

Chapter One

WORD STUDIES

A. DEFINITION

Perhaps the most basic method of Bible Study is a word study. In it a student chooses just *one word* from Scripture and proceeds to discover all he can about it. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of that word he then not only better understands the truth it represents but also is more able to understand each verse it is used in. (e.g. studying the word “comforter” not only gives the student an understanding of the ever-present ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but also gives tremendous insight into certain New Testament passages.)

B. IMPORTANCE

In order to bridge the language gap that exists between our minds and those of the Biblical writers there are *two major parts* of the language that must be studied: (1) **VOCABULARY**, which involves the meanings of the words used in that language; and (2) **GRAMMAR**, which entails the ways the words of the language are put together in order to communicate thoughts and ideas. Word studies focus on the vocabulary of a language and more particularly on the words chosen by God out of each language to comprise the vocabulary of Scripture.

The following is a very brief list of some of these.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Salvation. | II Tim. 3:15; Jas. 1:21. |
| 2. Life. | Jn. 20:31; Ps. 119:93. |
| 3. Divine Nature. | II Pet. 1:4. |
| 4. Growth. | I Pet. 2:2. |
| 5. Sanctification. | Ps. 119:9,11. |
| 6. Peace. | Ps. 85:8, 119:165. |
| 7. Joy. | Jer. 15:16; Ps. 1:2. |
| 8. Guidance. | Ps. 119:105. |
| 9. Wisdom. | Ps. 119:98. |
| 10. Faith. | Rom. 10:17. |

Words are our primary means of expression. They are symbols of communication. Therefore, in order for us to fully understand what the Bible writers were communicating to us in Scripture we must attribute the same definitions and connotations to the words as they did. We must understand what they understood those words to mean. This is complicated by the fact that it is impossible for any English translation to perfectly express the full meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words. One Hebrew or Greek word may be translated by several English words in different contexts. On the other hand one English word may be used to translate several different Hebrew and Greek words.

The words used in Scripture often take on unique Biblical significance. In that they have been chosen by God to communicate truth, they often take on certain divine connotations in Scripture. Thus, a further aim of word studies is to discover what God meant by the words He used, to understand what various words mean in the context of Scripture.

Words are the building blocks of understanding. Therefore, in order to build an understanding of God's Word you must start at the bottom and build block upon block.

As you give yourself to word studies you will find that themes of truth will begin to open up to you and your understanding of the Word of God will greatly increase.

C. METHOD

There are many ways of doing a word study all of which have their own particular strengths and weaknesses. Some overemphasize certain areas of consideration, some are unreliable as to their conclusions and others are not thorough enough to be of long-term value. If a student is going to take the time and effort to research the meaning and use of a word he should have a method that will not only facilitate a balanced and accurate understanding, but will also preserve his efforts for future reference. The method suggested here is one that is balanced, simple enough for all to use, expandable for greater depth and detail, flexible enough for individual preferences and suitable to long-term use.

Once the student has access to the proper tools, the first step is to choose a word to study. Perhaps the student will have a special area of interest he may desire to pursue. If not, a good starting point is often to take a particular interesting verse of Scripture and study the key word or words in it. If the student is interested in building his understanding of a particular subject or theme in Scripture, he could begin by studying some of its most important words. It is suggested that he start with some of the more central and essential themes of Scripture so as to solidly build his perspective of the truth of God's Word.

By following the three-stage approach as given in the example for the Workshop Assignments the student will discover the joy of word studies.

Stage One — Definition

First, all available sources (such as Strong's, Thayer's, Vine's, etc.), should be used to compile the definition of the word. These sources should be noted for future possible reference.

Example:

1. Word — Fellowship
2. Verse — Acts 2:42
3. Strong's — A. Number
B. Transliteration
C. Etymology
D. Definition
E. Way translated
4. Thayer's
5. Vine's, etc.

Stage Two — Scriptural Analysis — Observation/Interpretation/Insights

Second, an analysis should be made using the Englishman's Hebrew, and/or, Greek Concordance and Bible of how this word is used throughout Scripture. To do so, and to do it properly every reference should be included.

This can be done in a simple three — column approach. the *left hand* column is used to note down the Scripture reference of each occurrence of the word under study.

Do NOT list the next reference UNTIL the right hand column where the interpretation or insights are written is complete. This helps to organise the page and to prevent overcrowding. The *middle* column is used to write out a brief quote from the verse, including the word being studied, or a summary, if that is better. Underline the word for ease of recognition.

The *right hand* column is the one which is used the most. Here the insights which are gained from reading how the word is used and what it means IN ITS CONTEXT are noted. As several points are usually noted, it helps to number each point for later reference.

Turn to P. 116 Word Studies Workshop assignment # 1, Stage Two, for an example of this approach.

Once this stage is completed, the student should review the insights written down, looking for natural divisions in order to categorise all the references under major headings. This prepares the way for Stage Three.

SC. 2842

SCRIPTURE ANALYSIS

FELLOWSHIP

Scripture Reference	Brief Verse Quote	Topical Significance/Insights
Acts 2:42	Continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and <i>fellowship</i> , breaking of bread, and prayers.	1. Early believers continued in four major areas of church life: a. Doctrine b. Fellowship c. Communion d. Prayers 2. Fellowship included practical care for one another. 3. Etc.

Stage Three — Organization For Presentation

Third, a summarization of all the findings and insights should be made, thus bringing the study to a profitable conclusion. The student may organize all the material he has gained by using suitable questions as suggested here:

1. What?
2. Who?
3. Why?
4. When?
5. Where?
6. How?

OVERVIEW DIAGRAM OF A WORD STUDY IN THE THREE-STAGE APPROACH

The following is simply an overview of a word study following the three-stage approach as explained the previous comments.

WORD STUDY

THREE – STAGE APPROACH				
STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO			STAGE THREE
DEFINITION OF WORD	SCRIPTURAL ANALYSIS			ORGANIZATION/SUMMARIZATION
USING THE TOOLS	Scripture	Observation	Interpretation	Outline from Questions
1. Word : Fellowship 2. Verse : Acts 2:42 STRONG'S A. B. C. D. E. F. G. THAYER'S VINE'S Etc.	Reference Example:	Usage of Word in passage Phrase in quotes Underline word Note important details	Topical Significance Significance of use of word in verse Insights	What? Who? Why? When? Where? How?
	Acts 2:42	“Continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers”	Early believers continued in four major areas of church life. 1. Doctrine 2. Fellowship 3. Communion 4. Prayers	Summary and Practical Application

Importance of “Context”

In all methods of study, whether Word, Character, Place or Passage studies, the student should constantly maintain the “*context principle*”. That is, he should look at the use of the *word* (whatever it may be) in its *verse context* and *passage context*, discovering where the passage begins and ends in relation to that word under consideration.

Finally, certain guidelines and safeguards should be considered by the student involved in word studies. To be safe in his conclusions the student should only use Hebrew or Greek words (not English words) for word studies. He should recognize that vocabulary is only part of a language and that word studies alone are insufficient to totally bridge the language gap. Whenever research is done it should be written down, thus preserving the time and effort spent. Finally, the student would do well to be thorough, thus not having to repeat his efforts later.

WORD STUDIES

WORKSHOP

assignment #1

TOOLS NEEDED: Strong's Concordance, New Thayer's Lexicon, Vine's Dictionary, New Englishman's Greek Concordance, and a King James Version of the Bible.

ASSIGNMENT: Look up in Strong's the Greek word for "*perfect*" in the verse below. Then apply the proper information under each book below. Using your Greek Concordance look up in your Bible every usage of that Greek word in the New Testament. In the columns below write down the references, the ways it is used in those passages, and its topical significance in each passage.

Scripture Reference and word. II Corinthians 13:11 — "*perfect*"

STAGE ONE — Definition

Strong's

- A. *Dictionary number* —
- B. *Transliteration* —
- C. *Etymology* —
- D. *Definition* —
- E. *Ways translated* —

Thayer's

Primary definitions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Vine's

- A. *Transliteration (from Strong's)* —
- B. *Definition* —

STAGE TWO – Scripture Analysis

Using New Englishman's Greek Concordance

Scripture Reference	Observation — Usage in Passage Brief Verse Quote	Interpretation — Topical Significance Insights
<i>Mt. 4:21</i>	<i>James & John “<u>mending</u> their nets” – Jesus calls them.</i>	<i>Making complete by bringing each strand back in place and in connection with others – thus restoring usefulness.</i>

STAGE THREE — Organization

Using these questions as a guideline, categorize the Scriptures in relation to the word "perfect".

What is it to perfect?

- A.
- B.
- C.

Who is to be perfected?

- A.
- B.
- C.

What are the objects of perfection?

- A. Natural
- B. Spiritual

WORD STUDIES

WORKSHOP

assignment #2

TOOLS NEEDED: Strong's Concordance, New Thayer's Lexicon, Vine's Dictionary, New Englishman's Greek Concordance, and a King James Version of the Bible.

ASSIGNMENT: Look up in Strong's the Greek word for "*fellowship*" in the verse below. Then supply the proper information under each book below. Using your Greek Concordance look up in your Bible every usage of that Greek word in the New Testament. In the columns below write down the references, the ways it is used in those passages, and its topical significance in each passage.

Scripture Reference and word. Acts 2:42 — "*Fellowship*" (SC 2842)

STAGE ONE — Definition

(To study this word fully, its 3 alternate forms should be included. Because of time and space they have been eliminated here. Their numbers are 2841, 2843 and 2844.)

Strong's

A. *Dictionary number* —

B. *Transliteration* —

C. *Etymology* —

D. *Definitions* —

E. *Ways translated* —

Thayer's Primary Definitions

1.

2.

3.

Vine's

A. *Transliteration (from Strong's)* —

B. *Definitions* —

a)

b)

STAGE TWO – Scripture Analysis

Using New Englishman's Greek Concordance

Scripture Reference	Observation – Usage in Passage Brief Verse Quote	Interpretation – Topical Significance Insights
<i>Acts 2:42</i>	<i>Pentecost – 3,000 converted – continued steadfastly in apostle's doctrine & fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers” –</i>	<i>N.T. believers had continual fellowship that was demonstrated practically – involving teaching, prayer, worship, sharing possessions, visiting each other, resulting in joy, power and growth.</i>

STAGE THREE — Organization

Using these questions as a guide line, categorize the Scriptures in relation to fellowship:

1. What?
2. Who?
3. Why?
4. Where?
5. When?
6. How?