

# IN A WORD

How to Unlock the Meaning of Greek  
New Testament Words



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# Lesson 1 – Word Study at a Glance

The story is familiar: A rich young ruler approaches Jesus and asks, “What must I do to have eternal life?” His track record is already impressive; he claims that he already keeps all the commandments. Jesus replies, “You just need to do one more thing: sell everything you own and give it to the poor.” Clearly, that was not what this fellow expected to hear! Luke 18:23 says, “When he heard this, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.”

But how sad is “very sad”?

What is your impression? On a scale of 1-10, what was his pain level?

Your estimate: \_\_\_\_\_

I always assumed, “He was frustrated, but he’ll soon get over it.” I thought the pain was probably on the level of someone selling a house and having the buyer back out at the last minute. Maybe a 6.

But I was wrong!

After I read this passage, I took a few minutes to look up the Greek word used for “very sad.” It is *perilupos*, and it is not one of the usual words for grief or sorrow. In fact, it only appears in three other verses in the New Testament:

- Mark 6:26 – When Herod’s daughter Salome demanded John the Baptist’s head, the king was *perilupos* – extremely grieved – because he had made a rash promise and found himself trapped, unable to change course, even though he hated the idea.
- Matthew 26:38 and Mark 14:34 – In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus turned to his disciples and said, “My soul is *perilupos*, even to the point of death.” Then he asked them to watch while he prayed.

So how sorrowful was the rich young ruler? It was the kind of desperate, life-threatening sorrow that a cornered king might feel. It was a word appropriate to describe Christ’s torment in Gethsemane. On a scale of 1-10, this word describes distress at the top of the scale!

You have often heard preachers say, “The Greek word used in this verse means . . . .” And you thought, I wish I could locate that kind of information myself.”

The exciting truth is that **you can learn how to study a Greek word yourself!** Even though you can't compete with the professional scholars, there are simple procedures you can follow that will enable you to look for nuggets of truth for yourself.

*This short course will equip you with the know-how to start investigating Greek words in the New Testament for yourself!* In just 7 lessons, you will learn how to use the tools of word study properly, so that you can begin developing the skills of a master craftsman, "rightly dividing the word of truth."

***In Lesson 1, you will learn:***

- ***2 Things to Know about Words***
- ***2 Stages of a Word Study***
- ***2 Ways to Do Each Stage***

## **2 Things to Know about Words**

**Words have more than one meaning.**

Take a simple English word such as *run*. It can be a verb that means "to get from one place to another by moving your legs quickly." Or it can mean "to keep the engine of your car operating" (even if it's just idling in the driveway). When your watch runs, the hands go around. When the lawnmower runs, it cuts grass. When a stream runs, water flows over rocks. When your nose runs, you grab a tissue. *Run* can also be a noun, whether it refers to a point scored in a baseball game or a torn place in a stocking.

Let's try this out on another common word. Give yourself 60 seconds to write down all the meanings you can think of for the word ***hit***

Now grab an English dictionary and find the entry for *hit*.

How many meanings did you think of? \_\_\_\_\_

How many meanings were in the dictionary? \_\_\_\_\_

In the same way, Greek and Hebrew words often have multiple meanings. A Greek dictionary may list several meanings for a word.

Examples:

The Greek word *pistos* can mean (1) faithful, trustworthy, reliable OR (2) believing, trusting (as in “the one believing”).

The first meaning is “someone worth trusting”; the second is “someone who trusts another.”

The Greek word *pistis* can mean (1) faith, trust, belief OR (2) the Christian faith.

The first meaning is “the attitude of faith”; the second is “the thing you trust.”

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*Review [fill in the blank]: Words have \_\_\_\_\_ than one meaning.*

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## **2. A word has only one meaning in a particular context.**

If you click on a news feed and see the headline “Jones Runs for Governor,” you know that *run* is being used to describe a campaign for political office. But in another context, the word might describe someone who operates a factory. In another setting, you might complain that your nose is running, and you’re always grabbing tissues.

How do you know which meaning is in use? By looking at the **context** and using your **common sense**.

The same thing happens in Greek. We are familiar with the fact that the word *agape* means “love” in the New Testament. But a Greek dictionary will also list at least one alternate meaning. *Agape* can also mean “a love feast.” Once I know about that second meaning, I can much more easily figure out a verse like Jude 12, which accuses false teachers of being “hidden reefs in your **love feasts**” (NASB). In this particular context, most Bibles render the word *agape* not as “love,” but as “love feast.”

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*Review:*

*Words have **more** than one meaning.*

*A word has only \_\_\_\_\_ meaning in a particular context.*

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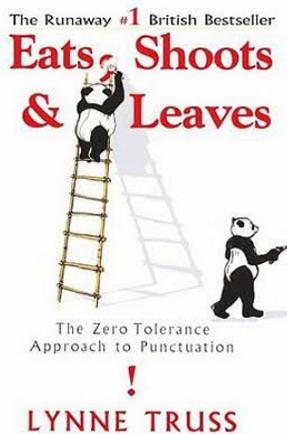
It's vital to understand both these things about words, and that's why every Greek word study incorporates two separate stages.

## 2 Stages of a Word Study

### 1. Discover all the possible meanings.

Since a word can have more than one meaning, you need to know all the possible meanings. Try to compile the longest possible list of potential uses. Your goal is to know everything that the word could possibly mean – and you don't want to overlook anything.

Even a small shift in meaning can make a big difference!



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*Review:*  
*Words have more than one meaning.*

*A word has only one meaning in a particular context.*

*Stage One: Discover \_\_\_\_\_ the possible meanings.*

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## **2. Decide the one meaning that fits in the context.**

In most cases, the reason you are studying a word is because you want to know how it is used in a particular Bible verse. To get that information, you must go beyond Stage 1, Discovering all the possible meanings. You must take the list of possible meanings and then attempt to discern which one appears in the verse you are studying.

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*Review:*  
*Words have more than one meaning.*

*A word has only one meaning in a particular context.*

*Stage One: Discover all the possible meanings.*

*Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the*

*\_\_\_\_\_.*

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## **2 Ways to Do Each Stage**

As the old saying goes, “There’s more than one way to skin a cat” (my apologies to cat-lovers). It is also true that there’s more than one way to do a word study.

It’s a bit like doing the jobs around the house. I once discovered that the light switch in our bedroom closet was rather warm to the touch. I could have tried to replace it myself. But in this case, I called a friend who was a professional electrician. He told me, “Don’t touch it! I’ll be right out.”

You always have two options for home repair: borrow the expertise of a professional or do it yourself. When I do it myself, I save money and I get a warm glow of achievement. On the other hand, an expert can often do the job more quickly and safely because he has the tools and experience that I lack.

When you are studying a Greek word, you have the same two options available for each stage of the process. You can borrow the information from professional Bible scholars or you can do the work yourself.

**1. You can borrow the information from others.**

Take advantage of the work that professional Bible scholars have done by simply looking up the Greek word in reference books or online resources.

In the first stage of a word study, you can consult a Greek lexicon or dictionary to find a list of possible meanings. (A lexicon is simply a dictionary with some extra features.)

In the second stage, you might study some commentaries which will suggest the meaning used in the verse you are studying.

*What Tool to Use for Each Stage of Study:*

	Borrow from Others	Do It Yourself
Stage 1	LEXICON	
Stage 2	COMMENTARY	

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*Review:*

*Words have more than one meaning.*

*A word has only one meaning in a particular context.*

*Stage One: Discover all the possible meanings.*

*Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the context.*

*You can \_\_\_\_\_ the information from others.*

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**2. You can do the study yourself.**

If you want to invest extra time so that you can dive more deeply into the meaning of a word, the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach can yield rich rewards in both stages of a word study.

**Stage One DIY Method:**

Use a concordance or Bible software to find a list of all the verses where the Greek word is used. Then examine each verse for yourself. Record your own observations on how the word is used, then compile a list of all the meanings you find.

**Stage Two DIY Method:**

Simply study the verse carefully in its context. Read the sections before and after your verse to discover the flow of thought. Meditate on it prayerfully, and then come to your own conclusion: Which shade of meaning makes the most sense in this verse?

Smart students usually supplement their DIY efforts by consulting dictionaries or commentaries, just to see if there any insights that may have escaped their notice. But you will find that the commentaries make a lot more sense after you have explored the word for yourself!

*What Tool to Use for Each Stage of Study:*

	Borrow from Others	Do It Yourself
Stage 1	LEXICON	CONCORDANCE
Stage 2	COMMENTARY	COMMON SENSE

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*REVIEW QUIZ:*

*Words have \_\_\_\_\_ than one meaning.*

*A word has only one meaning in a particular \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Stage One: Discover all the possible \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits the \_\_\_\_\_ you are studying.*

*You can \_\_\_\_\_ the information from others.*

*You can do the study \_\_\_\_\_.*

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## **Coming Up:**

What happens next?

In Lesson 2, you will learn how to use a Greek dictionary (print or electronic) to find all the meanings of a word.

In Lesson 3, you will learn how to use a concordance (print or electronic) to jump into a DIY version of Stage 1, finding all the shades of meaning a word might have.

In Lessons 4-7, you will start to handle the tools for Stage 2 and work through the whole process of studying key Greek words. You'll find out how to use the Greek alphabet to open up even more possibilities. We will explore ways to handle synonyms, investigate word history, and avoid common errors. By the time you finish, you will be well on your way to mastery of this crucial skill for Bible study!

## **A Word Puzzle to Ponder:**

In the next lesson we will untangle the riddle of why the same Greek word is translated “world” in 1 John 2:15, but appears as “adornment” in 1 Peter 3:3. See if you can figure it out!

# Lesson 2 – Borrow from Others to Find all the Meanings

*Agree or disagree: A Christian should love the world.*

It seems simple enough, but you may end up shaking your head in confusion after you consider these two Bible verses:

1 John 2:15 says, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

How do I reconcile those two verses?

Does it mean that it’s OK for God to love the world, but I’m not supposed to love it? That doesn’t seem like a very satisfying explanation.

Or do the verses use two different words for “world” in the original Greek? That’s a good guess, but a little research will show that both verses use the same word: *kosmos*.

The key to this riddle lies in the meaning of the word *kosmos*. This is the perfect occasion to carry out a word study, exploring this intriguing term.

In fact, let’s add a complication to make things more interesting. 1 Peter 3:3, talking to Christian wives, says, “Your **adornment** must not be merely external—braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses—but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” The Greek word translated “adornment” is *kosmos*, the same word we just met. How could *kosmos* possibly mean both “world” and “adornment”? We find the answer by conducting a word study!

In Lesson 1, we learned the basic process that we use in doing a word study. In this lesson, you will start handling some tools that you can use immediately to locate a Greek word and compile an inventory of all of its shades of meaning. Let’s begin with a quick review of the core information you have already seen.

***In Lesson 2, you will learn how to borrow the work of others to find all the possible meanings of a Greek word. This involves:***

- ***2 Barriers to Avoid***
- ***2 Traditional Tools***
- ***2 Electronic Tools***

## What We Learned Last Time

- **2 Things to Know about Words:**
  - Words have more than one meaning.
  - A word only has one meaning in a particular context.
- **2 Stages of a Word Study:**
  - Stage One: Discover all the possible meanings.
  - Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the context.
- **2 Ways to Do Each Stage:**
  - You can borrow the information from others.
  - You can do the study yourself.

This helps to explain why *kosmos* seems to shift gears from one verse to the next. Like any other word, it can have more than one meaning. When I uncover the range of varied ideas that it can cover, I will be in a much better position to explain the different perspective in the verses I am studying.

To fix the essentials of word study more firmly in your mind, take a minute to fill in the blanks below.

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*Review:*

*Words have \_\_\_\_\_ than one meaning.*

*A word has only \_\_\_\_\_ meaning in a particular context.*

*Stage One: Discover \_\_\_\_\_ the possible meanings.*

*Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Method One: You can \_\_\_\_\_ the information from others.*

*Method Two: You can \_\_\_\_\_ the study \_\_\_\_\_*

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We learned last week that there is a key tool used for each stage of a word study.

	Borrow from Others	Do It Yourself
Stage 1	LEXICON	CONCORDANCE
Stage 2	COMMENTARY	COMMON SENSE

In Lesson 2, you will learn how to use a lexicon or dictionary, borrowing from the work of others to discover all the possible meanings of a Greek word. This is the quickest, easiest way to get a first glimpse of your target word.

## Getting Around the Initial Barriers

You already know how to use a dictionary, and you can use the same skills to look up a word in a Greek dictionary. However, there are two features that make it a little more complicated.

### 1. The Alphabet Barrier

When I first visited my daughter in Sapporo, Japan, I foolishly expected many of the street signs to be in English letters that might give me a hint where I was. Not so! All the signs were in indecipherable chicken scratches that resisted my best efforts. Likewise, most people have a similar experience the first time they encounter a Greek word.

Take *kosmos*, for instance. In actual Greek, it looks like this: **kosmoV**. You may be able to guess some of these letters, but not all Greek words are that cooperative. How about this one: **qliyiV**? In our alphabet, it is *thlipsis*, which (appropriately enough) means “tribulation”!

If you can’t read the Greek alphabet, you can’t navigate in a Greek dictionary.

### 2. The Endings Barrier

In English, our words change spelling very little. It’s either *cat* or *cats*, and we know exactly where to look in the dictionary. Both spellings take you to the same spot on the page, where you can find the definition of the word.

Greek, however, is trickier. A noun like *kosmos* can be spelled in eight different ways. In the New Testament, you might see *kosmos*, *kosmou*, *kosmoi*, *kosmon*, or *kosmous*. If you try to look up *kosmois*, you won’t find an entry. The Greeks expect you to find your way to the main entry, *kosmos*.

Verbs are even worse. A verb might show up in 125 different spellings. If you count participles, there are an additional 168 possibilities. Sadistic, right! You might see *lueis*, *lusai*, *luomenos*, or *luthesontai* – all forms of the same verb – but you won’t find the meaning explained until you go to *luō* in the lexicon!

No wonder people mutter, “It’s all Greek to me!”

**Bottom Line: You must use study tools that allow you to bypass these barriers.**

In the rest of this lesson, you will learn to use four tools that require no knowledge of the Greek alphabet or the endless array of endings. (We will introduce the Greek alphabet in Lesson 4 and show you how to use it to go even deeper into the unexplored depths of Greek word study.)

## Traditional Paper Study Tools

The first two items in our toolbox are a pair of reference books that have served as the entry point of word study for generations of eager Bible explorers. They are fairly hefty volumes, but they are readily available at any Christian bookstore. In fact, you just may find an extra copy sitting on your pastor's bookshelf.

### 1. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*

James Strong published his *Concordance* in 1890, and it has become a standard tool for Bible students. It contains an alphabetical list of every word in the Bible, accompanied by a catalog of every verse where a word appears. If you remember one or two words from a verse in the Bible, you can use Strong's to locate that verse!

How does it help you study a Greek word?

The secret is the Strong's numbering system. James Strong assigned a number to each of the 5624 Greek words used in the New Testament. At the end of his *Concordance*, you will find a Greek-English dictionary where all those words are listed – not only in alphabetical order, but also by number. You don't need to know the Greek alphabet; you can simply look for the right number! Beyond that, the concordance itself lists the code number for every word in the Bible. Just look at the end of the line, and you find the number that takes you to the correct Greek word in the dictionary. It was an ingenious way to provide a passage through those barriers!

Here's how you can use Strong's to locate Greek words. It's a simple process:

Step 1 – Look in the main concordance.

- Find the English word that you want to study.
- Find the verse that you are studying.
- Look for the code number at the end of the line.

Step 2 – Look at the Greek dictionary in the back.

- Find the code number in the dictionary. That's the Greek word!

#### **Example – John 3:16**

How could you use Strong's to study "world" in this verse?

Step 1 – Look in the main concordance.

- Find the English word. What word are you looking for? \_\_\_\_\_
- Find the verse. What verse are you studying? \_\_\_\_\_

Here's what you will find:

**World** See also WORLD'S: WORLDS

There is almost a full page of material on “world,” but when you get to John 3:16, here is what you will find:

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the w' that he “

Do you see a number at the end of the line? \_\_\_\_\_

If you see “ instead of a number, it means “the same as above.” Keep looking up until you find the number used here.

What is the number for “world” in John 3:16? \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers:**

English word = world

Verse = John 3:16

Do you see a number? No

Number for “world” = 2889

Step 2 – Look in the dictionary at the back.

Caution: There are two dictionaries at the end of Strong's Concordance: one for Hebrew and one for Greek. Be sure to use the Greek dictionary.

Find word #2889 in the list. You can ignore the funny-looking squiggles that follow; that's the word in Greek letters. The next thing you see is the Greek word in English letters.

What is the Greek word used in John 3:16? \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers:**

Greek word = kosmos

Once you get this far, you can also get a brief explanation of what the word means. Check out the rest of the entry:

2889 **kosmoV kosmos**, *kos'-mos*; prob. From the base of 2805; orderly *arrangement*, i.e., *decoration*; by impl. the *world* (in a wide or narrow sense, includ. its inhab., lit. or fig. [mor.]): -adorn[ing], world.

Don't let the abbreviations throw you. Just focus on the words in italics; those are the basic meanings of the word. In this case, *kosmos* would mean “arrangement, decoration; world.” You might be interested in the last two words (after the colon and dash). Those are the ways in which *kosmos* is translated in the King James Bible.

Admittedly, this listing doesn't provide a lot of information, but it's an excellent starting point. Now you know the Greek word with a basic translation, plus all the ways it was rendered in the KJV.

And the best part of all? The Strong's numbering system is the key to using a lot of other Greek study tools. For over a century, people have been writing reference books where they list *kosmos* as word #2889. That means you can find your word in all these other sources, even if you can't decipher the Greek alphabet!

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*Review: Using Strong's Concordance*

*Step 1 – Look in the \_\_\_\_\_ concordance  
Find the code number.*

*Step 2 – Look in the \_\_\_\_\_ at the back.  
Find the code number.*

*This tells you the Greek \_\_\_\_\_ plus its basic  
\_\_\_\_\_.*

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**Answers:** main, dictionary, word, translation

## 2. Vine's Expository Dictionary

*Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament* has been a favorite ever since it came out in 1940. It contains clear, detailed explanations of all the Greek words you're likely to study, and you don't have to know Greek at all to use it! Everything is alphabetized using the English alphabet. Just look for the English word you're studying, and you'll find it in *Vine's*.

A caution: This dictionary is based on the King James Version of the Bible. If you are using a different version, you might have to check the KJV to maneuver to the right word.

A bonus: This dictionary lists the Strong's number for each word, so you can be sure you're looking at the right one!

Here's what you will find when you look up "world" in *Vine's*:

### WORLD

1. *Kosmos* (kosmoV, 2889), primarily "order, arrangement, ornament, adornment" (1 Pet. 3:3, see ADORN, B) is used to denote
  - (a) The "earth," e.g., Matt. 13:35; John 21:25; Acts 17:24; Rom. 1:20 (probably here the universe; it had this meaning among the Greeks, owing to the order observable in it);
  - (b) The "earth" in contrast with Heaven, 1 John 3:17 (perhaps also Rom. 4:13);
  - (c) By metonymy, the "human race, mankind," (e.g., Matt. 5:14; John 1:9 . . .);
  - (d) "Gentiles" as distinguished from Jews, e.g., Rom 11:12, 15, where the meaning is that all who will may be reconciled (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19);

- (e) The “present condition of human affairs,” in alienation from and opposition to God, e.g., John 7:7; 8:23; 14:30; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 4:3; 6:14; Col. 2:8; Jas. 1:27; 1 John 4:5 (thrice) 5:19;
- (f) The “sum of temporal possessions,” Matt. 16:26; 1 Cor. 7:31 (1<sup>st</sup> part);
- (g) Metaphorically, of the “tongue” as “a world (of iniquity),” Jas. 3:6, expressive of magnitude and variety.

This is the entry for the word that we’re exploring today, *kosmos*. However, if you keep on reading the entry in *Vine’s*, you find that there are two other Greek words translated “world” in the New Testament:

- 2. *Aiōn* (*aiwn*, 165) – sometimes translated “world,” it refers to “an age, a period of time.”
- 3. *Oikoumenē* (*oikoumenh*, 3625) – “the inhabited earth.”

As you can see, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary* gives you a more detailed explanation of *kosmos*, with a good list of its possible meanings.

#### Using *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*

1. Which word do you look for: the English word or the Greek word?
2. Should you look for “world” or “kosmos” in *Vine’s*?
3. In the entry we just examined, how many words for “world” are there in Greek?
4. In the entry on *kosmos*, what does the number 2889 mean?
5. How many meanings for *kosmos* are listed in this entry?

#### Answers:

1. The English word
2. “World”
3. Three (*kosmos*, *aiōn*, *oikoumenē*)
4. It is the Strong’s number for *kosmos*.
5. Seven

This might be more than you wanted to know! But it does give you a sample of what you might find when you start going deeper.

## Electronic Study Tools

If you’re comfortable with a keyboard or an iPad, you can pick from a wealth of electronic resources. Web sites and apps abound, designed for all levels of expertise. You can go all the way from a quick Google search to a professional-level analysis using a Bible software package like Logos.

We are going to sample two Web sites (also available as free apps for Apple or Android) where you can pull up the meanings of a Greek word with just a few clicks. No knowledge of Greek is required for either of these sources!

### 1. Blue Letter Bible

**Web site:** [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org) (available for Apple or Android)

You can use the Blue Letter Bible Web site or you can access it via an app.

### Using the App

Here are the steps to find the definitions of a Greek word using the iPhone app:

- a. Search for the verse you are studying (example: John 3:16).
- b. Tap the verse number (example: 16).
- c. Press “Interlinear/Concordance” on the screen that appears.
- d. This will bring up a detailed page with all the data on John 3:16. Scroll down until you find the Greek word you want and press it. (example: the world – G2889 – *kosmos*)
- e. Now you are looking at a screen full of information on the word, including an outline of biblical usage. If you go through this sequence for *kosmos*, here’s what you will find:
  - An apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order, government
  - Ornament, decoration, adornment, i.e., the arrangement of the stars, ‘the heavenly host’, as the ornament of the heavens. 1 Pet. 3:3.
  - The world, the universe
  - The circle of the earth, the earth
  - The inhabitants of the earth, men, the human family
  - The ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ
  - World affairs, the aggregate of things earthly (the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ)
  - Any aggregate or general collection of particulars of any sort (the Gentiles as contrasted to the Jews, Rom. 11:12, etc)

That’s quite a bit for just a few clicks – and there’s even more that we will learn how to use in a later lesson!

## 2. Bible Hub

Web site: [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com) (available for Apple or Android)

### Using the Web Site

To find a Greek word on this Web site, follow these steps:

- a. Type the reference of the verse in the search box (at the top of the home page).
- b. Click “Greek” on the tool bar.
- c. Click on the Strong’s number (first column) of the word you wish to study.

Again, this will bring up plenty of information that will sharpen your understanding of the passage.

### **Using Electronic Sources:**

1. The first Web site we examined is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The second Web site we examined is \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Which sites are available as Apple apps? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which sites are available as Android apps? \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers:**

1. **Blue Letter Bible**
2. **Bible Hub**
3. **Both**
4. **Both**

Now you're armed with a much deeper understanding of the word *kosmos*. In fact, you can probably determine fairly easily which of the meanings you've learned is used in the three key verses with which we began.

What meaning do you think is used in John 3:16?

In 1 John 2:15?

In 1 Peter 3:3?

Answers:

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*REVIEW QUIZ:*

*Two Barriers:*

*The \_\_\_\_\_ Barrier – Greek letters don't look like English letter.*

*The \_\_\_\_\_ Barrier – Greek words have many spellings.*

*Two Traditional Tools:*

*\_\_\_\_\_ Exhaustive Concordance*

*\_\_\_\_\_ Expository Dictionary*

*Two Electronic Tools:*

*\_\_\_\_\_ Letter Bible*

*Bible \_\_\_\_\_*

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**Answers:**

Alphabet  
Endings  
Strong's  
Vine's  
Blue  
Hub

## **More Practice:**

Would you like to try out these tools on a few more words? You can do a series of very profitable word studies based on the qualifications for leaders in Titus 1:5-9.

Suggested words to investigate:

Husband (6)

Wife (6)

Riot (6)  
Just (8)  
Temperate (8)

These are the translations used in the King James Version. Other translations may use different words.

## Coming Up:

What happens next? Right now, we are learning how to do Stage One of a word study: Finding all the possible meanings of a word.

In Lesson 2, you learned how to **borrow** that information **from others**. You learned how to use a Greek dictionary (print or electronic) to generate a list of all the meanings of a word.

In Lesson 3, you will learn how to go even deeper in exploring possible shades of meaning. Instead of borrowing from other people, you'll practice a **Do-It-Yourself** approach that allows you to draw your own conclusions.

So far, you have used tools that require no knowledge of the Greek alphabet. Starting in Lesson 4, you will learn how to handle the alphabet to open up even more doors for discovery.

## A Word Puzzle to Ponder:

You are familiar with 1 John 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But exactly what does it mean to “confess” our sins? Must we display deep remorse? Do we need to tell other people what we have done? Next week we will look at all the places where the word *confess* is used in the New Testament. You encounter the startling fact that 1 John 1:9 is the only place where the Greek word is used about sin. To find out the rest of the story, join us for Lesson 3.

# Lesson 3 – The Do-It-Yourself Approach

When you're hungry for a blueberry muffin, the easiest way to get one is to stop at Panera or the bakery section at Walmart. You just walk in and pick one up. But if you've ever opened your front door and found the house filled with the aroma of freshly baked muffins, you can appreciate the virtues of doing it yourself! My wife used to operate a small breadmaking business out of our home. She even ground her own wheat, and we found that there's nothing that matches a loaf of whole wheat bread straight from your own oven!

I have found that the same experience happens in Bible study. Suppose you want to know the meaning of a New Testament word. You can get a quick answer by letting the professionals do the work. Go to a Web site like Bible Hub or crack open a copy of *Vine's Expository Dictionary* and you will find the information you need. There's nothing wrong with this approach. Devout scholars have spent years constructing these tools for understanding the Greek New Testament, and we would be foolish to ignore their work.

But at the same time, we cheat ourselves of half the fun of Bible study if we leave everything to the experts!

In this lesson, you will learn a simple procedure that allows you to delve into a Greek word on your own. You will follow the same line of thought used by the people who wrote the dictionaries. And in the process, you will discover intriguing insights that don't show up in the standard sources.

***In Lesson 3, you will learn how to conduct your own investigation of how a Greek word is actually used in the New Testament. This involves 3 steps:***

- 1. List all the verses***
- 2. Examine all the verses***
- 3. Organize your findings***

## What We Learned Last Time

First, let's review what we have already covered.

### Lesson 1 explained the basic pattern of word study

- 2 Things to Know about Words:
  - Words have more than one meaning.
  - A word only has one meaning in a particular context.
- 2 Stages of a Word Study:
  - Stage One: Discover all the possible meanings.
  - Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the context.
- 2 Ways to Do Each Stage:
  - You can borrow the information from others.
  - You can do the study yourself.

Have you absorbed this pattern? Take a minute to fill in the blanks below.

---

*Review:*

*Words have \_\_\_\_\_ than one meaning.*

*A word has only \_\_\_\_\_ meaning in a particular context.*

*Stage One: Discover \_\_\_\_\_ the possible meanings.*

*Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Method One: You can \_\_\_\_\_ the information from others.*

*Method Two: You can \_\_\_\_\_ the study \_\_\_\_\_*

---

We also learned that we need the right tool for each stage of a word study.

	Borrow from Others	Do It Yourself
Stage 1	LEXICON	CONCORDANCE
Stage 2	COMMENTARY	COMMON SENSE

**Lesson 2 showed you how to borrow from others to discover all the possible meanings of a Greek word.**

This is the quickest way to accomplish Stage 1: Getting all the possible meanings of a word by borrowing from others. We introduced you to four resources that you can use, even if you don't know the Greek alphabet.

- Two Traditional Paper Study Tools
  - Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
  - Vine's Expository Dictionary
- Electronic Study Tools
  - Blue Letter Bible
  - Bible Hub

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*Review:*

*Which stage of word study was the topic of Lesson 2?*

*(a) Discovering all the possible meanings of a word*

*(b) Determining the one meaning of a word in a particular verse*

*Which method of word study was the topic of Lesson 2?*

*(a) Borrow from others*

*(b) Do It Yourself*

*We began to use the following tools:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Exhaustive Concordance

\_\_\_\_\_ Expository Dictionary

\_\_\_\_\_ Letter Bible

Bible \_\_\_\_\_

*Answers: a, a, Strong's, Vine's, Blue, Hub*

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## **The Steps to Do It Yourself**

After you have looked up a Greek word in a lexicon, you may think, "Is this all there is? Could I find out more about this word?" And, of course, there's always more to discover. At that point, you have two paths you can take. First, you can find more dictionaries or other Greek word study tools. In Lesson 4, you will learn how to use the Greek alphabet to explore more advanced dictionaries. Second, you can do the study yourself. Personally, I recommend that you spend some "do-it-yourself" time whenever possible. Perhaps you can't compete with the professionals, but you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you have gone directly to the New Testament text to make your own discoveries.

The Do It Yourself method involves three steps:

1. List all the verses where the word is used.
2. Examine all those verses one at a time, recording your observations.
3. Organize your findings.

We will explain these steps and guide you through a sample word study, so that you can see how the process works.

Most word studies start with a moment of curiosity as you are reading a Bible verse. In this case, we are going to be curious about 1 John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Since we all sin on a regular basis, and since we want God to forgive us, we come back to this verse constantly! Today, let’s scrutinize the word *confess*. If that’s what God asks me to do, I want to understand exactly what it means to confess my sins.

Once you decide to do a word study on confess, you’ll probably start by borrowing the work of others. You will look it up in a Greek dictionary or lexicon. If you start with Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance*, you’ll find that the Greek word is *homologeō*, which is word #3670 in the Strong’s lexicon. The most common translation is “confess,” but Strong’s also lists “assent” or “acknowledge.” If you consult the other sources we introduced in Lesson 2, you will find a wealth of information on the word. But today you have decided to go even deeper. You are going to try a “do-it-yourself” study of *homologeō*.

### **The First Step: List all the verses.**

Your goal right now is to discover all the different meanings that the word *homologeō* can have. And the way you’re going to do it is to look at every place where the word occurs in the New Testament.

The basic tool that gives you a list of those verses is a **concordance**.

You can use Strong’s *Concordance*.

There are also concordances on the market keyed to translations like the New International Version (NIV) or the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Most Bible software packages contain a concordance.

One caution: You should be careful to look up the Greek word *homologeō*, not just the English word *confess*. This is a *Greek* word study!

Let’s see what happens when we use the Blue Letter Bible app to search for a list of the verses using *homologeō*. We will follow the same steps you learned in Lesson 2, but we will take them one step further.

1. Search for 1 John 1:9.
2. Tap the verse number. This will bring up a screen with links to more information on the verse.
3. Tap Interlinear/Concordance. This will bring up a screen that shows the verse in Greek, plus a chart that lists each Greek word with its English translation.
4. Find *homologeō* / g3670 / we confess and tap it. This will bring up a whole page of information on that word.

In Lesson 2, we got this far and were able to find a good summary of the word meanings. This time, we are going to go a little further. Keep scrolling down and you will eventually come to the heading “Concordance Results.” Now you’ve struck gold!

You now have a list of every verse where our word appears.

The List:

Matthew 7:23

Matthew 10:32

Matthew 14:7

Luke 12:8

John 1:20

John 9:22

John 12:42

Acts 7:17

Acts 23:8

Acts 24:14

Romans 10:9

Romans 10:10

1 Timothy 6:12

Titus 1:16

Hebrews 11:13

Hebrews 13:15

1 John 1:9

1 John 2:23

1 John 4:2

1 John 4:3

1 John 4:15

2 John 7

Revelation 3:5

Can you find this information in the other tools we have used?

Strong’s – YES, if you look up all the ways the word is translated in English. The last part of the lexicon entry is a list of all the translations used in the King James Version.

Vine’s – NO

Blue Letter Bible – YES

Bible Hub – YES

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*Review:*

*The first step in a do-it-yourself word study is to make a \_\_\_\_\_ of all the verses where the word is used.*

*The basic tool you will use is a \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Which word should you look up?  
(a) the English word  
(b) the Greek word*

*Which tools can you consult to find a list of all the verses where your word is used?  
(a) Strong's  
(b) Vine's  
(c) Blue Letter Bible  
(d) Bible Hub*

Answers: list, concordance, b, a/c/d

### **The Second Step: Examine All the Verses**

Once you have a list of all the verses where the word is used, you are ready for the real project: peering through the microscope at each verse.

Here's a helpful procedure: Type out each verse in English, but leave a blank where the target word appears. Or if you prefer, you can write in the Greek word instead.

1 John 1:9 would look like this: "If we \_\_\_\_\_ our sins, he is faithful and just . . ." OR "If we homologeo our sins, he is faithful and just . . ."

Scrutinize this new version of the verse and ask yourself, "What idea goes here?" Of course, you already know that it has something to do with acknowledging or confessing something. But what action does that word describe? Look for more than just an English word that might fit; try to explain the idea that is being expressed. You may want to say it as a phrase, rather than just a single word.

Do you have questions about the word that haven't been answered by your first stage of study? Write down those questions and look for answers in each verse.

In studying *homologeo*, for instance, you could ask:

1. Who homologeo's things? Is God the subject, or people, or both?
2. Who or what do you homologeo? Look for the direct objects.

3. Is homologueo something you do privately, or does it involve expressing yourself to someone else?
4. Does homologueo always involve sorrow or feelings of guilt?

Now you try it! The verses are already written out in the left column. You can write your observations in the right column, including answers to questions like the ones we have listed (or others that you may have).

The Verses	Your Observations
<b>Matthew 10:32</b> Everyone therefore who shall homologueo me before men, the Son of man shall homologueo him also before the angels of God.	
<b>Luke 12:8</b> And I say to you, everyone who homologueo's me before men, the Son of man shall homologueo him also before the angels of God	
<b>John 12:42</b> Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not homologueoing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.	
<b>Romans 10:9-10</b> That if you homologueo with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth he homologueo's unto salvation.	
<b>2 John 7</b> For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not homologueo Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.	
<b>Hebrews 11:13</b> All these [patriarchs like Abraham] died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and welcomed them from a distance, and having homologueo'd that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.	
<b>1 John 4:2-3</b> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that homologueo's that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not homologueo Jesus is not from God.	
<b>1 John 4:15</b> Whoever homologueo's that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.	
<b>Matthew 7:23</b> And then I will homologueo to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."	

<b>John 1:20 And he homologueo'd, and did not deny; and he homologueo'd, "I am not the Christ."</b>	
<b>Acts 24:14 But this I homoloeco to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers.</b>	
<b>Titus 1:16 They homologueo'd to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him.</b>	
<b>Acts 23:8 The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees homologueo them all.</b>	
<b>1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and homologueo'd a good confession [homologian] in the presence of many witnesses.</b>	
<b>Hebrews 13:15 Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that homologueo His name.</b>	
<b>Revelation 3:5 He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will homologueo his name before My Father, and before His angels.</b>	
<b>Matthew 14:7 Thereupon he {King Herod} homologueo'd with an oath to give her whatever she asked.</b>	

### **The Third Step: Organize Your Findings.**

Once you have studied all the verses and written your observations in the right column of the chart, you will be intimately acquainted with the word you are studying. All that remains is to organize that pile of raw data into something you can easily use in the future. There are no rules for this part of the process; you just need to pick out the main things you have learned and make a list. You may want to start by writing down the various meanings that you have noticed. Or you can start by writing down answers to your questions about the word.

Here are a few of the points I have included in my list:

1. 1 John 1:9 is the only verse in the New Testament where homologueo is used for confessing sin. Everywhere else, someone is confessing something different.
2. Sometimes God will homologueo something (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; Revelation 3:5); usually people are the ones who homologueo something.
3. It's possible to homologueo a person (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 12:42) or a person's identity (John 9:22) or a fact about him (1 John 4:2-3, 15; 2 John 7).

4. The word can have the idea of acknowledging or openly admitting that something is true (Acts 23:8; 24:14). In one case, it describes King Herod's foolish promise to grant a request for Salome (Matthew 14:7).
5. In Hebrews 13:15, it seems to involve praise to God.
6. John 1:20 contrast it with "deny," suggesting that homologeo is the opposite of denial.
7. In at least some of the verses, homologeo involves a public statement, not just a private belief (John 9:22; John 1:20; Romans 10:9-10 – mentions "with the mouth").
8. In most cases, the word does not imply sorrow or grief, because you are acknowledging something good!

You can probably add several more points that you discovered for yourself!

When you work through this process, you are actually writing a homemade entry in a Greek lexicon. Oh, it's not as professional as the entries produced by lifelong scholars of Greek. But it's yours! This will not only solidify your insights into God's Word, but it will also give you the satisfaction of knowing that you have carved out this piece of truth for yourself. That's a very good thing!

### **When Should You Use the Do-It-Yourself Method?**

The Do-It-Yourself approach to word study is a wonderful tool, but there are times when you may need to set it aside.

When a word occurs only once or twice, you won't learn very much by looking at its usage.

When a word occurs 600 times, you won't have time to look at all the passages!

The sweet spot for this approach is for words that occur 10-25 times in the New Testament. You can use it for words outside that range, but you'll need to lean more heavily on the lexicons for the extremely rare or extremely common words.

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*REVIEW QUIZ:*

*Stage One in a Word Study: Find \_\_\_\_\_ the possible meanings*

*The quickest way to do Stage One: \_\_\_\_\_ from Others*

*The basic tool for looking up all the possible meanings:  
Dictionary or \_\_\_\_\_*

*A slower but satisfying way to do Stage One:*  
\_\_\_\_\_

*The basic tool for a Do-It-Yourself search for possible meanings:*  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Answers: all, borrow, lexicon, Do-It-Yourself, concordance*

---

## **More Practice:**

As long as you are delving more deeply into 1 John 1:9, you may want to try your new skills on one of the other words in that verse. I suggest that you take a look at the word “cleanse.” It occurs 30 times, so you have plenty of material to work with, and you will find that it refers to cleaning more than just unrighteousness!

## **Coming Up:**

So far, we have been learning how to handle the tools for Stage One of a word study. You have used dictionaries and concordances to tabulate all the possible meanings of a Greek word. You’re well on your way to becoming a skillful student of Greek vocabulary!

However, there are some very useful tools that are still off-limits for you because they require a knowledge of the Greek alphabet. In Lesson 4, you will learn the Greek alphabet well enough to use more advanced resources that can open up even more insights into the New Testament. We will also take a look at what you will find in those professional-level tools.

## **A Word Puzzle to Ponder:**

Hebrews 12:2 urges us to be “looking to Jesus,” an attitude that has been called “the conquering attitude of the soul.” It goes on to describe Jesus as “the author and finisher of our faith” (KJV). It’s an inspiring verse, but if you read it in other translations, you may come away feeling a little confused. Instead of “author,” you might read “pioneer” or “source.” Other versions render it as “founder” or “champion.” Why so many translations? In Lesson 4, we will take a closer look.

# Lesson 4 – Cracking the Alphabet Barrier

Before our first visit to my daughter in Japan, I thought I should prepare by learning a little Japanese. Memorizing a few greetings like “Good morning” and “Good evening” was relatively painless, but then I had the bright idea of learning the Japanese alphabet. Bad move! I immediately discovered that they have three alphabets, not just one. Most of the standard words are written in a 46-character alphabet called *Hiragana*. A second alphabet called *katakana* is somewhat similar, but the letters are shaped differently. Just as I was recovering from the shock of double alphabets, I learned that the Japanese also use complex Chinese characters called *kanji*. There’s a different pictogram for each word. High school Japanese includes about 2000 *kanji* and up to 50,000 *kanji* exist! If you’re lucky, you might find some Japanese words rendered in English letters, just to give you the basic idea. But I found that I had to depend on my daughter to translate everything.

So whenever you are tempted to complain about the Greek alphabet, remember that you could be faced with Japanese!

The Greek alphabet does stand as an obstacle that blocks your pathway to the goal of studying the New Testament in its original language. But Greek only has one alphabet, and there are only 24 letters. Better yet, over half of those letters match letters in the English alphabet. They are shaped a bit differently, but you can soon recognize them all.

And that’s good, because the ability to handle the Greek alphabet skillfully will really ramp up your Bible study. You will be able to use more advanced dictionaries that arrange the words in Greek alphabetical order, not English. You will more easily recognize Greek words when you see them. And you will look at an entire verse in Greek and start to recognize what’s going on!

In this lesson, you will practice the skills you have already learned, using tools that do not require a knowledge of the Greek alphabet. Then you will meet the alphabet for the first time. You’ll start getting comfortable with it. Finally, we will use it to navigate some more advanced word study resources, so you can get an idea of the added information available.

***In Lesson 4, you will learn how to handle the Greek alphabet.***

- 1. Study a word without using the Greek alphabet.***
- 2. Learn the Greek alphabet.***
- 3. Study the same word in enhanced mode, using the Greek alphabet.***

## What We Learned Last Time

You have already learned the two core truths of word study:

1. Words have multiple meanings.
2. A word has one meaning in a particular context.

Because of those core truths, we know that there are two stages in a word study:

1. Discover all the multiple meanings that a word could possibly have.
2. Decide which one meaning best fits the particular context of the verse you are studying.

So far, we have worked with Stage One: Discover all the possible meanings.

In Lesson 2, we learned how to use the “Borrow from Others” approach, using a lexicon or dictionary to find what scholars have said about the word.

In Lesson 3, we learned how to use the “Do-It-Yourself” approach, using a concordance to help us look at all the places where a word is used and then drawing our own conclusions about its meaning.

In this lesson, we will learn how to use the Greek alphabet to access more study resources. We will be able to take the skills you have already learned and push them to a new level.

Note: We have not yet worked on the methods for Stage Two: Deciding on the one meaning of a word in a particular context. That will be the subject of Lesson 5.

---

*Where We Are Now:*

**Two core truths:**

1. Words have \_\_\_\_\_ meanings.
2. A word has \_\_\_\_\_ meaning in a particular context.

**Two stages in a word study:**

Stage One: Discover \_\_\_\_\_ the possible meanings.

Stage Two: Decide which meaning best fits in the \_\_\_\_\_.

**What we have already studied:**

How to do Stage One by \_\_\_\_\_ the information from others

The main study tool is a \_\_\_\_\_ or lexicon.

How to do Stage One by Method One: You can \_\_\_\_\_ the study \_\_\_\_\_.

The main study tool is a \_\_\_\_\_.

**What we will study in this lesson:**

How to use the Greek \_\_\_\_\_ to do Stage One: discovering all the possible meanings of a word.

**What we have not yet studied:**

How to do Stage Two: Deciding the one meaning of a word in a particular \_\_\_\_\_.

---

**Answers:**

Multiple, one

All, context

Borrowing, dictionary, do, yourself, concordance

Alphabet

Context

## A Sample Word

Hebrews 12:2 urges us to be “looking to Jesus,” an attitude that has been called “the conquering attitude of the soul.” It goes on to describe Jesus as “the author and finisher of our faith” (KJV).

It’s an inspiring verse, but if you read it in other translations, you may come away feeling a little confused. Instead of “author,” the NIV calls Jesus the “pioneer.” The Holman Bible uses “source,” while

the ESV describes Him as the “founder.” The New Living translation calls him “the champion who initiates.”

Why is one word translated in so many ways? Is the Greek word so muddled that we can’t translate it precisely? Or is it a word so rich in meaning that no single English word can capture it all?

It’s time for a word study!

Let’s look more closely at the word “author,” using the skills you have already developed.

First, we need to identify the Greek word. Then we will carry out Stage One: Discovering all the possible meanings that it could have.

What is the Greek word translated as “author” in the KJV?

You can look it up in one of the four tools that we introduced in Lesson 2: Strong’s Concordance; Vine’s Expository Dictionary, Blue Letter Bible, or Bible Hub. Right now, let’s just consult the Strong’s entry.

1. Haul Strong’s off the shelf.
2. Look up the word “author.” You’ll find a short entry that lists 3 places where “author” occurs in the English text of the King James version.
3. Look for our verse, Hebrews 12:2, and find the number at the end of the line. In this case, the number is 747.
4. Now turn to the Greek-English lexicon at the back of the book. Find word #747. There’s our Greek word! You now know that we’re investigating *archēgos*, identified as Strong’s #747.

You already know that there are two methods for discovering all the possible meanings of a word: borrowing from others and doing it yourself. Let’s do a quick scan of what we can learn about *archēgos* using the tools you already have in hand.

We will begin by **borrowing from the research of others**. What will we find when we consult the four study sources we have already introduced?

Here are the entries from each source:

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance:

747. archgoV **archēgōs**, *ar-khay-gos’*; from 746 and 71: a *chief leader*: -- author, captain, prince

Vine's Expository Dictionary:

#### AUTHOR

2. *archēgos* (archgoV, 747), translated "Prince" in Acts 3:15 (marg., "Author") and 5:31, but "Author" in Heb. 2:10, RV, "Captain," RV marg., and KJV, and "Author" in 12:2, primarily signifies "one who takes a lead in or provides the first occasion of, anything." In the Sept. it is used of the chief of a tribe or family, Num. 13:2 (RV, prince); of the "heads" of the children of Israel, v. 3; a captain of the whole people, 14:4; in Micah 1:13, of Lachish as the leader of the sin of the daughter of Sion: there, as in Heb. 2:10, the word suggests a combination of the meaning of leader with that of the source from whence a thing proceeds. That Christ is the Prince of life signifies, as Chrysostom says, that "the life He had was not from another; the Prince or Author of life must be He who has life from Himself." But the word does not necessarily combine the idea of the source or originating cause with that of leader. In Heb. 12:2 where Christ is called the "Author and Perfecter of faith," He is represented as the one who takes precedence in faith and is thus the perfect exemplar of it. The pronoun "our" does not correspond to anything in the original, and may well be omitted. Christ in the days of His flesh trod undeviatingly the path of faith, and as the Perfecter has brought it to a perfect end in His own person. Thus He is the leader of all others who tread that path. See PRINCE.

Bible Hub:

**747** *arxēgós* (from [746](#) /*arxē*, "the first" and [71](#) /*ágō*, "to lead") – properly, the first in a long procession; a *file-leader* who *pioneers the way* for many others to follow. [747](#) (*arxēgós*) does not strictly mean "author," but rather "a person who is *originator* or *founder* of a movement and continues as the leader – i.e. 'pioneer leader, founding leader' " (*L & N*, 1, 36.6).

Blue Letter Bible:

- I. The chief leader, prince
  - A. Of Christ
- II. One that takes the lead in any thing and thus affords an example, a predecessor in a matter, pioneer.
- III. The author

Note: In Lesson 2, you learned how to navigate the Blue Letter Bible app for iPhones and iPads. To do the same thing on the BLB Web site, follow this procedure:

- 1) Type Heb 12:2 in the "Search the Bible" box. 2) Click on "Strong's" in the toolbar. 3) Click on the number following the word you want in the verse – G747.

---

*Here is your chance to practice your skills!*

*Read the entries from all four sources and make a list of all the possible meanings you find for archēgos.*

*Write down all the translations you find, but don't stop there. Go further and write down any phrases you find that explain the idea behind the translation. Example: BLB lists pioneer as a possible translation, but it also explains with the phrase "one that takes the lead in any thing."*

*Your list:*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

*More?*

---

Congratulations! You have already compiled a valuable store of information about our word. You used the first method of study: Borrowing from Others. Now let's see what you can learn with the second method of study: Do-It-Yourself.

You will recall that the **Do-It-Yourself approach** asks you to use a three-step process:

1. List all the verses where the word appears.
2. Study each verse.
3. Organize your findings.

How do you get a list of all the verses where a word appears? You can use a concordance or you can click on the concordance function in a Web site or app. In this case, let's assume that you used the Blue Letter Bible app.

Procedure: Search for Hebrews 12:2 / tap the verse number "2" / tap Interlinear-Concordance/scroll down and tap *archēgos*/scroll down until you find the list of verses.

---

*Here is a chance to practice your skills. Use the word study tool of your choice and find the four verses where the word *archēgos* appears in the New Testament. Write the references below.*

---

Answers: Acts 3:15; Acts 5:31; Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 12:2

Once you have the list of verses, you are ready to study each verse separately. For your convenience, the verses are written out here in the recommended format, writing out *archēgos* rather than inserting a translation. Study the verse itself and decide what meaning is being used.

Acts 3:15 And you killed the *archēgos* of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are all witnesses.

Acts 5:31 God exalted him at his right hand as *archēgos* and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the *archēgos* of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Hebrews 12:2 Looking to Jesus, the *archēgos* and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hints:

1. Read the context, the verses before and after each verse, to get clues to the meaning.

2. Notice that all four references are descriptions of Jesus.
3. What other facts about Jesus are mentioned in these verses? Are there any ideas that occur more than once?
4. When a word is used only a few times, it's harder to build a complete picture of its possible uses, but you can at least add detail to the ideas you learned from the reference books.

---

*Use this space to record any fresh observations based on your study of the individual verses:*

---

It's surprising how much you can learn about a word, even when you are new at word study! But you don't have to stop there. Veteran students of the Greek New Testament have a vast array of high-powered tools at their disposal to carve out more insights about the Word.

You can start using some of those tools yourself, but there is a technical difficulty standing in the way: most of the advanced study resources assume that you know how to handle the Greek alphabet.

We are going to help you overcome that obstacle now, by introducing you to the alphabet.

## The Alphabet

The Greek alphabet contains only 24 letters, and many of them are similar to letters in our English alphabet. Here it is!



## The Greek Alphabet

Capitals	Lower Case	Name of Letter	Pronunciation
A	a	alpha	a in father
B	b	beta	b
G	g	gamma	g in goat

D	d	delta	d
E	e	epsilon	e in let
Z	z	zēta (zay-ta)	z
H	h	ēta (ay-ta)	a in late
Q	q	thēta (they-ta)	th in think
I	i	iota	i in hit or machine
K	k	kappa	k
L	l	lambda	l
M	m	mu	m
N	n	nu	n
X	x	xi	ks
O	o	omicron	o in hot
P	p	pi	p
R	r	rho	r
S	s, v	sigma	s in sit
T	t	tau	t
U	u	upsilon	u in put
F	f	phi	ph
C	c	chi	ch in German ach
Y	y	psi	ps
W	w	omega	o in home

Now for a guided tour of the four columns.

Column 1 gives you the capital letters. When the New Testament was originally written, everything was written in all caps.

Column 2 gives the lower case version of each letter. These were introduced a few centuries after the New Testament was penned. When you look at a modern printed Greek New Testament, almost everything will be in these lower case letters.

Column 3 tells you what to call each letter, and Column 4 tells the sound that each letter signifies when you say a word out loud.

**Column 2 – Lower Case Letters – is the most important thing to learn right now.**

---

Which form of the letters was used when the New Testament was originally written?

- a. Capital letters
- b. Lower case letters

Which form of the alphabet is most important to learn?

- a. Capital letters
  - b. Lower case letters
- 

Answers: a, b

What should I do with this alphabet chart?

First, keep it as a reference to use whenever you want to use a Greek resource that arranges things in Greek alphabetical order. You can check the chart to see whether you need to flip a few pages forward or backward to find a word.

Second, start learning the alphabet in order. I find it helpful to divide it into four sections:

#### A. The Familiar Five

The first five letters of the Greek alphabet are roughly equivalent to the opening letters of the English alphabet. You can see this more easily when you look at the capital letters.

Alpha = A = A

Beta = B = B

Gamma = G = G (well, it's not exactly the same, but a G looks a lot like a C!)

Delta = D = D

Epsilon = E = E

#### B. The Rhyming Three

The next three letters of the Greek alphabet have names that rhyme: *zēta*, *ēta*, *theta*. They are pronounced like the English Z, "a" in "ate," and TH.

#### C. The Familiar Twelve

Now comes a long stretch of letters that roughly correspond to the English alphabet.

	<u>Greek</u>	<u>English</u>
Iota	i	I
		J – Greek doesn't have a J.
Kappa	k	K
Lambda	l	L
Mu	m	M

Nu	n	N	
Xi	x		Greek places an X here.
Omicron	o	O	
Pi	p	P	
Rho	r	R	
Sigma	s, V	S	
Tau	t	T	
Upsilon	u	U	

#### D. The Freaky Four

The last four letters in the alphabet don't look like English letters, and they don't come in anything like English alphabetical order. The Greeks just decided to go a little wild at the end!

Phi	f (like our "ph" sound)
Chi	c (like the guttural German ch in <i>ach</i> )
Psi	y (a "ps" sound)
Omega	w (a long "o")

You've heard of the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, right? You already know the first and last letters, so you have a head start!

Still feel a little intimidated? Then go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0gUfuWoHJA> to watch a math teacher teach kids the Greek alphabet in less than 10 minutes. Even if you're not a kid, you'll enjoy this fast start on the learning process.

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#### *Review:*

*Learn the Greek alphabet in order so you can find words in dictionaries that arrange the words in \_\_\_\_\_ alphabetical order.*

#### *Sections of the Greek alphabet:*

- 1. The \_\_\_\_\_ Five*
  - 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Three*
  - 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ Twelve*
  - 4. The \_\_\_\_\_ Four*
- 

#### Answers:

Greek, Familiar, Rhyming, Familiar, Freaky

## Opening Up New Tools

Once you learn to use the Greek alphabet, you can glean information from many of the standard word study tools that professionals use. These books offer you bonus material:

- Fuller explanations of possible meanings
- How the word was used outside the New Testament
- Lists of verses where the word appears
- Help with Stage 2 – determining the meaning used in a particular verse



**BONUS**CHECK OUT A LIST OF ENGLISH WORDS FORMED FROM THE GREEK ALPHABET :

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/words-from-greek-alphabet-letter/alpha-male>

Here are a few of the best-known resources that require some knowledge of the Greek alphabet, with a summary of what they say about *archēgos*:

F. Wilbur Gingrich. *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957. This is a compact (241 pages) version of the Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich lexicon listed below.

ajrchgoV Either *leader, ruler, prince* or *originator, founder*; the former is more likely for Ac 5:31; for 3:15 either is poss. The latter is more likely for Hb 2:10; 12:2.\*

Frederick William Danker. *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-226-13615-8. At 390 pages, it is the size of a short novel.

ajrchgoV 1. 'One who enjoys a preeminent position', **leader, ruler Ac 5:31**. –2. 'one noted for beginning something', **originator, founder Ac 3:15** (some would place this in 1); **Hb 2:10; 12:2**.

William Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957. The standard lexicon for New Testament Greek, covering not only the New Testament, but the Septuagint Greek Old Testament and the Greek writings of the early church fathers. This one feels like a dictionary, with 909 large, densely packed pages. There is a third, updated edition available, but it is quite expensive.

archgoV

1. *Leader, ruler, prince* Ac 5:31 and 3:15 where meaning 3 is also possible.
2. *One who begins* something as first in a series and thus supplies the impetus
3. *Originator, founder* Hb 2:10; 12:2

NOTE: These are the highlights of a much longer entry.

Colin Brown, ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967. Originally published as three heavy volumes, this set now contains a fourth volume composed of nothing but indexes.

*Archēgos* is found only 4 times in the NT and is applied only to Jesus. It means:

- a) *Leader, ruler, prince*. Peter's phrase is paradoxical, when he accuses the Jews of having chosen a murderer and of having killed "the Prince of life" (RSV "Author", Acts 3:15). The expression here can mean that Jesus brings men to life, and also that Jesus Christ is the author of life (cf. Jn. 1:4). God raised up Jesus, who had been murdered on the cross, and exalted him to his right hand as *archēgos* (Acts 5:31), i.e., "as leader" (and Saviour). The expression should be taken as a parallel to Acts 2:36: God has made him *Kyrios* (-> Lord) and Christ.
- b) *Author, founder*. Heb. 2:10 speaks solemnly of Christ as *archēgos tēs sotērias*; Jesus is pioneer and author of salvation (cf. Heb. 5:10; 6:20). "The way, the work and the image of the Christ determine the 'salvation' of man" (O. Michel, *Der Hebraerbrief*, KEK XIII, 75). Because Christ has himself reached the goal, he is not only author but also perfecter of salvation (Heb. 12:2).

Geoffrey W. Bromiley, abridged ed., Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Abridged in One Volume*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1985. The full-scale *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT) fills a shelf with 10 fat volumes of word studies. Fortunately for those who don't have the money to buy such a set or the time to read it, a one-volume version has been published.

ajrchgoV

- a. The "hero" of a city, its founder or guardian;
- b. The "originator" or "author" (e.g., Zeus of nature or Apollo of piety);
- c. "captain." Philo uses the term for Abraham, and once for God, while the LXX mostly has it for "military leader." In the NT Christ is *archegos* in Acts 5:31: we bear his name and he both looks after us and gives us a share of his glory, especially his life (3:15) and salvation (Heb. 2:10); he is also the *archegos* of our faith both as its founder and as the first example when in his death he practiced his faith in God's love and its overcoming of the barrier of human sin (Heb. 12:2).

---

*INVENTORY:*

*What can I learn from these new tools? Go back and examine the entries for archēgos in these four study tools. Make a list of several insights about the meanings of the word that you did not find in the first four sources.*

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Hints for Using Advanced Greek Tools:

1. Don't worry about things you don't understand; extract the things you do understand.

These dictionaries refer to people and documents outside the Bible. They sprinkle their entries liberally with abbreviations. They insert Greek words and phrases that you don't know.

But none of this is of crucial importance for your purposes. Each book has a place where you can look up abbreviations, and you can always do a Google search for unfamiliar names. However, you are just asking, "What can this word mean?" Don't get sidetracked by the gobbledygook. Just lift out everything that you do understand, everything that will help you grasp the use of the word.

2. Learn from the use of a word in earlier periods of history, but emphasize the New Testament uses.

People spoke Greek for several centuries before the New Testament period, and it is often useful to know how a word was used by a philosopher like Aristotle or Plato. It is even more helpful to observe the way it appears in the Greek Old Testament (also known as the Septuagint). However, words can change meaning over time, so you should spend most of your time on New Testament usage.

You probably don't have these books on your shelf right now, but you may be able to borrow one from a pastor or purchase one as part of a Bible software package. Once you have learned the alphabet, you can more easily use these tools and many more.

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### *SUMMING UP STAGE ONE*

*Now that you have viewed several sources, what have you learned?*

*Make a list of all the possible meanings that *ajrchgoV* can have:*

- 1.*
  - 2.*
  - 3.*
- Etc.*

## **Coming Up:**

What happens next?

So far, you have been learning how to do Stage One of a word study: Finding all the possible meanings of a word.

In Lesson 5, you will learn how to do Stage 2: looking at all the possible meanings and then deciding which one meaning best fits the verse you are studying. Once you master this material, you will be able to work all the way through the process of Greek word study.

In Lessons 6 and 7, you will gain more practice in studying Greek words. You will learn what to do with synonyms like *agapē* and *phileo*, the two words for love. You will gain skill in studying families of words built around a single root. And you will discover how to think about the history of a word and its uses at different times in Greek history.

## **A Word Puzzle to Ponder:**

In Revelation 2:1, John was told to write “To the angel of the church in Ephesus” (ESV) with a divine message for that congregation. However, the Young’s Literal Translation says “To the messenger of the Ephesian assembly write.” Various commentaries agree with Young’s position that the verse describes a human messenger rather than an actual angel.

Is this translation really a viable option?

In Lesson 5, we will look more closely at the Greek word used here, to find out what lies behind the disagreement.

# Lesson 5 – What Does It Mean in This Verse?

When some people say “angel,” they picture the cuddly cherubs clustered around the corners of Renaissance paintings, playing games in the clouds. Others visualize Clarence, the probationary angel trying to earn his wings in the movie *It’s a Wonderful Life*. And, of course, a young man might use it in quite a different way when he tells his sweetheart, “You’re an angel!”

Anyone familiar with the Bible knows that the angels of Scripture are never cuddly. Angels terrify people! Their first words are typically, “Fear not!” Angels are divine messengers from God who orchestrate escapes from jail, announce impossible pregnancies, and roll massive stones away from tomb entrances.

When you hear someone say “angel,” you have to ask, “What kind of angel do you mean?”

You can run into the same problem with the Greek word for “angel.” We get our word *angel* from the Greek *aggelos* (ajggeloV). Like most Greek words, it has various meanings, and they’re not the same as English!

Clearly, this is a situation that calls for a Greek word study!

You already know the basic techniques for Stage 1: Discovering all the possible meanings of a word.

Method #1 – Use a dictionary or lexicon to borrow the work of others.

Method #2 – Use a concordance to do it yourself as you examine each verse.

You’re welcome to do the whole study process on the word *aggelos*, but right now we are going to jump to the results:

*Aggelos* (Strong’s #32) has two meanings:

1. A supernatural spirit being, usually a servant or messenger from God
2. A human messenger

The Blue Letter Bible summarizes the usage: a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God.

If someone were to tell you, “There’s an *aggelos* at the door,” it might be a UPS driver with a package, or a dignitary bearing an official message from the President. On the other hand, it might be an awesome being with glowing garments sent from God Himself. There’s actually a third option: Hebrews 13:2 says that you could conceivably open the door to an angel without realizing that you were dealing with more than just another person.

I would like to know which kind of being I’m encountering at my front door . . . or in the verse I am reading!

Recognizing the difference is the task of Stage Two in a word study. We want to know how to determine which meaning is being used in the verse we are studying. In this lesson, we are going to learn how to do that!

***In Lesson 5, you will learn both methods for doing Stage Two: Determining the one meaning of a Greek word in a particular verse.***

***Method 1 – Borrow from others – Commentaries***

***Method 2 – Do-It-Yourself – Context and Common Sense.***

## Summing Up Stage One

Here's what you already know:

1. The goal in Stage One is to discover all the possible meanings that a word can have.
2. You can use the Borrow from Others method to do Stage One.  
The tool you use to do this is a dictionary or lexicon.  
Find your word in the dictionary and make a list of all the meanings listed.
3. You can also do Stage One using the Do-It-Yourself method.  
The tool you use to do this is a concordance, which provides a list of all the verses where the word is used.  
Study each verse in the list, make notes of what you see, then organize your findings.

Your toolkit includes:

- Strong's Exhaustive Concordance
- Vine's Expository Dictionary
- Blue Letter Bible (Web or app)
- Bible Hub (Web or app)

You have also started getting comfortable with the Greek alphabet, so that you can more easily use advanced study tools.

---

*Review:*

*The goal in Stage One is to discover \_\_\_\_\_ the possible meanings of a word.*

*You can use the Borrow from Others method to do Stage One.*

*The tool for this method is a Greek \_\_\_\_\_*

*You can use the Do-It-Yourself method to do Stage One.*

*The tool for this method is a \_\_\_\_\_*

---

**Answers:** all, dictionary/lexicon, concordance

## Turning to Stage Two

Now you are ready to move to Stage Two: Deciding on the one meaning of a word in the specific verse that you are studying.

This is important! You are not done until you can understand how a word is actually used in the passage in front of you.

You can compare the process to grocery shopping. My wife says, “Can you pick up a can of baked beans for me?” Simple enough, right? But when I walk down the bean aisle of the supermarket, I am facing a wall that seems to stretch to the horizon - filled with cans of beans. They come in all sizes, with dozens of variations. Low sodium? Organic? Meatless? Chili beans? Name brand or house brand? I have just encountered the reality of Stage One: baked beans come in multiple options.

But I’m not done! Somehow, I have to decide which one of the 75 possible kinds of beans is the one my wife had in mind. What does “baked beans” mean in this context? That’s Stage Two: there is one particular can of beans that my wife wants this time. I have to make a choice. At this point, I usually call her and ask her which one to buy!

Similarly, Stage One in a word study allows you to see the whole shelf full of meanings, but you aren’t done until you finish Stage Two by picking the best meaning for this particular verse.

## Two Methods for Stage Two

In Stage One, we learned two methods for accomplishing the task: (a) Borrow from Others, or (b) Do-It-Yourself. You have the same two options available for Stage Two.

- You can borrow from others by looking at a commentary.

- Or you can do it yourself by examining the verse in its context and using common sense to decide which meaning of the word is in use.

We will look at each of these methods in more detail in just a moment. But first, I have a strategic suggestion. Especially when you're just starting out, I suggest that you start by using the Do-It-Yourself approach first. This gives you a chance to have the satisfaction of wrestling with the text yourself. You get the joy of discovery!

When you have finished the Do-It-Yourself process, you can use the Borrow from Others approach to confirm your conclusions. Reading a commentary might reveal something that you overlooked, and that might lead you to revise your original diagnosis. Or it might confirm your first ideas so that you can feel confident about your explanation.

Let's look more closely at each method.

## The Do-It-Yourself Approach to Stage Two

The Do-It-Yourself method of doing Stage Two is really simple: **Read the verse in its context, then use your common sense to scan the list of possible meanings and decide which one makes the most sense here.**

You already use this process constantly in English. When you glance at the sports page, you might see this headline:

Angels Beat Cubs

Each of these words has multiple meanings.

- *Angels* might mean the celestial beings that we've discussed earlier. It might be a term of endearment: "You angel!" It could be the financial backer for a business enterprise. Or it might be the name of an athletic team.
- *Beat* could describe a cook whipping up scrambled eggs with an eggbeater. Or it could mean punching someone into submission. It could describe a hasty retreat: "Beat it!" Or it could describe winning a victory in a contest or athletic event.
- *Cubs* could be baby bears or lions. Or it could refer to an athletic team.

Theoretically, it could describe a replay of Daniel in the lion's den, a scene where a couple of God's angels come to the lions' den with clubs, whacking the younger lions into submission!

But I suspect that scenario never entered your mind. You were aware of the context: the sports section of a newspaper or Web site. You also knew that the California Angels and the Chicago Cubs are major league baseball teams.

With that glance at the context and a quick application of common sense, you instinctively know that "Angels Beat Cubs" refers to a baseball game where the California Angels outscored the Chicago Cubs.

NOTE: Baseball purists may have noted that these two teams play in different leagues. If you ever see this headline in real life, it would almost certainly refer to the World Series!

When you come to the New Testament, you can turn your mind loose to follow the same pattern. Pay attention to the context, then select the most appropriate word meaning for your passage.

Take the word *aggelos*, for instance. We learned earlier that it has two possible meanings: (a) a supernatural messenger from God, or (b) a human messenger. Let's analyze a few verses that contain the word.

Luke 1:26 Now in the sixth month the *aggelos* Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth.

This is part of the familiar Christmas story, so you may already know the meaning used here. But let's stop and think. How do you know whether it's a human messenger or a supernatural one?

Read the context: Luke 1:1-38. What two events are recorded here?

This is part of a larger section of Luke. The first two chapters are devoted to events surrounding the birth of Christ.

Use common sense: Notice the details of the context.

What is the name of the *aggelos* in this verse? Does the same name appear earlier in Luke 1? (See verse 19.)

According to the passage, who sent this *aggelos*?

Based on this evidence, what does *aggelos* mean in Luke 1:26?

**Answers:**

An announcement to Zacharias and an announcement to Mary  
Gabriel  
Sent by God  
Supernatural messenger

Luke 7:24 And when the *aggelos* (plural) of John had left, He began to speak to the multitudes about John. . .

Read the context: Begin by reading the immediate context, starting in Luke 7:18.

Jesus was preaching, healing, and drawing huge crowds. Earlier in Luke 7, He even raised a young man from the dead! Meanwhile, John the Baptist had been arrested (Luke 3:19-20).

Use common sense:

In verse 24, who sent the *aggelos* to Jesus?

Do you see anything in the context to identify these *aggelos* more precisely?

Based on what you have observed in the context, what kind of *aggelos* is involved in this verse: supernatural messengers or human messengers?

**Answers:**

John the Baptist

Two of John's disciples (7:19)

Human messengers

Revelation 2:1 To the *aggelos* of the church in Ephesus write:

See the similar statements in Revelation 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14).

Read the context:

Skim the verses listed to get a quick idea of the context.

In chapter 1, John sees an astounding vision of the glorified Jesus.

In 1:19-20, Jesus tells him to write what he sees. In chapters 2 and 3, He dictates seven messages, one for each of the seven churches of Asia, beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea.

Use common sense:

This is a more controversial use of *aggelos*. Some Bible students believe that each letter is addressed to an actual angel, who is evidently responsible for that church. Others think that the letters were to be given to human messengers from those churches.

Which meaning of *aggelos* seems to fit the context better?

Why do you choose that meaning?

These verses are open to debate, so I am going to leave the issue open for the moment. On tricky issues like this, it is wise to Borrow from Others so you can benefit from the additional insights they can offer.

You can get even more practice by looking at one of the words we studied in Lesson 2: the word *kosmos*.

We worked through a Stage One study of *kosmos* to find all the possible meanings, using both methods: Borrow from Others and Do-It-Yourself. Here is a slightly condensed list of the meanings that we discovered:

1. A harmonious arrangement or order
2. The world, universe
3. The earth

4. The inhabitants of earth, the human family
5. The whole mass of men alienated from God
6. The present condition of human affairs, the whole circle of earthly goods, riches, etc. which draw people away from God and obstruct the cause of Christ

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Read the context: Read the entire chapter of John 3.

Use common sense:

Is *kosmos* mentioned anywhere else in John 3?

What does God do to the *kosmos*?

Which meaning(s) of the word make sense when you consider God's actions?

Answers:

Verse 17

Loves, gave Son, sent Son, not judge, save

Meanings 4 or 5. God loves people, not the earth or a sinful system.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Read the context:

Scan a couple of inches before and after verse 15. What else does it say about *kosmos*?

Use common sense:

Which meaning makes the most sense in this passage? Why?

Answers:

Verse 16 describes the ingredients of the *kosmos*: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Verse 17 says that the *kosmos* is passing away, in contrast to the one who obeys God and lasts forever.

Meaning 6 makes the most sense in this context.

---

Review:        *The Do-It-Yourself method for Stage Two:*

1. Read the \_\_\_\_\_ of the verse.
2. Scan the list of possible \_\_\_\_\_ from Stage One.
3. Use your \_\_\_\_\_ sense to decide which meaning fits best.

---

Answers: context, meanings, common

## Stage 2 – Borrow from Others

As you can see, Stage 2 is not complicated. Even when you use the intuitive Do-It-Yourself approach, you will often be satisfied with the results.

However, there are times when it pays to get good advice from professionals. The Bible is a big book, and Greek is an intensely rich language. It's always possible that there's an important angle that you might overlook because you are still developing your skills. There might be something in the context that slips by you.

That's why it is a good idea to consult a Bible scholar. Borrow from their expertise whenever you can!

The process of borrowing from others to accomplish Stage Two is rather simple: **Look up the verse in a commentary or a lexicon to learn the meaning it assigns to your word.**

Here's how it might work when you apply it to *archēgos*, the word translated "Author" of our faith in Hebrews 12:2.

- In Stage One, we learned that *archēgos* appears only four times in the New Testament:
  - Acts 3:15
  - Acts 5:31
  - Hebrews 2:10
  - Hebrews 12:2
- The primary meanings that we discovered in Stage One are:
  1. One who has a preeminent position: leader, ruler, prince
  2. One who begins something: originator, founder, author (but not in the sense of one who writes a book)
- When we look at Hebrews 12:2 using the Do-It-Yourself approach to Stage Two, we will evaluate these two meanings, looking at the context and using common sense.

As we observe the verse, we might notice that *archēgos* is linked with another word that means "finisher, perfecter" of our faith. Logically, if it is paired with a word that

describes the completion of something, *archēgos* makes sense as a reference to the beginning. Jesus is the one who begins the process and he is the one who completes it.

- Just to be sure I'm on the right track, I want to borrow the expertise of some veteran Bible scholars. I will move to the [Borrow from Others approach to Stage Two](#). We will look up the verse in a commentary or lexicon to learn the meaning it assigns to the word we are studying.

### Example: Lexicon

Here is the entry for *ajrchgoV* in Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek NT*:

Either *leader, ruler, prince* or *originator, founder*; the former is more likely for Ac 5:31; for 3:15 either is possible. The latter is more likely for Heb 2:10; 12:2.

In Danker, *Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*, the listing reads:

1. "One who enjoys a preeminent position," **leader, ruler** Ac 5:31. -2. "one noted for beginning something." **Founder** Ac 3:15 (some would place this in 1); Heb 2:10; 12:2

Which meaning for *archēgos* do these two lexicons choose in Hebrews 12:2?

Answer: Meaning 2 – originator, founder, one noted for beginning something

### Example: Commentary

What does a commentary say about the meaning of *archēgos*?

*Moody Bible Commentary*

"the one from whom our faith derives"

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown

Going before us as the Originator of our faith, and the Leader whose matchless example we are to follow always. In this He is distinguished from all those examples of faith in Hebrews 11:2-40.

Matthew Henry

He is the author of their faith; not only the object, but the author. He is the great leader and precedent of our faith, *he trusted in God*; he is the purchaser of the Spirit of faith, the publisher of the rule of faith, the efficient cause of the grace of faith, and in all respects the author of our faith.

David Guzik

Jesus is not only the author of our faith; He is the finisher of it also. The idea of *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Philippians 1:6) is comforting indeed to these discouraged Christians.

My thoughts:

The combination of *archēgos* and "finisher" makes it clear that we should go with meaning 2: One who begins something. Jesus is the originator of our faith, the one who got it all started. It is through

His grace that we first receive salvation by trusting Him, just as He is the one who carries us through to the completion of the process.

Your thoughts:

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*Review: Two Places to borrow help for Stage Two*

*Step 1 – Look in a c\_\_\_\_\_*

*Step 2 – Look in a d\_\_\_\_\_*

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Answers: commentary, dictionary

## Try It Yourself

Remember the ambitious project we tackled in Lesson 3? We were searching for all the possible meanings of the word *homologeō*, and we took the time to study every place where it occurs in the New Testament. That was Stage One.

Now it's time to move to Stage Two: Determining the meaning of the word in one specific verse. The question is, "What does *homologeō* mean in 1 John 1:9?"



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The longest word ever to appear in literature occurs in *The Ecclesiazusae*, a comedy by Aristophanes (448-380 BC). In the Greek it is 170 letters long but transliterates into 182 letters in English:

Lopadotemachoselachogaleokraniroleipsanodrimhypotrimmatosilp  
hioparaomelitokatakechymenokichlepikossyphophattoperisteralek  
tryonoptekephallioikigklopeleiolagoiosiraiobaphetraganopterygon.

The term describes a fricassee of 17 sweet and sour ingredients, including mullet, brains, honey, vinegar, pickles, marrow (the vegetable) and ouso (a Greek drink laced with anisette).

First, we will try to use the Do-It-Yourself approach.

1. Go back to Lesson 3 and review the things you wrote about *homologeō*. Make a list of the various ways the word was used.
2. Now read the context of 1 John 1:9, covering at least 1:5-2:1.
3. Use your common sense to write down a simple explanation of what John means when he says we should *homologeō* our sins. Put your answer in the box below.

Now you have summarized the Do-It-Yourself version of the study, and we can finish by borrowing the expertise of a few commentaries. Scan these explanations for fresh insights.

- Moody Bible Commentary: To confess our sins is to admit a sinful disposition.
- Bible Knowledge Commentary – New Testament: A Christian ought to be ready at all times to acknowledge any failure which God’s light may expose to them.
- David Guzik, Blue Letter Bible – To confess means, “to say the same as.” When we confess our sin, we are willing to say (and believe) the same thing about sin that God says about it. [Note: This comment is based on *etymology*, a topic we will explore in Lesson 6.]
- Matthew Henry – Our duty to receive continued pardon of our sin = Penitent confession and acknowledgement of sin are the believer’s business, and the means of his deliverance from his guilt.
- Jamieson, Fausset and Brown – Confess – with the lips, speaking from a contrite heart; involving also confession to our fellow men of offenses committed against them.

Do you see anything here that makes you want to change what you wrote above?

## Remember the Alphabet?

Learning the Greek alphabet doesn’t happen instantaneously. You can only make it stick by repetition and practice.

Can you rearrange these Greek words in alphabetical order?

logoV  
qeoV  
ekklhsia  
swthria  
filosofia  
douloV

**Answer:**

douloV – ekklhsia – qeoV – logoV – swthria - filosofia

## Something Extra: Checking Family Members

At this point, you have experienced the basic steps of a word study. Congratulations! But there are tricks of the trade that will make your study even more rewarding. Here's one:

**Words come in family groups.** Just as you can understand a new friend more deeply by meeting their family, you can often gain more insight into a word by broadening your focus to look at other words that are “in the family.”

1. Greek sometimes builds a new word by adding a syllable to the beginning of a word, and the new word can be very interesting.

Take *homologeō*, for instance. We noticed that the New Testament never uses it for confession of sin anywhere but 1 John 1:9. However, a search for the English “confess” will reveal that there is another Greek word that is used for confession of sins. It's the verb *exomologeō* – a more intensive form constructed by tacking an extra syllable on the front of *homologeō*. It appears in 10 passages, including the people who came to John the Baptist confessing their sins (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5), and the people of Ephesus who confessed their sins of occult practices (Acts 19:18). It is also the word used in James 5:16 – “Confess your faults one to another.” *Exomologeō* also has some of the same variety of meaning that we found in *homologeō*. It makes an excellent supplementary study. We will learn how to find these words in Lesson 7.

2. Words often come in grammatical clusters. You may find the same root idea expressed as a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb.

You see it in English:

Noun: You have my *trust*.

Verb: I *trust* him

Adjective: He is *trustworthy*.

In Greek you find something very similar:

Noun: *pistis* (trust, faith)

Verb: *pisteuō* (trust, believe)

Adjective: *pistos* (trusting, trustworthy)

Sources like the Strong's Concordance will give you clues to these family groups. Simply find your word in the lexicon at the back, then scan up and down a few words to see if any are related. The lexicon entry will help by adding a note like "from 762" to confirm the connection between two words.

You will learn more about these groups in Lesson 6.

## Coming Up:

The next two lessons will answer some of the most common questions about word study.

In Lesson 6, you will learn the virtues and limitations of etymology, the way that words have been constructed by combining two words into one. Whenever someone says, "This word is a combination of A and B," they are talking about the origin and history of the word.

The history of a word can be tremendously illuminating – or it can be frustratingly misleading. Lesson 6 will take you on a tour of the Greek language through the centuries, and help you use etymology properly.

Finally, Lesson 7 will help you think clearly about synonyms. When two words have similar meanings, how can you tell the distinctions between them? What is the real difference between the words for love?

In addition, you will learn how to use a simple chart to record all the key elements of a word study on a single page (most of the time!).

## A Word Puzzle to Ponder:

One of the key words in the book of Titus is the Greek word *sophron*, usually translated "sober." It is one of an intriguing family of related Greek words, with an undertone of meaning that you would not expect. Next week we will take a tour of *sophron*.

# Lesson 6 – Tracing a Word’s Family Tree

On a 1983 missions trip, my family spent the night with a family in the German village of Hessigheim. When they heard that we spelled the name Bechtle with *-le* at the end, they said, “Your ancestors must have come from around here. That’s how they spell it in Schwabia!”

Other sources have confirmed that our family roots probably reach back to southern Germany, somewhere around the Black Forest region. Our ancestors probably came to America as part of a wave of immigration in the early 1800s. The family moved soon moved on to the Midwest, and both of my parents ended up in Los Angeles just before the Great Depression took hold.

Knowing your roots can help you understand the people in your family. That’s one reason why genealogy has become a big business.

A similar principle operates in the business of word study. The words in the Greek language have a history of their own, and learning about a word’s family tree can illuminate its meaning.

There are two ways to look beyond the individual word you are studying, so that you can get acquainted with other words in the same family.

First, you can explore the history of the word, looking for the earlier words that came together to produce your words. This is like looking for your great-grandmother or discovering that you are a descendant of George Washington.

***In Lesson 6, you will learn how to broaden your word study by investigating a word’s family tree:***

- ***Ancestors - Etymology***
- ***Relatives – Cognates***

Second, you can get acquainted with other words in the same verbal family as they were used in the New Testament language. This is like meeting a person’s siblings or cousins.

The first approach is called *etymology*, a study of what happened earlier in the history of the Greek language to produce the word you are studying.

The second approach focuses on *cognates*, a study of other words used in the New Testament that are part of the same word family as the word you are studying.

Let’s take them one at a time!

## **Etymology: Tracing the Ancestry**

Children love to take things apart . . . but they can’t put them back together again. Inventors and craftsman love to take things apart, and they can put them back together again, with no parts left over!

Preachers share the same instinct when they are studying a Greek word. How often have you heard your pastor say, “This word is made up of two Greek words”? Then he will launch into an explanation of how the two original words combine to make a newer, bigger term.

When you dismantle a Greek word to look at its component parts, you are really going back to look at the history of that word. You are tracing its family tree.

You are checking to see whether it was originally formed by combining existing Greek words to form something new. Of course, not all Greek words are formed in this way, but Greek does have a remarkable number of such combination forms.

### What is etymology?

This kind of study is called etymology. The dictionary lays out a comprehensive description of what may be involved:

The history of a linguistic form (as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found, by tracing its transmission from one language to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other languages, or by tracing it and its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language. (Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1965)

In this course, we can use a simplified definition: Etymology is the study of a word’s history to determine how it was formed. We are tracing its family tree, looking for its verbal ancestors.

### Is this a legitimate way to study words?

Of course! Knowing that a word is a combination of two other words can launch an instantaneous word picture that helps you grasp the idea and communicate it vividly.

Take the word *homologeō*, which we studied in Lesson 3 as the word “confess” in 1 John 1:9.

The listing for this word in the Strong’s Concordance contains an easily overlooked note: From a compound of the base of *homou* (#3674) and *logos* (#3056). One of those words means “same” and the other means “word.” Put the two together and you get the commonly-expressed idea that *homologeō* means “to say the same thing as.” That phrase doesn’t always work as an actual translation of the word, but our study supports the idea that it really is a useful way to think about the term. When we confess our sins, we are agreeing with God that our actions actually were sinful, and that we are the ones who committed them.

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#### *Review:*

*Etymology is the study of a word’s \_\_\_\_\_ to determine how it was formed.*

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Answer: history

### Are there limitations to this method of study?

Yes, there are some risks when you assume that dismantling a word reveals the true meaning.

Sometimes the combination of two words makes no sense. You can see this easily in English. Just imagine an English teacher lecturing on the etymology of the word “butterfly”: “Students, the word butterfly comes from the words “butter” and “fly,” so it is obvious that this is a description of an insect that looks like a stick of butter floating through the air.”

Sometimes the ancestor words have multiple meanings. It would be easy to latch onto the wrong meaning, with painful results. Take the English word *supervisor*. It’s easy to see that it comes from the words “super” and “visor.” But if a future linguist tried to explain that *super* means “higher quality, extremely good” and *visor* means “eye shade,” you could end up with the explanation that a supervisor is an extremely high quality eye shade.

The biggest problem is that the word you are studying may have originated several centuries earlier than the New Testament, and the meaning could have changed during that time.

See for yourself how words can change by taking the vocabulary quiz to the right. All the words actually appear in the King James Bible of 1601.

Sometimes the passage of time can actually reverse the meaning of a word. Take 1 Thessalonians 4:15 in the KJV:

“We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not **prevent** them which are asleep.”

The same verse in the New American Standard Bible:

“We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall not **precede** those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”

In 1611, the word *prevent* meant “to come before.” It was formed from the Latin words *pre* (before) and *venire* (to come). However, English has changed in the last 400 years, so the word has flipped to a completely different meaning.

## Vocabulary Quiz

1. ceiled (2 Chr 3:5)
2. privily (Matt 1:19)
3. asswage (Gen 8:1)
4. chapman (2 Chr 9:14)
5. daysman (Job 9:33)
6. discomfited (Judg 4:15)
7. chide (Ex 17:21)
8. beeves (Lev 22:19)

### ANSWERS:

1. overlaid, lined
2. secretly, privately
3. subsided
4. trader, merchant
5. umpire
6. routed
7. scold, quarrel
8. cattle

The same thing can happen in Greek, so we should be cautious about basing foundational doctrine on the etymology of a word.

NOTE: For a fuller discussion of this issue, see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, pages 28-33.

### A short history of the Greek language

If we want to investigate the history of a Greek word, it helps to know something about the overall history of the language. How far back does the Greek language go?

Some ancestors of the Greeks have been traced back to before 2000 BC, but we don't know much about their language until much later. Once the fog begins to lift, we can see that the story of Greek language contains several chapters.

1. The Age of Dialects (before 6<sup>th</sup> century BC) – At first, there was no such thing as “the” Greek language. The Greek peninsula was a patchwork of communities separated by rugged mountain ranges. Each pocket of civilization spoke a slightly different dialect of Greek, so you would hear something different whenever you traveled to a neighboring territory. The earliest Greek literary works dating to this period are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.
2. The Age of Classical Greek (6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) – The city of Athens rose to leadership among the Greek states (followed by Sparta), and developed a flourishing civilization that featured famous philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, dramatists like Aeschylus and Euripides, and many other writers. The Athenian dialect of Greek became the dominant form of the language.
3. The Age of Koine Greek (4<sup>th</sup> century BC through the New Testament period) – Philip of Macedon gained domination of all the Greek states. After he was assassinated, control passed to his son Alexander. Alexander the Great led the Greek armies on an unbelievable campaign of conquest. He defeated Persia, Egypt, and all the other rivals to the East, eventually reaching India. When he died, he left behind a Greek empire stretching across much of the known world.

The Greek language changed with Philip and Alexander. Their armies included men from all parts of Greece, and they had to understand their leaders. The peoples who had been conquered had to communicate with their Greek overlords. This necessitated a simpler, more understandable form of the Greek language without the subtleties of the philosophers. What resulted was what we call Koine (or *common*) Greek.

Various influences caused continued change, but New Testament Greek is recognizably a form of Koine Greek.

As you can see, the words used in the Greek New Testament have a family tree that can extend back hundreds of years!

### How do you discover the etymology of a word?

You can discover a word's history by looking carefully at its entry in your Greek lexicon. If you looked up *eiserchomai*, which means “to go in, to enter,” you would find phrases like these:

- **From 1519 and 2064** (Strong's)
- ***eis*, "in," *erchomai*, "to come"** (Vine's)
- **Root Word (Etymology): From *eijV* (G1519) and *ejrcomai* (G2064)** (Blue Letter Bible)
- **Origin: from *eis* and *erchomai*** (Bible Hub)

All of these phrases occur in the basic word study tools, pointing you to the origin of the word in question. To pursue this line of research, you can look up the two words listed as ancestors of your word.

*Eis* (#1519) means "in, into."

*Erchomai* (#2064) means "to come."

So the combination means "to come in, enter."

### How should you handle etymology?

Once you have discovered the roots of a word, how should you think about that information?

Here is the bottom line for using etymology in word study: **Usage trumps etymology.**

Think of this this way: What's the best way to get acquainted with a new friend: spend time with them, or read some letters written by his great-grandfather? Similarly, Paul's use of a word carries much more weight than the way it was used three centuries earlier.

The most reliable way to determine what a word means is to observe the way it was actually used when the New Testament was written. The study pattern you learned in Lessons 1-5 will enable you to develop a solid picture of its first century meaning. Do that study first. After that, feel free to move back into the past and investigate the word's earlier history.

Studying the history of a word can be extremely valuable.

1. It can help you make exciting discoveries that you might otherwise overlook.
2. It can lead you to marvelous illustrations that will help people visualize the impact of the word.
3. It will enable you to learn vocabulary words more easily.
4. It will make it possible to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words in the text.

However, etymology has its limitations. Therefore, you should always look at the way the word was actually used in the New Testament. Focus first on the usage, and use history as a supplement.

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*Review:*

*Which is more reliable?*

*(a) The etymology of a word*

*(b) The usage of a word*

*Which should you study first: its meaning in the first century AD, or the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC?*

**Answer:** (b), first century AD

Let's look at another example:

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to **help** in time of need.

If you want to know more about the "help" promised here, you can look up the word. In the Strong's Concordance, you'll find it listed as word #996. Look it up in the lexicon at the back, and you'll discover that #996 is *boētheia*, translated "help."

What is the etymology (or history) of *boētheia*?

According to Strong's, it comes from word #998, *boēthos*, which means "a helper." That doesn't give me much new information, but I notice that there's another note about the origin of this new word. We can trace the family tree back even further!

The word *boēthos* ("helper") comes from two Greek words:

*Boē* (#995) which means "a cry" and *theō* (not in the NT) which means "to run."

At this point, you might be tempted to wonder if the word means "to run and cry out." Frankly, that doesn't make much sense when you apply it to Hebrews 4:16.

A case like this reminds us that etymology is often interesting and sometimes helpful, but the true standard for word meaning is its actual usage.

Let's examine the usage of *boētheia*.

It occurs only one other time in the New Testament: Acts 27:17. Here in the account of the terrible storm that caught the ship carrying Paul, the account tells how the crew "used **supporting cables** in undergirding the ship." In this verse, *boētheia* is a nautical term for the cables that the sailors wrapped around the ship hull to keep it from breaking up in the storm.

What have we learned?

The word for "help" in Hebrews 4:16 has at least two meanings: (1) a general term for help; and (2) a specialized meaning to describe the cables that hold a ship together.

Which of these two meanings is used in Hebrews 4:16?

Answer: (1). The word is used with this idea in secular Greek and in the Greek Old Testament.

The context of Hebrews 4 does not deal with ships, so meaning (2) does not apply.

We might note, however, that the nautical usage does supply a vivid mental image that might help us appreciate the kind of help that God offers. There are times when you might feel as if your life was on the verge of breaking apart, and the image of God providing that help you need to hold it together could be very encouraging.

Note that we are using this as an application or illustration, not suggesting that it is the actual meaning intended in Hebrews 4.

## Cognates: Meeting the Relatives

Rummaging through the attic looking for scrapbooks with pictures of your grandparents is an enjoyable way to spend an hour, but you can often learn even more about a person by meeting their brothers or sisters, or cousins. They're all different, of course, but there is often a family resemblance that helps you understand a person.

In a similar way, you can often deepen your understanding of a Greek word by looking for other words in the same family group.

Words often come in clusters. Find a noun, and you're liable to discover a matching verb or adjective. In English, for instance, we might talk about "deceive" (verb), "deception" (noun), "deceptive" (adjective), or "deceptively" (adverb). The dictionary would list them as four separate words, but all share the same underlying meaning.

You can see a similar pattern in two Greek words for hospitality:

### HOSPITALITY (Noun) *Philoxenia* – *filoxenia*

Where it occurs:

Romans 12:13 – Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing **hospitality**

Hebrews 13:2 – Do not neglect to show **hospitality to strangers**, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it

Root words (etymology):

It's a combination of *philos* (friend) and *xenos* (stranger – someone outside your comfort zone).

What experts say:

"regard for one who comes from outside one's group or on a visit," in keeping with cultural tradition that the stranger or visitor is to be recognized as a guest and entitled to hospitality (Danker)

"love of strangers" (Vine's)

### HOSPITABLE (Adjective) *Philoxenos* – *filoxenoV*

Where it occurs:

1 Timothy 3:2 – An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, **hospitable**, able to teach

Titus 1:8 – [An overseer must be] **hospitable**, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled

1 Peter 4:9 – Be **hospitable** to one another without complaint

Root words (etymology):

It's a combination of *philos* (friend) and *xenos* (stranger).

What experts say:

"having regard for the stranger or visitor," hospitable (Danker)

One is a noun and the other is an adjective, but they both share the same root, and both are derived from the Greek words for “love” and “stranger.” Hospitality involves love for strangers. Studying both words gives you a richer understanding of the idea.

## A Larger Word Group

Suppose that you are leading a Bible study for a group of college students, based on the book of Titus. You have reached Titus 2:6 – “Likewise, urge the young men to be sensible.” There are times when young guys are not always sensible, so you want to expand on that word *sensible*.

When you look up the Greek word in the background, you discover that it translates the verb *sophroneō*. The entry in the Strong’s Concordance defines it as “to be of sound mind, sane, moderate.” That’s a good start, but you would like to know more, so you launch a Do-It-Yourself search for all the references where it appears. Unfortunately, it only appears 6 times. That’s not much to work with!

You are about to conclude that this word is not very interesting, but then your peripheral vision happens to pick up some other words in the Strong’s Lexicon that look very similar! Word #4998, *sophroneō*, is embedded with a cluster of relatives. Starting with word #4993, every word is spelled similarly and has a similar meaning. To clinch the deal, each of them contains the phrase “from 4998.”

This is a word family, and you can enlarge your grasp of the idea here by studying the whole group.

Here is a complete list of the words, plus the text of every verse where the word appears. I invite you to make the time to work through the whole list for yourself. Use the steps of Do-It-Yourself Stage One word study to learn the meanings of *sophroneō* and friends!

### Adjective – *sophron* (#4998)

1 Tim 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, \_\_\_\_\_, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach...

Tit 1:8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, \_\_\_\_\_, just, holy, temperate...

Tit 2:2 That the aged men be sober, grave, \_\_\_\_\_, sound in faith, in charity, in patience

Tit 2:5 To be \_\_\_\_\_, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

### Sensible or Sober?

The KJV translates *sophroneō* as “sober.”

What does the English word *sober* mean? One dictionary offers:

- 1 sparing in the use of food or drink; not addicted to intoxicating drink; not drunk
- 2 marked by sedate or gravely or earnestly thoughtful behavior or demeanor: serious, solemn
- 3 unhurried, calm
- 4 marked by temperance, moderation, or seriousness
- 5 subdued in tone or color
- 6 showing no excessive or extreme qualities of fancy, emotion, or prejudice: Realistic, well balanced, restrained, rational

How well do these match the meanings you found in your study of *sophroneō*?

**Noun – *sophrosune* (#4997)**

Acts 26:25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and \_\_\_\_\_.

1 Tim 2:9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and \_\_\_\_\_; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array...

1 Tim 2:15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with \_\_\_\_\_.

**Adverb – *sophronos* (#4996)**

Tit 2:12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live \_\_\_\_\_, righteously, and godly in this present world...

**Noun – *sophronismos* (#4995)**

2 Tim 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Verb – *sophroneo* (#4993)**

Mark 5:15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and \_\_\_\_\_; and they were afraid.

Luke 8:35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and \_\_\_\_\_; and they were afraid.

2 Cor 5:13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be \_\_\_\_\_, it is for your cause.

Rom 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think \_\_\_\_\_, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Tit 2:6 Young men likewise exhort to be \_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore \_\_\_\_\_, and watch unto prayer.

**Verb – *sophronizo* (cause to be *sophron*) (#4994)**

Tit 2:4 That they may \_\_\_\_\_ the young women to love their husbands, to love their children...

Look at each verse and try to decide what idea goes in each blank.

Add any other observations that come to mind.

When you have completed the whole list, use the rest of this box to summarize your findings in a few bullet points. What are the possible shades of meaning for *sophroneō* and its neighbors?

Now go to Stage 2 – Determine the meaning of the word in this context.

Begin by using the Do-It-Yourself approach. Read the context of Titus 2:6 and think carefully about it. What is the most likely meaning of *sophroneō* in this verse?

Once you have drawn your own conclusions, check your work by borrowing the expertise of others. Scan the explanations below, drawn from various commentaries, to see what additional insights you can glean.

*Moody Bible Commentary (p. 1899):*

*Self-controlled, serious about life and ministry*

*Bible Knowledge Commentary (NT):*

*Worthy of respect, serious-minded, i.e. not clowns.*

*Self-control, a virtue in which many young men are deficient. Indicates for all Christians the importance of moderation, sensibleness, and self-restraint.*

*Bible Background Commentary (NT):*

*One of the central Greek virtues. When applied to women, it meant “modesty” and hence indicated virtuously avoiding any connotations of sexual infidelity.*

*Walter Lock:*

*The characteristic word of the whole chapter. Self-control, with respect for the rights of others, with true piety towards God.*

*Homer Kent:*

*A quality of mind which is serious, earnest, sound. It does not mean that a minister should be long-faced, but he should be earnest. He should have the balanced judgment to relegate fun to its proper place. The overseer, especially if he is young, must avoid the reputation of a clown. Young people may think such a preacher is funny, but they won't come to him for spiritual help.*

*Robert Thomas:*

*Self-controlled, in control of one's mind and emotions so that you can act rationally and discreetly, a virtue much needed on Crete. Self-mastery in thought and judgment.*

Now that you have finished a basic study of *sophroneō*, what will you tell your Bible study group? What does Paul mean when he says that young men should be “sensible”?

## Coming Up:

There's just one more lesson left, so what's left to learn? You already have the basics under your belt, but don't stop now.

In Lesson 7, you will learn how to handle synonyms. How do you compare two Greek words that have similar meanings? When someone says, “There are two Greek words for *time*,” how do you tell the difference between those words?

We will also give you a master template that you can use to record the results of any word study. When you use this tool, you can be sure that you won't overlook any part of the process. You'll use this again and again to give direction to your study. Synonyms

Finally, you will get a clear strategy for deciding where to go next in your study of Greek.

## A Word Puzzle to Ponder:

In Galatians 1:6-7, Paul warns against troublemakers who teach “another gospel which is not another gospel.” It sounds contradictory, doesn't it? Next time, we will learn how to clear up conundrums like this one by studying synonyms!

# Lesson 7 – Synonyms

Mark Twain famously said, “The difference between the right word and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

Sometimes we have to choose just the right word from several possibilities that are pretty close to each other. When I turned in the rough draft of my master’s thesis, the prof complained that I introduced every quotation with “So and so *said*.” Try to use a little more variety in introducing your quotes, he wrote. Personally, I was quite happy using “said,” because all the people I was quoting had indeed said something. But you don’t question the professor on things like this, so I went back and substituted more specific terms like “explained, agreed, asked, exclaimed, made the point that, disagreed,” etc. Every time I chose a new word, I was reviewing an array of synonyms, choosing the one that best fit each quotation. Did it make much difference? Probably not, but the process did force me to think more precisely about what I wanted to communicate.

Synonyms are words from different families of words that have overlapping meanings. Good writers are masters of synonyms; they can think of several words that might communicate their thought and pick the most effective one for each sentence. Sometimes it’s easy; sometimes it’s hard.

Consider the way English handles synonyms. Take the example of the furry, yappy critter that plays catch with your kids and chews on bones. How would you describe it? A dog? A canine? A cur? A pup?

Depending on the pet, more than one of those terms might work. The common term is “dog.” A more scientific description would be “canine.” Either one would work to describe your Cocker Spaniel. However, we also use “canine” to describe the teeth at each corner of your smile. You can call those your “canine teeth,” but you certainly wouldn’t call them your “dog teeth.”

We talk about synonyms in clusters: two or more words that have overlapping meanings. Sometimes the two words have virtually identical meanings; other times they are used with markedly different meanings. This works in Greek as well as in English.

Take Galatians 1:6-7, for example. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto **another** gospel; Which is **not another**; but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” (KJV). Another gospel which is not another. Sounds confusing, doesn’t it? In this case, you can clear up the problem easily by noticing that Paul uses two different Greek words here.

The first “another” is the Greek word *heteros*, which is used to describe another thing of a different kind. Our English term *heterosexual* is a reminder of that meaning. Sometimes we translate it as “different.”

The second “another” is the Greek word *allos*, which to describe another thing of the same kind.

Paul's idea is clear enough. He complains that the Galatians have moved to a different gospel, another "gospel" that is not like the original one they believed. He makes this clear by adding that whatever odd thing they are accepting is not another gospel like the first one. It's not just the second edition of the genuine article.

As you can see, the ability to deal skillfully with synonyms can be very handy!

***In Lesson 7, you will learn***

***Synonyms: Words with overlapping meanings***

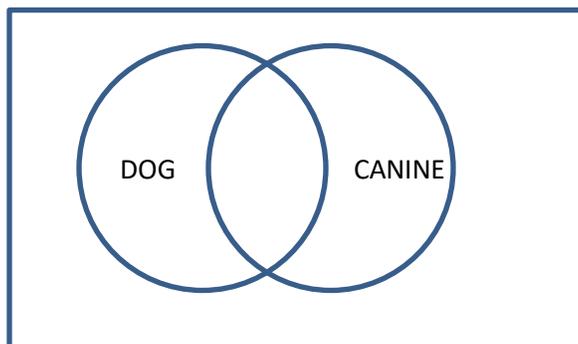
***Idioms: Phrases with meanings all their own***

***Master Template: A tool for organizing your research***

## Synonyms – How Do They Work?

As we've said, synonyms are words with overlapping meanings. Two or more words can sometimes be used to describe the same thing, and a careful writer tries to choose the one that is the very best description of the idea.

It's a good idea to visualize synonyms with circles. Let's take the example of *dog* and *canine*.



Imagine that the box represents every kind of animal in the world, from woodchucks to wildebeest. It's packed full of critters!

Our "dog circle" represents all the animals that can be described by the word "dog" (plus any other idea that the word can mean).

The “canine circle” represents all the beasts that can be called “canine” (plus any other meaning the word might have).

Things to notice:

1. There is an overlap, where both circles cover the same territory. That reminds us that there are many cases where you could use either word to describe your poodle, and either word would be equally appropriate. Fluffy or Bowser is a dog, and it’s equally true to say that he’s a canine.
2. There are areas where the circles DO NOT overlap. Those areas picture the situations where only one word will do. A fox is considered a canine, so you can use that word to describe it. But nobody looks at a fox and says, “There’s a dog!” In another context, you might want to say something about “canine teeth.” That’s one term for the longer teeth at each side of your front teeth. Your dentist might call them incisors, but that’s another story. The point is that you don’t look at those teeth and say, “You have healthy dogs”!

Logical corollary:

When you’re in the overlap section, you don’t waste time talking about the differences between the two words. You focus on the general meaning that they share.

But when you’re in the NON-overlapping area, you may very well spend time talking about the differences between the two words.

We can understand this best by returning to our original discussion of words.

Stage One: Words have multiple meanings, but they only have one meaning in a particular context.

When you deal with a pair of synonyms, each of those words has its own set of multiple meanings.

Some of those meanings might be shared by both words.

Some of those meanings might be unique to just that one word.

Stage Two: When you look at a specific verse and find a word and you know there are synonyms for it, you have to ask, “In this verse, is the writer using a meaning that’s shared with the synonym? Or is he using one of the meanings that is definitely not true of the other word?”

If it’s a shared meaning, then you shouldn’t spend time talking about it.

If it’s a separate meaning, then it can be very helpful to talk about it.

And if both words occur in the same passage, you will almost certainly want to talk about the differences. You may decide that the writer is not emphasizing the distinctions, but you’ll at least be curious about the special flavor each word brings to the discussion. It might be only a subtle difference, like the subtle differences between “said” and the other words in my thesis. But it might be the key to the passage. It’s worth a look.

Let's take an example:

The Greek word *anēr* is translated "man," normally an adult male. At times it is translated "husband" or "bridegroom." There are rare instances where it may be used in the generic sense of "human being," like *anthrōpos*.

The Greek word *anthrōpos* is also translated "man," but it is also used in a general sense of "mankind, human being, person." In other words, it can include women.

That's the short version of a Stage One study on both words. Now you can take a Stage Two approach, taking a closer look at the way they are used in specific verses

Here are a few of the verses where *anēr* is used. Based on the context, which of these three meanings is being used in each verse? Feel free to look at a larger context in your New Testament.

1. an adult male
2. a husband
3. a human being without regard to gender

\_\_\_ 1 Corinthians 13:11 – When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became an *anēr*, I did away with childish things.

\_\_\_ Acts 8:3 – But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off *anēr* and women, he would put them in prison.

\_\_\_ Acts 8:12 – But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, *anēr* and women alike.

\_\_\_ Mark 10:2 – Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a *anēr* to divorce a wife.

Answers: 1 or 3, 1, 1, 2

Now look at a few verses where the word *anthrōpos* appears. Based on the context, which meaning does the word probably have?

1. an adult male
2. a human being, including either men or women

\_\_\_ Matthew 5:13 – You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by *anthrōpos*.

\_\_\_ Matthew 5:16 – Let your light shine before *anthrōpos* in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

\_\_\_ Mark 10:27 – Looking at them, Jesus said, “With *anthrōpos* it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

\_\_\_ 1 Corinthians 1:25 – Because the foolishness of God is wiser than *anthrōpos*, and the weakness of God is stronger than *anthrōpos*.

\_\_\_ Philippians 2:7 – but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of *anthrōpos*.

\_\_\_ Mark 2:27 – Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for *anthrōpos*, and not *anthrōpos* for the Sabbath.

\_\_\_ 1 Corinthians 7:1 – Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a *anthrōpos* not to touch a woman.

Answers: 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 2, 1

## The Word Study Template

We have now worked all the way through the fundamentals of Greek word study. You have a basic idea of how to do each step. Now we are providing a tool that you can use to stay on track. It’s a template that you can use to record the most important findings in a relatively small space. Of course, you’re welcome to back it up with a pile of data, but this is a place where you can see a word at a glance.

After the template, you will find explanations of what goes in each box, and you’ll find that these explanations also provide a great review of the steps you’ve learned in this course.

# WORD STUDY SUMMARY

The English Word: (Key verse/translation/Strong's number)		<b>1</b>
The Greek Word: (Greek form/transliteration/pronunciation)		
<u>Stage One: Borrow from Others</u>	<u>Stage One: Do-It-Yourself</u>	
Meanings: <span style="float: right;"><b>2</b></span> 1. 2. 3.	References: <span style="float: right;"><b>3</b></span>	
<u>Stage Two: Borrow from Others</u>	<u>Stage Two: Do-It-Yourself</u>	
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	
<u>Etymology and Cognates</u>	<u>Synonyms</u>	
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Conclusion:</b>		

Implications:

### **Explanations:**

What should you put in each box? We assume here that you are studying a word in order to help you understand a specific Scripture passage.

**Box 1.** Begin by listing the Bible verse you are studying, then write down the English word that has caught your attention. Use a Strong's Concordance or Bible software to discover the Strong's number for that word. Now you are ready to look at the actual Greek word.

On the second line, write down the Greek word: (a) how it looks in Greek letters; (b) how it is spelled when you transliterate it into English letters; and (c) how it is pronounced. All of this information is available in the Strong's Lexicon or the software apps.

**Box 2.** In this box, you can record the results of a Stage One study, using the method of borrowing from others. Look up the word in a Greek dictionary or lexicon and make a list of all the possible meanings listed. You should probably start with one or more of the tools we introduced in Lesson 2: Strong's Concordance, Vine's Expository Dictionary, Blue Letter Bible, or Bible Hub. If you are comfortable using the Greek alphabet, you can consult the advanced tools we mentioned in Lesson 4.

**Box 3.** If you choose to dig deeper into Stage One, you can use the Do-It-Yourself approach by using a concordance to make a list of all the New Testament occurrences of the word. Then you will study each of those verses and write down anything interesting that you notice. If a word occurs very frequently, you may choose to write down your findings on a separate sheet of paper or Word document, then transcribe the highlights on this chart.

**Box 4.** Once you have completed Stage One, you are in a position to do Stage Two: Determining the meaning used in a specific verse. You may choose to consult a commentary, to borrow the expertise of others. This box provides space to record what you find.

**Box 5.** In the end, you will have to come to your own conclusions about the meaning in this verse. Examine all the information you have gathered, scrutinize the context, and use your common sense to decide which meaning makes sense. Record your answer in this box, along with your reasons for choosing it.

**Box 6.** Although you have established the basic meaning of the word in the first six boxes, you may be able to supplement that study by looking at its etymology and checking to see if there are any other words in the same family. In this box, you can list the words for possible study in the future. This information can be found in Strong's lexicon or the Bible apps.

**Box 7.** If you find that there are significant synonyms for your word, you may list those in this box. It can be very profitable to do a separate word study on an important synonym. Comparing the two words can sharpen your understanding of their meaning. The easiest way to find synonyms is to look at a concordance to discover other Greek words used to translate the same English word.

Box 8. What is the bottom line? After you have completed the study, write down your conclusion: a summary of what the word means in this passage. It should give the meaning at a glance.

Below the conclusion, you have room to record the implications. Once you have discovered something in Scripture, you should always ask what difference it makes. **First the What, then the So What!** Record anything that would help me understand the verse more clearly and apply it more usefully to my life.

**Example:**

Here is how a completed summary sheet might look for the word *dokimazō* in Romans 12:2 – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may **prove** what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (NASB).

## WORD STUDY SUMMARY

The English Word: Romans 12:2 – “prove” - #1381 The Greek Word: dokimazw – dokimazo – dok-im-ad’-zo	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stage One: Borrow from Others</u></p> <p>Meanings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals</li> <li>2. to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy (BLB)</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stage One: Do-It-Yourself</u></p> <p>References: Occurs 24 times in 20 verses [see complete list below the chart]</p> <p><u>Tested but not necessarily approved</u></p> <p>Luke 14:19 – examine oxen          1 Cor 11:28 – examine spiritual condition at the Lord’s Supper          2 Cor 13:5 – examine a person’s life          1 Thess 5:21 – examine all things (in context of prophecies)          1 John 4:1 – examine the spirits          1 Tim 3:10 – examine candidates for deacon</p> <p><u>Tested and approved:</u></p> <p>1 Peter 1:7 – trials are like gold tested by fire          1 Cor 16:3 – character of men carrying an offering to Jerusalem          2 Cor 8:8 – Paul asks Corinthians to prove their love          2 Cor 8:22 – a brother has been tested and approved          Romans 14:22 – don’t condemn yourself by examining and approving doubtful things          Phil 1:10 – approve essential/excellent things          1 Thess 2:4 – Paul was approved as an apostle</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stage Two: Borrow from Others</u></p> <p>To prove by testing, i.e., ascertain. The believer discovers that God’s will is what is good for him, that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)</p> <p>To prove by testing, to accept as approved after testing (Cleon Rogers, Linguistic/Exegetical Key)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stage Two: Do-It-Yourself</u></p> <p>The word here has meaning #2 – to approve after examination. We know that the will of God is good, so we’re not testing it to see if it will fail. We’re testing it to demonstrate that it really is good.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Etymology and Cognates</u></p> <p>Root: dokē, “watching” [not found in NT]</p> <p>Related words: dokimos “approved” (adjective)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Dokimē “proven character” (noun)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Dokimion “test” (noun)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Dokimasia “test” (noun)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Apodokimazō “reject” (verb)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Adokimos “disapproved” (adjective)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Synonyms</u></p> <p>Peirazō and its related words also mean to “test, tempt”</p>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>This word describes a process of examining the will of God with the expectation that it will prove to be everything that it’s supposed to be: good, acceptable, and perfect.</p> <p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p>It may appear to me that following God’s will is risky or unpleasant, but if I put it to the test, I will discover that it is absolutely right, both for my good and for God’s glory.</p>	

Complete list of references for dokimazō:

- Luke 12:56
- Luke 14:19
- Romans 1:28
- Romans 2:18
- Romans 12:2
- Romans 14:22
- 1 Cor 3:13
- 1 Cor 11:28
- 1 Cor 16:3
- 2 Cor 8:8
- 2 Cor 8:22
- 2 Cor 13:5
- Gal 6:4
- Eph 5:10
- Phil 1:10
- 1 Thess 2:4
- 1 Thess 5:21
- 1 Tim 3:10
- 1 Peter 1:7
- 1 John 4:1

You will notice that the completed chart has expanded past a single page. That's one of the virtues of doing it electronically; you can fill it with as much information as you wish!

## Bonus: Identifying Idioms

My mom used to say that someone had “kicked the bucket.” She meant that they had died, and we knew what she meant. But if you just look up the individual words “kick” and “bucket” in the dictionary, you will never guess that the combination means “die.” The phrase has a meaning that differs from the meanings of the individual words. A phrase like that is called an **idiom**. An idiom is an expression with a meaning that you can't predict by looking at the usual meanings of the individual words.

English is full of idioms:

- Hang your head
- Beat around the bush
- Bark up the wrong tree
- Bite off more than you can chew
- Burn the midnight oil
- Costs an arm and a leg
- Feel under the weather
- Hit the nail on the head
- Hit the sack

So is Greek:

In Mark 6:39, for example, Jesus prepares to feed the 5000 by instructing his disciples to have the crowd recline in groups to eat – literally *sumposia sumposia* – “group group.” When they carried out his instructions, the people sat down *prasiai prasiai* – literally “garden plot – garden plot.” The phrase makes no sense if you translate it a word at a time, but the combination was easily understood by first century readers. And with a little imagination, you can almost picture the hillside segmented into clusters of people like the sections of a garden.

How do you deal with these?

1. Recognize that they exist. When a verse doesn't make sense, consider the possibility of an idiomatic phrase.
2. Look at the lexicon to see if it gives you a definition for the combination. Good lexicons often do this, often in the latter part of the entry. [Give examples]
3. English translations will often provide suggestions about good translations.
4. A commentary will probably help you with idioms.



# WORD STUDY SUMMARY

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Meanings: 1. 2. 3.	References:
<u>Stage Two: Borrow from Others</u>	<u>Stage Two: Do-It-Yourself</u>
<u>Etymology and Cognates</u>	<u>Synonyms</u>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	

Implications: