requirements that aids be used and we must always be careful when using material written by men, as they are fallible. Fortunately, there are many scholars who have produced a myriad of materials that can help us to properly divide the word of truth. In this lesson, we will survey the different types of aids that can be used and examine how they can assist our daily study.

Commentary

A simple definition of a commentary is “a series of comments, explanations, or annotations.” In this case, these would be by a scholar regarding the Bible. Over the course of time, there have been hundreds if not thousands of commentaries written by scholars from all walks of life. At a base level, these scholars are conveying their understanding of scripture and in the process of doing so, they often expound on the culture, people and life during the time the bible was written. As with all other study aids, we must be conscious that their comments and explanations are not inspired and they are often influenced by their religious background. For instance, a commentator who believes in the principles of Calvinism will often translate passages with those principles in mind and therefore be in error in their translation. As a result, we must always compare what they believe with God’s word to make sure it is accurate.

Concordance

A concordance allows the Bible student to locate all of the occurrences of different words that are used in the Bible. Unlike a dictionary, the concordance simply lists the passages of scripture where the word is used. Some concordances include comments from the author, which may not be consistent with scripture, so care must be taken. There are also “exhaustive” concordances that will give additional items like the language, the transliteration, a reference number to show where else the same Greek or Hebrew word is used, and even the total number of times a particular word is used in scripture.

Dictionary

A Bible dictionary has some similarities to a normal dictionary in that it provides definitions for different words used in scripture. Expository Bible dictionaries go beyond simple definitions and give more comprehensive definitions of all Hebrew and Greek words used in the Bible. In addition, they specify which words are nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc. and list a few passages where the words are used. There are also opinions from the authors on the usage and definition of words so we must make sure what they state is consistent with scripture.

Bible Atlas

A Bible atlas normally contains maps, pictures, geographic information, archeological information, historical information, and other relevant facts. This study aid can help the Bible student to gain a better understanding of the culture, region, people, and other facts, to give a better perspective of what is taught in scripture.

Interlinear

An interlinear provides a literal rendering of the scriptures in the original Greek text. The Bible student will be able to see the Greek words in the same order they were listed in the manuscripts, like the Textus Receptus and the English word is normally listed right below the Greek word. This can help the student to see which Greek word was used for a given passage of scripture and the English equivalent. Also, the interlinear will normally list the passages from the King James Version in the margins to allow a complete comparison.

Bible Translations

Referencing different translations of the Bible can be very helpful as a study aid. Translators used many sources of manuscripts when they were translating and also used wording that was relevant for the intended audience. As a result, the way scriptures were worded and the sentences were structured varied from translation to translation. When comparing scriptures across multiples translations, it helps the Bible student to gain a better understanding of what was being said and taught.

There are other sources that were not listed here such as handbooks, historical writings, encyclopedias, etc. These aids can also have value as long as the Bible student compares them to the scriptures to ensure accuracy.

For the following exercises, please consult the study aids listed above. If you do not have access to some of these aids, please go to www.biblestudytools.com where you can use them for free.

1. Consult two commentaries for an explanation of the statement “be baptized” in Acts 2:38 and summarize their beliefs. Is it consistent with scripture? _____

2. Using a concordance, list all of the passages where the word “justified” can be found? _____

3. Using an expository dictionary, list the different definitions for the word “love” and at least one passage where each usage can be found. _____

4. Consult a Bible atlas and list the locations of Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives. _____

5. Compare Hebrews 11:6 in the NKJV, RSV and ESV translations and document the main differences. Does it change the meaning of the scripture? _____

6. Using an expository dictionary, list the different Hebrew words for “Lord” and their meanings. _____

7. Consult a Bible Atlas and list three different facts you learned that you did not know before.

Classroom Exercises

1. If you wanted to prove that baptism means immersion, what study aid(s) would you use and why?

2. Complete a word study on the word “peace” and document not only the different meanings but also scriptures for each definition and the application for us today.

Definitions with Scripture

Application for Today

3. What resources would you use to find the names the seven churches of Asia and to locate their geographic location? Complete these exercises _____

4. Look at the following passages in three different translations. Document how they differ and what you learn from the renderings.

2 Peter 1:5 _____

Psalms 51:5 (use the NIV for one of the translations) _____

Acts 12:4 (use the KJV for one of the translations) _____

5. What study aids would you use to gain a better understanding of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35? Use those resources and document the meaning. What impression might someone get by taking the verse at face value? _____

6. List a noun and verb from the Greek for the following words and document the different meanings:

Hope

Noun: _____
Verb: _____

Instruct

Noun: _____
Verb: _____