

Tools: A Summary of References (J. Hansen)

One common thread among many fine craftsmen is that they have a number of tools at their disposal. In fact, most would have several variations of the same item (whether it be hammers, chisels, etc.) just in case one wouldn't do the job as well as another. The same applies to the student of the Bible. If we want to be skillful in our interpretation of the Bible, we will have to be comfortable using the many "tools" that are at our disposal.

We must realize, though, that not every tool will help us get the job done. A woodworker would never use a screwdriver to hammer in a nail. And although a sledgehammer may look like it is closer to what is needed, that still won't work effectively.

So too it is with good reference materials; if I want to see a map of what Judea looked like in the time of Christ, I probably don't need to use a commentary. However, if I want to know the cultural background of a certain passage I am struggling to understand, some commentaries might be helpful. Listed are the reference materials that will be most beneficial to your study of the Word of God. Some of this material is also available on computer software. The references are grouped as:

Bible Dictionaries	Bible Manners and Customs	Bible Difficulties
Bible Commentaries	Study Bibles	Bible Hermeneutics

About James Hansen

I was born and raised in San Diego, California. My parents put me in a Christian elementary school for educational reasons, and it was there in my first year that I placed my faith in Christ.

Jack Eckdom, my fourth grade teacher, explained the Gospel to me. I understood what sin was (what rambunctious child doesn't?) and how Jesus is the One Who paid the price for those sins. The offer had been made, and I warmly embraced it. Grace seems to be so easily understood by children, doesn't it?

My newfound love for the Lord lasted with me through my early teenage years. However, when I entered my second year of high school, I walked away from the Lord. It wasn't a big blowout of faith, more like a slow erosion of passion. And yet, the Lord was faithful to pursue me back into fellowship with Him.

A traveling evangelist spoke at our high school during my senior year, and I have never been the same since. It was then that I renewed my love for prayer, for going to church, and for reading the Bible. It was also during my late teenage years that I felt the Lord was calling me into vocational Christian service. Little did I realize that my recommitment to Christ would lead me to be a pastor and a teacher at a Bible college.

Some people's spiritual journeys keep you on the edge of your seat. Mine, however, hasn't had a lot of fireworks; but it doesn't make my faith any less meaningful or significant. Not only do I remember the simple trust I had when I first became a Christian, I try to embody that same faith today as an adult. In other words, though I was saved by grace (Eph.2:8-9), I'm to live by that grace as well.

"May it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal.6:14)

James Hansen is a pastor at Antioch Bible Church, located in Redmond, Washington. He has served on staff since 1995, and teaches in the areas of theology, hermeneutics and the arts. He is currently the Academic Dean of Antioch Bible Church's Bible College, the imago Dei institute-Cascade (iDi-Cascade).

This educational ministry of Antioch Bible Church that offers college level courses to adults wishing to deepen their Christian education, experience and worldview. Through classes in theology, Biblical studies, the arts, church history and life integration, students are challenged to gain a well-rounded view of their Creator and His work in our current culture. (www.abchurch.org)

For Those Who Desire More

For those who desire more, I would highly recommend the following book which will help you develop your reference library and skills to research various biblical topics:

Introduction to Theological Research by Cyril Barber

The reference books that I recommend in the following pages are categorized as **basic**, **intermediate**, and **advanced**.

The preface of each book has been copied for you to help you evaluate its appropriateness in your library.

The recommendations are ones found in the books themselves. Some books did not have a forward / preface or recommendation.

Some books are out of print but are listed in the event that you come across a used copy.

If a person only had limited dollars to spend on biblical resources, I would encourage them to purchase the following items first:

Bible Dictionary,

Bible Language Helps,

Bible Commentary

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/intro2.aspx

====

What is this reference: Bible Dictionaries?

In contrast to traditional dictionaries where words are defined, Bible dictionaries also include information such as the background of people, places, and books of the Bible.

They are full of maps, charts, pictures, cultural insights and basic language helps (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek). They are designed to provide the student with specific information on a wide variety of Biblical subjects.

The more current the Bible Dictionary, the more likely it will contain the more current findings in archeology and anthropology.

Many scholars consider this as the first reference that all students of the Bible must have. Here are some examples:

Dictionary of Biblical Imagery. Longman III, T., Ryken, L., and Wilhoit, J. C., eds., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998. (Intermediate)

Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels. Green, J., McKnight, S., and Marshall, I. H., eds., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992. (Intermediate)

Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments. Martin, R. P. and Davids, P. H., eds., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993. (Intermediate)

Dictionary of Paul and His Letters. Hawthorne, G., Martin, R., and Reid, D., eds., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993. (Intermediate)

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Youngblood, R. F., ed., Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995. (Basic)

The New Bible Dictionary, 3rd ed. Marshall, I. H., Millard, A.R., Packer, J.I. and Wiseman, D.J., eds., Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1996. (Basic / Intermediate)

What is this reference: Bible Dictionaries? (continues)

The New International Dictionary of the Bible, 5 vol. Tenney, M., Douglas, J. D., ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1987. (Basic)

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Unger, M., Chicago: Moody Press, 1994. (Basic)

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, 5 vol. Tenney, M., ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1990. (Basic)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/dictionaries.aspx

====

What is this reference: Bible Manners and Customs?

These reference books can provide a wealth of information about the customs and lifestyles of those in Biblical times. They can function as Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias, yet may have more cultural information than those reference tools do. Numerous photos and illustrations further enhance one's understanding of the biblical period and clarify the meaning of Hebrew poetry and figures of speech.

Included here in this section are **Bible atlases**, which provide important geographical context to the biblical passage or event.

Archaeology and the New Testament. McRay, J., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991. (Basic / Intermediate)

Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey. Elwell, W. and Yarbrough, R., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. (Intermediate / Advanced)

Exploring the New Testament World. Bell Jr, A. A., Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998. (Basic / Intermediate)

The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament. Keener, C., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993. (Basic)

Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. Jeremias, J., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977. (Basic / Intermediate)

The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. Edersheim, A., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980. (Basic / Intermediate)

Ludwig's Handbook of New Testament Rulers and Cities. Ludwig, C., Denver: Accent Books, 1984. (Basic)

Ludwig's Handbook of Old Testament Rulers and Cities. Ludwig, C., Denver: Accent Books, 1986. (Basic)

The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times. Gower, R. and Wight, F., Chicago: Moody Press, 1994. (Basic)

The New Testament World - Insights from Cultural Anthropology. Malina, B., Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. (Intermediate)

The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment. Livingston, G. H., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974. (Basic / Intermediate)

Sketches of Jewish Social Life. Edersheim, Alfred., Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994. (Basic / Intermediate)

The Temple Its Ministry and Services. Edersheim, A., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958. (Basic)

What is this reference: Bible Manners and Customs? (continues)

Atlas

Baker's Concise Bible Atlas. Laney, J. C., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988. (Intermediate)

The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands. Beitzel, B. J., Chicago: Moody Press, 1985. (Basic)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/manners.aspx

====

What is this reference: Bible Language Helps?

There are a number of works out on the market now that allow those with no background in Hebrew or Greek to be able to have a basic understanding of those language's most common words. There are 4 types of references that can help you understand the meaning of the original language: a) Word Studies, b) Grammars and Syntax, c) Lexicons, and d) Concordances.

Word Studies are references focused on very deep studies of significant words in the Bible; they examine the origin and morphology of a word. By understanding how the context or use of a word changes over time, you could understand the different meanings and subtle nuances of a word.

Grammars and Syntax focus primarily on sentence structure and arrangement. What was the verb form? Was the noun the object, subject of a verb or an object of a preposition or even an appositive? If you have a tough time in English, you'll need a grammarian for Hebrew or Greek!

Lexicons categorize how words are used in relation to each other and clarify their contextual meaning. Together with Word Study references, they provide a thorough insight into the meaning of the words found in the Ancient Text.

A **Concordance** is a collection of the most common words found in the Old and New Testaments. An exhaustive concordance will list every word found in Scripture and all of their occurrences, whereas those that are in the back of Bibles will not. By using a numbering system, some concordances will identify the actual Hebrew or Greek word that has been translated into English. For instance, though there are three different Greek words used in the New Testament for love (each having its own nuance), our English texts translate them all the same way. A good concordance will show those distinctions. The concordance you choose will have to match up with the Bible version you study from (most major versions have concordances available).

Old Testament

The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon. Davidson, B., Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981. (Intermediate, Lexicon)

The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament. Wigram, G., Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996. (Intermediate, Concordance, Word Studies)

Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the OT. Unger, M. F., White Jr., W., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1980. (Intermediate, Lexicon)

The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Aramaic and English Lexicon. Brown, F., Driver, R., Briggs, C., Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999. (Advanced, Word Studies, Lexicon)

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Harris, R. L.; Archer, G. L.; and Waltke, B. K., Chicago: Moody Press, 1980. (Intermediate / Advanced, Word Studies)

What is this reference: Bible Language Helps? (continues)

New Testament

The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised. Edited by Moulton, H., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1978. (Intermediate, Lexicon)

Analytical Greek New Testament. Friberg, B. and Friberg, T., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1981. (Basic / Intermediate, Grammar / Syntax)

Exegetical Fallacies, 2nd ed. Carson, D.A., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996. (Advanced, Word Studies)

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Bauer, W., Arndt, W., and Gingrich, F. W., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979, 2000. (Advanced, Lexicon, Word Studies)

An Index to the Revised Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon. Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., edited by Alsop, J. R., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1981. (Intermediate / Advanced, Word Studies, Lexicon)

Lexical Aids For Students of New Testament Greek. Metzger, B. M., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983. (Advanced, Grammar / Syntax)

A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament. Rienecker, F., edited by Rogers Jr., C. L., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1980. (Intermediate / Advanced, Word Studies, Lexicon)

A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, Dana, H. E. and Mantey, J. R., Upper Saddle River: Pearson Education, 1927. (Advanced, Grammar / Syntax)

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology. Brown, C., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1980. (Intermediate, Word Studies)

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Bromiley, Geoffrey W., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1975. (Intermediate / Advanced, Word Studies)

Vocabulary of the Greek Testament. Moulton, J. H. and Milligan, G., Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997. (Advanced, Lexicon, Word Studies)

The Word Study Concordance, Wigram, G. and Winter R., Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978. (Basic / Intermediate, Concordance)

The Word Study New Testament, Winter, R. and Winter, R., Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978. (Basic / Intermediate, Word Studies, Concordance)

Word Pictures in the New Testament, 6 Vol. Robertson, A.T., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1930 reprint. (Intermediate, Word Studies)

Old and New Testament

Figures of Speech Used in the Bible: Introduction, Bullinger, E. W., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968. (Intermediate, Word Studies)

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words. Vine, W. E.; Unger, M; and White, W, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991. (Basic, Word Studies)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/helps.aspx

What is this reference: Bible Difficulties?

The Apostle Peter once wrote that some of Paul's material was difficult to understand (2 Pet. 3:16). This is not an understatement! In fact, the Bible is full of statements that can make us scratch our heads and shrug our shoulders. These books specialize in addressing biblical passages that seem to be contradictory or difficult to understand. And by specifically addressing the perplexing things we find in Scripture, they generally give wonderful cultural insights into what was being said.

However, because they function as commentaries, they are susceptible to the same limitations and biases.

Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties. Archer, G., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1982. (Basic)

Hard Sayings of the Bible. Kaiser, W. C., Davids, P. H., Bruce, F.F., and Brauch, M. T., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996. (Basic / Intermediate)

When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties. Geisler, N., and Howe, T., Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999. Basic / Intermediate)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/difficulties.aspx

====

What is this reference: Bible Commentaries?

This reference section has been listed last for a reason. Commentaries are designed to help the student out after proper study has been done, and are never to take the place of your own personal time in the Word. They should be used with caution and discretion, for they are simply the thoughts and biases of ordinary men and women.

However, commentaries can prove to be extremely helpful for the student to gain cultural, grammatical, and historical insights into the text. It can also be helpful to see other's views that challenge us and cause us to think about our own conclusions. We would do well to heed the following:

"The community is a check against my personal distortions" (Parker J. Palmer's, *To Know As We Are Known: Education As A Spiritual Journey*, p. 18).

"There is always a need to check our interpretations over-against those of others, including our own earlier interpretations" (From Fowl and Jones' book, *Reading in Communion*, p. 30).

"Once we acknowledge the plurality of interpretive interests, we need not treat alternative interpretations as failed attempts to discover the meaning of a text. One of the residual benefits of this is to rehabilitate the history of the exegesis of Scripture. While we need not always agree with the readings of such interpreters as Origen, Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, or Luther, discerning and critically reflecting on their interpretive interests can help to clarify and enrich our own readings" (Fowl and Jones, *Reading in Communion*, p. 16).

When selecting individual commentaries, one should determine their needs before making a purchase. While there are several kinds of commentaries out on the market, the four most common types are exegetical, expositional, devotional and cultural. The following describe the intent of each kind, along with an example from each category:

Exegetical: These commentaries focus more on understanding the grammar and language of the Text. They are often more technical and academic than other types of commentaries, and may or may not assume the reader has a working knowledge of the original Biblical languages. Though scholarly in nature, these books are useful tools when studying through a book simply because they address critical issues that are not discussed in the other types of commentaries.

Word Bible Commentary: Genesis, 2 Vol. Wenham, G. Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987. (Advanced)

What is this reference: Bible Commentaries? (continues)

Expositional: These books are usually written by pastors who have preached through the book they are commenting on. They are generally filled with easy-to-follow outlines, illustrations and applications for the reader. Oftentimes, these books are taken directly from the preaching notes of the pastor writing the book.

Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis. Ross, A. P. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996. (Intermediate)

Devotional: Commentaries that are devotional in nature focus more upon reflection and application of the Text. Their purpose is not to address scholars, but general readers. Nourishing both mind and heart, Puritan commentaries are some of the most soul-searching examples of devotional literature the church has ever seen. A modern example would be the following:

The Genesis Record: A Scientific & Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings. Morris, H. M. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991. (Basic)

Cultural: While not as prevalent as exegetical, expositional and devotional commentaries, cultural commentaries are helpful tools when seeking to discover the background of the text one is studying.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Genesis-Deuteronomy. Walton, J. and Matthews, V. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998. (Basic / Intermediate)

There are literally hundreds of individual commentaries on the books of the Bible, so trying to choose one with so many options can be a bit frustrating. For the sake of space, only those commentaries, which cover the complete Old Testament and complete New Testament, will be listed.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 2 Vol. Walvoord, J. and Zuck, R. B., eds., Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985. (Basic)

The Expositor's Bible Commentary, 12 Vol. Gaebelin, F., ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1985. (Intermediate)

The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament. Keener, C., Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993. (Basic)

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary. Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., and House, H. W., eds., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1999. (Basic)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/commentaries.aspx

====

What is this reference: Bible Software / Internet Resources?

Available initially as computer software installed locally on your hard drive, there are a variety of excellent and efficient Bible study resources on the Internet available as a download or as a service in the cloud. These Internet offerings may be accessed either freely, by fee or by subscription.

There are three major factors one should consider when evaluating these Internet services: 1) quality of scholarship and 2) ease of navigation and usability

Quality of scholarship

Many cloud based products utilize dated public domain resources; copyrighted material becomes free after 100 years. While having some resources is better than none, dated resources lack the benefit of the more recent advances in anthropology, archeology, and biblical languages.

What is this reference: Bible Software / Internet Resources? (continues)

Ease of navigation and usability

How frequently a Bible study resource service is used depends on how easy and intuitive it is. Are the icons intuitive? Is the navigation simple? Does it require many clicks to access your resource? Take care in allowing user reviews affect your evaluation of a Bible study resource, because not all reviews may represent how you intend to use the product.

There are thousands of web based resources on the Internet that can help one study the Bible. Listed here are some sample resources online and when their ministry started. They may be software that is downloaded freely or by fee or as a service in the cloud. With this diversity, there's something available for everyone!

1982: Silver Mountain Software (www.silvermountainsoftware.com/)

1987: Wordsearch Bible (www.wordsearchbible.com/)

1988: BibleSoft (www.biblesoft.com)

1989: Gramcord Institute (www.gramcord.org)

1989: Oak Tree Software (www.accordancebible.com)

1991: Faithlife (formerly Logos Bible Software) (www.logos.com)

1992: Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org)

1994: SwordSearcher (www.swordsearcher.com)

1995: Bible Gateway (www.biblegateway.com)

1996: Blue Letter Bible (www.blueletterbible.org)

2000: E-Sword (www.e-Sword.net)

2001: StudyLight.org (www.studylight.org)

2007: Bible Hub (www.biblehub.com)

2010: BibleStudyTools (www.biblestudytools.com)

2017: Marvellous Bible Resources (www.marvel.bible/)

Drastically changing the publishing industry, the Internet has caused a consolidation of publishers. While some may no longer be independent, some publishers of Christian works, such as those listed below, are worth evaluating for your library and may offer reference works by download or as a cloud based service.

Book Publishers

InterVarsity Press (www.ivpress.com)

Moody Publishers (www.moodypublishers.com)

Paternoster Publishing (www.paternoster-publishing.com)

Thomas Nelson, Inc. (www.thomason.com)

Zondervan Publishing House (www.zondervan.com)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/software.aspx

====

What is this reference: Study Bibles?

Study Bibles combine the resources of a Bible dictionary, manners and customs, concordance, atlas, and commentary into one Book. While they provide a convenient and portable means to have a deeper personal Bible study while traveling, they are not a substitute for a true reference. Yet for those who may not be able to afford any reference works, Study Bibles offer a powerful aid to the casual Bible reader.

Just remember this rule for good Bible study:

First - read the Bible.

Second - then consult the references.

What is this reference: Study Bibles? (continues)

Included in this category is Interlinear Bibles. These special Bibles will have the Old Testament Hebrew and / or New Testament Greek on one line with the literal English equivalent underneath them. Grammatical markers are used to indicate nouns, prepositions, articles, etc., which provide you a greater insight on the subject of translation.

Various Bible translations were also included here, because their prefaces / forewords provide information about the challenges and task of translation; this information would help one gain a deeper appreciation of those toiling in the task of translating the Bible.

Study Bibles

New International Version Study Bible. International Bible Society.

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985.

NIV Archeological Study Bible. International Bible Society.

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

The Nelson Study Bible. Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., and House, H. W., eds.

Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1997.

Interlinear Bibles

The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament. Kollenberger, J.

Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/studybibles.aspx

====

What is this reference: Bible Hermeneutics?

While these types of books do not fall in the category of reference works, I am recommending that people consider reading a book on biblical hermeneutics. They provide profound insights and tips that will help you read the Bible more effectively, efficiently, and comprehensively; your ability to apply the biblical principles to your life will be greatly improved.

Reading styles can vary greatly, and the variety of books on biblical hermeneutic reflect this diversity. It is worthwhile to consider reading a couple of these books and learn about some of various approaches to reading the Bible!

Basic Bible Interpretation. Zuck, R., Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991. (Basic / Intermediate)

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth. Fee, G. D. and Stuart, D., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1993. (Intermediate)

Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics. Kaiser, W. Jr. and Moisés, S., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 2007. (Intermediate)

Living by the Book. Hendricks, H. G. and Hendricks, W. D., Chicago: Moody Press, 1991. (Basic)

Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind. Longman III, T., Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997. (Basic)

Understanding and Applying the Bible. McQuilkin, R., Chicago: Moody Press, 1992. (Basic)

www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/13system_tools/hermeneutics.aspx