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Project WorldReach (T&M™ ministry operation)

Dr. George Patterson (Originating Author)

SEAN International



Contact: **Project WorldReach PWR™**

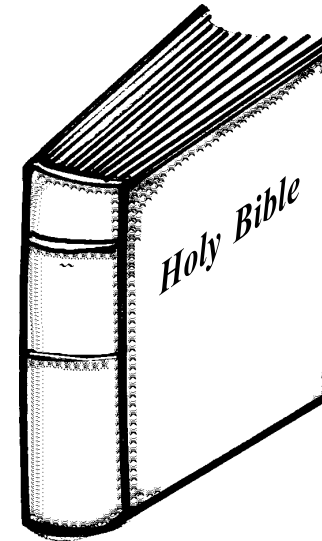
474 - 800 - 15355 - 24th Ave
Surrey BC, Canada
V4A 2H9

E-mail: pwr@trainandmultiply.com

Website: <http://www.trainandmultiply.com>

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The Authority of the Bible



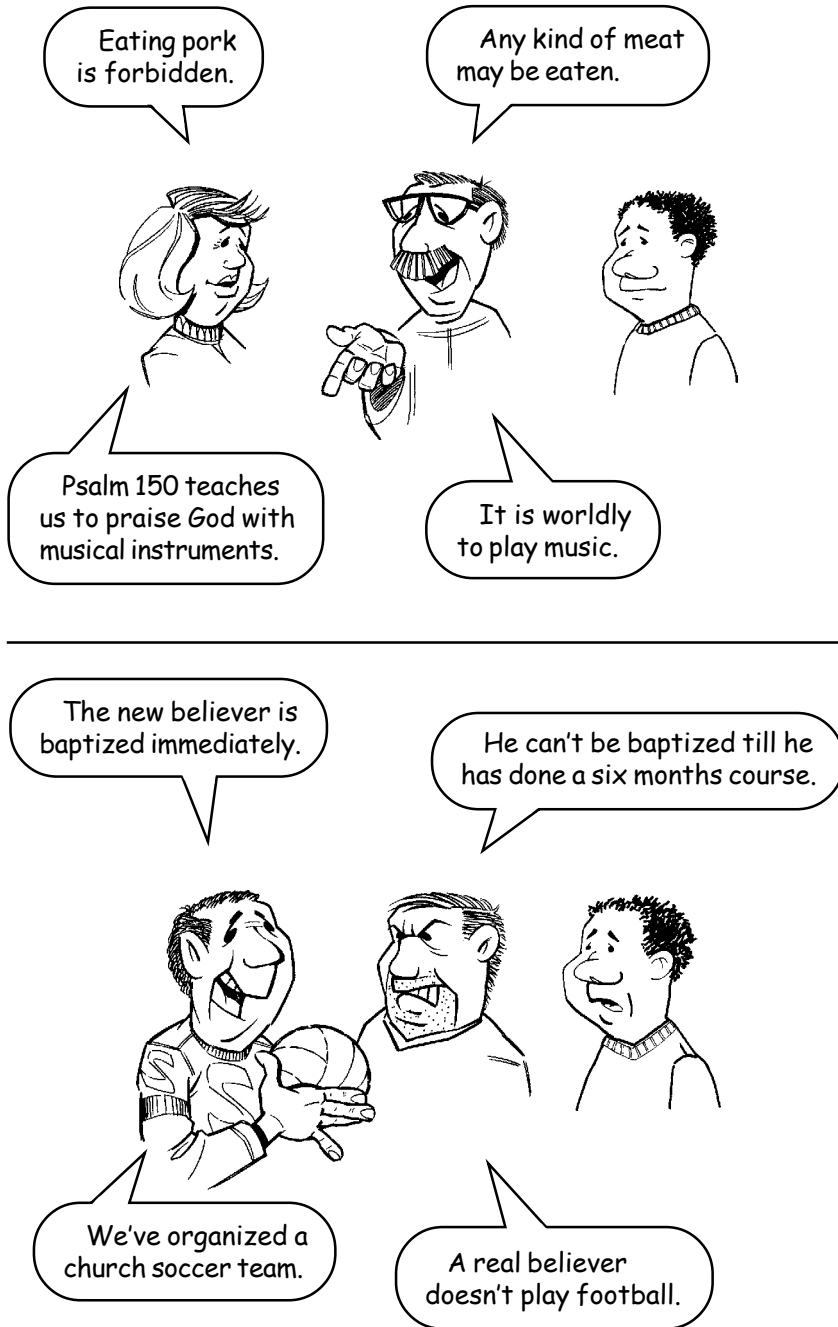
Pastoral Leader Training Booklet

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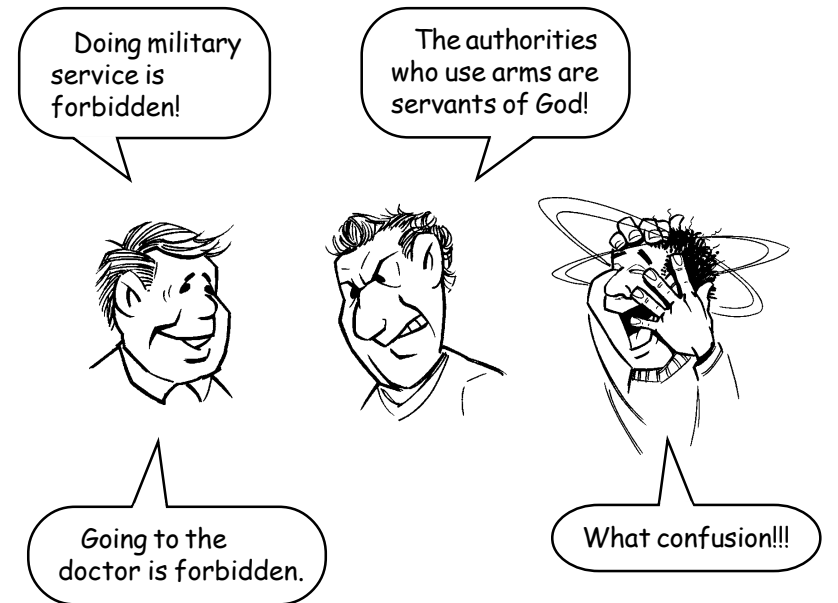
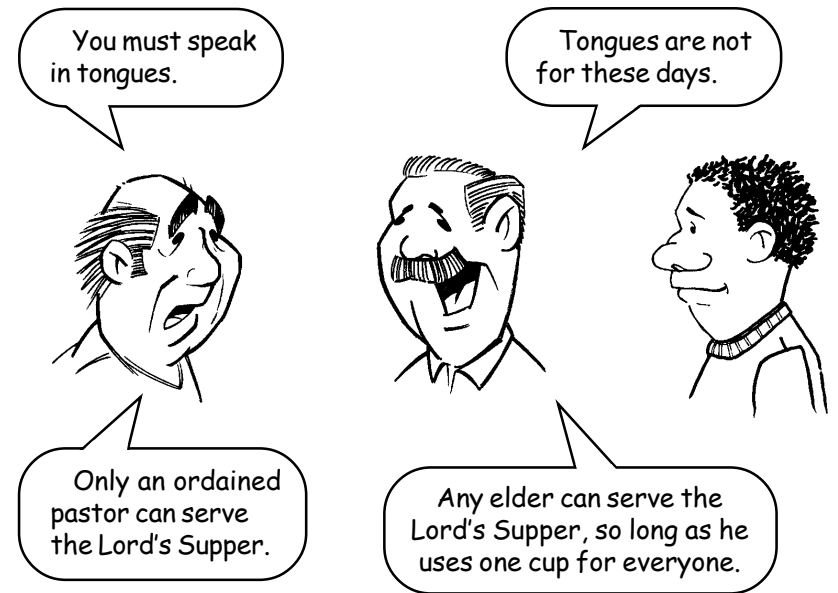
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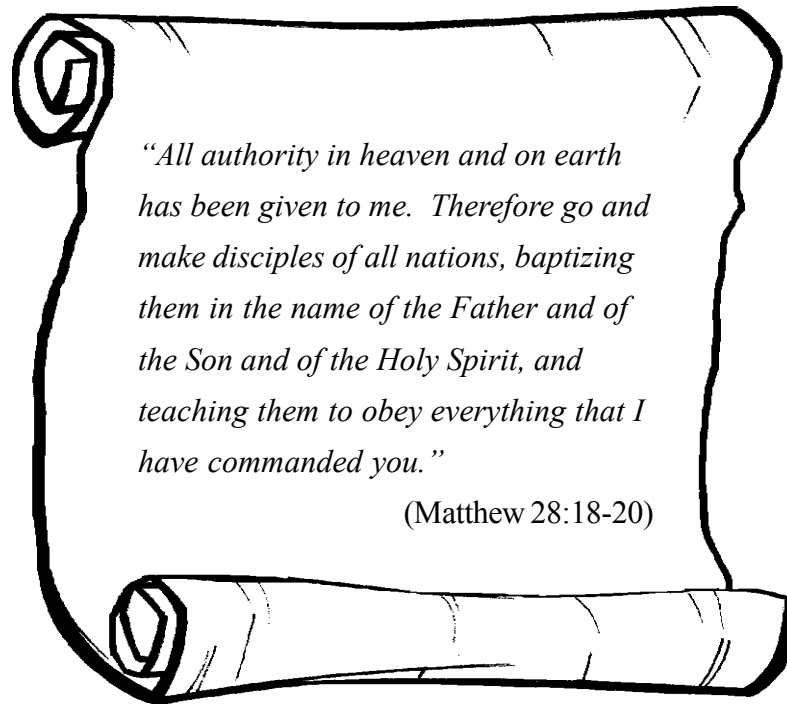
NOTES



Ask the Spirit of God to guide you in this study, so that you may interpret His Word correctly.

Sometimes there seems to be confusion among pastors. One says one thing; others say something else.

To avoid confusion, and obey only Christ, we learn His commands. The Lord Jesus declared that He has all authority, when He commanded us, saying:



8. To celebrate the Lord's Supper in believer's homes:

Answer: (Acts 2:46)

PRACTICAL WORK

- Teach the members to distinguish between these three levels of authority for the Christian life, emphasizing that we always give total obedience to the Lord's commands.
 - If some in your church want to impose customs, or traditions which prevent obedience to Christ, correct this.
 - Write any commands of Christ or His apostles which your church needs to obey more diligently:
-
- Review "How to Study the Bible" (Level 1).

4. To forbid music in church services:

Answer: (Psalm 150)

5. Training the leaders in one's church:

Answer: (2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5)

6. That elders care for the flock:

Answer: (Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

7. To pray for the sick:

Answer: (James 5:14)

AUTHORITY

There are three levels of authority to guide and direct the life of the church of Jesus Christ in doctrine, practice and daily life.

First Level of Authority

The Divine Commands of the New Testament, the absolute authority:
We must obey them. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Second Level of Authority

Apostolic practice: we may follow their example (mentioned in the New Testament but not as commands).

Third Level of Authority

Human traditions and rules: We adopt them or reject them, according to their usefulness (things not mentioned in the New Testament).

Write down the three levels of authority:

1. Divine co _____ (the absolute authority).
2. Apostolic pr _____.
3. Human tr _____.

The ability to distinguish between divine commands of the New Testament, apostolic practice and human tradition, resolves many problems between believers and churches, and helps us to obey Christ, above all. Nearly all division comes from a believer's desire to dominate; he takes an apostolic practice or a human tradition, and insists on it, as a command, in a legalistic spirit. This leads to divisions.

Mark the answer to show to which level of authority the following correspond.

Repentance from sin is:

- ☐ a New Testament command.
- ☐ only apostolic practice.
- ☐ human tradition (not in the Bible).

SUMMARY TEST

Be side each activity named, write whether it is a “command,” “apostolic practice” or “tradition”:

1. To witness to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit:

Answer: (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-49)

2. To keep Saturday as a day of rest:

Answer: Tradition (in the old Testament only was it a command: Colossians 2:13-17). It is not a New Testament command.

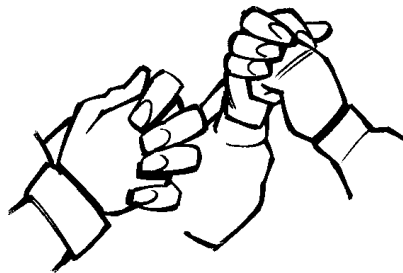
3. Keeping Sunday as a day of worship:

Answer: (Romans 14:5, Acts 20:7)

How will people see the Son of Man coming?

What signs will there be before Christ's second coming?

If you do not understand a passage clearly, do not preach on it yet.
We do not preach on personal opinions or wrong teaching.



God commands us to repent. (Mark 1:15)

Biblical commands are evident. We read them clearly in the New Testament. It is not a matter of human interpretation. These commands are universal; for all believers in all churches.

Fasting before ordaining or commissioning pastors or missionaries was:

- ☐ a divine command.
- ☐ apostolic practice.
- ☐ only human tradition.

It was not commanded by God; it was practised by apostolic churches. (Acts 13:3, Acts 14:23) Some do this now, but we have no authority to insist on it. It was an apostolic practice, not a command.

Similar apostolic practices include laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14), celebrating the Lord's Supper frequently in the believers' homes (Acts 2:46) and having all things in common. (Acts 2:44) They are all good, but it is not a command of the Lord to do them. We base everything on divine commands; they are fundamental for the discipline of obedience.

Doing acts of penitence is: (for example: pilgrimages, or repeating prayers to the saints)

- ☐ a command of the Lord.
- ☐ an apostolic practice.
- ☐ a tradition of some people.

Such acts of penitence have no biblical basis. They are a human tradition or custom. Some human traditions are positive; others are harmful.

Baptizing new believers is:

- ☐ the Lord's command.
- ☐ only apostolic practice.
- ☐ human tradition.

Christ's Great Commission orders the baptism of every repentant believer (Matthew 28:18-20); it is God's command.

Baptizing the new believer immediately is:

- ☐ a divine command.
- ☐ apostolic practice.
- ☐ human tradition.

According to verses 7-8, whom will false teachers claim to be?

Why should we not be alarmed when we hear of wars (verse 9)?

Until when will Jerusalem be occupied by the gentiles?

What will happen immediately before the Lord's coming?

To what building was reference made, that led to this teaching?

Which two questions were put to Jesus, before he gave this answer?
(Matthew 24:3)

At what stage in Jesus' earthly life did this happen?

Which command is repeated in several ways in this passage?

The Apostles always baptized immediately (Acts 2: 41, etc.); it was apostolic practice but not given as a command.

Baptizing after several months of Bible Study is:

- ☐ the Lord's command.
- ☐ apostolic practice.
- ☐ human tradition.

Some churches have the tradition of a lengthy doctrinal course before being baptized.

To love God and one's neighbor is:

Answer: (Matthew 22:34-40)

Celebrating the Lord's Supper has what authority?

Answer: (Luke 22:19)

Proclaiming Christ's Gospel:

Answer: (Mark 16:15)

To pray:

Answer: (Luke 21:36)

To love one's enemy:

Answer: (Matthew 5:44)

Making the sign of the cross:

What did Jesus' disciples do, after He explained that his arrest was to fulfill the Scripture?

LUKE 21:5-38

Who spoke?

Which two other passages relate this same speech?

To whom was it originally addressed?

About how many came with Judas?

Who had sent them?

What was the sign with which Judas identified Jesus?

What did Judas say to Jesus, before kissing Him?

How did one of Jesus' disciples defend Jesus?

Lighting candles to saints:

Using a jacket and a tie in the pulpit:

Answer: Making the sign of the cross, lighting candles, using or not using formal dress, are human traditions, without Biblical authority.

A command from the Lord has all authority. It is commanded by the Almighty (not us). We obey the commands through love, not in a legalistic spirit. The legalist expects to gain God's favor, through keeping regulations. He establishes his own, rather than God's rules. Obedience must be for love of Christ. (John 14:15, 1 Corinthians 13:1)

Who gives us commands?

- ☐ The pastor.
- ☐ God.

Only God has the authority to command His church. A pastor leads the church under authority to Christ, but does not have the authority to invent non-biblical laws for all believers.

The apostles, inspired by God, wrote other commands in their letters to the churches. These carry the same authority as Jesus commands, because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 3:16)

As for their practice it is good to follow their example if circumstances warrant, but it is not obligatory.

Christ's Commands:

- ☐ are things in which we must obey the Lord.
- ☐ are secondary things we can leave aside.

We must be careful not to delay fulfilling the commands. The Lord requires of us the simplest and most direct obedience. (John 14:21)

Which three other Bible passages tell of the same event? (This can be seen below the subtitles in some Bibles.)

Does this passage have a clear command for us?

Who are the two principal persons mentioned in the passage?

To whom was Jesus speaking when Judas arrived?

MARK 14:43-52

Who wrote the passage?

What happened?

What had happened before that?

What happened afterwards?

Apostolic Practice:

(Such as meeting in believers' houses: Acts 2:46)

- ☐ is obligatory.
- ☐ we may prohibit.
- ☐ we may follow if it is useful.

We have no authority to oblige people to obey these, as they are not the Lord's commands, nor may we forbid what God has given as examples in the Bible.

Human Traditions:

- ☐ are obligatory.
- ☐ we may require obedience to them.
- ☐ we may forbid them if they hinder the work.

We must not insist on human customs. We may forbid them if they prevent obedience to the Lord's commands. (Matthew 15:1-9)
Some human traditions are useful in some circumstances, and may have some authority within an organization, institution or church.



For example, the members of a church may voluntarily decide to celebrate the Lord's Supper each Sunday at 9 a.m. To meet at nine would then become a custom that the members of that church should keep, in harmony.

The authority of a custom or tradition depends on the goodwill of the members of a church. It is not right to impose the customs of one church on other churches.

The believers of a church should concern themselves with:

- ☐ their own church.
- ☐ other churches.

Let us evaluate the customs of our own churches. Let us not criticize the customs of other congregations, nor should they judge our ways of doing things.

Each church is responsible, before God, for developing its own rules, according to local needs and circumstances. Christian unity is of the Spirit; it is not uniformity of practice.

Which other passage deals with the same theme? (You can find out looking below the title, or at the references, in some Bibles.)

Remember that there may be information suggested, such as "references" to other passages, or subtitles for portions of text. Some Bibles give references to related passages underneath the subtitles.

Look up
difficult words
in a dictionary.



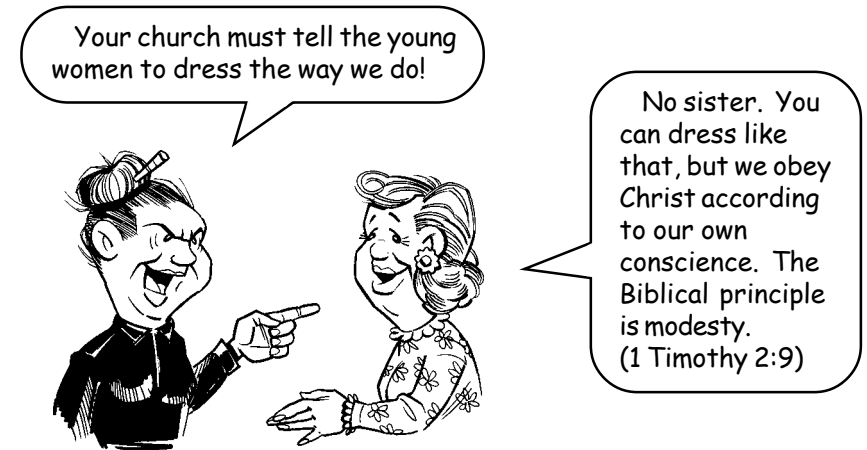
What is the theme of this passage?

To what level of authority does this passage belong?

Now we will look closer at the context of the passage, what comes before and after.

What is the theme of the passage that precedes Matthew 6:5-15?

So we see that this teaching on prayer is in the context of not doing our “good deeds” in public (6:1-4). That is to say, certain aspects of our religion, which include giving, prayer and fasting, should be something between God and us.



The apostles continually fought against customs that prevented obedience.

When should we insist on or forbid a church practice?

- DIVINE COMMANDS are always obligatory.
- APOSTOLIC PRACTICES are not required or prohibited (they can be convenient in the right situation).
- TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS are not to be required. They should be forbidden if they prevent obedience, or are silly.



A church must be guided by these three levels of authority.

Which level must we always obey?

At which level may a “rule” be rejected, if it prevents obedience to Jesus Christ?

STUDIES

Study Matthew 6:5-15, taking into account its context. (What is written before and after, and the historic occasion.)

To whom was it said? (Matthew 6:5)

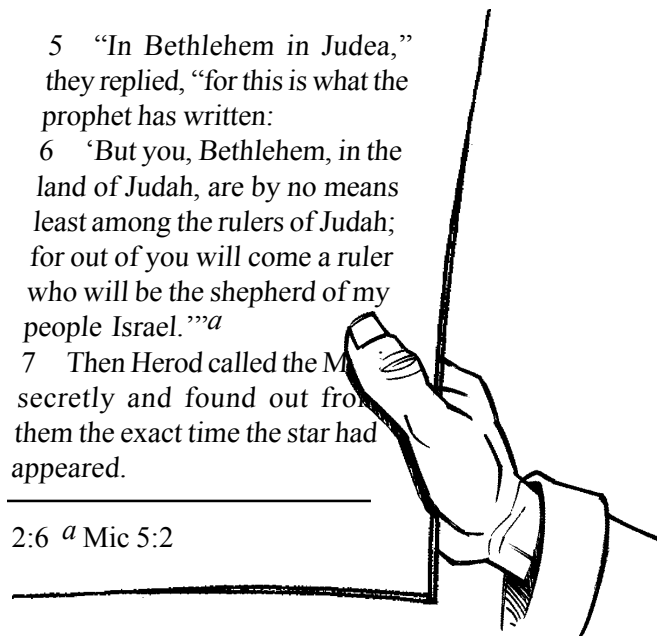
Who commanded it?

We do not follow all Old Testament laws today, or we’d stone people to death who gather firewood on Saturday, and we’d sacrifice animals during worship. We are under the NEW Covenant, not the OLD.

To understand a passage well, meditate on the details, to understand their inter-relationship. Look for the theme that gives meaning to all the details (the thread that links the whole passage).

For example: read Matthew 2:6. In some versions, you will see the word “Israel” is followed by a tiny letter “a.” This letter “a” means there will be a reference with the same letter, at the foot of the page or in the center column, there you will find “^a2:6, Micah 5:2.”

(Other versions have other ways of indicating these; look in your Bible to see how these are shown.)



^a2:6 means Matthew, chapter 2, verse 6.
Micah 5:2 means Micah, chapter 5, verse 2.

This means that Micah 5:2 speaks of the same theme as Matthew 2:6.
Read Micah 5:2 to confirm this.

At which level of authority should we neither forbid, nor insist on something?

Apostolic (that is, New Testament) practices that were not commanded. They cannot be forbidden nor can we insist on them in a legalistic way.

Some things that were commanded in the New Testament are not commands for us. For example: Paul commanded Timothy to bring his cloak. (2 Timothy 4:13) These are not universal commands, but rather, things that were dependent on temporary or local circumstances.

Jesus washed the disciples' feet and commanded them to do the same. The context of this passage (John 13), shows that Christ was teaching them to serve humbly. At that time it was a social custom for the most humble servant to wash the feet of a guest after his travels. Jesus was not so much interested in foot washing, as in HUMBLE SERVICE.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

To understand a Bible passage well, we must carefully study what the text says, and not put our own ideas into it. We must humbly submit our ideas to what the text itself says.

In studying the Bible we reach conclusions by our:

- ☐ opinions.
- ☐ observations.

Meditating on the details of a passage, we understand its meaning better. We do not preach messages based on our own opinions, but on the words and meaning of the text.

To understand a Bible passage well, we must find out several aspects:

1. Who is its author?
2. Where did this take place?
3. When did it happen?

4. What is the context (what goes before and after, and the historical setting)?
5. Who are involved?
6. Who speaks to whom?
7. What does the passage say? (Consider each detail; is it a parable, command, example to follow, tradition which explains the historical context, a historic event, etc.?)
8. What application has it today?

When interpreting a passage, it is useful to find out which other Bible passages deal with the same subject. (Sometimes the Bible itself helps in this.)

In some Bibles, in a vertical column or at the foot of the page, there are Bible texts. These are called "references." They help us to find other Bible passages which refer to the same subject as the text we are studying.

