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April 12, 2007

For those interested in the Spring Bible Study Seminar,

Thank you for considering the Spring Bible Study Seminar. This seminar is for Christian's who want to learn to look deeply into the Word of God for help and direction in becoming more like Christ. This year we will focus on becoming like Christ in our daily lives. There have always been pressures in life and, even in spite of all our time saving and labor saving devices, it seems the mental and physical pressures of life are possibly worse than ever before. That means that those of us who wish to live a godly, Christ-like life need to work harder than ever to do so.

This year we will be studying God's Word using either laptops with Bible Study software, or books, or both if you prefer. Seminar participants should bring their own Bible Study tools, whether books or laptops. The seminar is designed to help equip people to study the Bible on their own, so it is not very helpful for us to provide materials that people will not have to study from when they get back home. The seminar is not "lecture format" but "hands on." Each student is provided with Bible questions and challenges, and is taught how to use the study tools to find the answers for themselves.

If you are bringing a laptop with Bible Study Software, but do not have any such software yet, please consider calling us for recommendations. Any software should have multiple versions, be able to do concordant searches and show the Greek and Hebrew meanings of words. If the software does not have Bible Dictionary's or a Bible Atlas, those should be brought as books.

For people who are bringing Bible Study books, this letter has a book list at the bottom. Please look it over and acquire any books you do not have but will need for the seminar. If you have any questions at all, please call. I want to encourage you to buy your own books and not borrow them from a friend. Books are the tools of Bible Study. If you do not have your own, then when you get home and want to do your own study you will not have the tools you need. Also, you will find it helpful to make notes in your Bible study tools. I have some books that are as marked up as my Bible is. The book list is long and detailed, so please do not rush through it. You are amassing a library to study the Word of Eternity, so take some time and make wise choices. I am available to help if you need it.

If you do not have any books and are thinking of purchasing from scratch, consider Bible study software, especially if you have a laptop. The amount of study material that comes on BibleWorks, for example, even at \$349.00 is cheaper than you would pay for all the reference materials it has.

I encourage you to buy, as soon as you can, any books or software that you do not have. Shipping books at the last minute is very expensive, and so is paying retail. It can save you money to order books online or from a Bible discount house. Furthermore, if you have a lot of new books or Bible software,

there is always a learning curve. Having the time to read the introductions, or start to use the tool, can be very helpful, although many people do come to our seminar with brand new study tools that they learn to use at the seminar. Please call if I, or any of us here at Spirit & Truth, can help in any way.

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Reference Materials for the Spring Bible Study Camp

You want to learn more about studying the Bible. If you want to learn carpentry, you have to learn the tools, i.e., hammer, saw, level, screwdriver, etc. Similarly, if you want to learn Bible Study, knowing the tools that are available, and how to use them, is essential. Below is a list of the many tools that are available to you, and that will be helpful to you. You can look over the entire list for reference.

If this is your first or second Bible Study Seminar: please bring the basic Bible study tools listed in the “Basic Bible Study Tools list” (below).

If you have been before, and want to advance in your Bible study, add a Greek Interlinear, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible by E. W. Bullinger, and/or some books on biblical manners and customs. If you do not have a Greek Interlinear and want one, and you do not have Bible software for your computer, I recommend the 4 volume interlinear by Jay Green that we sell at STF. If you have Bible Software, I recommend an interlinear that uses a more modern Greek text, such as *The New Greek English Interlinear New Testament* by Brown and Comfort, edited by J. Douglas.

Basic Bible Study Tools¹

The **basic** tools you should bring to a Spirit & Truth Bible Study Camp are:

- 3 Bibles (see below under Bibles)
- 1 English Dictionary (see below for a recommendation)
- 1 Greek Lexicon (see below for a recommendation)
- 1 Hebrew Lexicon (see below for a recommendation)
- 1 English Concordance (most likely Strong’s)
- 1 Greek Concordance (see below for a recommendation)
- 1 Hebrew Concordance (see below for a recommendation)
- 1 Bible Atlas (see below for a recommendation)
- 1 Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia
- An interlinear of the New Testament, and the OT if possible

These are the basic tools. If you have more than one lexicon, or more than one Bible Dictionary, it can be helpful to bring them.

Bibles:

Bring at least three Bibles. You should bring a *New International Version*, a *King James Version*, and the third is your choice, but it should be the version you read if you read a version other than the two mentioned above.

English Concordances:

(I recommend “The Strongest Strong’s”)

There are a number of exhaustive concordances. If you are using material that uses the Strong’s numbering system, you should bring a concordance with those numbers, usually

¹ All of these are available as computer software. I recommend Bibleworks, which we sell, which has all of them except the Bible Atlas. Generally, computer Bible Atlas programs are not very good.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. The newer versions of the *Young's Concordance* are coded to the Strong's numbers, but only in the back so research is still quite slow using it.

Make sure you bring a concordance to the Bible that you use the most: *NIV Exhaustive* if you use the *NIV*, *New American Standard Exhaustive* if you use the *NASB*, etc. Make sure the concordance you bring has numbers that allow you to use the study material you bring. The *NIV Exhaustive* uses the Goodrick/Kohlenberger numbering system. If you use books coded to the "Strong's numbering system" for research, which is the system most research books use, make sure you bring a ***Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.***

Make sure the concordance is "exhaustive" or "complete." For research purposes, "abridged," or "concise," or "personal size" concordances are smaller (and thus seem easier to carry) because they do not list every occurrence of the words in the Bible. Thus they are not very helpful for Bible study. Be a smart shopper: there are some "exhaustive" concordances that do not have the Strong's numbering system in them. Check for it. Also, there are some "exhaustive" concordances that are not truly exhaustive. Look at the book itself. Is it notably smaller in size than other exhaustive concordances without having smaller print? You can bet it is not truly exhaustive in a usable sense.

There is a new Strong's on the market titled, "The Strongest Strong's" which has been revised by computer and is very good. Also, that version also comes in a large print edition (which I personally use, and is great for "older eyes").

Greek Concordances:

(I recommend *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament*)

A Greek concordance is a very useful tool. As in English, Greek words have several meanings. Furthermore, due to the semantic range of words, a single word can be translated by different English words. For example, the Greek word, *tacheos*, is translated as "hastily," "quickly," "shortly," "suddenly" and "soon" in the *KJV*, depending on the context in which it was used. This is very common. How would you know **every way** that a Greek word was translated? A Greek concordance. My personal preference is:

The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament. It is based on the *KJV* (make sure you get a new one that is coded to the Strong's numbering system, some of the older versions are not).

The Word Study Concordance. A two-volume set (one version is a partially numbered *KJV* New Testament that is basically useless if you have a ***Strong's Exhaustive Concordance***). This is basically the same book as ***The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament*** (above) but has some extra numbers that can be useful.

The Greek-English Concordance to the New Testament by J. Kohlenberger III. Based on the *NIV*. Uses the Goodrick/Kohlenberger numbering system. That means you have to have an ***NIV Exhaustive Concordance*** to use it. I have not found this as helpful as the Englishman's, above.

Hebrew Concordances:

(I recommend *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance to the Old Testament*)

Hebrew concordances work just like Greek concordances do except they are for the Hebrew language used in the Old Testament instead of the Greek that is used in the New Testament. My personal preference is:

The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance to the Old Testament. Based on the *KJV* (get one coded to the Strong's numbering system.).

Also available is, ***The Hebrew-English Concordance to the Old Testament*** by J. Kohlenberger III. This Hebrew concordance is based on the *NIV*, and uses the Goodrick/Kohlenberger numbering system. That means you have to have an ***NIV Exhaustive Concordance*** to use it. I do not like it nearly as much as the one based on the King James Version because it does not recognize things about the Hebrew words that I believe are important for accurate Bible study.

Bible Dictionaries and Bible Encyclopedias: (No specific recommendations)

A Bible Dictionary is more like a small encyclopedia than a dictionary because it tells you "about" something instead of giving a definition. In the theological world you get definitions from a "lexicon." A Bible Dictionary can be one volume or many volumes, while typically a multi-volume set is called a "Bible Encyclopedia." Still, there are one volume "Bible Encyclopedias," and multi-volume "Bible Dictionaries," it just depends on what the author wants to call it. Obviously, the more volumes the more detailed the information is going to be.

Every Bible Dictionary or Bible Encyclopedia has a "bias," a point of view from which it was written. Some are written by very liberal scholars who do not believe the Bible. Some are written by conservative scholars of various denominations. Some are older, before the modern discoveries in archaeology, some are more modern and have all the newest information from archaeology and the study of linguistics.

New Bible Dictionary, Howard Marshall, ed., (Intervarsity Press). Strengths: Somewhat conservative scholarship, concise writing. Weakness: one volume.

Holman Bible Dictionary, Trent Butler, ed., (Holman Bible Publishers). Strengths: Fairly conservative scholarship, good pictures. Weakness: one volume.

Mercer Dictionary of the Bible, Watson Mills, ed., (Mercer University Press). Strength: very biblically conservative, the product of Mercer University, a Baptist college. Makes some statements that other scholars might not make. Weakness: one volume and orthodox. Articles support the orthodox Baptist perspective.

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary R. Youngblood, ed. (Thomas Nelson, Pub.) I have not had the chance to review this personally, but the article on it I read sounds like it will be a good Bible dictionary.

Smith's Dictionary of the Bible (4 volumes), H. B. Hackett, ed., (Baker Books). Strength: Conservative and Bible based. It was written in 1896, before modern archaeology had discovered and excavated many sites so there is some outdated material, but without the reliance on archaeology there is a much heavier reliance on the words and nuances of words in the Bible itself. Its 4-volume size allows for a great deal of attention to detail. Weakness: Limited because of age. (The one volume *Smith's* does not have the strengths of the 4-volume version, and the extra material in the four volume version is left out. Therefore I do not recommend the one volume edition).

A Dictionary of the Bible, James Hastings, ed., (Hendrickson). Popularly known as "Hastings Bible Dictionary." Strengths: Large and detailed in 5 volumes. Liberal scholarship looks at some

texts and subjects in a non-orthodox light that can shed new information on a subject. Weaknesses: Liberal scholarship can add an air of unbelief or skepticism to some articles. Also, written before the age of modern archaeology.

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Merrill Tenney, ed., (Regency/Zondervan). Strengths: Large (5 volumes) and detailed. Many maps and pictures. Conservative scholarship. Written recently enough to include most discoveries of modern archaeology. Weaknesses: Conservative scholars look at many subjects from an orthodox viewpoint.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., (Eerdmans). Strengths: Large and detailed (4 volumes). Conservative. Clearly and concisely written. Weaknesses: Conservative scholars look at many subjects from an orthodox viewpoint.

Other Bible Dictionaries or Encyclopedias: There are too many to mention. You can call for our opinion, or check it out and get a feel for it yourself by looking at various articles and seeing if they are accurate, detailed, etc.

Bible Atlas:

(I recommend the *Oxford Bible Atlas*)

The best Bible Atlas for the money is the *Oxford Bible Atlas* edited by Herbert May, now in its third edition. There are many Bible atlases on the market. Most cost more than they are worth and have lots of text and pictures, but few useful maps. This appeals to the modern reader who is attracted by color pictures, but the serious Bible student knows that a good Bible atlas has to have good and complete maps. Get your articles and pictures from a Bible Dictionary or specialty book such as *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (George Adam Smith), and get maps from the atlas.

The *Atlas of the Bible* by John Rogerson (Facts on File Publications) is a nice twist because it is the only atlas I know of that puts the cities of every era on a single map and uses smaller map areas so all the cities will fit. However, it should not be a first atlas, because it does not give enough of an “overall picture” of the Bible lands. Other atlases do their maps era by era (which is generally more useful). The Macmillan Bible Atlas is quite popular, but it is not as easy to use as the *Oxford* is. However, it was written by two Israeli soldiers and archaeologists, who took a special interest in following the wars in the Bible, so it is very interesting if that is a field of study.

Interlinear Bibles:

(The 4 volume by Jay Green that we sell at Spirit & Truth is very good, because it is the entire Bible and has the Strong's number with each Hebrew and Greek word. It is listed below. For a New Testament Interlinear, my personal favorite is *The Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* by Brown and Comfort (J.D. Douglas, editor)

There are Hebrew interlinears, Greek interlinears, and interlinears of the entire Bible. The thing to remember is that the “interlinear word” in English is a translation, and therefore is not much different than any other translation. People think that the English in an interlinear Bible is somehow more accurate than the English in their translation of the Bible. That is not the case at all! Thirty years of using interlinear texts has shown me that Hebrew and Greek words still have to be studied for their meaning. The great value in an interlinear text is to do a quick reference of the Hebrew or Greek word, to see the structure of the Hebrew or Greek text, or to see if there are untranslated words in the original or added words in the English. Both Hebrew and Greek use

different word orders than English, both omit the indefinite article, and both languages have quirks that professional translators are aware of that cannot be seen from a simple interlinear translation. Therefore caution is needed when doing research from them. If you arrive at a totally different understanding of a verse than the English versions support, get a second opinion.

Some things to look for: Some interlinears have the *Strong's* numbers as well as the English word. That can be very helpful. Different interlinears use different Greek texts. The *KJV* was translated from a Western Text, the *NIV* and *NASB* were translated from texts that have an Alexandrian Text base. Generally the Alexandrian text is more accurate. Some interlinears have different English versions in them. Some have notes to differing Greek texts. I have no specific recommendations on an interlinear. *The Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* by Alfred Marshall is good, and the interlinear version and the Greek Text is Nestle's 21st edition, which is very good, but not the most modern. There are several Hebrew Interlinears out also.

I also really like *The Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* by Brown and Comfort (J.D. Douglas, editor). The Greek text is easy to read (and big) and the interlinear is generally very good. The Greek text is Nestle-Aland 26, which is very good.

I also use the *Word Study Greek-English New Testament* by Paul McReynolds. This interlinear is very literal, which can be helpful (but occasionally confusing) and it does also include a full Greek Concordance in the back. The Greek text is Nestle-Aland 26, which is very good.

A very helpful interlinear, and one that I use a lot in my office if my computer is off is a 4 volume set of the entire Bible called *The Interlinear Bible* by Jay Green. Green did a fairly good job on the interlinear, but more importantly also put a *Strong's* number above every Hebrew and Greek word. This is very helpful because it allows a person to accurately study using Greek and Hebrew lexicons and concordances without ever checking a specific English Bible. There is a one-volume edition of Green's work out on the market, but the print is so small it can be hard to read. The downside to this interlinear is that the Greek text is an older version of the Western Text, which fits with the *KJV* but is not as good as the Alexandrian Text type.

Greek Lexicons:

(I recommend either Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament or The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates).

There are 4 basic types of Greek lexicons.

- The first is "secular" lexicons such as you would buy in college to study the works of Homer and the Greek poets and writers.
- The second is biblical Greek lexicons such as *Thayer's*, in which you look up the Greek word once you know it (or use the *Strong's* numbering system).
- The third is lexicons such as *Bullinger's* or *Vine's* in which you look up an English word and then the lexicon gives you the Greek word. Sometimes lexicons are now being called "dictionaries" which confuses them with Bible dictionaries.
- The fourth is an "analytical Greek lexicon." An analytical lexicon only gives very basic meanings of the root words, but is used to give the exact part of speech of the Greek word.

The advantage to the “secular” lexicons is that they give every use of a Greek word. The disadvantages are that they contain material you do not need, and may not cover enough material on the words you do need. Also they tend to be very scholarly and difficult to use, and are expensive. “Biblical” lexicons have the words you need and material on each word, but will omit certain definitions of the Greek words if the author or editor thinks that definition does not apply or is not used in the Bible. Usually they are correct, but occasionally the secular uses of the words gives a broader scope of meaning than just the biblical usages do. The Greek lexicons such as *Vine’s* in which you look up an English word can be very easy to use but they are usually based on the *KJV*. If you are using a version that does not use the same English word as the *KJV* does, then you may not be able to find the correct Greek word. Also, many times you need to know the Greek word you want to look up anyway. For example, if you look up the word “move” in *Vine’s*, there are 6 Greek words to choose from. If you do not already know the one you want, how will you know which definition to choose? For the purpose of home Bible study and Spirit & Truth Fellowship Bible study camps, having a Greek lexicon with Greek words that you cannot access either by the English or by the *Strong’s* numbers is not helpful unless you are familiar enough with Greek that you can use a lexicon and look up a Greek word in Greek.

For the purposes of our seminar, Thayer, Zodhiates, or *Vine* is best, all described below.

“Secular”:

Greek-English Lexicon by Liddell and Scott. There is an abridged version. If it is worth getting at all, get the unabridged version. It is not a biblical lexicon, thus it is not coded to *Strong’s*.

Use by English Word:

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (There are a bunch of variations on *Vine’s* out on the market. If you get one, get one that has the Greek words coded to *Strong’s* numbering system.)

A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament by E. W. Bullinger. Commonly known as “Bullinger’s Lexicon.” All words are from the *KJV* but a full concordance allows you to find the correct Greek word. Not coded to *Strong’s*.

Use by Greek Word:

Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament. *Excellent and easy to use lexicon. Get one with the Strong’s numbers.*

The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. Excellent lexicon, coded to *Strong’s*.

A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature by Walter Bauer (also called “Bauer’s Lexicon) edited by Arndt and Gingrich (so it is also said to be by them). This is a wonderful lexicon but it is not coded to *Strong’s*, so some knowledge of Greek is necessary to use it. As well as giving the biblical meanings, it gives the meanings in early Christian patristic literature as well.

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains by J. Louw and E. Nida (2 volumes). This is a wonderful resource if you can read the Greek words in Greek. Greek words, like English words and words of every other language, usually have several meanings. What Louw-Nida does is organize the various meanings of separate words together so that they

can be studied side by side. For example, under “Press,” there are 12 Greek words that are very similar but have small differences. Louw-Nida puts all of these side by side so those difference can be studied. This is a wonderful tool for comparing different Greek words, but should not be a “first” lexicon.

Theological Lexicon of the New Testament by Ceslas Spicq (3 volumes). Only covers some of the words in the New Testament, but has a lot of material on the words he does cover.

The New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words (introduction by John Kohlenberger). This is newly out on the market, but seems quite good, and lists all the Hebrew words too, so it could be a one volume Greek and Hebrew Lexicon.

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament by G. Kittel. This is popularly known as “Kittel’s,” or “Kittel’s Theological Dictionary.” It is in 10 volumes and has a voluminous amount of material on each word. Nevertheless, it does not cover every Greek word in the New Testament. There is also a one volume edition available, but then you lose the history of the words, something often important if you need something as expanded as Kittel’s.

Analytical Greek Lexicons:

The New Analytical Greek Lexicon by W. Perschbacher. Coded to Strong’s but, like most analytical lexicons, can be very difficult to use. Be careful to order this book with the Strong’s numbers. The earlier printings do not have them, so you would have to be able to read some Greek to use it.

Hebrew Lexicons:

(I recommend *The Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, but it is very scholarly, and it is nice for beginner to have a “simple” one also, I like *The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament* by Baker and Carpenter).

There are only a few Hebrew lexicons available.

The Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. This is the most well known Hebrew lexicon. It covers every word in the Old Testament and is coded to the Strong’s numbering system. The definitions are short and occasionally are not clear. Nevertheless, because it covers every Hebrew word, I recommend it.

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, by Harris, Archer and Waltke. This 2 volume set is very helpful. It has expansive definitions that are usually very clear. However, it does not cover every word in the Old Testament, and sometimes the definitions incorporate some orthodox theology that is suspect.

Old Testament Word Studies by W. Wilson. This book has simple definitions that are easy to understand. You look up the English word, not the Hebrew word, so it is used like *Vine’s* and *Bullinger’s* Greek lexicons. The newer ones are coded to Strong’s numbers.

Vine’s Dictionary of Old Testament Words. Similar to the *Vine’s* Greek lexicon. You look up the English word. It is based on the *KJV* but is coded to Strong’s. A serious weakness is that it does not cover every Hebrew word.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary Old Testament by Baker and Carpenter. I have not had much time to review this, but it looks very good, and is coded to Strong's.

The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words (introduction by John Kohlenberger). This is newly out on the market, but seems quite good, and lists all the Greek words too, so it could be a one volume Greek and Hebrew Lexicon.

The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon by B. Davidson. This volume is not coded to the Strong's numbers and is very difficult to use. The definitions are very short and therefore not as useful for study.

Topical Bibles:

(No specific recommendations)

These are great reference sources for Bible Teachers. A topical Bible is not actually a Bible. It is actually a teachers or students guide to Bible topics. A more accurate description would be a "topical concordance." If you wanted to study the coming Judgment, for example, and you used a standard concordance such as *Young's* or *Strong's*, you could look up "judgment." But would you think to look up Matt. 8:29? It says, "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they [the demons] shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" The "appointed time" of course, is the Judgment.

A topical Bible is not complete, but it can be very helpful in reminding you of categories to look up and verses to check that you might not otherwise think of. There are a couple Topical Bibles on the market. The industry standard is *Nave's Topical Bible* and there are different ones available based in different versions of the Bible.

Synonym Studies:

(No specific recommendations)

Every serious student of the Bible has looked up a Greek or Hebrew word and noticed that it seems so similar to other Greek or Hebrew words that there seems no way to tell the difference. Two books that help with some of that are:

Synonyms of the New Testament by Richard Trench

Synonyms of the Old Testament by Robert Girdlestone

These works do not give every Greek or Hebrew word in the Bible, but on the words they mention they are very helpful. Also very helpful is the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* by J. Louw and E. Nida (2 volumes). This is described above under Greek lexicons.

Word Studies:

(I recommend Robertson's Word Pictures)

Various books and multi-volume sets focus on important, difficult or unusual words as they appear in the books of the Bible. *Word Pictures in the New Testament* by A. T. Robertson is very good. Two others are *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* by Kenneth Wuest and

Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament by Marvin Vincent. I have found Robertson to be the most helpful. There are not as many references for studying the Hebrew, but a few do exist.

Figures of Speech:

There is only one book on figures of speech in the Bible that I have ever seen that attempts to cover the subject and it is *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* by E. W. Bullinger. The subject of Figures of Speech is very important, and the misunderstanding of what is literal and what is not literal in the Bible is a major source of doctrinal error in the Church.

Bible Handbooks:

Bible Handbooks contain maps, pictures, outlines of Books, timelines, weights and measures, articles on various subjects and some commentary on biblical subjects and the text itself. They can be helpful, but the serious student of the Bible will find that they are too general or too limited. The information in a Bible Handbook can be found in specialty books on the subject in question: maps in a Bible Atlas, notes and outlines in a good commentary, weights and measures in a Bible Dictionary, etc. Therefore, I really do not recommend a Bible Handbook for serious Bible students.

Commentaries:

(No specific recommendations)

Commentaries are the writings of “commentators,” who are generally biblical scholars. They are the opinion and belief of the writer, so they can be superb, or they can be horrible. There are several types of commentaries. An *exegetical* or “preachers” commentary is one that helps the minister *teach* the text. It will not have a lot of detailed information about what the text means, rather it will have examples and sometimes even full stories that the preacher can put into his sermon. The primary purpose of an exegetical commentary is to help the minister teach the text. Matthew Henry’s commentary is an exegetical commentary. I have found these to be of limited help in my ministry.

A *critical* commentary goes into the text itself and “criticizes” the text: i.e., it explains what the text means, why words are used the way they are, and then gives the probable meaning of the text. I have found these to be very helpful. Although I check a lot of commentaries, two I have found very helpful are: *Commentary on the Old Testament* by C. F. Keil and Delitzsch (10 volumes) and the *New Testament Commentary* by R. C. H. Lenski. Each volume of Lenski’s work starts with *The Interpretation of...* and there are 10 and 12 volume editions I am aware of. I also like and use *The International Critical Commentary* (66 volumes was my last count) and *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, but these last two are so expensive that a full set needs to be located at a nearby seminary.

Customs Books:

(I recommend starting with *Bible Manners and Customs* by G. M. Mackie, expanded and revised by John Schoenheit. Available in our online catalog at www.STFonline.org under “Books by Others” or call us toll free 888-255-6189, M-F, 8:30 to 5.)

Books on customs and manners of the Bible are very helpful. Almost without exception, the older ones, especially those written before WWI, are better than the newer ones. There are many to choose from, so be sure to look any customs book over to see whether the format and

information will be helpful. WWI totally changed both the physical culture of the Near East and the “mental” culture. That makes sense because the way someone lives influences the way they think.