

Meaningful Bible Study

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Tim 2:15

Meaningful Bible Study

by Carl Graham

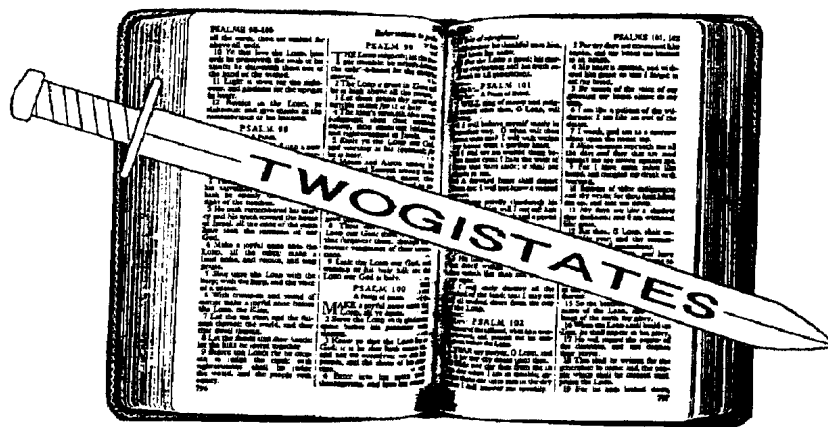
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TWOGISTATES Publishers advocate the King James Bible
as the best source for God's Word in English



For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any
twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of
soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a
discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

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MEANINGFUL BIBLE STUDY

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Isaiah 28:9-10

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

MEANINGFUL BIBLE STUDY

Introduction

The first requirement for meaningful Bible study is the student must be a born again Christian. Secondly, there must be a burning desire to want to learn what God has said to mankind. Thirdly, you must approach the study with a proper attitude. Fourthly, the student must have the proper tools with which to perform the study.

Being born again is absolutely necessary for one to understand God's Word. In this day of easy believism and universal salvation, too many people try to study the Bible but find they cannot understand it because they have not been saved. If one has not experienced salvation, the divine power of the Holy Spirit is not in him, and there is no way he can even begin to understand the truths of the Scriptures.

The burning desire to study God's Word comes about only because a person truly loves God. This love will naturally manifest itself in a lifelong dedication to studying the Bible and learning more about God and His message. To love God is to love His Word.

The proper attitude and preparation for Bible study is extremely important. The first thing to do is to find a quiet place where you can be alone with God. The second is to get closer to God with a time of prayer. The third is to focus your study as God leads you in a particular direction. Fortify all of this with a firm belief that the Bible is God's inerrant Word and that you will accept everything it reveals to you.

Regarding Bible study tools, one needs as a minimum a Bible, a language compatible Bible concordance, and a language compatible dictionary for the particular Bible version being used. I recommend only the 1769 Edition of the 1611 King James Version of the Bible (KJB) because all modern English versions have been corrupted by the ungodly theories of unbelieving scholars.

A Few Cautions

Do not accept everything that calls itself Christian at face value. There are many unsaved and confused people in the land today who have messages, which sound as if they come from the Bible, but in reality they come from their own imaginations, or even worse Satan himself.

Don't be led astray by the titles and popularity of many who call themselves experts in the religious community. You can't always determine a person's Christian credentials by reading his/her writings. Look beyond the obvious to find out exactly what a person believes regarding the doctrines of God's Word. If they don't prove to be a strong believer in the inspiration of the Scripture, you can't expect them to take a strong stand on the super naturalness of the Bible.

Don't be misled by those who flaunt great religious experiences as if it sets them apart in a special category of Christian giants. These people seem to be able to get a big following without any challenge to the source of their experiences. They often lead people away from the true God and divert the true meaning of the Bible to suit their own ideas. Try all things by the Scriptures, and if they don't measure up, they are not from God.

Make sure of your own salvation. If you have tried and tried to understand the Bible, but just can't seem to grasp it, you may not be saved. God's Word is not complicated, but it does require one to be born again to receive it. If you are not sure of your salvation, talk to your pastor and he will help you understand that there is a way to have assurance. When all doubt is cleared up, Bible study will take on new dimensions.

Study Aids

Listed below are some study aids that are most helpful. Most of these can be purchased from any reputable religious bookstore. If you have access to a computer, I recommend the e-Sword Bible study program. It's basic programs are provided with this booklet and it may also be acquired on the internet at e-sword.com. The study aids listed below are all available for the e-Sword program.

1. **A King James Bible** with cross-references is very useful for a quick look at related Scriptures, but detailed cross-reference is best accomplished using a concordance. Be aware that popular references Bibles, such as Scofield and Thompson, while having many helpful notes, are filled with notes that support modern day apostasy in regards to the manuscript issue.

2. **A concordance** that permits the student to find any text in the Scriptures is essential. There are several available. However, make sure you are purchasing one that is King James Bible based as concordances use different words depending on the specific version they support.

a. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance** – I highly recommend the Strong's concordance. It not only has an excellent scriptural reference system, it also has a numerical reference coding that allows the student to look up the meaning of each individual Hebrew and Greek word in the King James Bible.

b. **Cruden's Complete Concordance** – Cruden's concordance, while not as comprehensive as some, can be very useful in finding various references. However, it is small in size and is excellent for a quick reference desk copy.

c. Young's **Bible Concordance** - While not as complete as Strong's Concordance, it has excellent cross-reference material.

d. **Nelson's Bible Commentary** - This is a three-in-one commentary in that it has the meaning for the word, Scripture reference and, the Hebrew or Greek meaning all together.

3. **Dictionary** (Bible and secular)

a. I personally like **Smith's Bible Dictionary** because it is structured around the KJB and doesn't have all the theological "gobbledygook" that the more modern ones have. It also has maps and other pertinent Bible information that is useful in Bible study.

b. Any good secular dictionary is satisfactory.

4. **Bible Commentary.**

a. **Halley's Handbook of the Bible** – Halley's Handbook is an excellent quick reference for the student. It gives a short explanation of the Scriptures and other useful information such as church history.

b. **Matthew Henry's Commentary** – Even though Matthew Henry's writings are aged, his thoughts and expositions provide excellent insight, which leads to deeper understanding of the Scripture.

c. **H. A. Ironsides Commentaries** – Ironsides' writings are very concise and well written. I highly recommend them for more extensive study. Most religious bookstores won't have these in stock but should be able to order them.

d. **Oliver Green's Commentaries** – I have found Oliver Green's writings to be biblically based and well researched. They are excellent for detailed and precise Bible study. They are not available in religious bookstores but may be ordered from The Gospel Hour, PO Box 2024, Greenville, South Carolina 29602.

5. **Other aids**

a. **Naves Topical Bible** – A Topical Bible is an excellent aid to Bible study. It presents all the Scriptures about a particular subject in a composite setting. You only have to look up the particular subject you are interested in and all the Scriptures relating to that subject are presented as they appear in the Bible.

b. **Herbert Lockyer's "All" Series** – Lockyer has taken about every subject and doctrine of the Bible and explained it in minute detail from his viewpoint. His books are highly recommended for detailed study of a specific subject.

c. **Maps** – Bible maps are invaluable for detailed Bible study. They help identify the specific locations of particular events as you study which adds immeasurably to your understanding of the Scripture.

d. **People and Customs** – Many books are available which present the people and customs of biblical times. Information in these areas helps one to understand the meaning of many of the Bible passages and adds richness to Bible study.

e. **Pictures** – Pictures and videos of the Holy Land give a feeling of awe and provide visual references as one studies about the places where the characters of the Bible lived and traveled. Visual references are especially informative when used in conjunction with corresponding maps.

f. **Holy Land trip** – An actual trip to the Holy Land would be beneficial as many of the biblical sites are as they were when Jesus walked the earth. A trip such as this will not only be educational, it will also strengthen your faith.

g. **Computer based information** – If you have access to a computer, there are several good Bible study software programs on the market. I personally use the e-Sword Bible Study Program as mentioned earlier. One of its greatest assets is that it allows direct transfer of any Bible verse directly into most word processing programs. It also has several Bible versions and other useful reference material. This type of program allows quick reference to any part of the Bible and will be a tremendous aid to meaningful Bible study.

Approaches to Bible Study

There are several approaches to Bible study and each of these have a specific goal in mind. The possibilities are unlimited.

1. **Pleasure** – Reading the Bible for pleasure is not really study per-se, but is a practical means of fulfillment as a Christian. It is a pleasure to read your favorite passages over and over again. It is a thrill to experience the Words of God as they speak to you. I recommend a Bible based daily devotional that you read for pleasure. It will help you focus your thoughts toward God and lead you into a closer walk with Him.

2. **Systematic** – Systematic Bible study is basically a structured program to read or study through the entire Bible in a certain time frame. The most popular of these is a daily reading schedule to completely read the Bible in one year. Another of these schemes is used in planned Sunday school literature to cover the Bible in a certain period of time such as five years. I recommend systematically reading through the Bible at least once a year. If you would like a free daily reading plan to aid you in this quest, contact TWOGISTATES Publishers, 759 Wheeler Drive, Angier, NC 27501, or e-mail me at carlgraham@mindspring.com.

3. **Word** – As this implies, a specific word is researched throughout the Bible to study its application and usage in various places. Keep in mind that words spelled

exactly the same may have different meanings depending on their specific application. For example, one passage may use “sword” as a weapon for fighting while another may use it to describe God’s Word. It also helps to look up the particular word being studied in both Bible and secular dictionaries.

4. **Topic or Theme** – A topic or theme of the Bible may be studied as an isolated subject of special interest. A concordance is necessary to find all the references to whatever is being studied. However, keep in mind that sometimes the subject is not listed exactly as you are identifying it. This is where the *Naves Topical Bible* comes in especially helpful. For example, look at the topic of “anger”. The first reference has to do with Cain’s countenance being fallen, which means the same as anger, but does not use the specific word. Other words used to express anger such as wrath, judgment, haughty, and malice must also be considered to get full understanding of the subject.

5. **Bible Book** – Systematically working through a book in God’s Word is most rewarding. I suggest that you include a preliminary study of the person responsible for recording the particular book to give you insight to the kinds of people God used to document His Word. The more information you have about how the particular book came about and the circumstances under which it was written will help considerably in understanding its contents. It also helps greatly to have a good outline of the book under scrutiny.

6. **Person** – This is picking out a specific person and looking at all the Scriptures that apply to him or her. Sometimes an external source on some of the characters can be located which enhances the biblical information. Much can be gleaned from the lives of such people as Jesus, Moses, or John the Baptist. Look up all the occurrences of the person in the Bible, and start from there. The study of people in the Bible, both good and bad, is unlimited and brings forth much personal growth.

Principles of Study

Always study with an attitude that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that you are going to believe it whether you understand it or not. If you take this approach, God will give you insight to the truths of His Word as you continue to grow in faith. I can’t emphasize strongly enough that you should never doubt God’s Word. Doubt will not only weaken your faith, it will also cause you to drift away from God and His work. Satan is behind any thought of doubting God’s Word.

Always study in context. This means to look at the verses preceding and following a particular verse and place it in its proper setting. Drawing conclusions from an isolated Scripture may lead one to believe untruths about the Bible and lead down a wrong path. Taking Scripture out of context is a favorite method of Satan and his crowd in an attempt to deceive people. He tried this deception on Jesus during the wilderness temptation, but with no success. All the cults specialize in this misuse of God’s Word.

Always determine who is being addressed. Sometimes the Jewish law is the subject, and the Jews who are misinterpreting the law are the ones being addressed. Keep in mind that the Jews of Jesus' day were highly legalistic and were placing great burdens on the Jewish people. We can see evidence of this in the record of Jesus confronting them with the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12.

Always distinguish between literal and figurative situations. As one becomes more founded in basic biblical doctrines, it becomes much easier to distinguish between literal and figurative situations. Literal situations are those that are to be taken literally. They are events that actually happened or expressions from the Scriptures that contain unmistakable directions from God. Literal situations are generally easy to identify and understand, but figurative situations are more difficult for they present a message beyond the actual words. Be cautious that you don't apply figurative interpretations to Scripture where the meaning is to be taken literally.

The following definitions identify some figurative situations that are commonly found in the Bible.

a. **Parable** (pa-ra-ble) – This is a short concise story that conveys a spiritual meaning or lesson. It is earthly stories that convey a heavenly lesson in a short concise manner. For example, look at the parable of the mustard seed in Luke 13:18-19. “ Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.” It is referring here to the small number of believers at the beginning of the Christian faith which shall end in large multitudes just like the growth of the mustard seed tree from a small seed.

b. **Metaphor** (me-ta-phor) – The Bible presents a metaphor by comparing two things and identifying one of them so that a comparison may be made. For example, where it says that you are the salt of the earth, it means that the Christian is to influence the world just as salt seasons the food. When Jesus talked about separating the sheep from the goats, he is addressing separating the saved from the unsaved at the end of time.

c. **Simile** (sim-i-le) – A simile compares two things to make the point. For example, when Jesus said, “I send you forth as a sheep in the midst of wolves”, He is warning us how the Christian will be treated in the world. Just as sheep are in danger of being devoured in the midst of wolves without the shepherd to protect them, we Christians are in danger of being led astray by the world without the Good Shepherd to protect us.

d. **Analogy** (anal-o-gy) – An analogy is a comparison of two things so that one explains the other. For example in 1 Corinthians 1:18 it is written, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”. This statement compares the understanding of the purpose of the

cross of Christ between the saved and the unsaved. The saved know about its saving power; the unsaved think it is foolishness.

e. **Hyperbole** (hy-per-bo-le) – A hyperbole is an exaggeration to attract attention. For example, in Matthew 7:3 Jesus said, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye”. The mote (a small particle) is being compared to a beam (a large piece of wood) to illustrate the foolishness of self-righteousness.

f. **Anthropomorphism** (an-thro-po-mor-phism) – The word, anthropomorphism, basically means that the Bible is ascribing human characteristics to God so that we humans may begin to grasp God’s characteristics. God does not have a human body, He is spirit, but the Bible tells about God’s ear, voice, hand, etc. so that we may begin to grasp, from a human standpoint, the significance of God’s dealing with humankind.

Remember the law of first mention. If you have a question about the meaning of a particular Scripture, go back to the first time it is mentioned in the Bible and apply that meaning to the questioned passage. It works every time.

Ready to Start

Now that you know all about the paraphernalia and techniques of Bible study, how do you start to actually begin?

1. **You must know how to locate each book of the Bible.** Take time to memorize all the books in the order they appear in the Bible. A tabbed index Bible will help the novice to locate the books as they begin to memorize them. Look up the books in the index to help you get oriented at first. Get a book marker with all the books listed. Put the page number for each book by its name and place it in your Bible. Keep a list handy and go it several times each day. As you study and practice, it won’t take long for you to be able to immediately locate any book you are searching for.

2. **Get familiar with your reference material.** Get to know all your study materials in such detail that you will be familiar enough with the contents to know the approximate location of what you are looking for. For example, if you didn’t know that the dictionary presented words in alphabetical order, you would have difficulty in finding any word you may be searching for.

3. **Determine exactly what you are looking for** before you start, otherwise, you’ll spend time trying to decide what you want to do. For example, if you are researching the Holy Spirit, you should decide which aspects of the Holy Spirit you are interested in such as baptism of the Holy Spirit, filling with the Holy Spirit, coming of the Holy Spirit, and etc.

4. **Make notes as you go** so that you can easily assimilate the information you have gathered. You may find that some of your references do not support your subject but similar words and expressions are used to express different thoughts. Take for example the word “children.” Where the Bible speaks of the children of Israel in Genesis 32:32, it has a totally different meaning than the little children Jesus was addressing in Matthew 19:4.

5. **Evaluate the information** in light of known truths and doctrines of the Bible. For example, if you are looking into baptism and read Acts 2:38 as an isolated Scripture, you may come to the conclusion that one has to be baptized to be saved. Since this does not agree with the rest of the Scripture in regard to salvation, it must be interpreted beyond what it appears to be saying. Another example is found in 1 John 3:9 which speaks of Christians not sinning. This must be interpreted in light of 1 John 3:2 which speaks of our being like Him. Certainly, we won’t sin in our glorified body, and you must also take into account 1 John 1:10 which says that if we say we haven’t sinned, we make God a liar.

6. **If you don’t understand something**, discuss it with someone you can trust such as your pastor or a close friend who is well versed in the Scriptures. Often times someone who disagrees with you can cause you to delve further into the Word. However, I’d be careful about discussing the meaning of Scripture with just anyone because too many people think their opinions are paramount to the Scriptures. Always back up anything anybody says with God’s Word and you can’t go wrong.

7. **Practice what you have learned** by sharing it with others. It’ll bring you new insights and sometimes will cause you to moderate your original thinking. Take caution as you share your insights because everybody will not agree with what the Bible says. Some have made up their minds about certain things and don’t care what the Bible has to say about it. Don’t be confused by opinions; know what the Bible says about any particular subject and be firm in your beliefs.

8. **Never argue about what the Bible means.** This is an old trick of the unbelievers. They try to get the believer into an argument and then confuse the issue. Keep away from these kinds of people. If you allow yourself to argue with them, you are stepping down to their level. Know what you believe and why you believe it, but don’t expect to convince Satan and his crowd of anything.

9. **Never waste you time on unanswerable questions.** The unbelievers always like to ask such questions as, “Where did Cain get his wife,” or “Who were the sons of God in Genesis 6:3?” If God had wanted us to know such things as these He would have told us. Trying to explain the mysteries of the Bible to unbelievers is a waste of time. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “Don’t cast your pearls among the swine.”

10. **Keep in mind that Bible study is a lifelong process.** You never learn all it has to teach. You’ll find as you grow in the faith that old familiar Scriptures will always

have new and fresh meanings that give you greater insight into God's will for your life. Make yourself a nonnegotiable resolution that you will study the Bible reverently and regularly throughout your life. It'll bless you here on earth and prepare you for the heaven to come.

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APPENDIX 1

E-Sword Bible Study Program Information

The included e-Sword Bible Study Program contains the following files:

The file listed as e-sword 785.exe is the primary program which also includes the King James Bible with Strong's numbers, Strong's Dictionary, and Strong's Concordance.

e-Sword Tutorial Manual in PDF format.	King James Bible without Strong's numbers.
Matthew Henry's Commentary.	Naves Topical Bible.
King James Bible 1611 Edition	Smiths Dictionary.
King James Bible Dictionary	Strong's Dictionary
King James Bible with Strong's numbers.	Many other files may be downloaded at e-sword.com

To install the main e-Sword program load the CD and double click on setup 785.exe. and follow instructions. All other files may be extracted automatically by double clicking the desired file on the CD. After you download them they must be "run" to complete their installation. Install all resources into the e-Sword program directory. Minimal system requirements include:

- Windows 95, 98, ME, NT4, 2000, XP, or Vista
- Pentium based PC (or equivalent)
- Best viewed in 800 x 600 resolution or greater

The e-Sword Bible Study Program is provided by Rick Myers free of charge, but he needs donations to keep the site going. Send all donations to e-Sword, 5902 Parham Road, Franklin, TN 37064.

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