

Word and Grammar Study – Detailed

A Detailed Method of Word Study

Determine which words bear the need for further study

- Choose the words whose meanings are not obvious
 - words that you are not sure of the meaning
 - words that are obscure or foreign
 - words that can have more than one meaning i.e. ambiguous

Choose key words

- theological words
- repeated words
- theme words of the passage

Choose words that are translated in different ways

- not just synonyms or stylistic differences in translation
- words that have significantly different meaning in different translations

Choose words that have important functions in the sentence

- Verbs- the main action words are usually worth studying
- Don't forget conjunctions- they usually have important functions, especially less frequent conjunctions
- Don't forget prepositions- they usually have important function and can have a variety of meanings/connotations

Choose whatever words interest you- those words that you are interested in studying

Find the Dictionary Form of the Word to be studied

See “Finding the Greek or Hebrew Word” Handout

Determine the range of possible meanings for the word

Word meanings

- Words often have a range of meanings
- Words don't always mean the same thing every time they are used
- In any context, a word has a narrow point of meaning from the wider range of possible meanings
- Words change meaning over time
- At any time, the range of possible meanings is smaller than the total range of what it meant over centuries of time

Use research tools to find the range of meanings

- Concordances- lists every occurrence of the word so you can look at the ways in which the word is used
- Lexicons- lists the definitions of a Biblical word (the original language word), grouped into categories of meaning
- Bible Dictionaries- lists the definitions of a Biblical word (English language word), often grouped into categories of meaning
- (Don't use modern English dictionaries, (e.g. Webster's dictionary). They define what the word means to modern English speakers, not what the word meant to the original hearers, and there is often a significant difference of shades of meaning)
- Bible Encyclopedias- like Bible Dictionaries, but in much more depth
- Theological Wordbooks- much more in depth than lexicons and dictionaries (usually based on original languages). Traces the meaning of words throughout the history of the language, especially the meanings they had in the Biblical uses of the word. Use caution with wordbooks because not every meaning a word ever had is a possible meaning in the Biblical time period or context.

From these tools, review the possible meanings of the word.

Determine the precise meaning by the word's use in context

words take their meaning in context

- let the context rule out certain possible meanings of the word which don't make sense in this context
- let the context tell you which possible meaning of the word was probably intended by the author

A Detailed Method of Grammar Study

For those translation differences which you suspect are based on grammatical decisions research the grammar

Study that which you think is important for understanding the passage

Be thorough- the more work you do now, the better you understand the passage, and the easier for later work

Don't be over-thorough, don't study every word, but only those that are unclear and/or will be helpful to understand the passage

How words relate

Words serve a specific function in a sentence

verb- action word

subject- what does the action

object- what receives the action

modifiers- words/phrases that explain/describe/elaborate the verb, subject, or object

Words sometimes directly modify (define, explain, describe and elaborate) other words

Ask the form of words

What about the grammatical function is indicated by the morphology?

What about the morphology indicates tense, gender, number etc.?

Does the morphology suggest close relation to other words in the context?

Ask the function of words

What is its function in the sentence?

What words modify what words?

Which words refer to which words?

How do phrases relate? What is the function of a phrase in a sentence?

Research and display the grammar

for Nouns- Is it the subject, object, other function in sentence?

for Pronouns- What noun does it refer to (antecedent)? What is its function in sentence (subject, object, etc.)?

for Verbs- What is the significance of the tense? Voice? Mood? Aspect? What type of action does it describe? What is the subject? object?

for Participles- What does it modify? Does it function as a noun, adjective, or verbal (action) idea? How does it add to the sentence?

for Infinitives- What does it modify? Does it function as a noun, adjective, or verbal (action) idea? How does it function in the sentence? What does it add to the sentence?

for Adjectives- What does it modify? What does it say about the word, sentence

for Adverbs- What does it modify? What does it add to the sentence?

for Conjunctions- What does it connect together? What type of conjunction is it? What is the nature of the connection?

for Prepositions- What is the object of the preposition? What does the phrase modify? What does it add to the sentence?

Consult the grammar discussion in the commentaries.