

Tools For Developing a Meaningful Devotional Life

A GOOD STUDY BIBLE

- NIV Study Bible
- MacArthur Study Bible
- Apologetics Study Bible
- Quest Study Bible

A word about translations: Choose a Bible that is readable for you but that is accurate to the truth of the text. Below are a few of the more popular translations.

- *New King James Version (NKJ)* - The NKJ is basically an update of the KJV. It reads like a late 20th century KJV. It is accurate to the text yet retains the classical feel of the KJV.
- *New American Standard (NAS)* - The NAS is a translation that attempts to be accurate to the text yet current in language. It is a very good translation for the reader who is already familiar with Biblical phrases and terminology.
- *New International Version (NIV)* - The NIV is referred to as a dynamic equivalent translation. The method the translators used was to translate from then original languages phrase by phrase rather than word by word. Whereas the NAS stresses the literalness of the language of the original text, the NIV stresses the literalness of the message of the original text. The NIV is a very good translation for the reader who wants the truth of Scripture expressed in readable form.
- *Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)* - In creating the HCSB, if a more literal, word-for-word translation best communicated the text, it was used. When clarity demanded a more “dynamic” translation, that became the rendering of choice.
- *English Standard Version (ESV)* – published in 2001, the ESV is the newest and most up-to-date formal equivalent translation. It maintains some of the theological terms that have systematically developed in English (e.g., justification, sanctification and propitiation), and has also consistently translated specific terms in the original language to make theological developments easier to follow, and English concordance searches more accurate. Like the KJV, it has many unforgettable expressions, suitable for memorizing.
- *New Living Translation (NLT)* - The NLT is from the publishers of the Living Bible. The Living Bible was a paraphrase from the KJV rather than a translation from original languages, but the NLT is a translation from the original languages that seeks to present the truth of Scripture in an easily read format. It also is an excellent translation for teenagers and for adults who are new to the Bible and its teachings.

<http://www.biblestudymagazine.com/preview/choosetranslationWeb.pdf>

A NOTEBOOK OR THREE RING BINDER

This is for taking notes and recording insights that God gives you into the text and how it applies to you. It is also helpful to keep track of what you pray for so you can see God's activity in your life.

AN APPOINTED TIME AND PLACE

You will be surprised how much more consistent you will be if you treat your quiet time like other appointments. It is never wrong to pencil God into your daily schedule! It may be difficult at first, but with time, you will look forward to your time with Him.

BIBLICAL LANGUAGE TOOLS

Since the Old Testament was written in Hebrew (and a little Aramaic) and the New Testament was written in Greek, many words have shades of nuance that are lost in translation. Below are a few tools that will help you unlock some of the kernels of truth locked inside of language.

❑ *The Hebrew/Greek Study Bible* by Spiros Zodhiates -important words have a number superscripted that leads you to a fuller definition and explanation in the back of the Bible. This is an excellent help for the Bible student.

❑ *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* by W.E. Vine, Merrill Unger, and William White. Look up an English word and find it's Hebrew and Greek counterparts, where they are used in Scripture and what they mean in context.

❑ *The Amplified Bible* - Nuances of various words are placed in brackets after the Biblical word so that the reader can see the shades of meaning intended by these key words.

OTHER HELPFUL BOOKS

➤ Commentaries - while I am not necessarily a big fan of commentaries, sometimes they are helpful. Look for one- volume commentaries that provide background information on the text rather than commentaries that give the author's opinion on the meaning and application of the text.

➤ Bible Handbooks and Dictionaries are good for giving background information that help you understand the world in which the Scripture was written. There are several out there. Refer to the "Trusted Publishers List" below.

Trusted Publishers

Baker Book House
Broadman-Holman Publishers
Crossway Books
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
InterVarsity Press
Lifeway Christian Resources
Moody Press
NavPress (The Navigators)
Thomas Nelson Publishers
Fleming H. Revell Publishers
Tyndale House Publishers

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT HELP: THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to lead us into all truth. God alone is able to reveal Himself to us.

SEVEN WAYS TO APPROACH A BIBLE PASSAGE:

1. **PICTURE IT!** Visualize the scene in your mind.
2. **PRONOUNCE IT!** Say the verse aloud, each time emphasizing a different word.
3. **PARAPHRASE IT!** Rewrite the verse in your own words.
4. **PERSONALIZE IT!** Replace the pronouns or people in the verse with your own name.
5. **PRAY IT!** Turn the verse into a prayer and say it back to God.
6. **PROBE IT!** Ask the following five questions :

S.P.E.C.K. QUESTIONS

Is there a SIN to AVOID?

Is there a PROMISE to CLAIM?

Is there an ENCOURAGEMENT to HEED?

Is there a COMMAND to OBEY?

Is there some KNOWLEDGE to be GAINED?

7. **PRACTICE IT!** Find ways to immediately put what God has told you into action.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

Bible.Org – www.bible.org

Bible Gateway – www.biblegateway.com

Bible Study Tools - <http://www.biblestudytools.com/>

Online Study Bible – www.mystudybible.com