

Some Tools of Bible Study

1. Translations matter.

- a. There are three main approaches for Bible translations: Word-for-Word; Thought-for-Thought; Paraphrase
- b. Word-for-Word is regarded as the most accurate.
- c. Thought-for-Thought and Paraphrase are easier to read.
- d. Translators determine the intended meaning of a word with multiple definitions by considering the context of the verse or whole passage.
- e. In the course of our study, we discovered this together!
NIV 2011 used more gender neutral pronouns than 1984. Bible Gateway uses the NIV 2011.

NIV 1984. John 1:34. "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God"

NIV 2011. John 1:34. "I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

NIV 1984. Romans 16:1 "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchreae."

NIV 2011. Romans 16:1 "I commend to you our sister Pheobe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreee."

2. Context is King (formerly referred to as Context is Key!)

It is crucial to correct interpretation of a passage of Scripture to know the context. Context can refer to the setting, the norms, the culture, the history, the location and also other words in the passage and other Scripture (see #4)

3. Define Terms. Use a Bible dictionary to define any unfamiliar words. When discussing ideas with others, be alert to the possibility that a word may have different meanings to individuals in a group. Always take time to make distinctions and define terms. Listen carefully to one another.
4. Scripture Teaches Scripture. Avoid basing your doctrine on one verse. Use a concordance to look up all of the verses relating to the matter.

5. Law of First Mention. When studying a concept or term, find the first place it is mentioned in Scripture and trace its use and development throughout the Bible. (A concordance is very helpful for this but know that order of the books in the Bible are not necessarily in the order that they were written. A link to a chronological list of the books in the order they were written can be found on the GraceandPeacetoYouBlog.com.)

“Those who study the Bible in a serious way sometimes refer to the Law of First Mention. It’s not so much a law, really, as a common principle in the Scriptures. If you select an important biblical word—say, *worship*—you’ll find that its first biblical appearance sets the tone for all the richness of meaning that will emerge. Through the Word we go on to find many new understandings and many variations on the theme, but the first cut is the deepest; the First Mention gives us the essential picture.”

- David Jeremiah

“We have frequently in these pages referred to the ‘principle of first mention,’ pointing out that, when an important word or concept occurs for the first time in the Bible, usually in the Book of Genesis, the context in which it occurs sets the pattern for its primary usage and development all through the rest of Scripture. If this principle really means anything (and, in terms both of the doctrine of verbal inspiration and of numerous clear examples, it assuredly does), then it should certainly apply in a distinctive way to the word ‘love.’”

- Henry Morris

6. Systematic Theology

Systematic theology is the attempt to put Christian doctrine in a logical order, often starting from one fundamental principle. As you Define Terms, find First Mention, let Scripture Teach Scripture, and honor Context as Key, you will begin to build a Systematic Theology, but greater minds than ours have thought about and argued these distinctions for many centuries. It is helpful to be generally aware of the beliefs of the Early Church Fathers and great thinkers of Christianity and the distinctions among denominations

(with humility and respect.) Some great (though not infallible) persons who come to mind for the everyday scholar to know - Augustine, Luther, Wesley. (I am rather fond of Augustine's mother and Susannah Wesley, mother of John and Charles.)

The early creeds of the Church are excellent sources of systematic doctrine. Know how your own denomination defines key doctrines. Know what is essential and non-negotiable (for example, inerrancy of Scripture, the Virgin birth, the Trinity) and what we can agree to disagree on (sequence of events in the end times).

“Everyone is a theologian. Any time we think about a teaching of the Bible and strive to understand it, we are engaging in theology. Therefore, it is important that we put the Bible's varied teachings together in a systematic fashion, using proper, time-tested methods of interpretation so as to arrive at a theology that is founded on truth.

“No Christian can avoid theology. Every Christian is a theologian. Perhaps not a theologian in the technical or professional sense, but a theologian nevertheless. The issue for Christians is not whether we are going to be theologians but whether we are going to be good theologians or bad ones.” - R. C. Sproul

7. Transitional Words and Phrases

As the name suggests, these are words and phrases that help the reader progress from one idea to the next. They are essential to detecting shift, contrast or opposition, emphasis or agreement, purpose, result or conclusion. Some Transitional Words or Phrases used by Paul in Philippians include

Therefore

So that

And

But, Yet, However

Questions (What then?)

If

For (introducing a clause, meaning “because”)

This (introducing a clause, referring to the example just given)

8. Interlinear

“Interlinear” means that something is written or printed between the lines of text.

Reverse Interlinear has the English text of the Bible with the corresponding Hebrew or Greek words written directly below. The etymology of a word and using the Blue Letter Bible or a similar source adds depth and richness and specificity to understanding and appreciation of Scripture.

9. Transliteration

The process of transferring a word from the alphabet of one language to another. Hebrew, Greek and English use different alphabets. Knowing what transliteration is helps you to understand why there are differences in word for word translations

10. Find the Key Ideas by Marking the Text

This is a well-used tool: underlining, circling, highlighting to find Key Ideas in a text. Kay Arthur's symbol and color system is a wonderful resource.

11. Outline

Outlining a difficult passage or a book of the Bible is a great tool for review and clarification. Writing a Summary is a similar exercise