

## LESSON EIGHT

### TOOLS FOR THE TEACHER, cont'd

#### 1. COMMENTARIES.

You cannot have too many commentaries. That may sound like hyperbole, and it probably is, but different commentaries provide different approaches, different applications, different interpretations, different textual sources, etc. There are three basic kinds of commentaries. One is very simple and shallow. It makes general comments, covers passages briefly, and in general skims over the top of the water. On the other end of the spectrum is the commentary that spends all of its time in the Greek and Hebrew, discusses every jot and tittle at length, is very scholarly in approach and language, never uses a common word when a “big” word will do, and in general is so technical that it would cross a Rabbi’s eyes. It doesn’t understand why anybody would waste time with application. It may be of some use on occasion, but its content and approach is mostly unfit for a Bible Study class. In the middle is the commentary that explains the text, discusses the original language when it is important or makes a difference, and never leaves a passage without application. Some, such as *The NIV Application Commentary* is a good example of this type. *Word Biblical Commentary* is another example, but is not as strong on application. *The New American Commentary* falls into this category as well. Lenski’s commentaries are a bit more technical than applicatory, but are good. Barclay’s commentaries are sometimes technical, but are a good source for application and illustration. Some of the older commentaries should be looked at. For example, Albert Barnes commentaries on the entire Bible and *The Pulpit Commentary*. Barnes is very thorough. He is Presbyterian and will drive 100 miles out of the way to miss a body of water sufficient to immerse a man (see his comments on Acts 8). *The Pulpit Commentary* has both exegetical (setting forth the meaning of the text) and homiletical (lessons to be learned from the text) sections. These last two are the first sets of commentaries that I bought and really used. I had the GA commentaries, but they often left off where the real problems began and so were not used all that much. These commentaries are not listed to set them above others, but to illustrate the types that are available and to assist you in your search.

Brethren have written some commentaries and some of them are very good. Others are very poor. Some are wrong. Guy N. Woods has some good commentaries. McGarvey has one of the best commentaries on Acts. Homer Hailey's work is very good. Jim McGuiggan is a good expositor, though I tire from his constant attempts at humor. I am reading to learn, not to laugh. The *Gospel Advocate* has a series of commentaries that vary from the good to the completely wrong, for example Hinds work on Revelation that takes the historical approach.

Many of these commentaries are in computer programs. If they do not come in the package that you purchase, but can be purchased as stand alone items. But as discussed above, be sure to determine if you can get a larger package with these commentaries include, along with many other books, for the price that you would pay for the commentaries alone.

## 2. ENCYCLOPEDIAS.

You may already have *Britannica* or some other set of encyclopedias for your children to use for schoolwork. They can be useful on occasion. However, the main encyclopedias that you will need are Bible encyclopedias. One of the oldest and perhaps the largest is *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Don't let the "new" tag fool you. My set shows a first printing of 1950 and a third printing in 1956, which is the set, I have. It is available on Logos community pricing for \$30.00 on which they claim a saving of \$469.95 under retail. Other choices are *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (4 vols.), and assorted other religious encyclopedias. For example, there is *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling*, and *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, just to name a few.

## 3. BOOKS ABOUT THE BIBLE.

This is a catchall category. It includes such areas as systematic theology, surveys of the Bible, introductions to the Old and New

Testaments, inspiration, compilation of the canon and history of the text of scripture, alleged contradictions in scripture, Biblical criticism, the message of scripture (*i.e.*, the scheme of redemption from Genesis to Revelation), and numerous others.

#### 4. BOOKS RELATED TO DOCTRINE.

Broad categories here include any biblical doctrine from creation to consummation. It is essential for the teacher to understand Biblical doctrine. Absent such knowledge the teacher is unable to recognize error. It is not essential to know all of the error abroad; it is essential to recognize when a teaching contradicts Biblical doctrine. The teacher needs books on world religions and sects, the nature and history of the church, the doctrine of salvation from creation to Calvary, to conversion, to consummation, worship, Biblical morality, personal holiness, Christian service, Christian evidences. Under each of these areas and other areas that could be listed, there are numerous subareas that should also be included in the teacher's library. This should be the largest area of the teacher's library. It should include books that teach both truth and error. It is important for the teacher to know what is being taught in the world so that the class can be alerted to it and warned of it. An example is that I have an entire 5-shelf bookcase that contains only books about Jesus. I call it my "Jesus collection." I want to know what the world is saying about my Savior. You might be surprised how the writers, most of whom claim to be preachers or religious scholars, say about Him. Some of it is repulsive to read.

#### 5. BOOKS ABOUT THE CHURCH.

Books about the church deserve their own section. This includes such books as *The Christian System* (Alexander Campbell), *The Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration* (Shepherd), and *The Search for the Ancient Order* (West). The church had its fastest growth in modern days when they understood and boldly proclaimed the restoration message.

Much more could be said about the teacher's library but this is sufficient. Hopefully you have come to understand not just the importance but also the absolute essentiality of adequate materials to use in preparing a lesson to teach your class the Word of God. Your job is to make the Word come alive

in their minds and in their hearts. After all, it is the “living word” (Heb. 4:12).