

Tools for Bible Study

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[0:00] 2 Timothy 2 verse 15.

Just the one verse there, it says, Study to show thyself approved unto God, O workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2 verse 15. Study to show thyself approved unto God. This message is about tools for Bible study.

Tools that we can use for Bible study. There's only two ways you can study the Bible. Studying it with your mind made up, or studying it to let it make up your mind.

And the Lord calls us to be diligent students of the word of God. Study it, says. Study to show yourself approved. Workman, unashamed, rightly dividing his word.

[0:55] Now this message might seem elementary to some. Elementary truths really. For new Christians really, you could say.

But it's a good time of refreshing and thinking about, as well as for those that are younger in the faith today, what are those tools that are needful for me to help me to be a workman?

I know we've got some budding mechanics in our presence here today. They're telling me about fixing his car. Our brother Vic there. And how he had to climb underneath it and sort out a problem. He had to have some tools for the job.

And likewise for the Bible study, the Bible student should have some tools to be equipped to be a workman of the word. And some may consider that they can get by without obtaining tools to aid the study of God's word.

Of course we know absolutely the word of God itself is the best of any tool, of any source. And we're not to deny that.

[1:53] But it can be a mistake that Christians can make to think that they can grow in the knowledge of God's word without making some application, without making some effort, without having some tools to help them with that work of study.

And to obtain the tools to do the job. And so this message is also in part about spending money. Spending money. Spending money.

Now a lot of churches can talk about spending money. Something that people can get very touchy about. Some people can be very miserly and stingy about what they spend their money on. It's good to be frugal and not wasteful.

But some items are things that you could regard as essential basic equipment for the Christian worker. And this is what this message is all about. I urge you today to obtain the tools so that you young men, young women, older men, older women, young Christians, older Christians can have the tools that you need to help you to grow as a Christian.

That's what it's all about. It's very important for the growth of your Christian life. The question is, what do you spend your money on? What do you spend your money on? This is what the car looks like when Julie comes home from shopping.

[3:06] You know, it's just piled up with all the everything money can buy. Some people are like that, aren't they? When it comes to every decision in life, each of us have to make choices.

Choices about what do we put our money into? What is important to us? And often we show that by where our money ends up. And it's often evident by what we spend our money on, by how generously we give unto the Lord's work, and by how we invest in our own spiritual war.

And the question is, what is important to you? It will show you by what you do with your money. Matthew 6.20 it says, But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust are corrupt, and where things do not break through nor steal.

So, make a wise investment. Here's another picture. This was last night's meal. This was my, this is what I had for tea last night. Which one? You know, we can choose to spend our money on things that don't do us much good.

Amen? And all the men said, Amen. You can choose to buy things that are not good for you. Or you can choose to spend your money on what's beneficial for you.

[4:20] What will help you? There was a former US ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, and he was urging the graduating class of a university in Maryland to get a Bible.

He says, get a Bible. Read a chapter every day. He says, it won't hurt you at all, and it will give you more illumination and purpose in life. It's better to invest \$15 in a Bible now than \$25 an hour for a psychiatrist later.

Read the Bible, he says. Make a wise investment. And good Bible reference books are a wise investment if you truly take your Christian life and your faith in Christ seriously.

It's an investment for your soul and your spiritual life. So invest in a good Bible. Invest in a good Bible. Now, of special importance is the kind of Bible that you choose.

Now, you can see from this picture here of how you want to get a Bible that can take a bit of punishment. Get a Bible that can take a bit of wear and tear that you can use and abuse.

[5:28] That's got wear and tear in it. So it's got good binding. It's got a good quality to it. You know, if you can afford, get a genuine leather Bible. Genuine leather Bible, not just a bonded leather one.

It will stand the test of times. And especially important is make sure it's a King James Bible. A King James Bible. This is the most accurate translation of the best and reliable manuscripts of the reliable majority text.

So it's the text that 95% of the Greek texts support the Bible text that underlies the King James Bible.

And the King James Bible is the Bible that upholds the deity of Christ. So the Godhood of Jesus Christ. There is no substitute for a King James Bible.

And next one is try to look for a study Bible. A study Bible. Now, some of these pictures show certain Bibles or authors.

[6:31] I don't necessarily endorse every product in its entirety. This is just a guide. It's just a guide. It's important that every Bible student chooses very carefully.

Choose very carefully the tools that you use, the sources that they come from. It can be helpful really to have more than one study Bible. So you can compare and contrast.

This may include, for example, a King James study Bible. It could be a Thompson Chain reference Bible, which is also useful, or an open Bible. There's lots of different Bible study Bibles that you can get.

But think about it again, just to harp back, what do you spend your money on? You might think, oh, the Bible I've got is good enough. This one that I've had for donkey's years.

Find a Bible that you can study, that you can dig deep into, that's got references, that's got that resource. Study, it says, to show thyself approved unto God.

[7:29] There's a comparison been made about Bible study, that you can be like an explorer or like a tourist. Like a tourist, they travel quickly across the place.

They stop only to observe the noticeable sites and the items of interest. Maybe those that were in the information guide at the tourist centre.

A tourist travels like that. And then the explorer, instead, the explorer takes the effort to, the time and the effort to search out all that he can find.

Too many of us read the Bible like a tourist, just passing through, just the kind of noteworthy things. Let's instead be an explorer who digs deep beneath the surface.

So think about it. Try to search out and find for yourself a good study Bible that contains footnotes and helpful references and word definitions that can aid your study.

[8:27] Now sound theology is important too. Sound theology. It's been said that the Bible is so deep that theologians can never touch the bottom, yet so shallow that babes cannot drown.

The Bible is rich. It's rich in content, in the resource of it. You can dig deeper and deeper and mine the wealth of it without ever running out of things to discover.

And what's important is the sound theology that underlies the material that you use to study the Bible. You know, I was searching for pictures and information to prepare for this talk today.

And there's lots of resources. There's lots of kinds of Bibles out there. There's lots of kinds of Bibles. You can find all manner of variety of Bibles.

And there's different qualities. There's different sources. There's different information. There's doctrinal bias in everything and every source.

[9:30] So we need to be discerning with whatever resource or study aid that we use. And there are many materials out there with a faulty doctrinal basis. We need to be very aware of this, that some reference Bibles can have false doctrine in the margins of footnotes.

So be wary of that. Ensure that your Bible, if you get a study Bible, ensure that it's a reference that has a foundation in historic evangelical Christianity.

And not false modernistic latter day movements. Another important point is find a Bible ideally that's got cross-references. It's got cross-references in it.

Now what that means is you can use the Bible to interpret the Bible. The Bible is the best interpreter of itself. So you can compare Scripture with Scripture.

For example, if you're looking at a verse that had the word peace in it, it might have a cross-reference to other verses that have got the word peace in it. So you can compare and contrast and search from one to the other.

[10:35] As I was saying, like the Thompson Chain Reference Bible, you can go through a whole series of relevant notes. And the Bible itself is its own best interpreter.

The way that we can avoid the mistake of taking one verse out of context and using it as a proof text as the cults can do. It's like it's been said, if you take the text out of the context, all you're left with is a con.

That's what happens with cults. They take verses out of context. They cut and paste as it were to suit their own theology. But the Bible has to be taken in its context, in its reference.

For example, I heard it said that there was a Bible verse on a Christmas card that said, this Revelation 11.10, it said, they exchanged gifts and made merry.

But the verse there is talking about the rejoicing over the death of God's two witnesses. So it's quite irrelevant to use such a text, Revelation 11.10 on a Christmas card.

[11:39] Certainly way out of context. So take it in its context and use cross-references. Another thing is look after your Bible. Look after your Bible. You might want to get a Bible case.

Have a case to put your Bible in down at the Christian bookshops. Again, this is elementary stuff. But if you're a new Christian, you may not know some of this stuff. Get a Bible case to put your Bible in.

So you can carry it around with you and you can have it to take where you go. Make an effort to care for your Bible. Buy a Bible case for it or get one that's got a zip around it.

So it's all keeping it safe and secure. But on the other side too, don't be afraid to mark your Bible. Mark your Bible. Underline it. Get the pen out and underline those verses that speak to you.

Those verses that you want to find again. Highlight them. Get a highlighter pen and highlight those verses that you want to find again quickly and refer back to. Mark the verses you want to reference.

[12:39] And then with the Bible, it's needful that you think about your devotional life. This is a book that God speaks to us by. Not by latter-day prophets, but by the finished Word of God, the complete canon of Scripture.

Look after your Bible and think about how can I study the Bible for myself and get what I need to gain from it. Ask prayerfully when you reach for your Bible.

Ask prayerfully for the Lord to help you, to guide you as you study it. Because 1 Corinthians 2.14 it says, But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.

Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. Now this book is spiritually discerned. We need to ask the Holy Spirit who will lead us into all truth, who will guide us into truth.

Ask the Holy Spirit to make it understandable to lead us into all truth, to give us the guidance that we need. And we can strive to make application for it.

[13:45] The Bible is meaningful. It's God's love letter to man. As someone put it, the key to victory is, it is written. It is written. When you're searching for answers, when you're wanting victory, it is written.

That's the answer. It's in here. Brothers and sisters, so these things are spiritually discerned. Find some Bible devotionals, some daily devotionals that help you get in the habit of daily study.

Get in the habit of opening your Bible every day, if possible. Get in the habit of having a Bible that you read. It's like it's been said, the best Bible is a red Bible.

Now I've got a black one here. We're not talking about the colour of it. We're talking about reading it. The best Bible is a red Bible, one that you read. Read it regularly. Treasure it, if possible on a daily basis.

Read it here. And you can read through the whole Bible in one year by reading less than twelve minutes a day. Could you spare twelve minutes a day? Could you?

[14:50] I'm sure you could. You can average four chapters a day or so. You can read through the whole Bible in one year. Now there's some helpful daily reading plans that you can get, again, or helpful resources such as Our Daily Bread or other kind of daily Bible study guides that can help you to do this.

Less than 12 minutes a day. Now as you read too, someone put it like this, it's a helpful kind of thing to provoke you when you study the Bible for yourself and you know it by the acronym SAFEPAC. SAFEPAC. It's seven things. If I can count, four, five, six, eight things. Eight things. The word SAFEPAC. Is there S, a sin to avoid?

A, action to do. F, faith to exercise. E, example to follow. P, a promise to claim. A, attitude to change.

C, challenge to meet. K, key to victory. Think of that. As you read the Bible, is there a sin to avoid in this passage that I'm reading? Is there an action to do? Is there a faith to exercise?

[16:05] Is there an example to follow? A promise to claim? An attitude to change? A challenge to meet? A key to victory? Ask God to help you to make it relevant, make it real, make it applicable and apply it.

For example, our daily bread is free. It can prompt you to a daily reading to dig deeper into the meaning of the passage. And how is your devotional life? MacArthur said, I have found that my spiritual growth is directly proportionate to the amount of time and effort I put into the study of Scripture.

Your Christian life depends on your study of Scripture. It's very much tied to it. Some other basic tools. Again, this is elementary stuff.

Many of you may already know this. I trust that if you don't, you'll go out and get yourself a concordance. Go and buy yourself a Bible concordance down at the Bible bookshop.

There's a couple of Bible bookshops in Adelaide. Go and buy yourself a Bible concordance. There's two of them, essentially. There's the Strong's or the Young's.

[17:10] And it's an important tool for every Christian to have. By concordance, you can look up references to key words. And topics.

And study about a topic or a person. And look up the word. And also at the back of, for example, the Strong's concordance, there's a dictionary that will outline the different shades of meaning to help you to understand what it translates to.

Another thing is you can explore word meanings through other resources, for example, like a Vines expository dictionary. This is not as critical because some of that is found in the back of a Strong's concordance.

But a dictionary such as the Vines, which is the most common one, gives you information about the Bible words. So you can dig deep and find more meaning and more shades of meaning about the Bible word that you're reading in your Bible.

And find out more about the detail of what that word can be understood to mean. So the Bible, it's a mine of wealth.

[18:17] It can never be exhausted. Explore word meanings. Another useful resource is an interlinear Bible. An interlinear Bible.

Now again, this is not something that is probably an essential item. But it can be useful to have an interlinear. So with an interlinear, you can see it's got different, in this part here it's got the Greek. It's got the Greek with underneath each Greek word is the English word meaning. And then it's got the King James Bible here. So one you can get is this one called the Berry.

The Berry King James Interlinear. Interlinear King James by George Ricker Berry. That's one of them. Another one is by J.P. Green. J.P. Green, which is the Hebrew and Greek Bible.

And an interlinear can help you because it shows the English word matched against the Greek word or the Hebrew word. And tells you, and you can search and dig deep into those word meanings.

[19:24] Another resource to have is a Bible dictionary. It's another essential tool for every Christian. So have a Bible dictionary so that when you're searching through the Bible, you can find out certain topics.

You can explore the topic. And find out more about those particular subjects or things you've got questions about. The most common one is Smith's Bible Dictionary or Unger's Bible Dictionary. There's many out there. Find a Bible dictionary that you can use and put into application. As a student of God's word, sometimes it can help to refer to what other people have studied and learned and have given to us in commentaries.

These are not essential things, but they're useful things. They may be useful to give insights and explanation. When you come across a Bible verse and you just can't be sure what that might mean or refer to, having a commentary can help.

We again need to be careful because every reference material has got a certain doctrinal foundation to it.

[20:36] And so we need to be aware about what is behind it. A good devotional commentary can be, for example, the Matthew Henry's commentary, which is a devotional Bible commentary.

You know, when it comes to understanding the Bible, there was a young theological student, he queried Spurgeon one day about some verses that he could not understand. And he was worried about that.

He was worried that he couldn't understand the Bible verses. Spurgeon said, Young man, allow me to give you a bit of advice. You must expect God to know some things that you do not understand. We will not necessarily be able to understand every single reference that we can find in here.

There's some things that we won't fully understand till glory, but we can search the scriptures as we are told to meantime.

Another reference source is manners and customs. When reading through the Bible, it's good to know the historical, cultural context of what it's talking about. So you know when someone's getting their feet washed, why that is happening, for example.

[21:41] Because it's the tradition, because it's the culture of the day, the cultural context of where the passage sits, of what the book's about. Bible help, such as Bible handbooks, are useful.

They give further insights into what's happening in the timeline of scripture and the activities, what they're meaning, the biblical culture and practices. Another resource is a lexicon.

A lexicon is like a dictionary that gives you the words in the original tongue of Hebrew or Greek.

Then you can find the English variant meanings. An excellent lexicon is found, for example, in the back of a Zodiaci's Bible.

A Zodiaci's Bible is a very good Bible. I'd recommend that one. As a good reference source, it's got a very good lexicon in the back of it. Which is very useful, I've found. Next is interpretation.

When we're reading the Bible, it's important to think about what's called the technical term, hermeneutics. So it's about interpreting the Bible, the doctrine of interpreting the Bible.

[22:49] And some passages in the Bible are symbolic. So when you hear about, for example, in Revelation, where it's got great beasts flying around, some of that is in a symbolic way, referring to nations and rulers of the end days and so on.

So we need to be alert to the fact that some things are what are called types. Where it's a type, it's a picture, it's an illustration of a Bible truth, of a Bible concept.

For example, Noah's Ark. Noah's Ark represents Christ and his salvation. Of course, it was very rarely a boat in the midst of a flood that saved the people of the day. But for us, in looking back, the Ark pictures for us Christ and the safety that a believer has in coming into Christ, in being in Christ, you are safe from the judgment that the world faces. If you are in the Ark, you are safe. And that's what a type means. It's a picture of a spiritual truth. And so it's helpful if you search out books that explain things to do with Bible types and interpretation.

[24:01] Another thing to consider is where are we in the church history, in the history of the Bible? For example, this is just one illustration of that. For example, you see here the beginning, eternity past, before there was anything.

Then the world was created and there was the world of the flood here. Then the present age here, you've got the church dispensation.

And then you've got the second coming and the millennium and eternity future. Where are we in history? It's very important. Think of the Bible timelines or some would call it dispensations. There's a fact of different dealings of God with man. God dealt with Noah differently than he dealt with Abraham, for example, and with Moses.

They had different dealings and then with the church. There's a different dispensation. There's a different dealing of God with man. And as we see in the end times too, there'll be a different dispensation, a different dealing of God with man.

[25:09] And so thinking about the Bible, think about where in history am I when I'm reading this. There's verses in here that tell us about slaying lambs and of certain offerings and so on.

That is not for our day. That was for that day. Now there's one sacrifice. Once for all, Christ has been sacrificed for us.

We're in that dispensation beyond the cross. And so there's a different dealing with man. So we need to understand when we're reading the Bible, who is this speaking to? What timeline are they in?

What time period in history? The Bible says in Romans 15, 4, it says, For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

So it says there to you and I today, these things are written for our learning. This is for us. But it may not be written to us. So, for example, some of the things that God instructed the Israelites to do are not written to us, but they're written for us, for our learning.

[26:26] So, again, whether it's written to the Jews or to the church, we need to have the context and be careful to take the verses in context. And so to have study material, it helps us to picture that, to realise that, the dispensations of God's dealings with man through Bible timelines and through history helps us to make it applicable, that which applies to us and that which is for our learning, that we can learn by example from and by prophecy.

And some things yet future still, but some things that we know are written here that are beyond today. They're yet to come. And so we can take note of that historical context.

And just lastly, if you do not have a computer, this would make it worth your while buying one. It would be worth your while to buy a computer just to have Bible software.

Now, we've got a computer salesman in our midst here. But really and truly, all these things that I've been talking about, these various resources that I've been talking about, you can get them for free and have them on your computer.

So, for example, there's a Bible software called eSword. And you can see here, for example, this is a screenshot of some helpful Bible software and there's other brands out there.

[27:49] But, for example, you've got all these different translations of the Bible that you can refer to. Now, at the moment, this tab here is on the King James. And you've got the Strong's number, the Strong's reference number on each word.

So you've got, for example, highlighted here the word *oma*, which is a measurement that was used. It was a form of measure. And then you've got down here, this is a Bible reference source, like a Bible dictionary.

It explains what that word means down here. And then you've got over here some further cross-references of where this word is used. And then you've got other commentaries up the top here that you can flick to.

And you can highlight a word. You can search a word. You can search a phrase. You can look up Bible dictionaries, commentaries, study notes. It's very useful and very helpful for every person. And so you might feel, look, I'm not computer literate. It's really not that difficult. Once you have some guidance to learn, this kind of material can be very helpful.

[29:00] And AirSword, for example, or Bible software such as this, is an excellent free resource. It gives you access to what would be literally hundreds of dollars' worth of books and materials that you can access.

So, again, if you don't have a computer, it might be worth you buying one just so you can access Bible software. And to have reference to these commentaries, dictionaries, atlases, etc.

Important just to close to think of all of these things that we've said. There's lots of resources you can use. But the best thing is an open Bible. An open Bible.

Now, I've been in Harton. I've visited Brother Ralph, Brother Ian, different ones. I've walked in and caught them by surprise. I walked into their living room. And they went there starry-eyed with a dazed expression pressing the remote at the time I walked in.

They had an open Bible in their living room. They had the Bible there and they had other tools there to study the Bible. They counted it as important to have the Bible open on their coffee table.

[30:09] And they were reading it. The best thing is an open Bible. That is what you need, brothers and sisters. Open your Bible. Don't have it dusty, sitting on the shelf, hidden away.

Have an open Bible. A Bible stored in the mind is worth a dozen stored in the bottom of one's trunk. Someone said, put it in your mind too. Meditate on it.

Memorise it. As it was read earlier, The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.

The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired. More to be desired. But are they then gold, yea, than much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.

[31:10] Friends, to close, well before us, an old-time man of God said, There are four things that we ought to do with the Word of God. Four things that we ought to do with the Word of God.

Admit it as the Word of God. Commit it to our hearts and minds. Submit to it. And transmit it to the world.

I'll repeat that. Admit it as the Word of God. Commit it to our hearts and minds. Submit to. Obey it. And transmit it to the world.

Get yourself a Bible. Get yourself a pocket New Testament. So you can have it on you. Take it with you. Wherever you go. But you have the Word that you can transmit it. You can tell others about it. Friends, to close, have an open Bible. I've been preaching to Christians this morning. It could be you're not a Christian yet. This might be a foreign language to you.

[32:09] The Bible, it says it's spiritually discerned. You need God's Spirit to show you. You need to be saved. So understand. I love to tell the story of haunting things above.

Of Jesus and His glory.