

Testament letters. If you are studying an Old Testament prophetic book, you will find the historical books (Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, etc.) to be helpful. Similarly, if you're studying an Old Testament history book, the prophetic books can give you insight into the spiritual climate of the time.

For further information, many Bible Dictionaries and commentaries provide background on the issues the authors and recipients were facing. As you read, write some of the key ideas into your Bible study notes. As you gather information from many different sources, having the main points in one location allows for quick, easy review later on.

Many people find that Atmosphere Background Studies can become quite a fascinating exercise. The more you find out about a city, culture, people group, or individual, the more you want to know. There is so much historical information to be found – both Christian and secular – that there is literally almost no end to the depth of study you can do. The key is to find out how much background you need to make the Bible come alive and become more “real” to you. For one person, a 20-minute overview might be plenty. For another, there may not seem to be enough hours in the day.



### *Study Tools and Resources*

Here are some of the tools you might find useful should you choose to dig deeper than the information your Study Bible contains:

### *Bible Dictionary/Encyclopedia*

- Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias are extremely useful for researching authors, recipients, and cities.
- There are many good “one-volume” Bible Dictionaries. There are also Bible Encyclopedias that come in several volumes. Some have lots of illustrations and are very easy to use. Others are very thorough and academic in their language. Your best bet is to go to a Christian book store and spend some time leafing through the various choices.

### *Bible Handbook*

- A Bible Handbook explores the customs, politics, and history of various books, cities, and people groups in the Bible, providing a wealth of information for an “atmosphere” Background Study.

### *Bible Atlas*

- A Bible Atlas goes into great depth regarding the geography, climate, landscape, etc. of land regions during Biblical times.
- Note: Basic geographical information can be found in most Bible Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, and Handbooks. The Bible Atlas is a terrific resource for those who are fascinated by geography and want more detailed information as they study a book's atmosphere.

### *Commentaries*

- Commentaries are verse-by-verse or section-by-section discussions of books of the Bible.
- Most commentaries will have some general background

information at the beginning of the chapter pertaining to each book.

- As with many of the other tools mentioned here, commentaries can be found in many different formats – from concise, one-volume commentaries that cover the whole Bible, to complete sets that devote a volume to each book.
- Finally, since commentaries are simply books written by other Christians, every commentary will carry with it the theological positions of its author. You should talk with your pastor or a trusted friend to get a recommendation on which commentary might be best for you.

If you only plan on purchasing one or two of these resources, I would highly recommend a good Bible Encyclopedia and a one-volume commentary of the whole Bible. Most libraries (both church and public) have these resources as well if you do not have the means of obtaining these tools personally.

Many of these resources can also be found on the Internet or through several terrific software programs. This gives you the opportunity to search several books at once, and even “cut-and-paste” information you find into your own Bible study notes. It is also a comparatively inexpensive way to access a vast library of books you might never find at your local Christian bookstore.

*Note: For a brief description of several online resources, you can visit the “Resources” link at [www.thatsourwayknow.com](http://www.thatsourwayknow.com)*

## WHAT'S THE POINT?

*Purpose Statement*

