

How to Study the Bible Using Lexicons, Commentaries, Concordances, and Study Bibles

PREFACE: THERE ARE A LOT OF RESOURCES OUT THERE. THE RESOURCES LISTED BELOW ARE THE ONES THAT I USE. CHOOSE THE RESOURCES THAT BEST WORKS FOR YOU.

Studying the Bible is one of the most rewarding and transformative spiritual practices, but it can sometimes feel overwhelming—especially when you want to go beyond just reading the text. Thankfully, there are a variety of tools designed to help deepen your understanding of Scripture. Lexicons, commentaries, concordances, and study Bibles are powerful resources that will guide you as you explore the Word of God in its original context. In this post, we'll discuss how to use each of these tools to enhance your Bible study and grow closer in your relationship with God.

1. Lexicons: Unpacking the Original Language

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament), and sometimes our modern translations don't fully capture the depth of the original languages. A lexicon is like a dictionary for biblical Hebrew and Greek, helping you understand the true meaning of words as they were used when the Bible was written.

Why use a lexicon?

Understanding key biblical terms in their original language brings a deeper and often more accurate meaning to the text. For example, the word "peace" in English might not convey the same richness as the Hebrew word "shalom," which includes wholeness, well-being, and harmony.

How to use a lexicon:

- Choose a passage, such as Philippians 4:7, where Paul speaks of "the peace of God."
- Use [Blue Letter Bible](#) or [Bible Hub](#) to find the Greek word for "peace" and its detailed meaning.
- Reflect on how the word's original meaning adds a new layer to your understanding of the verse.

2. Commentaries: Gaining Historical and Theological Context

A commentary is a resource where biblical scholars explain and interpret Scripture verse by verse, often providing insights into the historical, cultural, and theological context. Commentaries help bridge the gap between the ancient world of the Bible and modern readers.

Why use a commentary?

The Bible was written in a very different time and culture and understanding the historical and cultural background can illuminate why certain things were said or done. A commentary can clarify difficult or confusing passages and show how they fit into the overall message of the Bible.

How to use a commentary:

- Pick a passage you're studying, like Psalm 23, and search for it on [Enduring Word](#) or Bible Gateway.
- Read the commentary's explanation about the significance of shepherd imagery in ancient Israel and how it reflects God's care for us.
- Use this deeper understanding to guide your reflection and prayer as you read the passage.

3. Concordances: Finding Key Themes and Words Across Scripture

A concordance is a tool that helps you find every occurrence of a specific word in the Bible, making it easier to study themes or do a word study. It lists where each word appears in Scripture and sometimes includes the original Greek or Hebrew word.

Why use a concordance?

When you want to study a specific theme or word, such as "grace" or "forgiveness," a concordance helps you find every verse that mentions it. This gives you a more comprehensive understanding of how the word or theme is used throughout Scripture.

How to use a concordance:

- Search for a word like "faith" using an online concordance at Bible Hub.
- Explore how "faith" is used in different books of the Bible, like Hebrews 11, where faith is described as the foundation of our hope.
- Compare how different authors and contexts in Scripture present faith to gain a fuller picture of its importance.

4. Study Bibles: A Comprehensive Resource in One Place

A study Bible combines the biblical text with built-in notes, cross-references, and explanations to help readers understand Scripture more easily. Study Bibles often include introductions to each book, historical background, cultural insights, and theological commentary, making them an all-in-one resource for deeper Bible study.

Why use a Study Bible?

A study Bible is like having a commentary, lexicon, and concordance built into the text. It's a great place to start because it provides basic context and explanations alongside the Scripture, helping you grasp difficult passages or themes without switching between multiple resources. It also includes scriptures to cross-reference.

How to use a study Bible:

- Choose a study Bible like the ESV Study Bible, or the NIV Life Application Study Bible.
- As you read through a passage—like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7—refer to the footnotes and side notes to learn about the historical background, cultural customs, and theological significance.
- Use cross-references to explore related Scriptures that reinforce the message or teaching of the passage.

Bringing It All Together: A Step-by-Step Guide

Here's an example of how to combine these tools in your study of a well-known passage, like Philippians 4:6-7, which says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

1. Start with a Study Bible: Read Philippians 4:6-7 in a study Bible to get an overview of the passage's meaning and its context within Paul's letter to the Philippians.
2. Use a Lexicon: Look up keywords like "anxious" and "peace" in a Greek lexicon using [Blue Letter Bible](#) to see their original meanings.
3. Read a Commentary: Check a commentary on [Enduring Word](#) to learn more about Paul's circumstances and why he emphasized peace in this letter to the Philippians.

4. Use a Concordance: Search for the word "peace" in a concordance on [Bible Hub](#) to find other verses that speak about peace, such as John 14:27, where Jesus promises His peace to His followers.

By using these tools together, you'll gain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of Scripture—one that allows you to engage deeply with God's Word.

Recommended Websites to Get Started:

- [Bible Gateway](#): Offers various Bible translations, commentaries, and study tools.
- [Blue Letter Bible](#): Features lexicons, commentaries, word studies, and more.
- [Bible Hub](#): Provides concordances, commentaries, and lexicons.
- [Enduring Word](#): A trusted source for verse-by-verse commentary.
- [The Bible Project](#): Offers visual guides to understanding themes and books of the Bible.
- Phone/Table apps: Strong's Concordance, The Bible App, Matthew Henry Commentary, Logos bible study app, Bible Project Blue Letter Bible

Studying the Bible isn't just about gaining knowledge; it's about growing closer to God. By using lexicons, commentaries, concordances, and Study Bibles, you'll be better equipped to understand the Scriptures in their original context and apply their truths to your life. Whether you're just beginning or have been studying the Bible for years, these tools provide a solid foundation to help you go deeper in your faith journey.

Happy studying!