



Bible Study Tools



DICTIONARIES

ENGLISH

An English Dictionary describes the common usage of words. A dictionary is not so much an authority on how to use a word as it is a record of how a word is commonly being used. A good dictionary shows the origin of a word - what words and languages it evolved from (etymology).

BIBLE

A Bible Dictionary gives definitions of words found in the Bible. Some give pronunciations of words. Some give historical or archeological information about people, customs and places mentioned in the Bible.

EXPOSITORY

These offer studies of Greek, Hebrew, or Chaldean words of original Bible texts. They usually explain figures of speech, and sometimes give historical, cultural, and spiritual information beyond just definitions. (Bible Encyclopedias are in several volumes or are more in-depth than Dictionaries.)

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Translations of the Bible are very different in the way they represent the Greek or Hebrew or Chaldean text in English. Some are very literal. These sometimes even leave the grammar in a more foreign style than in English, making the text hard to comprehend. Others are very liberal in their handling of words and phrases, giving what they perceive to be the meaning of phrases as we would say the same thing in English instead of translating word for word from one language to another.

An example could be given with the phrase, "This is a cool car." If I were translating that phrase into a language spoken in central Africa, just giving a word for word translation might miscommunicate the idea. The word "cool" in the phrase is used as a slang word, not having its normal meaning. If I just straightly translate it, the reader might think the car had air conditioning. A person in Switzerland might think it had no glass in the windows. A less literal translation of the Bible tries to convey what the translators think the writer had in mind, even if the words used do not resemble the original.

Every cult has either written a new book, or given their own translation of the Bible to their people, or both, to support their false teaching.

BIBLE PARAPHRASES

A paraphrase is what normally comes after the introduction, "In other words..." It really just means to use "other words". If I say, "Buenos dias," it literally means, "Good Day." Depending on whether we are coming or going, it could mean, "Hello," or, "Goodbye." If I am translating from Spanish to English and come across this phrase, if I give the hello or goodbye, I am paraphrasing.

Depending on the paraphraser and the theological, social, and/or political persuasion they have, a paraphrase could go bad pretty quickly.

COMMENTARIES

Commentaries are as numerous (and sometimes as full of error) as people's opinions. They are available in single volume or multiple volumes. Some will have one book of the Bible per volume. Knowing something about the person or people who wrote a commentary is very important.

STUDY BIBLES

Study Bibles have various study tools built right in. These tools can include charts, maps, photos, drawings, historical information, cultural information, commentaries, concordances, dictionaries, and subject indexes. Like commentaries, you want to know that the person believes what you want to learn before you invest in one. Some have false teachings in them.

BIBLE HANDBOOKS

A handbook is like a study Bible without the Bible text. It can be made up of the same type material as a study Bible listed above.

CONCORDANCES

EXHAUSTIVE

This type of concordance contains every word in a certain translation of the Bible, and the location of every occurrence of each word. The context, or the text around the word in each verse where it appears, is written out by the reference of each occurrence. Words such as "a" or "it" or "the" are listed, but the context is not necessarily given for such words, since it is unlikely they would be used to search for a text. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the King James Version of the Bible contains a dictionary of Old Testament words and one of New Testament words. Each word in the original languages is assigned a number. The number is listed with each reference so that you can tell what word is being translated by the English word listed.

COMPLETE

Complete concordances do not list every word in a particular translation, but they do list every occurrence of each word they contain.

INCOMPLETE

Occasionally a concordance in a book by itself will be an incomplete one, but this kind is usually found in study Bibles and Bible handbooks. Not every word is listed, and not every occurrence of any particular word is listed.

(A different concordance is needed for each Bible Translation, because each translation is subject to use a different word in a particular situation.)

TOPICAL BIBLES

In the King James Version, the word "faith" appears only two times in the Old Testament. Hebrews chapter 11, however, refers to eighteen Old Testament characters who lived by faith! If I want to do a study of faith in the Old Testament, then, a concordance is probably not the best tool to use. A topical Bible would let me look a certain subject up, such as faith, and find the important sections of the Bible referring to that topic or subject. Some topical Bibles give the text of the particular Scripture, others just the references.