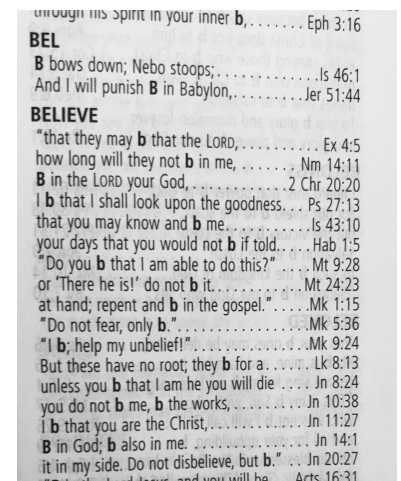
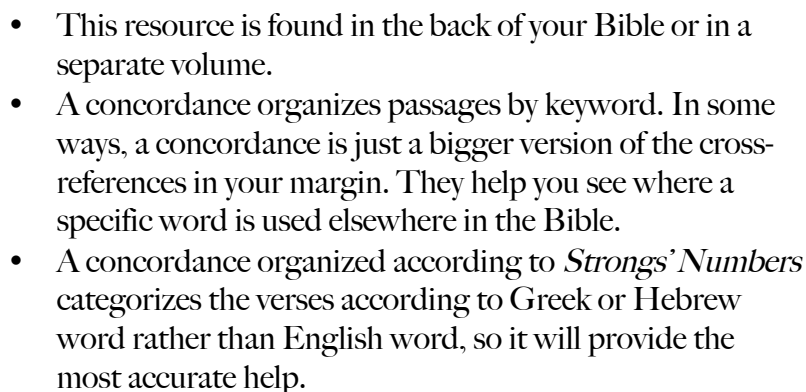


The Proper Use and Priority of Teaching Helps

- NOT FIRST. (1 John 2:27)
- After:
 - You have read the verse many, many times
 - You have considered the context (chapter, book, and salvation history)
 - You have prayed to the Spirit for guidance
- The only way to better understand the Bible is to do the hard work of interpretation *yourself*.

These tools do not contribute any extra-biblical material. They simply help you find other helpful passages in the Bible that might illuminate the text. We turn to these tools before the extra-biblical reference tools because we believe in the *perspicuity* of Scripture: *the Bible is its own best interpreter*.

- Usually found in the side margin or between the columns of your Bible, these are other passages of Scripture that either quote, refer to, or use similar language to the verse in question.
- This tool will help you form a web of interconnected verses in your mind, as other verses in the Bible help provide greater context and clarity for your verse. Remember, Scripture is trustworthy and completely true. The Bible never contradicts itself.



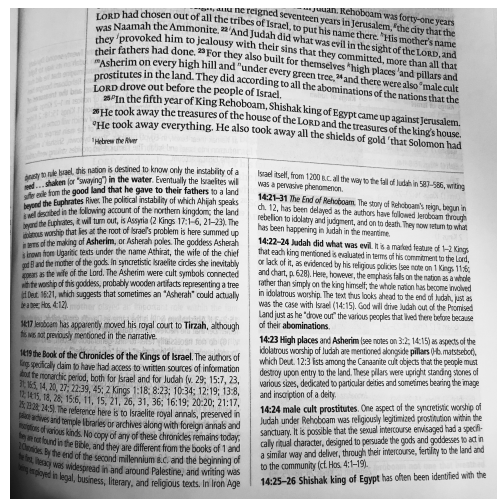
Extra-Biblical Reference Tools

We call these *extra-biblical* because they provide content and information from some source outside of the Scriptures—whether archaeological information, theological reflection, or extra historical context.

These can be very helpful tools as you think through a verse or passage, especially those contributions from other believers and church figures. However, remember that these are not without error, and they can contain overt or unintended biases.

1) Study Notes

- These are found in the bottom margin of your Study Bible.
- Depending on your Study Bible, the notes may be more focused on the meaning of phrases, extra historical/archaeological background, interpretations from church figures, or application and practical thoughts.
- Try your best to resist immediately reading these notes. If you can't resist, do your main studying in a plain Bible—without study notes—and keep the study Bible for reference purposes.



2) Commentaries

- Scholars and pastors put together entire books, usually focused on individual books of the Bible.
- Commentaries come in all shapes and sizes:
 - Expository commentaries will focus on line-by-line explanation of the verses. If you have particular questions about how a passage has been understood in church history or how to properly translate a difficult verse, this is a good resource.
 - Pastoral/Application commentaries will read more like a sermon. They will often gloss over difficult questions in the passage, focusing on the outline and structure, while drawing out specific practical suggestions.
 - Critical Commentaries will focus on sources, authorship, and original community that received the book. These commentaries are not particularly helpful for teaching.
- It's very important to make sure you trust the author of the commentary you are reading. Often, a commentators comments and interpretation will vary according to their theological convictions.
- Recommended: Pillar Commentaries, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentaries, Preaching the Word, New International Commentaries
- Many free commentaries can be found online, especially from older church figures. In fact, many of them can be downloaded on apps on your phone.
- Apps: E-Sword, Olive Tree, John Calvin Commentary