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NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Word Study Guide and Resources

Step 1: Starting Off

Word studies require the researcher to examine words in-depth, beyond the dictionary definition. The following are some questions to consider during research.

1. Who is using the word?

- a. Who is the author and what is his/her context?
(Consider the Author's biography, audience, etc.)
- b. Who is the speaker in the text?

2. What is the immediate context of the word usage?

- a. Where does this word appear in the work? Just in this passage, or elsewhere in the book and the Bible?
- b. If the word appears elsewhere, how many times is the word used? In your book? In the rest of the Bible? How is the word used in those contexts?
- c. What comes before and after the passage you are examining? How does your passage and the word relate to the rest of the work?

3. Compare multiple translations of the word and passage

(New Revised Standard Version, New International Version, King James Version, etc.)
Does the translation give insight into the usage or shades of meaning of the word?

4. How does grammar/syntax play a role in understanding the word?

5. What is the definition of the word?

- a. Does this word have multiple meanings?
- b. Do the multiple meanings of the word add context to its usage?

Step 2: Locating Resources

There are many resources for word study available in the library as well as online. The following descriptions will highlight the content and uses of each type of resource.

Concordances

Concordances are books that include an English language index, with references to where the word appears in the Bible. Some will include a key to the original Hebrew or Greek word of which the English is a translation. The standard concordance for this purpose is Strong's Biblical Concordance. For every English word that appears in the King James Bible, there will be a number keyed to the original Greek or Hebrew word behind it.

Separate numbers are associated with words that have different Greek or Hebrew originals, even if they are translated by the same English word. Short definitions of the words are included in the Hebrew and Greek sections of the resource.

Source List:

1. Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words
2. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible
3. NIV Compact Concordance.

Dictionary

Dictionaries provide definitions, grammatical information, and sometimes historical information on the background of the word. Theological dictionaries provide in depth definitions of the word, describing how the word relates to other Greek or Hebrew words and how the word is often used in various portions of scripture. Some dictionaries also provide a bibliography to other sources of information about the word, such as other articles in other references works (e.g., the Anchor Bible Dictionary), books and journal articles.

Source List:

1. Lexicon Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek – English Lexicon
2. Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
3. New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis
4. Anchor Bible Dictionary
5. New Interpreter's Bible Dictionary

Commentaries

Critical commentaries are books that include scholarly analysis of each book of the Bible, with detailed information for each of the passages contained within. Such commentaries frequently include information about the author, the intended audience, the context of the work at the time it was written, the subtleties and difficulties involved in translating certain words, theological uses of the words, and highlighted points of grammar and syntax.

Source List:

1. Anchor Bible Commentary
2. Word Biblical Commentary
3. Interpretation
4. The International Critical Commentary

Have more questions? Contact Sage Library:
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