

LESSON

3

Searching the Bible

No one could find anything in Grandma’s kitchen. The flour was in a can marked “sugar” and the tea was in a box marked “salt.” But this was not much of a problem because Grandma was the only one who worked in her little kitchen.

In the house across the street, however, was a different kitchen. Everything was correctly labeled because the mother was not the only one who worked there. Her husband liked to make his own breakfast, and her daughters often took turns preparing dinner. So there had to be a workable system at mealtime.

Order and structure are necessary for the working of any system, whether household, literary, or otherwise. Thus, the Bible is arranged systematically so we can more easily find its treasures and understand them. Regardless of the translation, our Bibles hold to the same chapters and verses so people do not get lost. Indexes and the table of contents also help direct readers to specific places in the Bible.

The Plan

- A. The Bible Reference
- B. The Study Reference
- C. The Concordance

The Goals

1. Know how to identify Bible references.
2. Identify the use of study references.
3. Describe ways to use a concordance.

A. THE BIBLE REFERENCE

The Basic Language

Goal 1. Know how to identify Bible references.

To help us in our reading and studying, every book of the Bible is divided into chapters. Each chapter is also divided into smaller sections that are numbered on the left side. These are called *verses* or *Bible texts*. We refer to any Bible text by saying the name of the book, then the number of the chapter and the number of the verse. All of these together can be called the *Bible reference*.

Let us look at Genesis, the first book of the Bible. If the version you are using has an introduction, skip that and look for the big number *one* that marks the beginning of the first chapter. The first verse of the chapter—sometimes marked with a small *one*—starts out, “In the beginning.” To refer to that text, we would say, “Genesis one, one.” You will notice the small number marking the verses continuing throughout the chapter.

Now look for the next large number, which is 2. That is the beginning of the second chapter. The first verse begins, “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.” To refer to that text, we would say, “Genesis two, one.” Chapter two has twenty-five verses.

Skip ahead now to Genesis five, one. It begins, “This is the written account of Adam’s line.” When we give a Bible reference, we do not have to say the words *chapter* and *verse*—just the numbers that refer to them.

What would Genesis 5:1–5 be? You probably said it right, “Genesis five, one through five.” An en dash divides verses from verses and chapters from chapters that occur in sequence. If we are referring to several verses of the same chapter, but the verses are not consecutive, we write them like this: Joshua 1:5, 8, 10. We say, “Joshua one, five, eight, and ten.”

If the texts are in different chapters of a book, we separate the chapter references by a semicolon. For example, Matthew 1:21; 2:1–6 refer to the book of Matthew, chapter one, verse twenty-one and chapter two, verses one through six.

Some books, like 1 Kings and 2 Kings, have the same name and follow consecutively. The writer of John wrote three letters that also bear his name: 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. A reference from one of those books (First John, chapter one, verse nine) could be written as 1 John 1:9.

Application

1 Complete the missing information in the following chart. Write in every blank box.

Reference	How it is said
a) John 3:16	_____
b) _____	Romans six, twenty-three
c) 1 John 1:8–10	_____
d) _____	Romans twelve, fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen
e) _____	Matthew one, one; and five, one through three

2 Matthew 1:1–4 is the reference for the first four verses in Matthew. How many verses are there in each of the following references?

- a)** Genesis 8:18–22 has
- b)** Genesis 8:18, 22 has
- c)** Genesis 8:18–20, 22 has

3 Matthew 1:21; 2:1; and 3:16 speak of

- a)** Jesus, the wise men, John the Baptist, and the disciples.
- b)** Jesus, the wise men, and the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ baptism.
- c)** Jesus, Joseph, and the shepherds.



Finding References

In the front of your Bible is the table of contents—a page that lists every book of the Bible and the page number where each book begins. At first you may need to use this index when you want to find a particular passage of Scripture.

The best way to find Bible references, however, is to memorize the books of the Bible in their proper order. Children learn these quickly, and adults can too. You can learn five or six names each day by repeating them and writing them on cards to carry with you; soon you will have them all committed to memory. You will appreciate being able to turn to any part of the Bible with minimum effort.

Application

4 Look up each reference on the left and match it with the correct verse on the right.

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| ... a) Philippians 4:19 | 1) “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” |
| ... b) 1 John 1:8 | 2) “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” |
| ... c) Joshua 1:9 | 3) “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” |
| ... d) Psalm 23:1 | 4) “My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” |

B. THE STUDY REFERENCE

Goal 2. Identify the use of study references.

Some Bibles have study references down the center, in side margins, at the bottom of each page, or after each verse. These are sometimes called cross references or marginal references, and they help you find other related verses.

A tiny letter by certain words in a Bible verse tells you to look for the same letter in the reference area. By that letter you will find a Scripture reference which will lead to a related verse. If you have a study Bible, you can use this system to develop interesting studies on the topics you are reading.

The references and other comments in your Bible are helpful, but they are not divinely inspired. They were given by Bible teachers and scholars to help us use and understand our Bibles more easily.

Application

- 5** The tiny letters by certain words in the Bible refer to
- a)** special chapter divisions.
 - b)** a different alphabet.
 - c)** study references.
- 6** Marginal or cross references (study references) help you find other
- a)** Bible verses on the same subject.
 - b)** books to read on the subject.
 - c)** authors of the Bible.
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C. THE CONCORDANCE

Goal 3. Describe ways to use a concordance.

A concordance is an alphabetical index of some principal words in the Bible. This index gives the references in the Bible where a particular word is used. At the present time, most listings in a concordance are references to the *King James Version* of the Bible. However, we hope that the suggestions given here for using a concordance will be of help to you.

There are several instances when you may wish to use a concordance. Let us say that you wish to read several verses that contain the word *love*. Look up the word in your concordance. The references are listed, together with a few words from each Bible verse that uses the word *love*.

A concordance can also be of help when you wish to know where in the Bible to find a particular verse. Perhaps you know all of the verse, or only a part of it, but you do not know the reference. Choose a key word from the words you remember of the verse, and look up that word. It is possible that you will find among the references listed one with a phrase from the verse you are seeking.

For example, suppose you want to find in the Bible the verse that says “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” Perhaps the only words of the verse you remember are “money

is the root of all evil.” Notice that there are three key words that you can look up: *money*, *root*, and *evil*. The key word is usually identified in the concordance by only the first letter of the word. If you look up the word *money*, you will probably find something that looks like this:

Matthew 25:18 hid his master’s *m*.

Mark 12:41 crowd putting their *m*. into the temple treasury.


1 Timothy 6:10 love of *m*. is a root of all kinds of evil.

If you do not find in the concordance the Bible reference you are looking for, by looking under the word *money*, proceed to look up the other key words.

The verse just cited, 1 Timothy 6:10, is often misquoted. An additional advantage, then, of using a concordance is that it enables us to discover errors such as this.

Does your Bible have marginal references and a concordance? These are important helps for teachers, preachers, and others who want to work for God. Perhaps you do not plan to be a preacher or teacher; you can still learn many new things if you will use your study references and a concordance.

Application

- 7** Which two statements below are TRUE?
- a)** A concordance is an index of the principal words of the Bible.
 - b)** A concordance is only for preachers and teachers.
 - c)** If you can remember only one or two words of a verse you want to find, you can probably find it using a concordance.
 - d)** A concordance and a marginal reference are the same thing.
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Check Your Answers

- 1** a) John three, sixteen
b) Romans 6:23
c) First John one, eight through ten
d) Romans 12:14, 16, 18
e) Matthew 1:1; 5:1–3
- 5** c) study references.
- 2** a) five verses.
b) two verses.
c) four verses.
- 6** a) Bible verses on the same subject.
- 3** b) Jesus, the wise men, and the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism.
- 7** Statements a) and c) are true.
- 4** a) 4) "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."
b) 2) "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."
c) 1) "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."
d) 3) "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."