

What's New in Bible-Study Software and More

'More for your money' describes many of the latest resources for students of the Bible

Today, Bible reference materials typically are released not only in traditional book form but also as computer software, with the latter option becoming increasingly popular—given the capability it provides of packaging multiple products together in one program.

Though the cost savings accrued from software usage can be significant, perhaps the greatest benefit of the digital form is the time savings it affords. A world of information can be as close as a click away, eliminating in some cases the need to leaf through countless reference books during study.

For the technologically challenged, however, there remains a wealth of reference materials in the traditional form to choose from. Whether you're a layperson, Sunday school teacher, Bible-study leader or senior pastor, a wide variety of biblical reference books and software is available, no matter your budget or the translation or the format you need.

Helpful Terms

Before shopping for Bible-study materials, it is helpful to acquire at least a working knowledge of the standard reference products available to readers.

Dictionaries define the terms found in the biblical text. Encyclopedias explain the times and traditions of biblical

people and places. Concordances show where specific words, phrases or ideas occur in the Bible.

Commentaries contain comments from scholars that explain the meaning of Bible passages. Handbooks give introductions and overviews to books of the Bible.

Atlases include maps and illustrations that show where biblical events occurred. Lexicons list words that appear in the Bible and their equivalents in the original biblical languages.

Given a grasp of the fundamentals, readers are better positioned to select from the plethora of products on the market today. In the list that follows are some of the more popular reference materials available, many of which come in both book and software formats.

Bible Study Resources

A classic reference text for today's readers is The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Thomas Nelson). The concordance is completely updated with extra Bible study helps—including a 200-page topical index—and includes convenient pronunciation guides for readers.

For students of all ages there is The Student Bible Dictionary (Barbour Publishing). It contains definitions and explanations of hundreds of Bible words, names, places and concepts. Scores of full-color charts, maps, photographs and illustrations help to clarify the text and add visual appeal.

The Holman Illustrated Study Bible (Holman Bible Publishers) features the Holman Christian Standard Bible, one of the five best-selling translations of the Bible. To assist readers in contextual study of the Bible, more than 1,000 four-color maps, charts, photographs, reconstructions and supporting graphics are placed within the biblical text.

The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Baker) is a helpful tool for greater comprehension of the original Greek language used in writing the New Testament. Useful in devotional as well as exegetical study, it includes a Greek-English lexicon and New Testament synonym listing.

For those who dig archaeology, there is the new Archaeological Study Bible (Zondervan), which features nearly 500 full-color photographs of places and artifacts that explain the historical context of the people and stories of the Bible.

Also new is Zondervan's Africa Bible Commentary, edited by Nigerian theologian Tokunboh Adeyemo. Described by pastor Rick Warren as a "monumental work" that would benefit every Christian, the volume features commentaries by 70 African scholars analyzing such issues as poverty, war, worship, prayer, AIDS, and race and ethnicity.

Another popular reference product is the perennial best-seller The Ultimate Bible Reference Library (Thomas Nelson) on CD-ROM, which offers a vast library of state-of-the-art Bible study tools, including \$1,500 worth of unlocked resources.

Also from Thomas Nelson is its eBible for PDA Essentials Library Edition, which is readable on both Palm OS and Pocket PC handheld devices. It contains Vine's Complete Expository

Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Nave's Topical Bible, the Illustrated Bible Handbook and several other works.

Bible reference software is available not only for handheld personal computers but also for other portable computing devices.

iPocketBible (Avanquest), for Apple Computer's wildly popular iPod digital media player, comes with unabridged text and audio and is meant for devotional reading and serious study. It works with Apple's iTunes on both Macintosh computers and PCs. Using iTunes, you can drag and drop books or chapters of interest from the Bible or import the entire Bible for listening.

Also for iPod is Zondervan's TNIV Bible for iPod, an interactive DVD-ROM.

With the popularity of the iPod has come an increased market for Macintosh computers. More publishers are now creating products for the growing group of Mac users.

The Zondervan Scholarly Bible Study Suite for Macintosh provides an impressive array of study tools. Included are three lexicons, two concordances, four analytical tools, three dictionaries and 15 other texts.

Thomas Nelson offers Mac users the Word Biblical Commentary CD-ROM Mac Edition, which features powerful search capabilities, views of multiple translations of the original Greek and Hebrew and bookmarks to note verses of interest.

Other electronic study choices range from the software version

of printed study Bibles to entire libraries of Bible helps, such as Logos Research Systems' Scholar's Library, Parson Technology's QuickVerse, Biblesoft's PC Study Bible, Tyndale House's iLumina and Thomas Nelson's eBible Bible Study Library.

Software products will give you more for your money in Bible resources. A traditional reference-book library can cost as much as several thousand dollars. The typical software user generally can expect to spend closer to \$200 for as much, if not more, reference material.

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