

Helps For Bible Study

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Unless you have been hiding under a rock most of your life, you already know the importance studying the Bible. I'm sometimes asked what resources are available to help us succeed in this task.

Since Hebrew and Greek are foreign languages to us, start with a reliable translation. I have a dozen or so translations, but some are anything but reliable! As a "main" version I recommend four. My personal favorite is the New King James, followed by the New American Standard, the American Standard (1901), and the King James. Every version has its flaws, but I would judge these four to be "reliable."

Whatever version you choose, obtain one with cross references (center column or side column). Cross references help you find other passages with similar wording. Sometimes (not always) one explains another.

Next, a concordance will aid you tremendously. I recommend Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. It lists every time a word is used in the KJV (helpful even if you are using a different version).

Numerous Bible Encyclopedias and Bible Dictionaries are available. Most are helpful, but be careful with all of them. Just because a dictionary or encyclopedia says something doesn't make it so!

The very last resource you should consult is a commentary. Too often, folks resort to a commentary first. You should thoroughly study the text itself first. Read it from your main translation and several others. Run your cross references. See how the words are used in other passages. Then, and only then, consider what other people have to say about it. Commentaries can be profoundly enlightening; but study the text itself first!

A Lion In A Pit On A Snowy Day

"Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a mighty man of Kabzeel, mighty in deeds, struck down the two sons of Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion inside a pit on a snowy day" (I Chronicles 11:22 NASB).

To jump down into a pit with a lion when the footing isn't the best is quite a deed. I wonder what Benaiah's motivation was. It certainly was a great deed.

Most of us would like to do some great deed for the Lord. Because of that attitude we can feel like failures as Christians. Jesus said in the parable of the talents, *"Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things"* (Matthew 25:21).

As we go through life, we fail to recognize the small deeds that we do – deeds such as going to work faithfully, being honest, meeting simple needs of others, and being consistent in assembling with brethren. Everyday things that aren't extraordinary please our Lord.

When we do everyday things that are unimportant in the world's eyes, God is preparing us to be able to do more. If we are faithful to take care of the small things, then our opportunities to do good deeds in the name of Jesus will increase. Like the ones on the right in the judgment scene we might say *"Lord, when did we?"* (Matthew 25:34-40). When we submit to God's will and allow our lives to be changed, we don't keep track of our deeds because we have a new nature, a servant heart. God keeps track and He is pleased.

To hear Jesus, say, *"Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into your Master's rest."* When I stand before Him, that's what I long to hear. Knowing that I have pleased Him will be a great blessing.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)

Let God Send You

When we think of the great apostle Paul, we think of a rugged warrior for Christ – a courageous, daring, fearless man who laughed in the face of danger. After all, he was the man who got up and walked back into the town where folks had stoned him, drug him out of the city, and left him for dead (Acts 14:19-20). Paul was the guy who was whipped, beaten, shipwrecked, mugged, thrown in prison, and endured many great perils with his faith intact (2 Cor. 6:4-10; 11:24-28).

In 2 Cor. 7, we see Paul continuing this life theme in being bold in speech and joyful in tribulation (v. 4). But even Paul had times that were hard to handle. For in the very next verse, we see a side of Paul we are not used to seeing in the pages of the New Testament: *"For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears."* (2 Cor. 7:5) So Paul was human after all. And even he had to grapple with trouble, conflict, and fear in his life. Can you relate to that? I certainly can.

The first word of the next verse is *"nevertheless"* and it introduces the thought that a solution was provided – and it was: *"Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus"* (2 Cor. 7:6). Titus was one who was able to comfort (2 Cor. 7:6), console (2 Cor. 7:7), and render proper affections (2 Cor. 7:15). It was just what Paul needed. Titus was one who brought the light of a new day after a dark and stormy night.

The Century English Version of the Bible renders 2 Cor. 7:6 this way: *"But God cheers up people in need, and that is what he did when he sent Titus to us."* God uses various means to comfort His children. In this case, it was **sending** Titus to Paul.

There are many in the world (and this church) who are suffering, in pain, dealing with turmoil and fear in their lives. So many times just being there for them makes such a big difference. As one lady once said, "My friend just came over, made coffee, then sat down and drank it with me. I didn't want to talk right then, and she did not try to make me do so. She helped me a lot." (from "Personal Counseling" by Bill Flatt).

Why not let God send you to someone to help bring them a little comfort?

- Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)