Is it appropriate to bring what you discovered reading a commentary into the classroom discussion?

Great question!

The answer is yes, and this is why.

One of the characteristics of a most Bible study leaders, especially Precept leaders, is that they love to study. We love it so much that for many of us Bible study is a big event with a very specific routine. We have our favorite place, favorite tools, and favorite time to study. We normally even study at the same times each week.

You probably also love to talk about what you are learning, which is another reason you are Precept leader. This love of conversation, along with a love for studying, is also part of what drives you to read commentaries. I know, you are thinking “Reading a commentary is not a conversation”, and you are of course right, sort of.

The conversation between you and the scholar who wrote the commentary is a bit one-sided, but the scholar is talking to you about what they understand from the passage. You read and process what the commentary says; you think through their views and find places of agreement, or points of argument. After a while you find you have favorite commentaries, because you have enjoyed the conversation with that author.

The classroom becomes an extension of the conversation. It is natural to bring into the discussion the important points or insights you gained by reading the commentary. The discussion time is after all a discussion of what everyone has learned.

The question then becomes how do I as a Precept leader carry the commentary conversation over into my classroom discussion? The answer is very, very carefully.
Cautions

You know the danger of using commentaries before you study the Scriptures. If you have studied the passages first then reading the commentary really is a discussion. In your mind you are thinking “Oh, yes! I see that” or “No, no that is not Paul’s purpose at all!” If you have not studied the passages first, the conversation is only a lecture. You have nothing to add to the discussion in your mind so you are lectured to by the commentary and not having studied you are at the mercy of someone else to define truth for you.

There are a couple of reasons it can be dangerous to bring the commentary’s comments into the class discussion.

• **It sometimes leads to lecturing.**
  
  If you are not cautious you can find yourself telling the class what you learned instead of asking them what they learned. Many times the Bible study leader is also the best student in the room. If you also read the best commentaries then you become an imposing figure. The class can be intimidated by you and this is only magnified when you constantly quote Dr. So and So really is an expert.

• **Lecturing prevents students from doing their homework.**
  
  Since you are the best student in the room, and read the best experts, the students will soon realize they could never understand the passage as well as you or the commentator you quote. That leads them to stop studying and just take notes in class, and that defeats the whole purpose.

A good approach

As you lead the discussion by asking questions share **what you have learned only in small bites,** and only occasionally. Also, don’t mention the name of the commentary unless the information is unique to that one source. If you saw the same information in three different places, and you feel the need to share it, then just share it. Constantly quoting the author or the commentary series name will make you look like the professor and the discussion will become a lecture.

Also, if the **information is plainly seen in the text, why quote the commentary at all? Quote the source, the Word of God.**
In closing

Remember your goal is to let the students talk about what they learned; it’s not about you telling them what you have learned.

Let the discussion be a discussion.
Well-known Bible teacher Kay Arthur leads readers into the fascinating world of Inductive Bible Study where God Himself becomes the teacher (Psalm 119:102). This book teaches readers how to study Scripture and specifically mark the text to unlock its meaning. In just 28 days readers learn how to:

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- recognize key words and concepts in the Bible
- discover the main point of any passage of Scripture
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This is a very practical, hands-on, learn-by-doing book, perfect for either individuals or small groups. Bible text and space to write insights are included. Readers need only a pen, a few colored pencils...and a prayerful heart to complete each study and experience the Bible’s life-changing power.

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