Studying the Bible week in and week out for preaching and teaching, the pastor can find himself falling into dry routine. How to refresh? Here are three suggestions:

I. Update Your Study Tools: A pastor’s library of reference tools tends to be frozen in time to those he used when he was in school. It may be a matter of familiarity, knowledge or money, but keeping up to date with reference tools does not come naturally. Yet, not keeping up to date is to miss out on the ever increasing wealth of Biblical studies study aids. Here’s a quick checklist for you.


If your seminary diploma is dated 1985 or before, Louw and Nida, the very helpful, linguistically informed New Testament dictionary (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains. 2 vols. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988) would probably also be missing from your library.
Decide on a yearly budget for books and develop a strategy for strengthening your reference tools. Keep alert for advertisements of new products; judiciously assess them with the aid of book reviews; and keep your tool box stocked with the best tools for uncovering the truths of God’s Word.

II. Consider Upgrading to Computer-Assisted Bible Study. Hypertext will make the Greek, Hebrew, and English version texts readily available in a form which may be worked with for study—pop-up definitions and parsing to facilitate ease in translation and analysis, search engines for specialized concordance work and grammatical analysis. The Biblical Studies reference tools available either as software or on the Internet will bring the work of many scholars to your fingertips. Here are some suggestions with website addresses:

*Exegetical Resources--Original Languages:*
  - Gramcord –a GRAMmatical ConCORDance which can perform a virtually unlimited variety of lexical and grammatical searches. See [www.gramcord.org](http://www.gramcord.org)
  - Bible Windows 7.0 and Bible Works 5—offers both the ability to work in the original languages and the ability to view reference works. See [www.silvermnt.com](http://www.silvermnt.com); See [www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)

*Biblical Studies Resources:*
  - Logos Bible Software Series X–an electronic library which offers access to a large number of Bibles and reference books. See [www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com)
  - The Essential IVP Reference Collection—an electronic library of thirteen dictionaries and reference works. See [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)
  - Zondervan Computer Reference Tools–has bundled (Zondervan Bible Study Library–Professional, Scholars Edition), as well as stand alone resources–Expositor’s Bible Commentary for Windows; Zondervan Theological Dictionaries for Windows (DNTT; DOTTE) See [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

*Internet Sites*
  - CIU Library ([www.ciu.edu/library](http://www.ciu.edu/library)). See subject resources–Biblical Studies for helpful links.
  - Biblical Studies Tools ([www.biblestudytools.net](http://www.biblestudytools.net)). Older (public domain) commentaries and dictionaries.

III. Tune Up Your Study Method: Diagnosis is the key to tuning up a car’s transmission and it is no different with the practice of Bible study for preaching or teaching. Take some time to write out from memory the steps you normally take in studying a passage you are going to preach or teach. Be as specific as possible about the types of study you normally do (more specific than--“read the passage . . . take notes . . . read commentaries”). Take the following overview of a comprehensive exegetical method and compare it with the steps you normally take. In the light of this comparison, to what would you give more attention? What would you start doing that you are not doing? How would you vary the order of your study steps, and why? What else would you look into doing differently?

**Preparation of the Preacher/Teacher and the Text**

*Spiritual Preparation: Pray for mind and heart open and submissive to the message of the passage.*
Text Preparation
• Prepare a finished translation (from the Greek or Hebrew) of significant portions of the text.
• Prepare a visual representation of the flow of thought of the passage (Mechanical Layout).

Exegesis of the Text Survey
• Establish the wording of the text (text criticism) as needed, as indicated by Greek New Testament or “pew Bible.”
• Raise questions and make observations about the content of the passage in terms of historical, literary, theological, interpretation/application, and homiletical or didactic appropriation.

Analysis: Historical
• Introductory Matters: How does background information about the origin of the book (author, audience, composition-occasion & purpose) help you understand the passage’s content?
• Historical-cultural-religious Details: Research historical-cultural details from the passage to see what light they shed on its meaning.

Analysis: Literary
• Context: What is the position of this passage in an outline of the book? What is its role in its immediate context (two paragraphs before and after)?
• Genre: What genre and subgenre does this passage participate in (e.g., epistle, narrative, hymn, parable)? How does an understanding of the form and use of the genre help you understand the passage’s message better?
• Syntax–Grammar: What do the various uses of the grammatical features of the passage (e.g., for Greek, Structure: conjunctions–coordinate, subordinate; Verbs: tense, voice, mood, mode; Cases; The Rest: definite article, particles, pronouns, prepositions) contribute to the meaning of the passage?
• Syntax–Rhetorical Features: What meaning is the writer communicating through the features: word absence, word order, word arrangement, word figure, special forms of emphasis, in the passage?
• Word Study–Focus the Meaning and Illumine the Meaning: What is the precise meaning of a word in the passage based on a profile of the range of meaning by the author and study of its use in that particular context? What light does source (use elsewhere in Biblical revelation) or contemporary background (use elsewhere in ancient culture) use bring to its use in your passage?

Analysis: Theological
• Biblical Theology Themes: What other passages in Scripture contain parallel or contrasting themes which will help you understand your passage?
• Systematic Theology: What area of systematic theology does your passage support, and how?
• Remaining Interpretational/Theological Difficulties: What problems for
understanding does this passage continue to present? What are the range of solutions? Which one do you choose, why?

Synthesis

• Exegetical Outline: Make an outline of the passage which represents its flow of thought.
• Biblical Coherence: What is the main message of the passage? How does it further the purposes of the book? What is its role (foundational or developmental) in the progress of redemption as presented in the progress of revelation?

Interpretation/Application: How may the message of the passage be applied to today (principle, situation, implementation) by way of . . .

• Communication: What vocabulary, images, illustrations from today’s culture will communicate the message?
• Correction: What in the passage is “bad news” to today’s culture, because it judges ideas, beliefs, values?
• “Capture the Significance”: What in the passage is “good news” to today’s culture, because it speaks to a felt need the culture is addressing wrongly or not at all?

Homiletical or Didactic Appropriation: Gather all results of your study, reflect on it, and frame a sermon or lesson, together with its outline.

Now try your revised study method for, say, six months to a year. Then, stop and reassess. Continuing refinement and enrichment of method should lead to continuing refreshment in the all important work of being a servant of the Word ministering to the servants of God.

This method is taken from William J. Larkin, Manual of Greek Exegesis for Communicator’s of the Word (CIU Bookstore, 2002). Available from the CIU bookstore.