

CAPTURED BY THE WORD PRT 6

We have been on this subject matter of the word for 5 weeks now and I believe that you are being equipped in a great way. Last week, we looked at the attitude of the student of the word. This morning, I would like us to deal with **THE TOOLS FOR THE STUDENT OF THE WORD**.

Just like any profession, a student of the word needs the appropriate tools in order to conduct an effective bible study. Professional athletes will tell you that in order to perform at a high level, you need to have proper equipment such as running shoes – and the running shoes tend to be pricey. As a student of the word, do you know the tools of your trade.

In today's session, we are going to explore 5 essential tools for a student of the Bible. Just like any tools of a trade, you start with easy ones to use and with experience, you move on to use the more complex tools.

2 Timothy 2:15 (AMPC) Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.

1. Bible Translations

- The most important tool of all is the Bible – it is a must have tool in your tool box.
- In the main, the original scripts of the Bible were written in Hebrew and Greek – unless you learnt these languages, you would need to acquire a bible that has been translated into your language of choice.
- We will focus on English and in that regard, it is exciting to note that there are very good English translations around.
- How do you go about in choosing a suitable translation for yourself – in order to make an informed decision, you need to know that translators used two main ways of translating the manuscripts.
 - Literal Translations – This is an attempt to translate word for word. This minimizes the possibility of introducing translators' bias as they try to bring out the meaning of difficult words. These are more difficult to understand.
 - Dynamic translations (functional equivalence) – This is an attempt to translate thought for thought using modern English style. They are much easier to understand, but run the risk that the translator may misinterpret the original thought.
- When should one use the *Literal Translation* and when should you use the *Dynamic translations*?

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Literal	Dynamic
Awkward English	Natural English
Reader interprets	Translator interprets
Hard to understand	Easy to understand
Good for serious study	Good for casual reading
Suitable for experts	Suitable for everybody

Table 1 – Comparison of Translation methods

- Which Bibles fall within which Translation?

Very literal	Fairly literal	Fairly Dynamic	Very Dynamic	Loose Paraphrase
NKJV	ESV	NIV	NLT	JB Phillips
NASB	NRSV	NET	NiRV	Living Bible
MKJV	HCSB	TNIV	CEV	Message
RSV	BBE	GW	GNB	

Table 2 – List of Bible Translations

- The Dynamic translations tend to be ok with adding conjunctions, punctuations to the original text in order to make the original meaning clearer to today's reader.
- The NIV, though it is categorized as fairly dynamic, it is quite restrained in what it adds (it is true to the term functional equivalence), whereas a natural language translation like the NLT, is more comfortable in adding a significant amount of extra information.

- For example:

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φοβούμενοι τε μὴ εἰς τὴν Σύρτιν

Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis,

ESV: “Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis:”

NIV: “Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis”

NLT: “They were afraid of being driven across to the sandbars of Syrtis off the African coast”

- The ESV is close to the literal translation, which is a word for word attempt – it therefore gives us what was contained in the Greek version.
- It says nothing about sandbars but the NIV introduces sandbars in order to help the reader to understand what was meant by running aground – you run aground by possibly hitting against sands ridges caused by waves close to the beach.
- The NLT, which is very fluid and uses natural language, adds “...sandbars of Syrtis off the African coast”. It still trying to convey the same message but it has added a detail that goes beyond the intend of the original writer. Luke did not find the need of adding sandbars and Africa.
- For serious bible study, it is advised to use at least three different translations, preferably from three different levels of literalness

2. Bible concordance

- Back in the days, an exhaustive concordance was priceless – what is a concordance?
- A concordance provides four main features.
 - It gives a complete, alphabetical list of all words appearing in a translation.
 - Under each word, it gives a full list of all the verses in which the word appears.
 - Beside each entry, it includes a number; each number refers to a particular Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic word.

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- The back of the concordance is a short lexicon (Hebrew-English and Greek-English dictionary) listing all the words by their assigned numbers
- Here is an example from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance for the word NETS

<i>n</i> of checker work, and wreaths of	1Ki 7:17	7638
the wicked fall into their own <i>n</i>	Ps 141:10	4365
woman, whose heart is snares and <i>n</i>	Ec 7:26	2764
they that spread <i>n</i> upon the Is the	Is 19:8	4364
of <i>n</i> in the midst of the sea	Eze 26:5	2764
shalt be a place to spread <i>n</i> upon	Eze 26:14	2764
And they straightway left their <i>n</i>	Mt 4:20	<i>1350</i>
their father, mending their <i>n</i>	Mt 4:21	<i>1350</i>
straight way they forsook their <i>n</i>	Mk 1:18	<i>1350</i>
were in a ship mending their <i>n</i>	Mk 1:19	<i>1350</i>
of them, and were washing their <i>n</i>	Lk 5:2	<i>1350</i>
and let down your <i>n</i> for a draught	Lk 5:4	<i>1350</i>

Table 3 - Example from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

- This entry lists all the occurrences of the word 'nets' in the KJV.
- Each entry includes a brief extract from the verse itself (note the word 'nets' is abbreviated by its first letter), the chapter and verse reference and the numerical code.
- Numbers in italics are Greek, while those in regular typeface are Hebrew. The entry shows there are six Hebrew words translated 'nets' but only one Greek word (1350).
- More information can be found by looking up the meaning of the Hebrew word by searching the number of the word in the Lexicon dictionary at the back.
- A concordance serves one main purpose: it helps you find verses in the Bible.
- Back in the days, one could not do without a concordance, but the advent of Electronic Bible software has made it obsolete.
- The power and speed of advanced programmes such as Logos Bible Software is unmatched.

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- Examples of Free Electronic Bible Software are e-Sword (see www.e-sword.net) and The Bible Gateway.
- The Bible Gateway is a website which provides searching facilities for 21 English translations of the Bible as well as many other functions.

3. Study Bible

- Every student of the Bible ought to have a study Bible. You also need to know which one to get and how to use it.
- Which Study Bible is the best?
- Taking a tour into a bookshop will expose you to a variety of Study bibles such as:
 - The Dake Study Bible
 - The Thompson Chain-reference Bible,
 - The Life Application Bible and
 - The Spirit-filled Life Bible
 - Specialized Bibles for teenagers, women, businessmen or leaders.
- Which ones are highly recommended for devotion and for serious bible study?
- For devotional purposes, the Life Application Bible (NIV, NLT) is highly recommended.
 - Simple notes
 - clear and focused on application
 - uses modern English, which is easy to understand
- For Study purposes (pastor, teacher, theologian student), the NIV Study Bible is recommended.
 - Written by an international, interdenominational team of evangelical scholars (accurate and balanced).
 - It contains more than 20,000 study notes located on the same pages as the verses to which they refer, helping to bring understanding to the Scriptures.
 - The notes treat difficult passages in a balanced manner; where evangelicals hold different views, the notes present the views without bias.
- The NIV Study Bible is kind of a one stop shop for a Bible scholar - In one resource, it provides a portable Bible concordance, dictionary, atlas, and commentary.
- Internet based bible such as the New English Translation (NET) is also recommended – produced by a team of scholars and is available for free on line.

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- It has over 60 000 notes, which take the form of translators' notes, study notes and text critical notes. For more details visit www.net bible.com.

4. Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia

- Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias cover such things as biblical books, customs, doctrines, events, geography, history, people and words.
- They help to create the context and culture of the Biblical times and this information greatly enriches your Bible Study experience.
- Some great Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias are
 - The New Bible Dictionary (3rd ed., edited by Wood 1996)
 - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Bromiley 1988)
 - James Orr (1915), International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
- The use of Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias gives you behind the scene details to certain moments – for instance, why did Jesus ask John to look after his mother Mary? By reading a Bible encyclopedia, you will discover that John's mother Salome and Jesus' mother Mary were sisters. In that regard Mary was John's aunt.

5. Bible commentaries

- Bible commentaries are comments made by interpreters regarding a passage of scripture.
- They are an aid to ones understanding of scriptures but never a substitute for your own study of scripture.
- Never consult a commentary before making an effort to seek your own understanding of scripture. Doing so is a sure death nail to your ability to receive revelation and understanding from the Holy Spirit.
- Facts to consider when selecting a commentary¹
 - The commentary should focus more on interpretation than application.
 - The author of the commentary must know Hebrew or Greek well.
 - The commentary must discuss all the possible meanings of the text and evaluate each one.
 - The commentary should discuss text-critical problems.
 - The author should discuss the historical background of the text.

¹ Fee (1985:35)

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- The commentary should give bibliographic guidelines, so you can do further research.
- The commentary should start with a thorough introduction to the book.

Works Cited

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