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How to Study the Bible (Part 1)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides insights on how to study the Bible effectively by discussing the importance of understanding the Bible correctly, attaching faith, familiarity with the Bible, choosing the right version, and considering translation philosophy and manuscript choice. He also highlights various resources such as annotated study Bibles, Greek and Hebrew dictionaries, and commentaries that can help in understanding the true meaning of the text. Thus, through disciplined study, Christians can gain essential knowledge of the Bible's teachings and enhance their spiritual growth.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to be talking about the study of the scriptures. This is the last part of our series. Many of you have not been in the earlier parts.

I just might say that we've been studying the authority of the scriptures. The first part of the series was simply apologetics, looking at the evidences that would give us reason to believe that the scriptures are, as they claim to be, the words of God, that the Bible is in fact inspired. We spent a good long time on that.

Then we talked about certain issues like how to apply scriptures to life. What I've been hoping would be the fruit of this whole enterprise would be that you would become more eager to study the Bible for yourself, more adept at thinking for yourself as you study the scriptures. By the way, when I talk about thinking for yourself, to me I just take it for granted that for people to think for themselves is a good thing.

I realize that in some religious institutions, for someone to think for themselves is not considered positive. Certainly, this was the case in the Roman Catholic Church for many, many centuries in the Dark Ages, that people who thought for themselves, especially concerning things of the Bible, people who actually read the Bible and allowed the Bible, God, to speak to them from his word, many times they reached different conclusions than those of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Eventually, this led to the Reformation.

But prior to the time of Luther, there were a great number of groups that did this. Most of them got burned at the stake and otherwise destroyed by the Spanish Inquisition and

so forth, because thinking for yourself was considered to be divisive. It was considered to be damaging to the unity of the Church.

There are cults today that are that way. Almost all the cults would be this way. One thing that makes a group a cult would be its highly authoritarian control over the thinking of its adherents.

I think, for example, of the boast that the Jehovah's Witnesses make, that they are the most unified Church and therefore they are the true Church, because Jesus prayed that his people would be unified. But the reason the Jehovah's Witnesses are unified is not because of some supernatural move of the Spirit of God among them. It is simply an enforced unity.

People are required to believe the same thing, and if they don't, all believe the same thing. If anyone begins to think for himself and reaches different conclusions, they are simply persona non grata in the organization they are excommunicated, and it keeps the organization pure. That way, everyone stays unified and thinking for yourself is considered to be dangerous.

One of the assumptions of the Protestant Reformation, which I believe in, but some of the Reformers really didn't believe in it as much as they thought they did, is that there is the doctrine of sola scriptura, which is Latin. It just means the Bible alone. Scripture alone as the ultimate authority in the life and the thinking and the behavior of Christians.

That means that organizations and human beings are not permitted in the mind of the true disciple of Christ to usurp the place of the Word of God as an authority in dictating what we will think or do. There was a related doctrine of the Reformation called the Purposcuity of Scripture, which basically is simply a fancy way of saying that the ordinary person with ordinary literacy and ordinary intelligence can understand the basic message of the Scripture without the intervention of scholars and priests and whatever. The message of Scripture is accessible to the common man.

These doctrines were both very contrary to that which had been official in the Roman Catholic Church for over a thousand years before Luther's time. Basically the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church was, and until very recently has still been, I think the Roman Catholics are becoming more open-minded about some of these things in my lifetime. I remember when I was a child the official Catholic position was somewhat tighter than it is now.

But for centuries the Catholic position was that if ordinary people read the Bible for themselves, they will not have the expertise to understand it correctly. I mean, the average ordinary person doesn't know Greek or Hebrew or Latin or Aramaic, and therefore they said, these Scriptures that are written in these archaic languages cannot really be understood but by those who have studied those languages and know. In other

words, the clergy, the scholars, the theologians, they alone really had the expertise to understand.

This is what the Roman Catholic Church taught about the Scriptures, and therefore for many centuries it was at best discouraged for people to read the Scriptures for themselves, and at worst is forbidden, and they were burned at the stake if they read it for themselves. There were times when certain popes actually tried to eliminate every copy of the Scriptures that wasn't chained to a Roman Catholic Church pulpit, so that people couldn't read them for themselves. And we know now why they didn't want people to do that, because there was a Catholic monk in an Augustinian monastery named Martin Luther who did just what they didn't want people to do.

He read the Bible, and he found out that the Bible taught several things, important things, different than the institutional church was teaching, and therefore he broke free and brought a lot, as a result, a lot of freedom to most of us too. Now, what I'd like to suggest is that the ideas of the perspicuity of Scripture, that is that the ordinary person can understand the basic message of Scripture, and sola Scripture, that only the Scriptures have ultimate authority to teach us what to believe, still needs to be held to, if it was ever valid, if it was valid in Martin Luther's time, it's valid now. Either the concept is valid or it's invalid.

If it's invalid, then it's always invalid, and if it's valid, it's always valid. I believe it's valid. I agree with the Reformation doctrines on these subjects, and therefore it is still appropriate and still necessary that individuals think for themselves.

Now, it is true that this can lead to different conclusions about some things, because even though a person of average intelligence, I personally believe, through careful study of the Scripture, can understand all that needs to be understood of the Scripture. I believe that if you study it more, you can understand more than if you study it less, but there's a lot of things that don't need, I mean, if you misunderstand certain things, it's not a disaster. If you get a different opinion than someone else as to when the Rapture is going to occur, it's really not going to, it's not going to have to affect very much.

If you have a different opinion of who Jesus is, that could affect a great deal. I mean, there are some issues that are negotiables, and some are non-negotiables, but on the things that are central to the Gospel, I think a child reading the Scriptures could reach the right conclusions. On issues that are more, oh, kind of peripheral and out there in gray areas, things that are not as clear in Scripture, obviously Christians can reach different opinions about those things, but that's not a disaster.

It only becomes a disaster if we interpret Christian unity as everyone has to believe everything just the same as each other, and the only way to make sure that happens is to have authoritarian leadership, either in the person of an individual or an organization that says, listen, you toe the line or you're out. And that is, of course, what the Church in

certain ages was. Believe it or not, that's how it is in some denominations still.

And Roman Catholics to this day, I know I dialogue with them quite a bit, they consider the fact that there are thousands of Protestant denominations that are independent of each other and don't think exactly alike, they consider that to be a proof that the Reformation was a bad thing. Because they say, look how disunified the Protestant churches are. We Roman Catholics, they say, we still have one leader, one organization, we're still one church.

But look what has happened since the time of Luther. There's literally, there are thousands. I heard back in the, I don't know, I mean, I don't know if anyone knows the total number, but I heard back in the early seventies that there were over 4,000 Protestant denominations in the United States alone.

A lot of denominations. And they say, look how disunified it is. That's what comes of letting people think for themselves and interpret the Bible for themselves.

Yeah, but what comes of not letting them do so? Spiritual death and mental tyranny, really. And actually, this diversity in the Protestant movement is not necessarily a bad thing unless the diversity reflects an inability to agree about the central issues. I mean, if Christians cannot agree whether there's one God or ten gods or a hundred gods, then we've got serious problems.

But no one who's in his right mind reading the Bible will mistake that particular issue. Nobody, if someone thinks that Jesus is the spirit brother of Satan, and another person says, no, he's the unique son of God and the eternal son, I mean, these are different doctrines, but no one's going to reach both these different conclusions from reading the Bible. To get the wrong understanding of that, you need some other literature, some other teachers giving you the wrong stuff.

Because the issues that matter most, how we are saved, how we are supposed to essentially live to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, how to love our neighbors and ourselves, these issues, for the most part, are clear enough that very few people could miss them. Now, there are some more specialized areas of ethics and of theology and so forth that not all Christians agree about, but in my understanding, those are issues that we can afford to take the time necessary to learn about, and we might not in our lifetime learn at all. But that won't prevent us from being good disciples and pleasing to God if our hearts are humble and right in the meantime.

Now, Christians are supposed to be unified, but on what? On one issue, the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We are not required to have the same opinion on every doctrine. There are a lot of doctrines that simply Christians will never fully agree about.

There's the Calvinist-Arminian controversy. There's controversies of end-times theology.

Lots of different views about that available.

There's a lot of different views on demonology, what the Bible teaches about demons and stuff. There's different views on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. There's people who believe the gifts are for today and people who believe the gifts are not for today.

These differences do not have to impinge upon the unity of the church. Sometimes they do, but when they do, it is not because people are thinking for themselves. It is because people are small-minded.

You know, if I hold one view about predestination and someone else holds a different view of predestination, that does not in itself have to make any problems between me and that person in my relationship or either of our walk with God. I have a lot of friends who hold a great number of doctrines, you know, different than my own, and it's never been a problem in our relationship because we don't put more emphasis on those things than is appropriate, I think. We realize that in Christ, all who love Jesus are one, and we are one with a great deal of freedom.

For liberty, Christ has made you free. Now, we're not free to sin, and we're not also free to reject the apostolic teaching, but we are certainly free not to have to submit to some individual, some living individual or some organization's interpretation of apostolic teaching. And, I mean, there will probably be never a time when all, where the Roman Catholics and Protestants agree on quite this issue, although it does seem to me like, unfortunately, an increasing number of Protestants are coming back to the Roman Catholic way of thinking about things.

There are, in the past decade, I've heard of Lutheran theologians and Presbyterian theologians who have converted back to Roman Catholicism, and then there's a bunch of evangelicals who are talking about some kind of working together of the two, and I, you know, it doesn't seem like the Roman Catholics are reforming more. It seems, if anything, that Protestants are getting more attracted to an authoritarian kind of religious system. And I'm, again it, I'm again it.

I don't believe in authoritarian religious systems. I believe that if people love Jesus and their doctrines are essentially right on the basic issues, that there's room for us to grow, for iron to sharpen iron, for us to challenge each other, to, I even enjoy and fully believe in the value of good natured debate and dialogue. I think it's a good educational experience, and I know I've gained a great deal from hearing debate and participating in debate.

So what I'm saying is, I believe, although some people do not, that thinking for oneself is a good idea, because the only other option is someone else thinks for you, and that isn't a good idea in my judgment. And so we have the Bible. If we didn't, that'd be a different

story.

If we lived as many people throughout the Middle Ages did, before there were printing presses, before everyone could get a Bible, and every Bible had to be written by hand, so there were very few of them about, then of course one might well argue that people ought to just accept what the, what the priest says, you know, in the service, because how do you know any different? You don't have a Bible to read, you know, just, just follow what he says. But thank God we live 500 years after the invention of the printing press, and we no longer have any excuse for being illiterate biblically. We have no excuse, but that hasn't stopped us from being biblically illiterate.

There, to my mind, I'm astonished in the past decade at the high degree of illiteracy in terms of scriptural knowledge in evangelical circles. I, when I was growing up in evangelical churches, and in the 70s also, I saw a tremendous passion on the part of people my age, especially in the 70s during the Jesus movement, a real passion to, to read the Bible, and to understand it, and to sit under Bible teaching day by day. And, you know, the average Christian I met would, could talk knowledgeably about a lot of different biblical topics, and could tell you where in the Bible they'd read this or that.

That has changed a great deal in, I think, the past decade or 15 years in my experience. There is a decreasing level of biblical literacy, and I'd love it if something I had to say could help turn that trend around. And that is partially why we're talking about what we are tonight and next time, and that is the study of the Scriptures.

Now, last time I talked about cultivating the Word of God. That's a very spiritual thing. It involves receiving the implanted Word, watering it with faith, cultivating it by meditating day and night.

This is a spiritual handling of the Word of God. This is essential, absolutely essential. But the first part of it is receiving the Word implanted, and if one misunderstands the Word, if they get a corrupted form of seed, then all the other processes are going to produce bad fruit.

For example, if the first time you ever hear the Bible represented to you is when the Mormon comes to your door, or the Jehovah's Witness comes to your door, and they tell you the Bible teaches such and such, that's the seed being planted in your life. Only problem is it's corrupted. And you can meditate on it, you can believe it, you can do all the right things, obey it, and you're going to have bad fruit because you got bad seed.

And Jesus said that one of those kinds of soil that the seed fell on, when He talked about the parable of the soils, He said it was the hard ground, the wayside, and the seed didn't penetrate, the birds came and ate it. And when He explained that, He said, that's those who hear the Word of God and don't understand it. And because they don't understand it, the devil snatches it away and that's the end of it.

Now, understanding is an important thing. I mean, it is true that cultivation of the Word of God is a spiritual process, it is a spiritual response to the spiritual Word of God, but the first step of it is understanding it correctly because you're going to attach your faith to it as you understand it. You're going to obey it as you understand it.

You're going to meditate on it as you understand it. And if you misunderstand it, if it's misrepresented to you by someone, then you're going to have problems with the whole process. You'll become intensely loyal and highly articulate in false doctrine.

And so, you need to know how to study responsibly the Scripture so that this process of feeding on and cultivating the Scripture and growing in it helps. Now, some of the things I'm going to share tonight are, as I said before we had the tape running, these are not going to be as spiritually edifying comments and subject matter because I'm going to be talking about actual printed resources that you may want to use. Next time I want to talk about how the Bible should be studied, how to approach Scripture and how to reason from Scripture and study it out and learn things from it.

But in order to do so, it helps to have at least some right tools. And so, tonight I want to talk about the workman's tools for the study of the Scriptures. And the reason I use the word workman is because in 2 Timothy 2.15 it says, Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Now, the word study there, I realize is an old English word that simply means be diligent. When we hear the word study, we think of like a student in school studies something. And I am advocating that kind of study, though I will admit right from the beginning, the word study is not a good translation in modern English.

That's the King James translation. All modern translations will translate that Greek word as be diligent because study is an old English word that means to be diligent. So, it really means be diligent.

But it doesn't remove the idea of academic study because it says you need to be a workman rightly dividing the word of truth. We read last time or the time before about Hebrews chapter 5 where it says that those who use milk are babes. It says they are not skillful in the word of righteousness.

We need to become skilled in the word of God. It takes skill. A workman who is skilled can craft a presentation of the truth both for his own learning and for the learning of others.

An unskilled person is not, you know, he's just going to have a bunch of parts here and won't know what to do with them all and won't know how to put them together. I know some people who have memorized a lot of Bible verses but they couldn't explain any theological concept because they've never put it all together. And for that reason, the

best thing you can do when it comes to studying the Bible to begin with is just read through the Bible and read through it again and read through it again.

Eventually, you'll become very familiar with it, of course. I doubt if there's anything, including the Encyclopedia Britannica, which you could avoid becoming familiar with if you read it through 20 times. I mean, read anything through 10 times and it'll become very familiar to you.

You'll become very acquainted with it. And you've got the rest of your life to be studying. I hope you won't ever give up on this.

So you have time to read it through 20, 30, 50 times in your lifetime. And the sooner you get at it and the more times you do it, the sooner the Bible will be very familiar to you. And by the way, familiarity with the Bible is extremely helpful in Bible study.

I remember one of the times I learned very rapidly a lot was when I was in fellowship with another brother who had... I was single for one thing, so I had a lot of time to study. After I got married and had kids, my study time has definitely been curtailed because of other responsibilities. But I was single for many years as an adult.

And there was another brother who was single, and he had a like passion as myself for the Scriptures, and he knew it very well. He knew the Scriptures very well. And we would get together socially many times a week and spend hours in the evening just talking about the things of God.

And inevitably, we'd end up on the floor with our Bibles open, some concordances open, and other things. And we're turning here, and he says, oh yeah, and that reminds me of this verse, and that reminds me of this verse. And we learned a great deal because both of us were very familiar with the Bible.

And whenever we were talking about any particular passage, it reminded us of a whole bunch of other passages on the same subject, which it wouldn't have if we weren't familiar. And there's where a general familiarity is going to advance your study of the Scriptures maybe more than any other thing. Because if you know the whole Bible... I mean, I don't claim to understand the whole Bible.

I don't understand the whole Bible. There's a lot of things in there I don't understand. But I'll tell you what, I'm acquainted with the whole Bible, and because I'm acquainted with it, it gives me some assistance, tremendous assistance if I'm trying to figure out the meaning of some particular thing in the Bible.

Because everything... someone said that when they listen to me on the radio and answer questions, or when they watch me answer questions, they say they can just see the computer working in there. When someone asks a question, they can... I don't know what it looks like to the watcher, but he said, you can see me doing the scan, you know. I

mean, someone says, ask me a question on some subject, and my mind scans the whole Bible for that subject, and pulls out the relevant Scriptures.

And I don't consider that I have an exceptional brain that way. Someone said they told someone I had total recall. I do not.

I can't remember the birthdays in my family, including my own half the time, or phone numbers. I do not have a great memory. But if you immerse yourself in anything, and I don't think there's anything more worthy of immersion in than the Scriptures.

If you immerse yourself in the Scriptures, you'll get saturated. And so I highly recommend that the first principle of getting to know and understand the Bible has got to be that you read it on a regular basis. I've continually asked by people, you know, Steve, can you recommend a method of Bible study, or some books perhaps, that will help me to understand the Bible, or to become... to know the Bible, like you do.

And of course, tonight and next time, I'm going to answer those very questions. But the real answer is, I don't know of any method, or any books, that will help you know the Scripture better than a good translation of the Bible itself, and a lot of time spent in it. In the Bible itself.

There are other helps I'm going to familiarize you with. They'll be very good for you, but nothing is better than the Bible itself. However, in saying that, we need to start with the question of what Bible? What translation? What version? We live in an age where there are no fewer than a hundred different English translations of the New Testament available in print.

It makes the picking kind of difficult. You know, I mean, one of the questions I'm asked a lot, well, what do you think about this translation or that translation? And I've run out of... I don't even try to keep up on the money anymore. I was raised in a church where, I think they taught from the King James most of the time, and I still... The King James Version is certainly the version I'm most familiar with, because it's the one I've read the most.

The first time I actually read through the Bible is in the RSV, which I don't recommend at all, that version. I'll tell you why in a moment. I read through the New Testament in the Good News for Modern Man before they had the whole Bible out.

It's called the Good News Bible now, I guess. It's the English version. I read through the NIV New Testament when it came out.

I never did read through the entire Old Testament when it came out. I read through the New American Standard when it came out. I read through the New English Bible.

I read through the Jerusalem Bible. Eventually, that was back when they put out a new

Bible every few years. It seems like nowadays it's three or four new translations a year, and I just don't have time to read them all.

So I say, I don't need a new translation. The old ones are working just fine. Thanks.

But the fact is I can't answer... If you ask me, what do you think about this translation or that translation? If it's a newish one, in all likelihood, I haven't even cracked it, nor do I even have an interest in doing so. I'm not on this endless search for the perfect translation. My conclusion a long time ago was, you won't find a perfect translation, but you can find some very, very good translations available, and they've already been made.

I don't see a need for continually putting out more and more and more. And by the way, the tendency to do so, I think, is going to be very, very damaging for biblical literacy in general. And the reason is, when I was young, even though there were several translations available, the King James was still used by most Christians.

And I certainly used it more than others, and it's still my favorite version. But everybody I know who memorized Scripture memorized from the King James. And whenever you'd quote Scripture, you'd quote the King James.

And you could be pretty sure that if you memorized Scripture from the King James, you'd be memorizing Scripture that would be quoted the same way by your children, your grandchildren, and so forth. But nowadays, every 10 years or so, a new translation replaces whatever one was the most popular 10 years earlier. And people are changing Bibles like they change shirts, practically.

And it doesn't encourage memorization at all. Why bother to memorize anything from the NIV when it's going to be displaced before, you can say, Jack Robinson, by some other translation that's going to be in vogue? You know, this endless perpetuation of new translations, I think, is going to be very discouraging for people memorizing Scripture. And that's only one of the things I have against some of them.

But nonetheless, I'm not, as many people I know are, I'm not a King James only type. I will say the King James is my favorite Bible in many ways. I think it could be the best one available.

There are others that are good and there are others that are not good, even though they're popular. And so I want to give you some kind of guidelines about the selection of a translation. I would just say, use the King James, except there's an awful lot of people who, for some reason, tell me they can't understand the King James.

A lot of times they blame it on the these and those. I really don't know anyone who can't learn in two seconds that the means you and thou means you also. Once you learn that, what's the problem with the these and those? You know, I mean, it's not doesn't take a

seminary course to discover what those words mean.

But it is true that the King James does use some archaic words, some words have changed in meaning. And if you're unfamiliar with those changes, you might until you learned about those differences in the use of words, you might have trouble understanding a few verses here and there, but not much. I think basically hearing young people as I do, because I run a Bible school and I see a new crop of young people come in every year, generally, more and more I hear people say, I can't understand the King James.

And I don't think it's because of any fault in the King James. I think it's a fault in the educational system. Largely, I think we got a bunch of people who can hardly read modern English either.

I think they just are illiterate people to a large degree and lazy readers. Because you know what? I didn't grow up in a world that spoke King James. My parents didn't grow up in a world where King James English was spoken.

My grandparents and great grandparents didn't grow up in a King James speaking world, Elizabethan English, but none of them and I never had any trouble really learning King James English and understand the King James Bible because we wanted to understand it. And we and we studied it and we learned it. Now, so when people say I can't understand the King James, unless English is a second language to them or something like that.

I really think there's usually probably some excuses being made. But at the same time, I want to say that for all my high regard for the King James Version, not everything in the King James Version is translated perfectly. Even given taking into consideration the language changes since 1611 when it was translated.

There are some passages that have been notoriously poorly translated. Now you might say, well, Steve, I thought that's your favorite version. Why? If there's some passages that they're notoriously poorly translated, why is it your favorite version? Well, because every new translation comes out has notoriously poorly translated verses to they're just different verses.

At least the King James went around long enough that most people know which verses could be improved upon. When a new translation comes out, it takes a while for them all to be combed out and publicized. I'd rather study the King James, knowing as I do where most of the problems in translation are, then have to come up with, try out a new Bible every two years that comes out and take several readings through before I know where the problems are.

The problems, by the way, that I allude to are very minor. I'm just saying there is not in the Bible or in any book that's ever been translated probably such a thing as a perfect

translation. And the reason for that is that languages are different from each other, not only in vocabulary, but in style and word order and syntax and a lot of considerations.

A lot of times you just don't have the exact translation possible from one language to another because words, all words, have a range of meaning. Right? I mean, you take a word like father, you think, well, that's a simple, straightforward word. Everyone knows what a father is.

And yet the word father can be used more ways than we normally think of. It's got a range of meaning. It could be, of course, a reference to God.

It could be a reference. Some people call their priest father in the Catholic Church. And there's people who are called the father of our country and so and so.

And one of Cain's was the father of those who worked with metal and played musical instruments and so forth. I mean, the word father in these cases means a variety of things. Sometimes it means ancestor.

Sometimes I mean, when the Jews of Jesus said Abraham is our father. Well, Abraham lived 2000 years before then. He wasn't their father.

He was their ancestor. But the word father, which we might think is a real straightforward, easy to understand word, it has a variety of meanings. It has a range of meaning.

And we who speak English fairly fluently know that range of meanings. But you might find another language where there's a word that means biological father, but doesn't have the same range of meanings. And one wonders, OK, well, how do you then translate when it says this man was the father of those who worked with metal? You know, it's not talking about being biological father.

And you have to find there might not be a word that's the exact identical word in another language. So the range of meanings in one language of a word, a similar word in the language into which it's being translated, may not have quite the same range of meanings. And it raises some problems translating at times.

But do not despair. It's not that big a problem. A very good translation can usually be made.

And many very good translations have come out of the Bible, at least several. And the ones that have been around a long time are usually very adequate. Now, there are two things that you need to consider if you're picking a Bible version to buy.

Most people have one Bible that they use most of the time, although a lot of people like me have one of everything. I've got twenty six translations in English of the New

Testament in my shelf, and I've got probably a dozen or more whole Bible translations different translations. I've consulted them all.

It's kind of helpful at times to consult various translations. But most people just buy one Bible and that's the Bible they carry until they wear it out. And then they either get another one of the same kind or something else has become in vogue.

They try that one out. And so the Bible you buy and the Bible you carry is in all likelihood going to be the Bible that influences your thinking for the next few years if you read it. And which I hope you will, unless it's a bad one.

And I hope you won't read it. But there are two considerations. First of all, I hope everyone here knows the basic fact that the Bible was not written in English by the original authors.

You know that I'm certainly everyone who's been a Christian very long knows that some may not. If they're a new Christian, the Bible was not written in King James English or any other kind of English. The Bible was written.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with the exception of a few chapters that were written in Aramaic, which was a derivative of Hebrew at a later age after Hebrew had become sort of a dead language written Hebrew. And the New Testament was written entirely in Greek, but not modern Greek. It's a different kind of Greek.

The Greek language has had several different ages. You know, there's Attic Greek and there's classical Greek and there's modern Greek. Greek has changed, just like English and other languages have.

The Bible was written in a form of Greek that is referred to as Koine Greek. It's the Greek that was introduced throughout the world in Alexander the Great's time by him. And he wanted to unify the world under one language.

So he taught everyone in the world or had them learn what's called Koine Greek. Koine is the Greek word that means common, common Greek. That is not, it does not resemble, it's not identical to modern Greek.

So if you were raised in Greece and Greek was your original native language, that wouldn't necessarily mean that you could read accurately the Greek New Testament, though you'd certainly have an advantage. You'd certainly be closer to it than an English speaking person. But because the Bible is written in ancient dead languages, by the way, these are not, that shouldn't cause any despair.

There are people who spend their whole lives studying dead languages and they know them very well. Just like I know King James rather well. It's a dead language.

No one speaks King James English anymore. But you learn a language, whether it's in common use or not, by immersion in it. And people who immerse themselves in a language, in the literature of a language, can learn eventually to be fluent in it.

And translators do know ancient Hebrew. They do know ancient Greek, but it's a specialized study. And you don't know it probably unless you've studied it at college level or better.

And therefore, you need to buy a translation into English. Now, there are two very important considerations in choosing a translation. The first is the manuscript considerations.

The best translators in the world can't help you if the manuscripts they use are defective. Because we don't have the original autographs written in the hand of Paul and Moses and Isaiah and Peter and Matthew and so forth. What we have is manuscript copies that have come down to us through the ages.

And as we've said in an earlier lecture, these have come down with a great deal of integrity preserved. They have not changed very much, but they've changed a little, usually in ways that are entirely inconsequential. But the fact remains that in the various manuscripts of the New Testament, for example, there are some variations in wording in a few places.

You know, sometimes variations of spelling of the same word. Usually, these are easily attributed to a mistake made by someone copying it and just not paying close enough attention and wrote it down wrong. But it came down, then someone copied his and copied his.

Eventually, you know, the thing was perpetuated. But having said that, we know, because there are people who have spent their whole life studying this, they're called textual critics. We know that the change has been minor and only in relatively few areas in the Bible.

But what the result is, there are manuscripts that are not identical word for word to each other. There are several thousand manuscripts of the New Testament that have been preserved and they're known. There's 5,000 approximately in Greek and about 8,000 in early Latin versions that was translated from the Greek.

And these are very helpful in knowing what the original said. But again, there's not 100 percent agreement in the manuscripts. So you basically have two different families of manuscripts.

You have what's called the Textus Receptus. And the vast majority of the New Testament manuscripts are in this family, Textus Receptus. Textus Receptus means the received text.

Obviously, it's a Latin term. And it was received in the sense that it was passed down for many centuries from early versions. And it was the translation, it was the text that was used by the King James translators in 1611.

It was used by Luther also in the 1500s when he translated the German Bible. And all the older versions of the Reformation time, the Bible was, by the way, translated in many, many languages. But all the early versions use the Textus Receptus.

And the vast majority of the manuscripts are of this Textus Receptus type. Sometimes it's called the Byzantine text. Now, in the past couple centuries, there have been the discovery of a couple of significant manuscripts in Alexandria, Egypt.

And their text differed in some ways from the Textus Receptus. And therefore, they represent a different manuscript tradition or different manuscript family. And this is usually called the Alexandrian text, which is because they were found in Alexandria.

However, only two or three copies of this particular text of the New Testament have been discovered. But they are earlier by a century or two of the Textus Receptus manuscript. So here we have a bit of a dilemma.

Some people make a great deal of this dilemma. I don't see any reason to make as big a deal as some people do about it. But there is a difference.

You've got two or three manuscripts of the New Testament that are of one type that date back to about the fourth century. I mean, that's when they came into existence. They weren't found that early.

But that's their alleged age. Then you've got thousands of manuscripts in the New Testament of this other kind, which is essentially the Textus Receptus. And they date back to maybe the sixth century.

So they're a couple of centuries later. Now, scholars do not agree among themselves as to which of these texts is really closer to the original. And there are people who are willing to fight to the death over their preference on this matter, although to me it's a misguided effort because the doctrines in both sets are the same doctrines.

What the differences are primarily are that. Well, the main difference is that the Alexandrian text, the earlier text that's represented by fewer copies. Is briefer than the Textus Receptus.

The Textus Receptus has whole verses that are left out of the Alexandrian text are not found in the Alexandrian text. There are some verses that have a word omitted in the Alexandrian text or two words omitted at the end of the Gospel of Mark. There's maybe a dozen verses that are found in the Textus Receptus that are omitted from the Alexandrian text.

In other words, the general difference between the two is that the earlier Alexandrian text is briefer. It has fewer words, fewer verses. But the Textus Receptus is a fuller text, has more to it.

Now, people who get concerned about these things are concerned for this reason. One of these two is closer to the original. Those scholars can't agree among themselves really as to which is.

But if the Alexandrian text is really more like the original, that means that the scribes and so forth who later produced the Textus Receptus added a bunch of stuff that wasn't in the original because it's a fuller text than the Alexandrian. On the other hand, if the Textus Receptus is closer to the original, then whoever made the Alexandrian text left stuff out. And so, the question is, do you want, whichever theory you hold, the Alexandrian is better.

If you believe the Alexandrian is closer to the original, then you're going to believe that the Textus Receptus added stuff and has man-made words and verses in there. And you're going to say, no, I don't want that. On the other hand, if you believe the Textus Receptus is closer to the original, then you're going to say, well, those people who put out the Alexandrian text, they left stuff out.

Now, there are certain persons who are of the King James only ilk today who actually are saying that the Alexandrian text, which was not used by the King James, that the Alexandrian text is the product of a New Age conspiracy. There's a woman named Gail Keplinger, or Riplinger, that's what it is. I know someone whose name is Keplinger.

Gail Riplinger is her name. And she wrote a book that's gotten wide circulation called the New Age Translations of the Bible. And she believes that there's this big conspiracy by these two guys named Westcott and Hort, who are the ones who basically are responsible for the discovery and publication of the Alexandrian text, to undermine Christian doctrine in favor of New Age doctrine.

And she points out that there are verses in the King James Version where it says, Our Lord Jesus Christ. But in the Alexandrian text, it just says, Our Lord Jesus. And maybe it doesn't have the word Christ.

So, see, they're trying to undermine the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ. The problem with this thesis is that the Alexandrian text calls Jesus the Christ in many, many, many places. It's just, you know, in a place here or there, the word seems to be dropped out.

There doesn't appear to be any evidence that there was some conspiracy to systematically remove the reference to Jesus as Christ in any of the manuscripts. It is the case that this woman, Riplinger, for all her good intentions, I've heard her debate real scholars before, and she doesn't really know. She doesn't read Greek or Hebrew, which,

by the way, I don't either.

But real Bible scholars generally do. She doesn't know very much about textual criticism. And on her book, it says, Gail Riplinger has degrees from this college and that college and that college and that college.

And she's spoken in this college. She taught a class in this college and so forth. Talks about her having all kinds of credentials.

It doesn't say what subjects she studied. However, I happen to know her degrees are in interior decorating. That's a fact.

There's a reason why they don't mention that on the book cover, because that does not add to her credibility as an expert on biblical texts. What she found out was that, in fact, the Alexandrian text and this is not news scholars have known this since it was first found. The Alexandrian text does omit some things that are found in the textus receptus.

But that doesn't mean that there was some conspiracy to do this. In all likelihood, the differences in the text are simply accidental, copious mistakes. But when it all comes down to it, I have seen a list of all the differences in these two texts.

They are, to my mind, really inconsequential. When you take the whole text of the New Testament, you get all the same doctrines taught. There's no doctrine undermined in one that's in the other.

I mean, it's true. One is obviously more accurate than the other by a few words here and there. But it's there's really the teachings of both are the same.

And you will not go to hell reading a New Testament that translated from the Alexandrian text, though I myself prefer the textus receptus. I'll tell you that now. If you believe that the text, I'll tell you what the arguments are for both of these.

And it's quite simple, really. One, those who favor the Alexandrian text, this one that has only a few copies, but it's earlier, they say because it's older, it is closer in time to the time of the writing of the original. And therefore, it's probably closer in content because it is assumed that as the years go by and more copies are made, more errors would be intruded in the text.

Therefore, an earlier manuscript is going to have fewer errors. And because the Alexandrian text is earlier, it must represent the text as it was originally more. And then the textus receptus is a corruption.

And things were added later on by scribes and so forth. Now, those who hold that the textus receptus is to be preferred, I'm among them, would argue that the earliness of a manuscript does not necessarily tell you whether it was a good copy or not. The fact that

only two or three copies of the Alexandrian text have survived, whereas thousands of the other have survived, suggests that the early church recognized that the Alexandrian text was a corrupted, defective text and didn't make a whole lot of copies of it, or else we'd find more of them.

And they recognized that the text represented in the textus receptus was the reliable text. And so they multiplied copies of that in great numbers. The question really gets down to what counts for more, a large number of manuscripts or the early data manuscripts? And no one really knows for sure.

This is the thing. I mean, you might say, well, I might as well not even be a Christian if I can't know for sure this. Well, that's ridiculous.

I mean, that's overreacting. There's really nothing to worry about. I mean, if you decide the Alexandrian text is better and I decide the textus receptus is better and we both get good translations using the different texts, we're going to believe the same things.

Or if we don't, it won't be because of the version we're using. It'll be because of other methods of Bible study we've used or whatever. So I am not as concerned as some people are about getting the right one.

Now, I will say this. Some people, it does matter a great deal. And if it matters to you, I'll just let you know.

If you favor the textus receptus, there's only two versions in print today, to my knowledge, that used it. And that's the King James Version and the New King James Version. The King James and the New King James used the textus receptus.

And I'm not aware of any other English translations that are currently being printed that used it because most scholars apparently favor the Alexandrian text. And so when they come out with new translations, they almost uniformly just assume the Alexandrian text is better and they follow that. So whether you've got the New American Standard, the NIV or the Revised Standard Version of the New English Bible or the New Revised Standard or the or there's all kinds of them out there.

They use the Alexandrian text. If you think the Alexandrian is okay or better, then you've got a lot of choices out there, about a hundred of them, you know, and you want to move on to the next consideration. Once you've decided whether or not the manuscript matters to you and which one you prefer.

And frankly, if you make the wrong decision about this, it won't hurt much in itself. But there's another consideration I would be more concerned about, and that is the translation philosophy of the men who made the book, who made the translation you're using now here. There are two major differences.

There are translators that follow what's called the formal equivalence philosophy of translation, and there are those who follow the dynamic equivalence philosophy. Now, I'll tell you what that means so you don't get too confused. Formal equivalence means that the translator believes in making a word for word translation, even though the word order in Greek is going to be different than the word order in English to make sense.

And even though there's going to be certain idioms that are used in the ancient Greek that don't make much sense taken literally in English, but they're going to be faithful to do word for word translation, even if that renders the material a little more difficult to understand in English, and it requires people to think and work on it a little more. Now, the other philosophy of translation is this. They say it's not the words that matter, it's the thoughts that matter.

And what good is it to translate ancient idioms word for word into English if the idiom makes no sense to English-speaking people? They don't even know what it means. So, they say the important thing is that we translate thought for thought. If I, for example, would say to you, I have a frog in my throat, I've used an English idiom that we all understand.

We all know what it means to say a man has a frog in his throat, but we all know that's not literal, too. That's an idiomatic expression. Now, in France, they have the equivalent expression, but it's not a frog, it's a cat in the throat in France.

So, if you have the same condition in France, you've got a cat in your throat. If you've got it in English, you've got a frog in your throat. Now, in ancient Greek, I don't know what they said for that kind of thing, but the point is, here's the idea.

Those who argue for dynamic equivalence, they say it's the thought for thought that matters. If I am speaking to a French audience, and I'm using a translator, I speak English, he translates in French, and I say, excuse me, I have a frog in my throat. The translator then has to make a decision.

Does he choose the French words for, I have a frog in my throat, and take the risk that the people listening don't know that English idiom, and they go, what? He's got a frog in his throat? What? And confuse him, or does the French translator, who knows this English idiom, and he knows the French equivalent, he just changes it, and says it the way the French would say it. Not just the French words, but the French idiom, I have a cat in my throat. Now, most people would argue that the second is better, because he then gets the thought across, even if he changes the words a little bit.

That's called dynamic equivalence. It's thought for thought translation. Now, very few modern translations follow the formal equivalence, which is word for word.

I'll tell you why in a moment. Most of the modern translations follow a dynamic

equivalence, which is somewhat of a paraphrase. They read what Paul said in Greek, and they say, what do you think he meant? I think he meant this, how do we say that in English? And then they just put it in their own words.

The argument goes like this. They say the average American reading in English would not understand these idioms from a foreign language, a foreign culture, and so forth. And people are going to get discouraged if they read a Bible they can't understand, it doesn't make sense to them.

And they'll just put the Bible on the shelf to gather dust. It's better for us, the scholars, who know everything. We know everything that Paul meant when he said these words, so we'll just figure out how we would say this to an English-speaking audience.

The same idea, not necessarily the same words. The translation that comes to mind, the most popular translation that follows this philosophy, is the NIV, the New International Version. Now, almost all new translations follow that philosophy, and I don't favor it myself.

Some people do. Essentially, what you've got to know is this, that whenever you translate something from one language to another, the idioms and the words and the phrases are not going to be exactly the same. So, you've got a trade-off that a translator has to make.

Do I go for word-for-word literateness and sacrifice, to some extent, how readable it is, and how immediately understandable it is to the new readers in the new language? Or do I not bother with word-for-word equivalence and just try to make it understandable? If you make the second choice, you've got a slight problem can enter, and that is the reader who's reading a dynamic equivalence translation isn't really told what the actual words Jesus or Paul used were, or what they meant. He's getting the interpretation of the translator, because an idiom might be as hard to understand for the translator as it is for me. I'm not a translator.

I don't know Greek and Hebrew. But at the same time, just studying Greek and Hebrew doesn't mean you know all the idioms. There are many, many things in the Bible that are very ancient idioms, and translators still just have to make an educated guess at what it meant.

And that being so, they will guess whatever they think it means, and they'll give it to me in a translation that, basically, if it's thought-for-thought, they're going to give me their thoughts. It might not be Paul's thoughts or Jesus' thoughts. It may be just what they thought he meant.

And if I can't read in the Greek and Hebrew myself, I'm going to be stuck with what these guys thought he meant. And there's examples of this that perturb me. I liked the NIV

when it first came out.

I read the New Testament through when it first came out in publication. I thought, well, this is the most readable Bible that's come out yet. There's been several others come out since that might be better.

I don't know, but I haven't read them. But the NIV was very smooth. It read like a modern book.

Makes it very hard to memorize from, by the way. King James is a lot easier to memorize from, because things that are worded poetically stick in the mind more. Things that are worded less like a newspaper are easier to remember word-for-word than things that are like a newspaper.

How many newspaper articles can you quote word-for-word? And yet, I can quote many King James passages word-for-word, lengthy passages that I never bothered to memorize, just because the wording is so peculiar in the King James that it sticks in the mind. But that's not one of the better reasons for using the King James. It's another consideration.

The point here is that, as I said the NIV more, I became more and more disappointed with it. I found that the translators, I didn't know then, as I know now, that one of the translators was a lesbian, and openly so, out of the closet lesbian. Obviously, the people who hired these people were not looking for spiritual credentials, as opposed to the King James translators, which, as I understand it, were very godly men and some of the best scholars who ever lived in the original languages.

But the NIV translators interpret things for you, and as anyone does who does a dynamic equivalence, they have to. Paul uses, for example, frequently, the word *sarx* in the Greek, which literally means flesh. *Sarx* is the Greek word for flesh, meat, you know, the stuff that's on your bones, is *sarx*.

Well, flesh has a range of meanings in Greek, as it does in English. It doesn't always mean just the same thing. When the Bible says all flesh is as grass, it means the whole human race is all flesh.

Or when it says no flesh would survive, it means no human beings would survive. Sometimes the word flesh means a physical body, and sometimes it means some other things. Like when it says of Jesus that He was of the seed of David according to the flesh.

What's that mean? According to the flesh means by nature, by human nature. And there are times when Paul uses the word flesh, where most scholars would agree he actually means something like sinful nature. And he talks about, I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing.

And a lot of places in Paul's writings, he uses the word sarx, and translators have, or I should say commentators and scholars have felt, for the most part, that he meant something like sinful human nature by that word. Well, that's not a literal meaning of the word sarx, but it may be that Paul used it in that specialized sense, and many scholars believe he did. Well, the problem is, even the King James translators believed that he meant that, but they still translated sarx as flesh, flesh, flesh every time it occurred.

The NIV translators and many others of modern translations, at certain points, when they come to the word sarx, they translate it as sinful nature. Now, that's not what the word itself means. That's an interpretation.

The problem with this is, I mean, if they understand Paul correctly, then they're doing us a service by telling us that sarx, in this case, he means sinful nature. But are we sure that he means it there? There are times when it's very much up for grabs. There are times when he could mean my physical body.

But many translators say, well, I think he means sinful nature here. And you can get the wrong impression if the translators make a mistake about this. I, myself, would rather have a translator tell me, he said flesh, he said flesh, he said flesh, he said flesh, than let me look at all the ways Paul used flesh, and let me... I can do that as well as they can.

Well, maybe I can't as well as they can, but I don't have any reason to believe that I can't do it as well as they can. If I want to study it as carefully as they want to study it, I can decide for myself whether Paul used the term to mean sinful nature in this kind of a context or not. And the same thing is true of the word anthropos, which means man, when it's used in connection with the word new or old.

The new man or the old man. You've heard those expressions in Paul. Again, those are distinctly Pauline expressions.

In Ephesians and Colossians and Romans 6, we find these expressions, the new man, the old man. Well, modern translators, especially dynamic equivalence translations, translate those the new self and the old self. Why? Well, that's what they think Paul meant.

When Paul said the old man or the new man, they think he meant your old self or your new self. In fact, I bet you thought he meant that too, because you probably read a translation where they translated that for you. Which means it closes your mind to other possibilities because you don't even know what Paul said.

You only know what they say he meant. And as a matter of fact, there's very good reason to believe that when he said old man and new man, he did not mean old self and new self. I don't have time to go into this in detail right now, but if you studied all the passages where he used that expression and recognized that he didn't say old self or

new self, but old man or new man, it really has a very different possible meaning.

And significantly so. We can talk about that some other time if you want. I just want to say that these are examples where dynamic equivalence results in the translator giving you his interpretation, which may or may not be correct.

And so, you're stuck with his interpretation. He may be able to smooth out the language so it's really easy to read, but you don't know whether what you're reading is really what Paul meant to say or anyone else who translated. Now, in every Bible or almost every Bible you buy, you will find that some words in the text are printed in italics, you know, slanty little letters.

Almost the whole verse will be in regular text and then a word or two might be in italics. And when we do that in English, we usually do that for emphasis or something. But that's not what it is in the Bible.

When you find words in italics in your Bible, it means that those English words that are put in italics, there is no Greek or Hebrew word in the original text that corresponds to them. It means the translators have added those. They're not in the Greek or Hebrew text, but they've added them because the Greek or the Hebrew text seems choppy, if you take it literally.

And so, they feel like to make a complete or a sensible English sentence, they have to add a few words. Usually, it's quite safe. Usually, it's quite harmless.

And usually, they're quite right, I think, in their decision to add these words. But they're at least honest enough to put them in italics, so you'll know that's not in the original. What they're doing is they're helping you to make a whole sense out of it, but they're telling you the truth.

That's not there. We're adding these words for you. That's why you put them in italics.

I like that. I appreciate that. Do you know that NIV doesn't have any words in italics? Do you know why? They'd have to have too many.

There's whole passages where there's hardly a Greek word corresponding to the English words in the passage, because the translators are taking a dynamic equivalence approach. They could never identify all the words that are not in the actual text that they're using, because a lot of times the whole passage, they don't have any words in English that correspond to the actual words in the Greek. And there are a lot of problems like that in NIV.

People like it because it's easily read, but now it'll probably be supplanted by some others. But here's the deal. You have to decide whether you want or whether you should have this manuscript or that manuscript, this translation philosophy or that one.

If you want a Bible that's easy to read and maybe not 100% accurate, go for a dynamic equivalence. It'll be easy to read. You trade off accuracy.

If you want one that's accurate, even if it's harder to understand, you say, well, let me do the work on this. Give me a good rendering of the actual words. Let me do my own study and my own interpretation.

And I don't want these guys doing that for me. Then you want a formal equivalence translation. What are your choices? Out there for formal equivalence translations, you've got the King James, the New King James, the New American Standard.

Now, the New American Standard used the Alexandrian text. The other two used the Texas Receptives. Apart from those, almost every translation that's come out in recent times has been dynamic equivalence.

And the reason is because the translators say, well, people don't want to buy a Bible that's hard to understand. They want one that reads like the newspaper. So, I mean, by the way, modern translations are put out for commercial purposes.

One thing I like about the King James is no one got a royalty on that. You can, that's, there's no copyright on that. Every other version, including the New King James, which I frequently use and appreciate.

In fact, my own publisher, Thomas Nelson, owns the copyright on the New King James. I like the New King James as a translation. It's a good one.

But it kind of irks me that there are commercial interests out there who have a stake in the sale of a different translation. There's a big, big, big rivalry between the New King James and the NIV right now. Zonderman publishes the NIV.

Thomas Nelson publishes the New King James. Lachman Foundation publishes the New American Standard. And these, especially the NIV and the New King James, these guys have commercial interests and they want their version to take over the field.

Because once the whole church decides, yes, we agree the NIV is the best, or yes, we agree the New King James is the best, suddenly that's a big boost in sales and someone's getting richer. I don't know that God ever really meant for His Word to be peddled like this. I realize that the translators probably need to be paid for the work they did.

But I imagine by now they've been paid. And I don't mind someone selling a Bible for the cost of printing it or even making a little bit of money on what it costs to ship it. But I really don't think that peddling the Word of God for profit is what God had in mind when He gave us the Bible.

And I'm not saying you should necessarily buy the King James for that reason. But the

King James is the only version out there that was not made for profit. It was made because someone in England, in the Church of England, usually King James is credited with this, felt like there needed to be a Bible in English.

And it was commissioned by the government and no one made a profit on it. So anyway, if you want the Alexandrian text, the choice between any modern translation, if you want the Texas Receptus, it's the King James or the New King James. If you want a literal translation, word for word, formal equivalence, you're going to want King James, New King James or New American Standard.

Of course, the New American Standard is a choice of the Alexandrian text if you want that. But it's a good translation from the Alexandrian text. You want a dynamic equivalence, the options are endless.

Okay, I myself, you make your choice based on what you value or what you judge. I myself like the King James and the New King James best because I prefer the Texas Receptus. I trust it more.

And also, of course, they're both formal equivalence translations. The New King James is a very good update of the King James. Some people are suspicious of anything that's updated from the King James, but it's what it has done as there have been some well-known passages in the King James that were for some reason or another were accidentally translated poorly.

These have been well-known and the New King James has usually improved on them. But I still think both are very good translations and that's enough on that. Now, in the selection of a Bible, I should say something also about annotated study Bibles.

People often ask me, what study Bible do you recommend? And by an annotated study Bible, we mean a Bible that actually has the editor's notes explaining the meaning of things at the foot of the page usually or in a sidebar. There seems to be an endless number of these. The very first annotated study Bible of the Schofield Reference Bible in 1909.

It was the first time any man had what some people call the audacity to put his own thoughts and his own ideas in the actual page of the Bible along with the biblical text. Now, no doubt Schofield didn't think he was doing anything irreverent. He probably figured, hey, commentaries have been with us forever.

What's wrong with putting a commentary right on the same page with the text? There were some who thought it was irreverent and there had been some results that are undesirable in that a lot of people don't know the difference between what Schofield says and what Peter says or Jesus says or Jeremiah says. I mean, if Schofield's notes are there. See, here's one thing.

If someone says, well, what's the difference when using an annotated study Bible and a commentary? Isn't a commentary the same thing as what you got in the notes down there? Yes, but here's some thoughts that I have on it. One is people don't usually just sit down and read through commentaries. You buy a commentary on Isaiah, you probably won't just read through it.

Or if you do, not every time you read the book of Isaiah, you're going to read the whole commentary. You use the commentary to look up things that are hard to understand and see if you can get some insight from some guy who's thought it out more. But when the explanation is right there at the bottom of the page, the commentary is right there, people are much more likely to use that commentary to help them understand everything they're reading along the way.

And since people usually don't have enough money with Bibles costing anywhere from \$60 to \$100 for a leather-backed Bible these days, most people don't have a lot of Bibles to carry around. Most people, if they buy one of these annotated study Bibles, it's going to be their Bible, the Bible they use most of the time, the one they carry with them. And every time they read something, they say, oh, there's no note down here on that.

And they're going to be getting all the time the interpretation of the guy who put out the Bible. Now, as I said, Schofield did this first. There are many others that have come out since.

There's, of course, the Dakes Annotated Bible, a lot of people like that. There's the Ryrie Study Bible, much more modern. There are a whole lot of others.

Nowadays, every time you turn around, there's a women's study Bible or a student study Bible or Afro-American, Generation Xers study Bible or whatever. You know, I mean, every special interest group, every sub-demographic category seems to have their own study Bible published for them now since they have money. And it's sort of a trend to alienate people in the church from each other by these kinds of demographic considerations.

So, you know, people want to get the Bible that's put out for their group, I guess. I don't know how it's working out. There's the Spirit Field Study Bible.

It has all the Word of Faith stuff in it. And you've got all kinds of study Bibles out there. Thompson Chain Reference Bible is a study Bible, though it doesn't have the notes on the page.

It has notes in the back, and it's a little, probably I could recommend it a little more for that reason. Though I don't really recommend annotated study Bibles in general. I really feel that if you have an annotated study Bible, the notes on the bottom page, you're very, very likely to read those notes while you're reading the text.

You're very likely to consult those notes, and you're going to get that person's opinion maybe before you've had time to get God's opinion on it. I think that you should study your Bible. You should have a Bible that has the Word of God and not the Word of man in it.

You can also, there's nothing wrong with hearing the Word of man. And I'm not saying if you have an annotated study Bible, you should throw it out. I have several.

I just don't carry them around and read them much. Actually, one that I like very much, ironically, is one that was wedded to the NIV text. I don't like the NIV text, but the NIV study Bible has pretty good notes in the bottom and fairly even-handed.

But still, it is an annotated study Bible. And if you've got one, I'm not telling you you shouldn't have it. I'm just saying, if you're saying, well, Steve, do you recommend these? I personally don't.

I personally think you'd do better with just the Word of God. And you can consult the opinions of man from commentaries or other places if you want to. But the problem is, everyone who puts out an annotated study Bible does so because they assume you would never reach their conclusions without their notes telling you to.

It's a fact. And if you would not reach their conclusions without their notes telling you to, maybe their conclusions aren't in the text. Because I find that the best conclusions, the clearest and most responsible conclusions I can reach are right there in the text.

And there are reasons why... By the way, most of these study Bibles have come out with one essential theological system in mind. A system that arose in 1830. Wasn't around before that.

No one ever read the Bible that way until Schofield and others put it in his notes. And Rye, Dakes, they all have the same system represented in there. And the reason is because you would never understand it that way without their notes.

But I think there's a good reason why you wouldn't. Because I believe those views are not taught in the Bible. That's why no one saw them until 1830.

And now, because Schofield Reference Bible sold two million copies within the first five years of its publication or something like that, it became an overnight sensation. The views of the Schofield Bible are often considered to be sacrosanct or something. Or in fact, they're very novel views in terms of church history.

I won't get into that right now. But you might be able to tell, I don't highly recommend that you get a study Bible that has someone else's notes in it. I don't think it's wrong to consult the opinions of commentators and so forth.

But I just think that when you put them on the Bible page, they're going to get in your mind mixed too much. I know you might say, well, I know the difference between what Moses wrote and what Schofield says. You do know the difference.

But if you don't understand what Moses said, you might consult Schofield and say, oh, okay, so that's what it means. And you might not realize that Schofield's given you his own narrow view of things. He's not necessarily giving you the only possible view of things, nor even the one that the church has most often believed throughout history.

As I say, annotated study Bibles usually come out from people who have a theological agenda. And that's not always so much the case, but it usually is. Now, there's several other books.

I'll run through these real quickly. Two different kinds of aids. I brought some of them with me from my bookshelf, but some of them I don't have with me.

Besides a good translation, I really recommend that you do some accessing of the Hebrew and the Greek yourself, if you can. And I thought I had brought here. Oh, yeah, here's one.

This is a Greek English Interlinear New Testament. You can also get the Old Testament Hebrew English Interlinear. You can look at this later if you've not heard it.

Although I'm sure many of you are familiar with these. There's different editions of these out, but you have the actual Greek text of the New Testament in the Greek letters, which probably most of you don't can't read. But under each Greek word is a literal English translation.

And then on the side, they usually have the text of some either King James or some other version that the publisher liked. So you can compare the text of a modern English version with the actual wording in the Greek. Now, if you ever wonder, you know, I wonder how that reads in the Greek.

You can go you can open an interlinear like this and look up the passage and say, OK, here's the Greek words. I can't read the Greek word, but here's the English word under it. OK, that one means a hundredfold that long Greek word that looks like about 20 letters means a hundredfold.

Well, fine. Now I know what the actual word was. At least I've got a start on it.

These are very easy to come by. Greek English Interlinear New Testaments. The Old Testament is available also usually in three volumes because it's much more material.

You can get the whole set Old and New Testament four volumes paperback. It's much more compact, but I don't know that you'd need the Old Testament as much. I really

think everyone who wants to seriously study the Bible should at least get an interlinear New Testament.

If you want to look at that afterwards, you can that way. You can know actually what the Greek words say, though, of course, the actual meaning that is given there might need to be checked against some other sources like a concordance. The second most important book you can have beside your Bible that sounds like a sweeping thing to say, but I just don't believe anyone could ever successfully refute this.

The second most important book you can have besides Bible is this book. And because of that, because so many Christians agree with me on it, they sell it almost as much as they sell Bibles. So that a book this size, which you'd expect a 35, 40 bucks for, you get it for 10 bucks because they mass produce them.

It's an old book. I don't know what century Mr. Strong lived, probably at least in the 1700s, before there were computers to do this. This was done by actual human hands.

This, Strong's Concordance. Well, what a concordance is. I assume most of you know, but some of you might not.

So I'll let you know. A concordance has every word in the Bible and every occurrence of every word. And what you do, if you know there's a verse in the Bible about some subject, and you can remember one word that's in that verse, or maybe you haven't ever heard the verse, but you know, there's verses in the Bible about this thing.

You can look up that word. It's arranged alphabetically like a dictionary. You find that word, it'll give every time in the whole Bible that that word appears.

And it'll do it with, it gives a sort of a phrase that has the word in it in each case. So you can sort of see, is that the verse I'm thinking of or not? And any word that's in the Bible is in here. And every occurrence of that word is in here.

There are a few cases where he made a mistake and left one or two verses out. I've found over the years that you got to use a concordance a lot to find the time when Mr. Strong left out one. Very rarely did he make such an omission.

Another copyist error kind of thing. But the fact is, this is a great book. Now, this uses the words from the King James Version.

If you're not using the King James Version, you might want to buy a concordance from whatever version you're using. They have them for the NIV and for the new King James. But even if for the ability to use the Strongs, that's good reason enough to just use the King James Version, because this is the most helpful book for studying the Bible that's ever been written apart from canonical writers.

And if I were to be stranded on a desert island with two books, one would be a King James or a new King James Bible. The other would be a Strongs concordance. Now, there's other concordances have come out.

You've got Cruden's concordance has been out for years. There's a Young's concordance that is almost as comprehensive as the Strongs, but it doesn't have every word or every occurrence. It's not as comprehensive.

It has been said that if you're thinking of choice of concordances, the Cruden's is for the crude, Young's is for the young, and Strong's is for the strong. And so if you want the best, Strong's is it for the King James Bible. Now, in addition to being a concordance, the Strong's has another wonderful feature.

It is also Greek and Hebrew dictionaries in the back. And when you look up any word in the Bible in the Strong's concordance, you'll find next to the phrase a little number that has four digits. And you look up that number in the back, and it'll give you the Greek word that it actually is, or the Hebrew word, and it'll give you an English dictionary definition of that word.

And so, any word in the whole Bible, you can look up the English word in here. It'll give you a number to access the actual Greek or Hebrew word in the dictionaries in the back, and it'll tell you what the range of meaning is of that Hebrew word or that Greek word. Yes? I've got a concordance when you look it up in the back there, that it gives you the definition of the word, and then it will also tell you how that word has been variously translated and how many times it's been variously translated throughout the Bible.

And I found that to be very, very helpful. And, you know, it's not in my King James. It's in my New American Standard concordance.

And I just love it, because it tells you how many different ways, and it's the only place I can find that. I have that kind of information in some other resources, but it's not in the Strong's concordance. But one thing Strong's did was it gave a number to every word in the Bible.

And a lot of other books have come out, resource books, that use Strong's numbering system. And that would include what we call dictionaries and lexicons. This is the best known dictionary that uses the Strong's numbering code.

It's Vines, W.E. Vines, a Plymouth Brethren scholar put this out. And it was published in the New York Times years ago. And this doesn't have every word in the Bible in it, but it takes a very good percentage of the words in the Bible and gives lengthy, lengthy descriptions of what they mean in the Greek and Hebrew.

You look up the word in English, and then it'll tell you how many different Greek or English words are translated with that English word. For instance, you know, there's

several Greek words for love. Well, if you look up love in the Vines, you look up the English word love, it'll have a paragraph or two telling what agape means, a paragraph or two what phileo means, and any other words that may have ever been translated love in the Bible.

And it'll give you instances where it's used this way and so forth. It gives a lot of good information on that. This is a very popular resource.

You can get it at any Christian bookstore, Vines. And then there are, I didn't put this in your notes, but these are wonderful books. This is for the Old Testament.

This is the new, the Complete Word Study, Old Testament, Complete Word Study, New Testament. These are in the King James Version, but over every word, it gives the Strong's numbering for that word. So if you're reading the King James Bible here, any word you want, you can see instantly over the English word what the Strong's number is.

And then it has the Strong's dictionaries in the back. So you can look up the Greek words. So you're reading the actual King James Bible, but you can look up any word at any moment you want to in the back.

It gives you the Greek or the Hebrew word dictionaries from the Strong's. They just reprint them in here. But this has other help, like what you're talking about.

In the back of this, it has every, by the Strong's numbering system, every word, every Greek word in the New Testament. And it gives all the occurrences of that one Greek word. It tells every word that that Greek word occurs.

And the same thing, I believe they have the same in the Old Testament one. There's some different features in the Old Testament. These are, these are put up by Spiros Zodiades.

He's native Greek, as you probably tell from his name, Spiros. But he, he was the head of, he is the head, I think, still of AMG, which used to be called the American Mission to the Greeks. Now it's called something else.

AMG, they just call it. But anyway, that's a really, those are really helpful. Although occasionally he puts notes in the bottom, not very often.

And when he does, he's got notes I don't agree with. But, but as far as the Greek and Hebrew, he's, he's good at that. Another thing is a lexicon.

These are lexicons. I'll show them to you real quickly here and tell you what they do. Many of these have now been coded to the Strong's numbering system.

They didn't used to be in the old days, but Strong's has set the standard for numbering the words in the Bible. We have here, here's some Hebrew lexicons of the Old

Testament. This is basically just a dictionary like you'll find in the back of the Strong's concurrence, but more detail as to the English meaning.

Sometimes they'll tell how the word was using classical Greek too, and how, how Plato used the same word or whatever. But they have the Strong's numbering. You look up a Hebrew word here.

These two are Hebrew Old Testament ones. Jesenius for the Old Testament and Thayer's for the New Testament do follow the Strong's numbering system. And you can actually buy a Strong's concordance paperback that's the same size as this.

You get all three of them, the concordance and the lexicons together. More prestigious for the Old Testament is this one, the Brown, Driver, Briggs, Jesenius Hebrew, English lexicon. This has more scholars.

It has Jesenius work as well as others. This is an Old Testament one. And as far as I know, the most prestigious English, Greek lexicon for the New Testament is this one.

It's sometimes called BAG, B-A-G. It's Bauer, Arndrich, Arndt and Gingrich. That's what it is.

Three scholars. And if you really want to impress people that you've done your homework, you can quote from this lexicon as the meaning of a Greek word because it's helpful. Now, these books are all to help you actually understand what the Greek and Hebrew mean if you want to.

A good translation of the Bible may be all you'll need. But if you really want to study something out and make sure the translator is not pulling the wool over your eyes at all, you can always get to it. Being English-speaking Christians is a tremendous advantage.

And I don't say that as some kind of a, you know, white supremacist Anglo guy. I say that just because it's true. In English, there are so many people speak English that there's a good market for books printed in English for English-speaking people.

So, people are motivated to put out a lot of books for English-speaking people. And in English, you can get so many good books that access the Greek and the Hebrew to an English reader, which you couldn't get if you spoke Swahili or something like that, you know. Now, as far as aids to understand the meaning of passages, not just the meaning of the words, but the meaning of the text, there's some aids here.

And I'll just tell you them real quickly. One is the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. I couldn't find my copy.

It's still in the boxes from my move here. But it's an ancient book. It was put out probably in the 17 or 1800s, not real ancient.

But it's a very interesting book. It's got a lot of contributors. Usually, people associate it with R.A. Torrey because he wrote the forward to the current edition.

But it's got the work of many commentators behind it. But what the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge really is, it's just a volume. They've come out with a bigger, newer one with bigger print.

The old one was small with small print. You can look up any verse in the scripture, Old or New Testament, and it won't, like if you look up John 3.16, you just look it up just like you'd look it up in the Bible. And you say, okay, here's John, here's 3, and here's verse 16.

But instead of the actual verse, it has cross references galore. For every verse in the Bible, references to other places in the Bible that say the same or similar or related things. So that if you're trying to study, you know, well, you may have these in the margin of your Bibles occasionally.

You may have a center margin or a side margin of your Bible that you're reading a verse that says, it's got a little A there, and you look over there at the A, and it says, oh, okay, it gives some other references. What they're doing is they're telling you where maybe a New Testament writer is quoting from the Old Testament or something similar is found in another passage. And they're directing you to look at that passage along with this one to get a bigger picture of the whole subject.

Well, what the treasury of scripture knowledge does is the same thing multiplied by about a factor of 10. You know, your margin may have two or three or four references for a verse, probably not. There'll be a lot more in the treasury of scripture knowledge.

And if you want to study the Bible by comparing scripture with scripture, there's no better tool for that. Any Bible bookstore will either have or could order the treasury of scripture knowledge. There are also a lot of commentaries.

I won't go into this in detail. I could give you a lot of names. I've given you only one example of each.

There are single volume commentaries that cover the whole Bible very briefly. The commentary just basically gives his explanation to kind of clarify what it's about, the verse. Multi-volumes usually have one volume for each book of the Bible.

The New International Bible Commentary, sadly, is written with the New International text. However, it has my favorite commentator as its general editor, FF Bruce. And he's pretty responsible, although it's written by a team of men.

If you want a one-volume commentary, you can buy Jamison, Fawcett, and Brown. You can buy Adam Clark. You can buy Matthew Henry.

You can buy a whole bunch of them. Or you can buy that one I mentioned. If you want more detail in commentaries, then you can go to multi-volumes.

And there's a lot of sets. But the one that's most affordable and, in my opinion, the best is the Tyndale Commentaries on the Old Testament, which are published by Eerdmans, and the Tyndale Commentaries on the New Testament, published by InterVarsity Press. These are multi-volume, but they're paperback.

See, most commentaries are hardback and expensive. These are like paperback, and they're much more affordable. If you go through something like CBD or some of these mail-order houses, you can get them really greatly reduced.

There's 20-something volumes in each of these sets. And you can get the whole set for \$120 or something like that through some outlets. The point is that these commentaries are very detailed.

They go verse by verse through the books that they're treating. And the commenter usually, in this particular case, gives a variety of opinions and arguments for various possible meanings instead of just trying to hammer whatever their favorite viewpoint is. That's not... Some commentators, they just hammer their viewpoint.

This particular set tries to give an even-handed treatment. Then, of course, on the Book of Revelation, I don't think you can do much better than this little volume right here. But actually, I don't consider the Book of Revelation to be the most important book for you to buy commentaries on, even though it's the only one I've ever written a commentary on.

I'm not trying to sell books. But anyway, those are some of the things. Now, I told you it'd be a little more technical, less edifying than some of the other lectures in this series.

But if you want to have a good library, you don't have to spend a fortune. There are just a few good books that are very valuable. I'd recommend you get the ones I've listed here if you don't have them.

There's a lot more you can get. I have a lot more than that at home. But I wouldn't want to burden you with a great expensive list.

But if you really want to do serious Bible study, responsible Bible study, it's good to have some of those books. At the very least, a good translation and read it a lot. And then the other books can be helpful to the degree that you make use of them.