



Supports to Guide Your Study of the Bible

People learn from one another, just as iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17).

I'll say it again, if all you study is the Bible, you have everything you need! However, God speaks to us in many ways, including through other people, writings, sermons, and the teachings of others. For example, Acts 8:26-40 describes how God prompted the apostle Philip to approach a man riding in a chariot along a desert road stretching from Jerusalem to Gaza. A dignitary from faraway Ethiopia was reading aloud from the prophet Isaiah in the chariot. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked him. The response: "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?" The man had been reading one of the prophecies about the coming of Christ, and Philip had the privilege of telling the Ethiopian the good news about Jesus. At that moment, Philip provided additional support for understanding God's Word (From <<https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2016/02/how-to-use-bible-commentaries/>>). We all can learn from one another, teach one another, and grow together in understanding God's Word.

And while varying commentaries, books, sermons, etc., can be beneficial, we must also be cautious that we don't become reliant on others' translations or interpretations of God's Word. Be mindful that all other resources, tools or commentaries only serve to support or enhance our study, not replace it.

Here are some tips for using other resources:

- Always begin with the Bible. I like the New King James Version (NKJV) as my starting point.
- Compare translations to gain a deeper, clearer or alternative meaning. I use a comparative study Bible or a Bible App such as YouVersion, which has a comparison feature.
- Have I told you how much I love to read? Yeah, I do. A lot. But for a time when I wanted to immerse myself in the Bible and connect my understanding and knowledge of God and His Word for myself, I didn't read other books or commentary. Once I felt more secure in my understanding of God's Word, I resumed reading other books.

Some lessons I learned when reading other books are as follows:

- When determining what to read or use, be sure the source is credible and reliable. Gather background information so that you understand the author's perspective.
- When using resources, **always, always, always** cross-reference it with the Word of God. Anything not in alignment with God's Word should be questioned or examined. I make it a habit of justifying through the Word of God why it's not true, strengthening my understanding of truth.
- Whenever an author states, "The Word of God says," or "In Matthew we find," or "Genesis 3:5 says," I always go to the Word and read it for myself. This practice helps me stay grounded in the Word, and it also prevents me from becoming lazy and accepting the interpretations of others.
- At the close of your study, draw your own conclusions. Ask questions such as

- What do I strongly resonate with from this reading/study?
- What do I disagree with?
- What questions do I have?
- How has my understanding of the Bible been enhanced?
- How has my faith been strengthened?

There are numerous kinds of commentaries for different purposes, hundreds of thousands of books and guides, as well as thousands upon thousands of interpretations. And each type can serve a different purpose for different parts of your study. I can't possibly reference every commentary, book, Bible, etc., but what I will provide are those that have been most helpful to me in my growth journey.

Virtual Bibles and Study Tools

- **YouVersion** – <https://youversion.com/> – This is my go-to Bible App. I love the "compare" feature of varying translations. I also like the Highlight Feature as well as the Notes feature. I also engage in some of the Study Plans, and the great thing is that you can study alone or with a group. I use this app primarily on my phone.
- **BibleHub** – <https://biblehub.com/> – I use this app as well, but primarily on my laptop. I can search texts easily and use the translations and the commentaries.
- **BibleGateway** – <https://www.biblegateway.com/> – I use this app as well, but primarily on my laptop. I can search texts easily and use the translations and the commentaries.
- **OpenBible** – <https://www.openbible.info/topics/> – I use this app to search the scriptures for particular words or topics.

Bibles

- **The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: KJV Edition, Hardbound (Key Word Study Bibles)** by Dr. Spiros Zodhiates (Editor), Dr. Warren Patrick Baker D.R.E. (Series Editor) – <https://www.lifeway.com/en/product/hebrew-greek-key-word-study-bible-kjv-P005128206> This Bible has been amazing for me. Biblical Hebrew words tell stories and to understand the story is to understand the meaning of the word (<https://theexplanation.com/from-dust-you-came-biblical-meaning/>). This Bible has been amazing for me. I learned so much about the need to understand the meanings of words, not just the English or contemporary meanings, but the original meanings or contexts in which the words were written. It's easy to use and has made the Word of God come to life in incredible ways.
- **The Original African Heritage Study Bible: King James Version Hardcover** – by Dr. Cain Hope Felder (Editor), James W. Peebles (Contributor) – <https://www.amazon.com/Original-African-Heritage-Study-Bible/dp/0529100673> This Bible has provided me another lens through which to study and understand the Bible from the perspective of Africa and descendants of Africa. It has answered numerous questions for me and raised many others. It has also helped me see "me" in the Bible for the first time.
- **The Chronological Study Bible: New King James Version Hardcover** – by Thomas Nelson (Author) – https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0718020685/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF

[8&psc=1](#)> This Bible has helped me see and read the Bible as a story, as a narrative. It has also provided context for the historical, cultural, social and political climate during Biblical times.

Websites

- **Bibleref.com** – <https://www.bibleref.com/> – This online commentary provides insights into the Bible, verse by verse.
- **GotQuestions.org** – <https://www.gotquestions.org/> – This website answers some of the "big questions" about the Biblical narrative.
- **The Bible Project** – <https://bibleproject.com/> – This website provides videos, podcasts, blogs, and educational studies to help you better understand the Bible. These resources use various learning styles (audio, visual, written), making the Bible narrative simple and personal.

Books

I have read countless books and have been inspired by many. And throughout the LIFE Lessons, I'll reference books that I found to be relevant to the particular topic or theme of the lesson. However, the books listed below guided my journey to knowing God more intimately and understanding His purposes for my life.

- **The 40-Day Surrender Fast Paperback – August 14, 2011**
by [Celeste Camille Owens](#) From
<https://www.amazon.com/40-Day-Surrender-Celeste-Camille-Owens/dp/0983789509/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=book+surrender+fast&qid=1636391829&sr=8-1>
- **The Pursuit: 14 Ways in 14 Days to Passionately Seek God's Purpose for Your Life Paperback – December 1, 2015**
by [T.C. Stallings](#) From
<https://www.amazon.com/Pursuit-Ways-Days-Passionately-Purpose/dp/1424551897/ref=sr_1_4?crid=2AQTXTGNFPFQ8&keywords=tc+stallings+books&qid=1636391994&srefix=book+tc+stallings%2Caps%2C182&sr=8-4>

Journal

- o The Christian Planner is my all-time favorite journal. I've used it for the past two years, and just ordered another. I only use it as a planner and journal of my spiritual growth and development, and not as a typical planner for work or your everyday living. The company also has other journals that may be of interest to you. -
https://christianplanner.com/collections/all?gclid=EA1aIQobChMI_Y6dipbX9AIVU-TICh3FwwODEAAYASAAEgi2h_D_BwE



Get in The Word

These activities are designed to give you an opportunity to explore and make meaning of God's Word for yourself. This section is designed to get you in the Word. They are designed to support a greater understanding of God's Word and to provide space for you to receive revelations and insights regarding God's Word as led by the Holy Spirit. These activities are also designed to provide an opportunity to practice crafting and sharing your story in light of God's Story.

- o **Cultural Comparison** - Identify a cultural practice from a Biblical nation. Find a way to creatively share and express the identified practice, highlighting the relevance of that practice then and in your life today (i.e., cook a dish and describe it, express something learned in a painting, a song, a poem, or develop a photo journal).
- o **Your Personal Stormy Story** - Read and reflect on Mark 4:35-41. Write or tell a story about a crisis or "storm" you've experienced in your life. Compare your "storm" to the disciple's crisis. Write about "your boat in the storm" experiencing, describing the storm, your feelings, your thoughts, and the dialogue with the others in "your boat" as well as your encounter with Jesus.
- o **Story Comparison** - Compare "Your story" to one (or more than one) of the stories of "Mary" as highlighted below. Choose one of the "Marys," and from her perspective, write a speech that she would share with 21st-century women regarding the principle of surrender.

Alabaster Box: Mary of Bethany

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood before him, weeping at his feet, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner." – Luke 7:36-39

Blessed and Highly Favored: Mary, Mother of Jesus

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." – Luke 1:28

Delivered from Demons: Mary of Magdalene

Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. There Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out... - [Luke 8:1-2](#)

Standing By Til' The End: Mary of Clopas

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. – John 19:25

At Jesus' Feet: Mary of Bethany

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, He came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are

worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” – Luke 10:38-42

A House of Prayer: Mary, Mother of John Mark

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. – John 12:12

- o **Devotional** - Prepare a 5-minute devotional centered around Exodus 34:6-7.
 - Read Exodus 34:6-7. Note the lessons learned from this passage regarding who God is. Jot down the points you want to share and highlight about who God is.
 - Develop an objective using this statement template: "All of us can know God more intimately by doing/understanding these 1-3 things _____."
 - Identify the 1-3 things that can be done or understood to know God more deeply. These points should be grounded in the passage. Remember this is a 5-minute devotional, so your points must be straightforward, without extensive arguments, proofs and sub-points. If you have one point, you can go deeper into that point, but if you have three, be sure the three can stand on their own without a lot of clarification and explanation.
 - Identify "Your Story" or your LIFE example to illustrate the points of the passage. Remember, the point always is to reflect Christ. So keep your story, your props, illustrations, etc., from overshadowing "Jesus."
 - Write a word-for-word transcript of your devotional message inclusive of your introduction, your message, and a powerful conclusion. Write, write, write, then edit, edit, edit. Five minutes of speaking is about 600-800 words. Your final draft should be written the way you plan to share it. Shorter sentences are better than long, complicated ones. Avoid religious jargon. Make it personal, conversational.
 - Practice, practice, practice. Imagine you're having a conversation with a friend. Record yourself, and then listen and critique. It'd be best if you know it so well, you can deliver it without notes. But if you need notes, develop cue cards or have an outline. You want your presentation to be as natural and as engaging as possible.
 - Share your message. Sharing with a small group is a great place to start. And you can always share with your friends here at Mazuri Ministries! We'd love to hear from you! Please visit www.mazuriministries.org and share your insights.

o **Conduct a word study of the concept – To know and be known.**

Then engage in the following:

- Identify the definitions and meanings of the word.
- Identify where the word is used in the Bible and pay attention to the following:
 - Where does the word first appear?
 - How often does it appear?
 - In which books of the Bible is it found? In which books is it used most frequently?
 - Which writers or characters use the word?
 - Where is it used?
 - In what context is it used?
 - How does each writer/character define or describe the word?
 - Reflect on the following:

- o Summarize the main lessons learned.
- o How does the phrase "to know and be known" expand your understanding of who God is?
- o How does the phrase "to know and be known" and what you've learned apply to your daily life?
- o How will you apply what you've learned to your life going forward?
- Record observations and application: Record your insights and questions as well as the ways you will apply what you've learned to your life.
- Spend time in the Word identifying who Christ says you are in Him. Then complete take each of the identifiers and insert them into the following statement:

I am _____ (site text) and it shows in the way I _____!

For example, I have a gentle, quiet spirit (1 Peter 3:3-4) and it shows in the way that I am able to diffuse tense situations.

Then create an "I am" Collage. Grab a canvas and paint, draw, clip words or phrases from magazines, use photos of yourself/family/friends/places, and/or adhesive letters and stickers. Unleash the inner artist in you and have fun!

Here's a link to beautiful "I am" artwork to be purchased - www.theblackgirlsx.com