

# THE FOREST HILL NEWS



**Forest Hill  
Church of Christ**  
3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd.  
Memphis, TN 38125

Office: (901) 751-2444  
Fax: (901) 751-9711  
Info Line: (901) 531-8849  
[www.foresthillcofc.org](http://www.foresthillcofc.org)

## **Elders:**

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Gregory D. Mangrum  
Harold D. Mangrum  
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## **VISIT US SOON!**

### **Sunday:**

Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.  
Morning Worship..... 10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship..... 5:00 P.M.

### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study .....7:00 P.M.

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## **Tips for Better Bible Study (Part 1)**

Kevin D. Beard

Every Christian ought to be interested in becoming a better Bible student. After all, studying the Scriptures is the key to becoming a worker who has no need to be ashamed before God (2 Tim. 2:15). But sometimes people are put off by Bible study. They may think the language is too difficult to understand, they may not know where to start, or they think it is just too uninteresting. Hopefully, the suggestions here will help you to become a better student of the Bible.

### **Be Consistent**

With just about everything you try to do in life, consistency brings improvement. The more often and the more regularly you do something, the better you will get at doing it. Bible study is the same way. If you want to be a better Bible student, make sure you devote some time every day to study. If possible, make it a consistent time, both with the time of day and in the amount of time you set aside. If you decide to study the Bible whenever you find some spare time, you will not develop a regular practice of studying.

Also, be consistent with the physical setting and surroundings in your bible study. Designate some place in your home where you have all the books and materials you need close at hand. If you have to interrupt your study to go and find something you need, your study will suffer. In addition, if you get into the practice of using the same desk or table for your studies, you will not be distracted by trying to get used to a different sized work area, a writing surface that is too high or too low, or anything else along those lines. These things may sound insignificant, but we really are able to focus better when our minds are not distracted by physical inconveniences.

### **Invest in Good Tools**

You don't need a lot of books and materials to study the Bible, but there are some things that can be very helpful. Let's consider some of them.

**Paper and pencil or pen.** If you are serious about studying the Bible as opposed to merely reading it, you will need something to be able to jot down ideas, thoughts, notes, questions, and so forth. As you read through the Bible text, you will come across words, phrases, and verses that spark some interesting thought. Write those thoughts down to be able to investigate them further. Having something to write on is very important to good Bible study.

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Tips for Better Bible Study (continued from page 1)

**A good Bible.** What do I mean by “a good Bible”? First, a reliable translation. There are so many different Bible versions in print today; some are good, some are bad, and some are somewhat in between. For your main study Bible, choose a reliable version. The King James Version (KJV) has been the standard for generations. The American Standard Version (ASV) is another reliable version that has been around for a very long time. The New King James Version (NKJV) is good, too, closely resembling the wording of the KJV, but in a more updated style of language. These are not necessarily the only reliable versions, but they are good ones that will not cause doctrinal problems in your study.

A second thing to consider about a “good Bible” is the condition of the book itself. Make sure the Bible you are studying from has clear and readable type so that you will not have to strain to read it. If reading a Bible with small, difficult to read print gives you a headache, you will not be very motivated to study it often. You will also want a Bible that will lay flat on the table when you open it. If your Bible closes when you let go of it, you will be constantly fighting with it to return to the place you were studying when you write something down or consult a reference book. Also make sure you have a Bible with a good sturdy binding that still stand up to regular usage.

**Basic reference books.** There are a few good books that you should have on hand to assist you in your study. In no particular order, here are some that I would suggest.

A good English dictionary. God used human language to communicate His will to us. Language consists of words and words have meanings. We need to make sure we understand the meanings of words correctly.

A complete concordance. A concordance is a reference book that lists all of the words contained in the Bible and gives the reference for where those words are found. So if you don't know where something is found in the Bible, but you know a key word or two in the verse you have in mind, you can look up that key word in the con-

cordance and find the verse you are trying to think of. I would recommend *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

A dictionary of Bible words. Since the Bible was not written in English, and since few of us can read Hebrew and Greek, this type of dictionary can be very helpful in understanding some of the subtle shades of meanings in many words used in the Bible. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* is a very helpful resource.

Other Bible versions for comparison. No one English version of the Bible is a perfect translation; but by having several different versions to compare, you may often get a fuller sense of the meaning of a passage. Just remember that some of the modern versions do contain the doctrinal bias of their translators in some places. Rely on your main translation, but use others to compare difficult passages.

**Other helpful tools.** Most people think of commentaries when they think of Bible study tools. Commentaries can certainly be helpful, and some are much better than others. Just keep in mind that a commentary is nothing more than a man's opinions about what the text means. Familiarize yourself with the authors of the commentaries you use and be aware of their basic doctrinal or denominational beliefs when you read them. Many different computer programs for Bible study are available in a wide range of prices. If you are computer savvy, these can be especially helpful and time-saving. Bible encyclopedias contain a lot of helpful information about the different people, places, and things mentioned in the Bible. Do some investigating if you plan to buy one and get one that will be thorough enough for your needs.

### **Develop Helpful Study Habits**

There is a difference between reading the Bible and studying it. Obviously you must read the Bible in order to study it; but it is possible merely to read the Bible without really studying what it says. Hopefully, these next suggestions will help you to see the difference and develop some good skills in actually studying Scriptures.

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Tips for Better Bible Study (continued from page 2)

**Familiarize yourself with the passage.** Before you can properly dig into a selected text, you need to know some basic things about it. Is it a part of the Old Testament or the New Testament? Who wrote it? To whom was it written? What was the reason for writing it? If it is a historical text, who are the people involved and what is their relationship to each other. What kind of writing is it; is it a historical passage, a poetic passage, a letter to the church, a figurative discussion? If all of this information is not readily available through reading the text itself, a good commentary or other reference work will come in handy in helping you to learn some of this important information.

**Read the passage thoroughly.** If you have chosen some specific book, chapter, or other passage of Scripture for your study, you need to familiarize yourself with its content completely to be able to study it thoroughly. As you read, watch for the main points of emphasis and key words and/or concepts that are repeated. Write down the things that you think are the main points while you are reading it, then go back through and read it carefully with your notes in mind. Make corrections or adjustments to your thoughts as you go. When you have done this, then you can organize the passage into the logical subdivisions that you have noticed in your reading. (to be continued)

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Forest Hill Church of Christ  
3950 Forest Hill Irene Road  
Memphis, TN 38125

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