

Bible Study Methods

*Oh how I love your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
Your commandment makes me
wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for your testimonies are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged,
for I keep your precepts.
I hold back my feet from every evil way,
in order to keep your word.
I do not turn aside from your rules,
for you have taught me.
How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding;
therefore I hate every false way
Psalm 119:97-104, ESV*

One cannot help but be struck with the Psalmist's love for the Scriptures that radiates from these verses. The Psalmist, of course, was not merely in love with the Bible (a kind of "bibliolatri") but he was in love with the God whose Bible he read. For the Psalmist seeking God and pursuing his Word were not two activities to be neatly separated. They were one and the same. Notice the parallelism between "seeking God" (line one) and "hiding the word in his heart" (line three) in an earlier portion of Psalm 119:

*With my whole heart I seek you;
let me not wander from your commandments!
I have stored up your word in my heart,
that I might not sin against you.
Ps. 119:10-11, ESV*

The Psalmist sought God through the Scriptures. The Word of God was not merely information to be amassed but the means through which the Psalmist sought and responded to God. The Psalmist reminds us how vital the Scriptures are to a growing and vibrant relationship with God.

The Scriptures are also vital to the ministry to which God has called us.

In both his letters to Timothy Paul urges this young leader to root his life and ministry in the Scriptures. In I Timothy 4:6-16 Paul outlines almost ten qualities that should characterize Timothy's life as a "good servant of Christ Jesus." The very first quality Paul mentions is being a leader who is "constantly nourished on the words of the faith" (v. 6). The fact that this phrase is in the present tense implies an ongoing activity of seeking nourishment.

Paul reminds Timothy that just as his body needs physical nourishment, so too his soul needs spiritual nourishment. In doing this he is calling Timothy to far more than a daily "quiet time." He is saying to Timothy, "If you want to be an effective leader you got to become a self-feeder." This is no less true for you and I. We too must become self-feeders.

Have you ever been in a conversation with a student who was deeply struggling over some issue and found yourself wishing that you knew the Bible better so you could more effectively help them through it? Have you ever listened to someone give a message from Scripture and thought, "I wish I could communicate the Bible's message more clearly"? Have you ever wished that you were able to better lead others from the Word?

The foundation of growth in each of these areas is becoming a self-feeder. Becoming a self-feeder is one of the most important habits you can cultivate. This course is designed to be the first step toward helping you become a person who feeds themselves from the Scriptures.

Course Description

Using an educationally sound, workshop-style approach, *Bible Study Methods* is designed to introduce you to a *process* for studying the Bible and give you a chance to improve your skills, all under the watchful eye of a skilled mentor. You will be exposed to the classic principles of interpretation, and then you will turn theory into practice by applying the principles as you study the book of Ephesians.

This course will cover the entire process of Bible study, from motivation, to interpretive principles, through skills and tools, all the way to communicating the text to others. After a lecture each day, your trained workshop coach will teach you skills and guide you through the use of tools to help you see and savor the glory of Christ in the Scriptures.

This course represents the first in a sequence of three courses you will complete in studying and communicating the Bible. Following *Bible Study Methods* you will complete *Biblical Interpretation* and *Biblical Communication*. In *Biblical Interpretation* you will learn how to interpret and apply the diverse literary forms in the Bible including narrative, prophesy, poetry, law, and gospel. In *Biblical Communication* you will learn how to communicate the Bible's message in a Christ-centered and life-changing way.

Course Objectives

- to be introduced to tools that can help you better understand Scripture and apply it to your life
- to discover why it is important to relate every passage to the redemptive story-line of the Bible
- to experience the gospel as you discover how Scripture exposes your brokenness/rebellion (fallen condition) and points you to find true life in Christ (redemptive solution)
- to learn how to discern the “fallen condition” and “redemptive solution” in a passage of Scripture
- to learn how to point people to Christ through small groups by asking good questions with the launch/explore/apply template
- to be better equipped for ministry by applying interpretive principles to your future reading, study and teaching from epistles
- to become aware of how our cultural perspectives might blinds us to aspects of the gospel
- to prepare you for Biblical Interpretation and Biblical Communication

Course Values

1. **Christ-centered Focus:** The deepest longing of the human heart is to know and enjoy the glory of God. As John Piper notes, “We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God’s glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart. The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center” (*Seeing and Savoring Christ*, p. 21). Our ultimate goal in this course is not that you would master all the skills we present but that you would cultivate a deeper hunger to “see and savor” the glory of Jesus Christ revealed in the Scriptures.
2. **Integrated Learning Environment:** This is not a traditional lecture course. You will learn not merely by “hearing” but also by “doing,” not merely by observing but also by experiencing. We are convinced that the best way to learn about studying the Scriptures is not by reading books about how to study the Bible but by studying the Bible under the watchful eye of a coach.
3. **Excellence** - We assume that you are here because you want to be here and we are hopeful that you will catch a love for the Scriptures and a desire to know truth that will motivate you from the inside to please the Lord with your work. Ultimately it is Him that you are serving (Col. 3:23).

****A note on academic integrity and plagiarism:** *Plagiarism is similar to stealing another’s ideas or thoughts and, therefore, unacceptable for Cru staff. Please refrain from copying or paraphrasing bible studies you read or find online. The penalty for plagiarism will be determined by IBS and may include automatic failure for the course. Ask your coach if you have questions concerning plagiarism.*

4. **Collegiality** - This is not a competition. We encourage you to help each other, and our desire is to help you. NOTE: *Collegiality does not mean that you may work together with other students on your worksheets in such a way that two people turn in identical work.*
5. **Development** - We realize that everyone comes into class with a wide variety of experiences regarding formal training in Bible Study. Some of you may have graduated from a Bible college where you covered a number of these skills. Others may have had no previous experience in formal Bible study. Wherever you happen to be as you enter this class, our heart is that you would take a “next step” in your development.

Required Texts

Ultimate Road Trip. Orlando: Cru Press, 2008, updated.
Piper, John. *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2001
Roberts, Vaughan. *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity: 2002. (Minor updating done in 2012)
Snodgrass, Klyne. *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Recommended Texts

Arnold, Clinton. *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
Bruce, F. F. *Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984.
Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003.
Lincoln, Andrew. *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, 1990.
O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
Thielman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Course Requirements

1. **Thoughtful Reading:** You are expected to read the assigned texts/articles carefully and thoughtfully.
2. **Vital Participation:** Discussion is a vital part of the learning process for this class. You will be expected to contribute ideas and opinions based on your reading and comprehension of the course material.
3. **Textual Worksheets:** You will be expected to complete eight worksheets that will enable you to practice the core skills we will present in the class. These will be turned in to your coach for review and evaluation.
4. **Bible Study Project:** Your final assignment in the course will be to develop a small group Bible study, based on the passage you have studied, which you can use in your ministry setting. All the worksheets will contribute towards this project.

Class Schedule

Topic	Date	Assignments Due the Following Day
Christ-Centered Bible Study	Wed., Jan. 11	Worksheet: #1 (Book Summary) “Hearing the Music of the Gospel”
Context	Thur., Jan. 12	Worksheet: #2 (Context) <i>NIV Application Commentary</i> (NIVAC), 17-31. <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C1
Analyzing Structure* (no lecture)	Fri., Jan. 13	Worksheet: #3 (Structural Layout) <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C3
Observing Details	Sat., Jan. 14	Worksheet: #4 (Observation) <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C6 Articles: “Asking Good Q’s” and “Practicing Q’s”
MLK Day No Class	Mon., Jan. 16	Today we honor the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. White evangelical Christians in the 60’s largely opposed or ignored the civil rights movement. I’d like you to read MLK’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” It is posted on the IBS website along with a five minute video that provides context for MLK’s letter that responds to the Birmingham clergy calling his nonviolent resistance “unwise” and “untimely.”
Interpretive Skills	Tue., Jan. 17	Worksheet: #5 (Interpretation) NIVAC, 123-139; <i>Additional Commentary*</i> , <i>The Ultimate Road Trip</i> , 99-111 (chapter 8) <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C7
Creating a Textual Outline* (no lecture)	Wed., Jan. 18	Worksheet: #6: (Textual Outline) <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C9 <i>God’s Big Picture</i> , Introduction
Finding Our Place in God’s Story	Thur., Jan. 19	Worksheet: #7: (Theological Analysis) <i>God’s Big Picture</i> , C7 NIVAC, 139-147. <i>The Ultimate Road Trip</i> , 36, 52-57 <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C12 Article: “Bridging the Gap between the World”
Christ-centered Application	Fri., Jan. 20	Worksheet: #8: (Application) NIVAC, 147-156. Article: “Understanding Scripture’s Fallen-Cond...” Article: “Asking Christ-Centered Questions...”
Leading Christ-centered Small Groups	Mon., Jan 23	Bible Study Project <i>Seeing and Savoring</i> , C13
Gospel, Leadership and Cru Culture	Tue., Jan. 24	<i>Turn in Bible Study Project</i>

Course Grade

Your course grade will be based on the following:

8 Textual Worksheets	80% (80 points)
Bible Study Project	<u>20% (20 points)</u>
	100%

To determine your course grade complete the following:

1. Total the points from your 8 worksheets: _____ (80 points possible)
2. Write in the score from your project: _____ (20 points possible)
3. Add #1 and #2 together _____
4. Determine your grade _____

Grading Scale:

94-100	A	80-81	C+
92-93	A-	74-79	C
90-91	B+	72-73	C-
84-89	B	65-71	D
82-83	B-	0-65	F

Coaches

Bible Study Methods is not a class for passive learning. As in any “methods” class, the desired outcomes will not be accomplished by just taking an exam that demonstrates a knowledge of the theory of Bible study. We will talk about theory. We will teach sound exegesis and hermeneutics. But many of the skills and principles can only be learned by working in the text, trying out the different tools, and deliberately applying the principles taught. The coaching workshops are essential to the learning that takes place in this class. As you learn the principles of Bible Study, you will be able to work your way through the process under the helpful and watchful eye of a mentor. Your mentor will give you constructive feedback and be available to answer your questions. You will get personal attention that would be impossible in a lecture style format. This class is being taught by a team of qualified people rather than by one individual. The coaches have been chosen because of their knowledge of the Scriptures, their love for Christ, and their ability in a particular aspect of Bible study. They come from various ministries and responsibilities, but each of them shares a desire to blend academic integrity with passionate ministry.

Select Bibliography

Introduction

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- Hendricks, Howard. *Living By the Book* (Chicago: Moody, 1991).
- Kostenberber, Andreas and Richard Patterson. *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011).

Authorship - Ephesians

- Arnold, C.E. "Ephesians, Letter to the" *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993, pp. 238-249.
- Carson, D.A., Moo, D., Morris, L. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 367-371. 480-486.
- Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003), 1-61.
- Lincoln, Andrew. *Ephesians*. Word biblical Commentary, Vol. 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), lix-lxxiii.
- Carson, D. A. "Pseudonymity and Pseudepigraphy," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000, 857-64.
- Meade, David. *Pseudonymity and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1-16.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 4-46.

Historical Context

- Carson, D. A., Moo, D., Morris, L. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 305-316 486-490.
- Virkler, Henry A., and Karelynn Gerber Ayayo. "Historical-Cultural and Contextual Analysis" *Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 79-96.
- Osborne, Grant. *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006) 158-80.
- Hawthorne, Gerald, et. al., eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993).

Observation

- Hendricks, Howard. *Living By the Book* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 141-192.

Genre

- Ryken, Leland. *How to Read the Bible as Literature*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Basic Books: Harper Collins, 1981
- Fee, Gordon and Douglass Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981, 1993), 45-77.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

The Importance of Structure

Arnold, Jeffrey. *Discovering the Bible for Yourself* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), 71-80.

Osborne, Grant. *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 57-81.

Interpretation

Baker, David. "Interpreting Texts in the Context of the Whole Bible" *Themelios* 5.2 (1980) pp. 21-25

Hirsch, E.D. *Validity in Interpretation*. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967) .

Johnson, Elliott. "Author's Intention and Biblical Interpretation" *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible*.

Radmacher, E., Preus, R., Eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984)

Kostenberger, Andreas and Richard Patterson. *Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature and Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011).

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Padilla, Rene. "The Interpreted Word: Reflections on Contextual Hermeneutics" *Themelios* 7.1 (1981) pp. 18-23

Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*. W. A. Wilde Company, 1950 pp. 78-96

Robert, Vaughan. *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity: 2002

Schreiner, Thomas. *Interpreting Pauline Epistles*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011, 2nd ed.)

Application

Doriani, Daniel, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub., 2001).

Biblical Communication

The Ultimate Road Trip (Orlando: Cru Press, 2008, updated).

Chapel, Brian, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005, 2nd ed.).

Millar, Gary and Phil Campbell, *Saving Eutychus* (Kingsford: Mathias Media, 2013).

Richard, Ramesh. *Preparing Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker 2001).

Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1980).

Wilhoit, Jim and Leland Ryken,, *Effective Bible Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1988).

Recommended Tools for Personal Bible Study

One Study Bible and Several Other Translations

First, you will need to choose a translation (e.g. ESV, NASB, NIV, etc.) from which to study. This will determine which tools you purchase later. (If you study from the NIV you will want to purchase a NIV concordance.) Be sure you understand the objectives of the translation you chose. The NASB, for example, provides a word-for-word rendering of the original while the NIV provides a thought-for-thought translation (referred to as “dynamic equivalence”). There are benefits and drawbacks to both. Look for a Bible with large margins, extensive cross-references and (preferably) NO study notes. (Although study notes below the text can be very helpful they may also short-circuit the study process.) One study Bible that meets these criteria is Kay Arthur’s *International Inductive Study Bible*.

Second you will want to collect several other translations (ESV, KJV, RSV, NLT) and paraphrases (Living Bible, Phillips, or the Message) for comparison.

Concordance

Be sure to get a concordance that is exhaustive (i.e. containing every occurrence of every word in the Bible), keyed to Strong’s numbering system, and contains Greek & Hebrew dictionaries. This will allow you discover the Greek (N.T.) or Hebrew (O.T.) word that stand behind your English translation and research this word further. The following concordances meet these criteria:

- *The Crossway Comprehensive Concordance of the Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Crossway)
- *NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (Zondervan)
- *NASB Exhaustive Concordance* (Holman)
- *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Abingdon) based on the KJV

If you chose to buy computer software, you will not need to buy a concordance.

Lexicons

A lexicon is a dictionary of words used in the Bible and is indispensable for determining the meanings of individual words. Perhaps some good tools to begin with are *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* or the *Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. (There is also an Old Testament counterpart to Vine’s). Both discuss the meaning of Greek words, are keyed to Strong’s numbering system and provides reference information to help you find the Greek word you are studying in two other helpful tools:

- (BDAG) *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker (Univ. of Chicago). This is the best Greek lexicon available but it can feel intimidating to use because all the words are listed in Greek and there is an abundance of reference material in each entry. (Note: Some computer programs will give you access to this tool as well).
- (NIDNTT) *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*- 5 vols. by M. Silva (Zondervan).

Atlas

A good atlas is critical for understanding the geographical context of Scripture. *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands* by Beitzel (Moody) is probably the best. More recent is John Currid and David Barnett's *Crossway ESV Bible Atlas* (Crossway, 2010).

Dictionaries/Encyclopedias

Bible Dictionaries provide valuable information on persons, groups, cities, customs, and cultural practices. The best single volume dictionary is the *New Bible Dictionary* edited by Douglas, Bruce, et. al., 2nd edition (Inter-Varsity). The best multiple-volume set is *the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* - 4 vols. edited by Bromiley (Eerdmans); however, it is very expensive.

N.T./O.T. Introductions and Surveys

Introductions provide helpful background information (author, date, occasion, original recipients, historical circumstances surrounding a particular book) on each book of the Bible. Surveys provide a synthesized overview of the books of the Bible. I would recommend purchasing one New Testament and one Old Testament introduction from the following list:

- *A Survey of the Old Testament* by Hill/Walton (Zondervan)
- *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. by Longman/Dillard (Zondervan)
- *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. by Guthrie (Inter-Varsity)
- *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. by Carson/Moo (Zondervan)

Commentaries

Commentaries are an indispensable resource for personal Bible study. Commentaries provide access to the interpretative judgments of Bible scholars and frequently supply historical and cultural background that affects one's exegesis of a passage. In addition, the introductions to most commentaries discuss the author, occasion, date of writing, audience and authorial purpose.

The following two books function like Consumer Reports to commentaries. They will give you short descriptions of the particular commentary you may be considering to use. They will also identify commentaries that are technical or intended for a broader audience. These books are well worth their price, but look for the most recent editions.

- *Old Testament Commentary Survey*, 5th ed. by Tremper Longman (Baker)
- *New Testament Commentary Survey* by 7th ed. by D. A. Carson (Baker)

It is best to consult several commentaries when you are studying a passage. The problem is that owning even one commentary on every book of the Bible is very expensive. I would begin by purchasing a one or two volume commentary on the entire Bible such as . . .

- *New Bible Commentary* edited by Wenham/Motyer et. al. (IVP)
- *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (two volumes) edited by Walvoord and Zuck (Victor)
- *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (two volumes) edited by Frank Gaebelein (Zondervan)
- *African Bible Commentary* edited by Tokunboh Adeyemo (Zondervan)
- *Soniclight* (available for free online) [<http://soniclight.com> click on "study notes"]
- *ESV Study Bible* (available online) [www.ESVbible.org]

Next I would begin purchasing individual commentaries as you study individual books of the Bible. Fee and Stuart, in their book *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, suggest several helpful criteria to keep in mind as you shop for commentaries.

- Look for a commentary that is exegetical (i.e. it focuses on the meaning of the text) and not devotional or homiletical (application-orientated).
- Look for a commentary that presents and discusses the interpretative options for a given passage. Examine how the author discusses the meaning of a text: Does he or she discuss and evaluate possible options or merely give you his or her judgment?
- Look for a commentary that discusses historical backgrounds of important items in the text (people, customs, cultural background, etc.)
- Look for a commentary that provides adequate historical background (in the introduction) to enable you to get a handle on the author, date, original readers and occasion.

Although you should purchase a commentary based on its individual merit, there are several commentary series you may find helpful to examine:

- (NICNT) *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Eerdmans)
- (NICOT) *New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans)
- (PNTC) *Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans)
- (TOTC) *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary* (Inter-Varsity)
- (TNTC) *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans)
- (REBC) *Revised Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Zondervan)
- (IVPNTC) *IVP New Testament Commentary* (Inter-Varsity)
- (NIBC) *New International Bible Commentary* (Hendrickson)

Biblical Theologies

Biblical theology differs from systematic theology (below) in that it attempts to trace the progress of revelation related to particular themes through Scripture (eg, God's presence and temple). Some biblical theologies, however, focus on the particular contributions individual authors or books make to a given topic (eg, Paul's theology of suffering). I would recommend *The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* edited by Desmond, Rosner, Carson and Goldsworthy (IVP). However, the following are also worth pursuing:

- *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible* by S. Dempster (IVP)
- *The Faith of Israel* by W. Dumbrell (Baker)
- *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology* by T. Schreiner (Baker)
- *Theology of the New Testament* by F. Thielman (Zondervan)

Systematic Theologies

Systematic theology is an attempt to set forth the complete teaching of Scripture on a given topic the Bible discusses (e.g. doctrine of God, humanity, salvation, person and work of Christ, etc.). I would recommend one of the following:

- *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* by W. Grudem (Zondervan)
- *The Moody Bible Handbook of Theology* by P. Ennis (Moody)
- *Christian Theology* by M. Erickson (Baker)
- *Basic Theology* by C. Ryrie (Victor)

Bible Resources on Computer Software

During the last ten years there has been a tremendous growth in Bible resources available on computer. Computer resources offer several advantages. First, you often get several tools bundled together which, if you purchased them separately, would cost considerably more. (A good Bible program will frequently provide the equivalent of several English translations, a Greek New Testament, a Hebrew Old Testament, concordance and Bible encyclopedia. In some cases it may even provide lexical information from lexicons.) Second, many programs will give you user-friendly access to Bible tools for which you would normally need knowledge of Greek or Hebrew. Third, computer programs frequently make word studies and other kinds of searches very easy. If you want to know every place in the New Testament where the word “grace” occurs all you need to do is to make several keystrokes. As you consider purchasing software ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I *need* to be able to do (both now and in the future as I become more proficient)?
- Do I want to do searches from the original Greek/Hebrew texts or do I just want to work with the English text? (I would get software that provides access to the original Greek/Hebrew.)
- What other resources do I want along with the texts? (lexicons, encyclopedias, etc.)

The following are computer programs you may want to consider:

- *Bible Works* [advanced]
- *Logos* [This is now available for Mac]
- *E-Sword 9.0* (Available for free online) [<http://www.e-sword.net>]
- Consider free online resources like
 - www.esvbible.org – free but if you have an ESV code you’ll have more access
 - www.biblegateway.com – for quick verse lookup
 - www.soniclight.com – a solid contemporary commentary on the whole Bible
 - www.blueletterbible.org – a great resource for Bible study
 - www.nextbible.com – a solid resource for more in depth study of Scripture

A Few Tips on Saving Money as you Develop Your Personal Library

- Develop a prioritized list of the tools you would like to purchase.
- Don’t buy books you will only read once. Borrow them from others and take notes.
- Never pay the retail price for any books you purchase. You can get up to 50% off retail by purchasing books through *Christian Book Distributors* (www.christianbook.com)
- Family Christian Stores has a program that gives significant discounts to full-time Christian workers.
- Consider online resources like www.soniclight.com and the others mentioned above.