

Getting the Most Out of Your Bible Study

STEP #2: INTERPRETATION - continued

The fifth 'C' of interpretation is "Consultation". It is important not to jump to this step too quick, so you are not biased by other's opinions or conclusions before coming to your own. However, we have been greatly blessed with wonderful resources that can assist us in this step. It is very important though to know what tools are most helpful and how to use them properly.

II. Helpful Tools and Their Uses**A. Concordance (book & computer)**

- A printed or electronic listing of every word in the Bible and the references where you can find that word. A good concordance will also be coded to indicate the Greek/Hebrew or Aramaic word "behind" the English word so you can be certain you are looking at the same word.
- ◆ Be sure you are using one that has been made of the same version of the Bible you are studying (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV).
- ◆ There are several relatively inexpensive computer programs that have one or more English Bibles on them that function as a concordance allowing you to search for words.

B. Bible Dictionaries

- Not a listing of every word found in the Bible, but rather key terms, people, places, events, etc. with helpful details to inform you of the meaning or background.
- ◆ Grenz, Stanely J., David Guretzki and Cherith Fee Nordling. *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.*
- ◆ Patzia, Arthur G. and Anthony J. Petrotta. *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.*
- ◆ Ryken, Leland, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III. *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.*
- ◆ Tenney, Merrill C., ed. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible – 5 volumes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976.

C. Historical Background

- The focus is on giving historical background information for each book of the Bible to attempt to bridge the time and culture gap that exists between us and original audience.

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- ◆ Alexander, Pat and David. *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.
- ◆ Arnold, Bill T. and Bryan E. Beyer. *Encountering the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- ◆ Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988.

D. Geographical Background

- A good Bible atlas will have maps and facts about the key places and events throughout Biblical history. Again this is to help bridge the gap between us and the original audience. A tremendous amount of the Biblical events are tied in some way to “the Land” – to geography. (*A great gift of Pastor and Tracy would be to send them to Israel with Calvary Seminary!*)
- ◆ Bimson, J.J. and J.P. Kane. *New Bible Atlas*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press,, 2000.*
- ◆ Rasmussen, Carl G. *Zondervan NIV Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.

E. Commentaries

- A good commentary will have bits and pieces of information that the above tools offer too, but to a lesser degree. It will focus on simply explaining the text, leaving all theological presuppositions aside! It is nearly impossible to find an entire series of commentaries that does this successfully. Generally speaking you need to go on a “book by book basis” and always ask Pastor’s or someone else’s opinion before spending your money.
- ◆ The series that probably does the best is: *The New American Commentary* by Broadman & Holman Publishers.

F. Study Bibles

- A good study bible will have multiple contributors to the notes, not all by one person. No one person can be an expert on the entire Bible. Similar to a commentary it will have bits and pieces of the information the above tools offer, but to a lesser degree. Its notes should be focused on simply assisting the reader in understanding the text leave theological presuppositions aside.
- ◆ One that seems to do a pretty good job of all of this is: *Thomas Nelson’s New King James Study Bible*.

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➤ Specialty Bible Translations

- ◆ *The Five Books of Moses*, Everet Fox
- ◆ *The Christian Counselor's New Testament*, Jay E. Adams

G. Another Person

- Obviously someone who knows more than you and has experience studying God's word and using the many tools that are available. Ideally this person will not just give you the answer, but will show you how to find it for yourself!

*All of these materials can be found on the *Essential IVP Reference CD-ROM*. This is a tremendous tool and would make a great gift for Pastor for Christmas or something!

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK:

1. Read all of 1 Samuel chapters 16 – 18 several times. Who are the main characters in these chapters? After looking at the larger context who is the historical account of David and Goliath really about?
2. Read all of 2 Samuel 11 – 12:25. Who are the main characters in these chapters? After looking at the larger context who is the historical account of David and Bathsheba really about?
3. Read Matthew 18:15 – 35. In context, during what time is Jesus saying verse 20 occurs?