Essential Tools for Bible Study

**Concordance:** Lists all the words in the Bible in alphabetical order with a reference for every word. The most popular is *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (usually KJV) which has two numbering systems: one for Hebrew and one for Greek that correspond to Hebrew and Greek dictionaries in the back of the concordance. Other concordances: *Young's Analytical Concordance, Cruden's Complete Concordance, New International Bible Concordance.*

**Bible Dictionary:** Works similarly to an encyclopedia. Most words, topics, names, cities, etc., are mentioned; typically with an article on each entry. Good resource to get information on things found in the Bible. Typically has a lot of pictures too. Two of the most popular are: *Unger's Bible Dictionary and Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary.*

**Bible Handbook:** Gives an outline and basic summary of each book of the Bible. There are usually historical and archeological notes. Some contain a limited amount of commentary on Scripture passages as well. Two of the more popular are *Unger's Bible Handbook and Halley's Bible Handbook.*

**Commentaries:** Are the comments of various spiritual leaders and scholars on the Scriptures. They range from one-volume commentaries to multi-volume sets. Their depth of content varies from very basic explanations of the biblical text to immense scholarly works. Some cover the whole Bible while others cover only one book or portion of a book. If you have never used one, it is advisable to talk to someone you trust who has used them to help figure out which would be best for you. You could also use any commentaries mentioned by a particular Christian author or teacher who has helped you in your walk.

**Old/New Testament Surveys:** Give surveys of the books either in the Old or New Testaments. Typically there will be an outline of the biblical book, a survey of its content and other information concerning authorship, date and place of writing, some historical background, etc. There are many good ones.

**Bible Atlas:** Contains various maps of Palestine and the Mediterranean Regions where the events of the Bible occurred. There are many to choose from.

**Lexicons:** More in-depth definitions of words in the Bible from the original language.

**Nave's Topical Bible:** List of topics in the Bible and all Scriptures that pertain to them. There is some commentary with the topics as well. A real time saver when doing topical studies.

**Vine's Expository Dictionary:** Lists words in the Bible. Gives a more in-depth study as to the original language, definitions, usage, and other information. Good reference for word studies.

**Manners and Customs of Bible Times:** Has information on culture, history, mannerisms, etc., of Palestine and Mediterranean Basin area. Helps to understand topics from Bible times.

**Works of Josephus:** Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian during the early 1st century. Good resource for historical context of the Old Testament, Inter-Testament period, and the time of Jesus into the 1st century. Covers the fall of Jerusalem and the surrounding history.

**Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah:** Classic work by Alfred Edersheim that gives a lot of information and context on the life of Christ. One example is a chapter on rabbinical tradition. A very good resource.

**Systematic Theologies:** Categorize what Scripture teaches on various topics like: attributes of God, salvation, angels, Christ, the church, etc. One caution to keep in mind - these works tend to reflect the biases of the author either personally, or of his group or denomination.

**Bible Software:** A lot of good Bible software is available: free stand-alone programs, web sites, and various priced commercial packages.

**COMMERCIAL:** Bible Explorer 3, PC Study Bible, Logos (very extensive and expensive).

**FREE:** www.e-Sword.net

**WEB:** Online at www.blueletterbible.org

A good, basic list of tools to start with in your library would include: a concordance, Bible dictionary, Bible handbook, and a one volume commentary.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call or email the church office: 303-628-7200 or info@calvaryaurora.org.