Wrestling with the Word

An Introduction to Bible Study Basics

and

An Introduction to Bible Study Greek

(Using Greek Tools in English Bible Study)

by

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οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

(Matthew 4:4 ESV)

Dedicated to the memory of my precious and godly father, Robert Krum, with whom I often wrestled with the Word. I miss his counsel.

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Prolegomenon:

How Do We Get At What the Bible Says?

Let's be honest. (A good place to start!) The Bible is not an easy read. It's not like reading the latest novel or a blog post. Yes, in one sense it is the same—it's language—but, for most of us, it's language that is rather thick and obscure. We make the effort to study it, of course—it's God's Word—but we have some difficulty getting very far.

This book will help you overcome some of that difficulty and help you start wrestling with God's Word. And it *is* wrestling. But it's also wonderfully rewarding! It's worth putting some effort into it.

Let's begin, then, with a question. *How* are we to get at the words of the Bible? How are we to understand them? How do we approach the Word of God? Is it through study alone, through a diligently rational and intellectual methodology? Or is it by some sort of "higher illumination" by the Spirit? Do we pray for understanding and then just go with whatever impressions come to our hearts?

You would think, since this really is the Word of God, and God really wants us to understand it, that the Bible itself would give us some guidance. And, in fact, it does.

There are a number of verses in the Bible that speak to the Holy Spirit's work of illuminating the Word to us. Take John 14:26, a well known passage: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (ESV). Our Lord Jesus spoke this to his apostles, but there are continuing implications for us as well. Then, in First Corinthians, Paul writes that, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are *spiritually discerned*" (1Cor 2:14, ESV; emphasis mine). Then there is David's famous prayer, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Psa 119:18, ESV). These are just a few of the many verses that speak to the Spirit's work of opening God's Word to us.

Yet, interestingly, we also find that there are a great number of passages that speak to some kind of diligent effort in the study of God's Word. Paul urges Timothy to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2Tim 2:15, NASB).[1] Our Lord Jesus describes his disciples as those who "abide in my word...and you will know the truth" (John 8:31-32, ESV). And finally, Paul tells the Corinthians (again), those wayward Christians in great need of help, to "be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature" (1Cor 14:20, ESV).

So, we find that the Bible teaches us that we need to be diligent in our efforts to understand God's Word. It also admonishes us that it is the Spirit that will lead us into the truth. It seems the Bible places a priority on both. In fact the Apostle Paul combines both in one admonishment to Timothy. He had just given Timothy three different metaphors about a pastor's work—a soldier serving, an athlete competing, and a farmer harvesting. Then he says, "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2Tim 2:7, ESV). The Greek verb Paul uses here for "think over" is *noeo* (νοεω) meaning "to comprehend something on the basis

of careful thought and consideration; to perceive, to gain insight into, to understand, to comprehend."[2] And it is in the imperative mood, a command! Here the great apostle sums up the matter to his "beloved child"—study hard, study diligently, *and* trust the Lord to "give the understanding."

Let me come at this a different way. I was teaching *Wrestling with the Word* to a group of young pastors when one of them exclaimed, "I don't need all of this intellectual stuff. I just read my Bible and trust the Spirit to lead me!" So I asked him to kindly turn to the sixth chapter of Romans and tell me what he saw. He turned to Romans 6 and began to read. I told him, "I'm sorry. Perhaps I misspoke. I wanted you to tell me what you saw there." He said, "I see words." "Exactly," I said. "You see words. Now, let me ask you—Do you think that the Holy Spirit will lead you into an understanding of Romans 6 that is not in accord with the words Paul wrote?" He said, "No." "Good," I said. "The Holy Spirit moved Paul to write *those* words. If they are in fact the Words of God we should pay attention to them. We should take *the words* seriously."

While the Bible is a spiritual book, it is spirituality expressed in *language*. It is not mysticism. Bible study is not a seance. We don't understand it clairvoyantly! It is language, and we understand it by using the normal rules of language. Yes, we need the Holy Spirit to illuminate the text, to help us understand and apply it, but the Holy Spirit will never lead us into an understanding that is not in accordance with the words. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are one in the message that they speak. The Word always honors the Spirit and the Spirit always honors the Word.

In John 4 Jesus is teaching his disciples about the harvest they will reap if they are doing the Father's will. As the people of Sychar were drawing near the Lord, he commanded his disciples to "Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:35, ESV). Interestingly, he commands them *three* times to see—"look...lift up your eyes...see."

Bible Study is about *seeing*—seeing the words that are really there, taking the time to allow God's Word to speak to us, and praying that we would be able to understand what the Spirit is saying. It is both a spiritual disposition *and* an intellectual task. To eliminate one or the other, or to emphasize one over the other, is not Bible study.

I find, though, that the biggest hindrance to effective Bible study is not an anti-intellectual attitude or an unteachable spirit. I find that most of the time it's simply that most folks just don't know how. The Bible is not a quick read, and a lot of folks don't know how to move deeper.

We live in an age of ease, quickness. Our food is pre-processed so we can heat it, eat it, and be done. Our information come to us in a steady stream (flood!) through texts, Facebook and Instagram posts, email, and web sites, information that is quickly read and quickly discarded. We read books at a gallop, close them and put them on the shelf, confident we'll retain what we've read just long enough to fulfill the latest passing trend.

But when we come to the Bible, we find two issues that work against this. First, *it's God's Word.* Its words are important, and being Christians we just can't hurry through it. And second, we have to admit that we often find it heavy and difficult . We don't know how to approach it unless its pre-digested for us.

During our time together we're going to teach you how to study the Bible—how to study deeply and well, thoughtfully, prayerfully. Quickness will not work here. But, oh!, the rewards of learning God's Word! It's worth everything!

Note 1: It is interesting to note that the word translated "diligent" is the same Greek verb Paul uses of Onesiphorus who searched "earnestly" for Paul in Rome (2Tim 1:17, ESV). And Rome was a *big* city!

Note 2: From *A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition, revised and edited by Fredrick William Danker (The University of Chicago, 1957, 1979, 2000)

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY BASICS

Beginning with the Bible

Learning to See What is There:

Some Beginning Principles of Exegesis

So, we want to come to the Bible and study it out. It is God's Word and we want to humbly hear what God has to say and obey it by faith in his grace. So what are the principles that will guide our efforts. We've already discussed the fact that we need to pray, to seek to lay our lives—mind, heart, and will—before the Spirit of God. But beyond that, how do we begin?

We begin by *learning to see*—to see what *is* there and not what we *want* to be there. Letting the words speak for themselves is *exegesis*, letting the words "exit" the page, so to speak. Reading *into* the words and phrases what we would like them to say is *eisegesis*. One is handling the Word of God with humility and respect; the other follows from pride and fear, or, often, just plain sloppiness.

Learning to see is a skill, involving both the spirit and the intellect. And the two most important and most fundamental exegetical principles are *humility* and *time*. First, we approach the Scriptures with an explicit understanding that they are the Word of God. It is God speaking, not us. It is His understanding of reality that we want to learn. We are the ones confused, lost, hurting. He is the One with all of the truth and life, and we come humbly, wanting Him to lead us into it.

The second fundamental principle follows from the first. When we come to the Word we want to give the Holy Spirit time to speak to us. We should not be in a hurry. We should not be in a rush. We need to take the time to really see what *is there* to be seen. Some Christians approach the Word like it's some kind of candy-filled piñata. Give it a good whack or two and rush in to collect the goodies. No! The Bible *can* be tough, difficult, but it is well worth our diligent efforts. And the Bible describes a wonderfully loving God who longs to heal our lives, if we approach Him humbly, and give Him time to speak to us.

The principles of exegesis follow from humility and time. We call these principles *hermeneutics*, that is, the study of the how to understand, or, technically, *interpret*, the Bible. The application of those principles to a particular text is our *exegesis*. (You might say that hermeneutics is a noun, and exegesis is a verb.) Finally, the *response* to our exegesis, the response to what the Word has taught us, is called *praxis*, our *practice* of living out what we've seen.

Looking at it another way, here is how the process works. First, we come to the Word prayerfully and look at it, study it out, examine it. This is the step of *Observation*—or, *What does it say?* Next, we seek prayerfully to work out what the writer meant for us to understand. This is the step of *Interpretation*—or, *What does the text mean?* Finally, we seek to understand how the Spirit would have us respond to what the writer meant, what practical obedience of belief, faith, or act is appropriate. This is the step of *Application*—or, *How do we respond to what we've learned?*

These are critical steps and must be followed in the right order. We can rush to some conclusion about the Bible's message in a certain passage, but we can be wrong—simply because we haven't approached the Word humbly and taken the time to study it out carefully. (This is far more common than we might otherwise think, even among faithful Christians.) We can be mistaken in our application because we are mistaken in our interpretation, and we are mistaken there because we are hurried and careless in our observation. In other words, *before* we can understand what the Word would have us to believe or to do, we need to understand what the writer of the text meant, and before we can understand what he meant we need to understand what he in fact said. If your observation is shallow, your application will be shallow. If your observation is solid, your application will be too!

My father used to say, "I know that you think that you understand what I meant, but I don't think you realize that what you think I meant is not what I said."

Slow down. God's Word is worth your time!

Note: We have time here just to touch on these things. But we'll speak more on the process of exegesis as we move along. And we'll also provide you with a list of additional resources you can use for further study.

Approaching the Text

Turn to any passage of scripture and what do you see? You see writing. More specifically, you see words, words that make up phrases, phrases that make up sentences, sentences that make up paragraphs, paragraphs that make up sections, and sections that make up a book. And the message of the book comes from its sections, paragraphs, sentences, phrases, and words.

Now the *words* of the Bible, as well as its sentences and paragraphs, are essentially no different than any other kind of writing. If you're reading a sports article on ESPN, or the latest movie review, or even something like Shakespeare, you're still reading words. Of course the message of the Bible is far more important than Shakespeare, but that message is still being conveyed by the writer's *words*.

Any given writer, if they wish to communicate, will use their words to *present* their message. They will "build" words into some kind of *argument*. (According to Webster, argument in this sense is giving "a coherent series of reasons, statements, or facts intended to support or establish a point of view.") It could be an article on how to travel across Spain, or how to prepare nutritious food for a family. But one way or another the writer is trying to communicate something with words, words that they use to explain something, or convey information, or use to build an argument in favor of some position.

A Biblical writer is no different (in this sense). He will use his words to tell us something about Jesus, or teach us how to approach God, or explain how to pray. But, just like the sports or travel writer, he is using words to explain something, or to "build" his words into an argument about something. And our job as Bible students is to seek to read and to understand those explanations or arguments.

The writer will either state their main point and then go on to elucidate it with their sub-points (that is, make it clear by explaining themselves), or they will use their sub-points to build the case for their main point. And our task is to understand their message by discovering the main points and the sub-points that make up that main point.

Now, why am I making a point of the fact that writers make sub-points and them build them into main points? I am doing so because so often in Bible study we get lost in the words (and wonderful words they are) and fail to grasp the point the author is making. He may be telling us a narrative about King David, or the glories of the New Jerusalem, or explaining sanctification. But, so often, we get carried away by the words and fail to perceive his main argument.

Some Bible study methods have you jump right in and start observing details. You see the book is written by Paul, so who is Paul? And he wrote to the Phillipians—who are they? And he greets them with "grace and peace." What are 'grace and peace'? So you do a word study of them… And so forth. All very good—except the details can obscure and cloud your discovery of the *main* points. And the main points are the main point of Bible study!

Fundamentally what we want to do in Bible study is to discover the author's main points and how he elucidates or builds those main points. And the sub-points will become clear as we see them in relation to the main point. So, starting with a bunch of details is not a particularly helpful method. A better approach is to first of all grasp the overall message of the book. What is it about generally? As you read (and re-read) the book the writer's main points will emerge from his words. That then becomes the skeleton upon which we see his instruction developing.

An illustration will help. Imagine that you are doing a study of England. You are going to lead a study tour of that island nation. Where do you begin? Well, I suppose that you could catch a flight to London, take a bus into Bankside (across the river from central London), and see a play at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, or perhaps hop across the river for a visit to the Tower of London and learn about the twin princes that were killed there. And then…and so on. But that is experiencing England with no context, no understanding of the nation as a whole. A better place to start might be to get a map. Learn about the layout of the country, its proximity to Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and the continent of Europe. You will want to dig into a little history, learn a bit about English culture. This background will give you some *context* to all you are learning. It will provide an outline for you study tour.

Similarly, we don't want to jump in and discover a bunch of unrelated details of the Biblical book we are studying. We want to start with the big picture and work our way down through the main points. That will give us a context and structure for all of the details we will later discover.

How do we do that? It's pretty straightforward. There are basically five steps. (We're going to use a hypothetical study of Philippians as an example.)

Step One: Start with prayer.

We've already discussed the importance of this, so I won't belabor it, but the essence of prayer is humility. There is something we need; God has it; and we get it from His hands. God is not only the author of truth, He is the truth. It is sheer folly to think that we can approach the Word without His abiding. But *with His abiding*, He has promised to lead us into the truth! (cf., John 8:31-33)

Step Two: Begin to wrestle with the overall message of the book.

Let's begin to wrestle with the text on *its terms* and *on our own*. Let's start with the Big Picture.

The first thing we will want to do is remove all of the modern helps that clutter the text a bit. Paragraphs and section titles are helpful but they are a modern addition to the ancient text. And the text is what we want to see. So, a good idea is to copy the text of our study and paste it into a word processor. Then go through and remove all of the headings, verse numbers, and paragraph divisions. You want just one long paragraph of text. Finally, I'd recommend that you

change the margins so you've got a left margin of about 2 inches, text about 3 inches wide, and a right margin of about 3.5 inches. (See the sample at the end of this chapter.)

(Don't have a computer? You need to get access to one, at least for this initial step. Borrow a friend's, go to the library, or ask to use one of your church's; this will really help!)

What we want to do is to begin to get a grasp of Philippians on our own. We begin by taking away all of the distracting stuff and reading just the text itself. (By the way, this is how it originally came to Philippi—just a letter from Paul. No cross references, no margin notes, no section headings, and not even any paragraphs!) Read and re-read the text several times until you get an initial grasp of the whole.

Then read and re-read it again until you begin to get a feel for the natural section divisions. This will be fairly obvious as you read over the text. Let *it's* message speak to you. Wrestle with it on *it's* own terms, not the interpretation someone else has given it, no matter how well meaning.

So what do we find in Philippians? Read it over a few times and it is not hard to see the basic structure. (This is what we want to start with, getting the basic structure of the book.)

You might start in this way—Paul begins with an opening greeting (1:1-2), then mentions his remembrance of the Philippians for their partnership in the work of the Gospel and offers a prayer for them (1:3-11). Next Paul makes some remarks about his imprisonment in Rome and his attitude about it and how this might impact them (1:12-26). Then he moves to some concerns he has about the Philippian church. There are some final verses in chapter 1, verses 27-30, which might be better thought of as part of chapter 2. But you might disagree. This is the joy of wrestling with the text. Where do you put these verses?

Now continue with the rest of the book. Don't be concerned just yet with a detailed outline of the book, just break out the paragraphs. You might go back and insert a paragraph break in your column of text.

So often we stop with the first question we have. "Oh, what does fellowship mean?" So we spend an hour looking up the word and we lose sight of the whole. For now, you just want to work with the big picture.

Go back through the book and come up with a working summary of each paragraph in your own words. Again, don't be concerned with how it all fits together yet. Just jot down the basic idea of each paragraph in the margins of your page.

Step Three: Work out a rough outline of the book.

Write out a rough outline of the book from your jottings. Don't be concerned yet whether your outline is "right" or not. Just write out the basic flow of the book. We can come back and correct it as we get deeper into the book.

Step Four: Get a basic understanding of the context of the book.

Here, we want to go through the book again and pull out anything we see that might give us a clue to the historical context of the book. Make notes on a separate page. When you have finished, write out a paragraph that sums up your notes.

Step Five: Study some reference works on the context of the book.

It's a good idea now to compare your work on the historical context with some good reference works—a Bible handbook, a Bible dictionary, or the introductory page(s) of the book in a good study Bible. Don't dig deeply into the heart of the book; just get the basic idea. Then compare what these scholars say with your own notes. I believe you'll be surprised at how much you were able to get on your own.

Good! We're well on the way.

REVIEW - Focus on *structure* before meaning; focus on "big picture" before details; context before interpretation. For now we are working from the outside in. Later we will re-build the book back up with all of the wonderful details. Remember, discovering the writer's main point and how he develops it with his supporting points is *the* point of Bible study.

Sample of Single Column Text (Philippians)

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. . . . For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. . . . Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. . . Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. . . The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (Philippians 1:1–4:23 ESV)

(I condensed Philippians with ellipses (. . .) to make it fit one page.)

How Language Works

You might recall the experience of Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb in *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Silver Chair*. (If you haven't read it, you should.) Aslan gave Jill four signs that would guide them on their quest to find King Caspian's son. He told her to "remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs." The story of *The Silver Chair*, in large measure, is about Jill and Eustace's failure to remember most of the signs. But in the end they get it right—by following the last sign!

We are not on a quest to find a lost prince. We are on a far more important quest, and we must learn to "follow the signs." The Word of God is, therefore, of the greatest importance to us. And *the whole key to Bible study is learning to see what is there.* Remember, if our exegesis is shallow, our understanding will be too. And if we fail to understand what God is trying to tell us, our lives will be much more difficult than that of Jill and Eustace!

So we need to *understand* the text and we begin with *learning to see* the text.

Open any Bible text and what do see. You see words, or more accurately, groups of words. Words have very little meaning by themselves. What if I said to you, "red." Would that mean much at all? Maybe a little. But if you happened to be on a beach somewhere wading in the surf and I yelled out, "Red tide!" you would probably get out of the water as fast as your legs could move!

Or, what if your child came home from school one day and they looked very upset. When you ask them what's wrong, they blurt out, "hit" …"Ethan" …"principle's office." The next moment you would be calling the school principle to find out…*some context*. Did your child hit Ethan, or did Ethan hit your child?

In order to understand words, we need to understand the *relationships* that words have with other words. We call these relationships *syntax*. And we understand them by using normal rules of grammar.

Now don't worry! I'm not going to make you return to eighth grade English class. But, at the same time, understanding syntax is critical in Bible study, and this is probably the most important chapter in the book. Why? Because if you can't see the *relationships* that Biblical words have with other Biblical words, you will be severely handicapped in Bible study. But we're not going to get technical. We're going to be practical, and you will probably breeze right through this stuff.

So, when we communicate, we usually talk about *things*—we make some kind of observation about a thing like, "Duck! That *ball* is going to hit you!", or how important a thing is, like, "*Love*

is critical in a good marriage." "Ball" and "love" are *nouns*. Nouns are "a person, place, or thing," as we've all been told.

Let's take the noun "husband" and another noun "wife" and put them together in a kind of relationship thus:

> husband wife

Does this tell us much? Well, not really. What we need is a *verb* to describe the relationship and give us a *sentence*, like:

> Husband *love* your wife.

Ah, now we're getting somewhere. Now we have three things—a *subject* for our sentence; a *verb* that tells us something about our subject; and a *direct object* which is the recipient of the action of the subject.

Now, let's switch them around to:

> Wife love your husband.

Now we mean the *opposite* of the first sentence. Husband is now the recipient of the wife's love. Now, note—very important—a *different* relationship, a *different* meaning.

Let's move deeper. What if we said:

> *Paul traveled to Philippi.*

Here we have "Paul" (subject), who "traveled" (verb), and "Philippi" (direct object).

Now we can add some color to this sentence by saying:

> *The apostle Paul traveled quickly to Philippi.*

Now we've added two *adjectives* ("the" and "apostle"), and an *adverb* ("quickly"). Adjectives modify nouns and adverbs do the same to verbs.

Now let's say:

> *The apostle Paul, along with Luke and Timothy, traveled quickly to*
> *Philippi to preach the Gospel.*

Here we have added two phrases: ("along with Luke and Timothy") and ("to preach the Gospel"). Both of these phrases are modifying the *main verb* ("traveled"). (The grammar is actually a bit more nuanced than I'm describing, but I want to keep this simple.) The first phrase shows the men Paul is traveling *with* and the second phrase shows *why* he is traveling, or in other words, his purpose.

Now, let's use a sentence from our (hypothetical) Bible study in Philippians:

> *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making*
> *my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.* (Philippians 1:3-5 ESV)

This a bit more complex, but it's a good example of what we'll run into many times in the Bible (especially the epistles). Here we have a subject ("I", i.e., "Paul") with a verb ("thank") and a direct object ("God") and an adjective ("my"). We also have several other *phrases*: "in all my remembrance of you," "always in every prayer of mine for you all," "making my prayer with joy," "because of your partnership in the gospel," and "from the first day until now."

In Bible study we're seeking to recognize the phrases (units) of a sentence and understand what their relationships are. This is where meaning *is revealed* in language. In other words, meaning comes not so much from the *individual* words but from the *relationships* the individual words have with each other. The device, or method, a writer uses to show, or reveal, those relationships is called *syntax*. And *grammar* is simply the "rules" that govern how we use syntax. (I say "rules" because in real language the rules are somewhat fluid.)

Our purpose in Bible study is not to describe these grammatical relationships for the purpose of grammar. It is the other way around. Our purpose is to see, to *notice*, the grammatical relationships so we can *understand* what the author is saying. Let's take our verse above. Paul's main point, *which we can see from the syntax*, is that he thanks God for the Philippians. In fact, he is so moved with thanksgiving that he prays for them with joy. (This shows us the *extent* of his thanksgiving.) Any *why* does he pray with joy? Because of their partnership with him in the Gospel.

In other words, what we're trying to do in Bible study is to *clearly* see the *relationships* that the words and phrases have with each other. Once we can clearly see what those relationships are, then we can build an understanding of the passage. Remember what I said in the previous chapter—discovering the writer's main point and how he develops it with his supporting points is *the* point of Bible study.

Now, there is one more issue we need to understand about how language functions. Words always have a *context* in which we mean them. If we were hiking in the mountains and it was getting late and we needed to hurry I might say to you, "We need to dog it." I don't mean that we need to go find some dogs! I mean that we need to hurry, to move along.

In the same way, Biblical writers will use words in a certain way in one context, and perhaps in a different way in another context. For example, in Rom 2:28 Paul uses *sarx* (σαρξ) to refer to our human fleshly physical bodies, but in Rom 7:5 he uses it to describe that propensity in ourselves toward sin (i.e., *the Flesh*). Same word, but he is using it differently in two different contexts.

Here, then, is the important point—meaning comes from the individual *words* the writer uses, arranged in *relationships* (syntax), and used in a certain *context*. Keep this formula in the forefront of your mind every time you open the Scriptures:

words + syntax + context = meaning

Again, the essence of the exegetical process is seeking to see and to understand how the words and their relationships are used in a given context to communicate the writer's meaning, and how the meaning of the individual sentences build into the meaning of a passage and into the meaning of a book.

But, now, the question emerges—what can we do in Bible study in order to *clearly* "see" those words and relationships from whence comes meaning (along with context). The answer is that we are going to "spread the words out" into their various phrases using a remarkably simple tool called *phrasing*.

A Note on the Importance of Syntactically Accurate Translations

I'm going to go into the differences between translations in a later chapter. But for now I need to make one observation. There are translations that are more "syntactically accurate," that is they translate the underlying text (I'm thinking of the Greek text primarily) in such a way as to more clearly reveal the syntactical relationships the writer uses in a given passage, and therefore his argument. Because these translations take more care to reveal those syntactical relationships they can be a bit more complex. Other translations smooth out the syntax so that they are easier to read. This is simply the nature of translation. The more accurate the underlying Greek the rougher the English. The smoother the English the less accurate the underlying Greek syntax. Thus there are some good translations that are great *for reading* to get the general idea of the text, such as the New Living Translation. But for Bible study and exegesis, *because we are seeking to clearly understand the writer's syntactical relationships*, I recommend using translations that more clearly present those relationships, such as the English Standard Version or the New American Standard Bible. (I will say more on this in the chapter on Texts and Translations.)

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY BASICS

Wrestling

Digging into the Text: "Phrasing"

To review, the essence of the exegetical process is seeking to *see* and to *understand* how the words and their relationships (syntax) are used in a given context to communicate the author's meaning, and how the meaning of the individual sentences builds itself into the meaning of a passage and into the meaning of a book.

Toward this end I'd like to recommend a procedure that is very helpful in "opening up" the words of the text so that we can clearly see them. It is a technique that I developed in college which helped me "scan" poetry. (One of my two majors was literature.) I also found it was helpful in doing Bible studies. I never gave it a name. It's just something I started doing quite naturally. Later, as I grew as a Christian, I discovered that others were using a very similar procedure. They called it by various names like "syntactical analysis" or "grammatical diagramming." But the name I like best is more "user friendly," more natural—*phrasing*.

Phrasing is a procedure that opens the various *phrases* of the text so we can see their *relationships* easier. When you look at the text in our Bibles all of the words are lumped together. What we want to do is "open them up" a bit, spread 'em out, so that we can *see* what's there. And the best way to teach this is to give you some examples. (This may be new to you and you will probably need to read this chapter over a few times and spend some time working these examples out for yourself. That's fine. Please do! After almost 50 years of doing Bible study, I believe that phrasing is *the* most important Bible study skill you can learn!)

Let's start with an example from the Old Testament, from Psalm 19. First, let's look briefly at the words themselves:

> *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.*
> (Psalms 19:7–9 ESV)

Here they are as they are in most of our Bibles—one big jumble of words. So, let's begin to *open them up* so we can *see* them. Let's begin by separating the sentences:

> *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;*
> *the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;*
> *the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;*
> *the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;*
> *the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;*
> *the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.*

Great! Now we're *beginning* to see. And we can see that each sentence is made up of two phrases. The first a *statement* about God's Word which is made up of a subject ("law, testimony",

etc.), a verb ("is/are"), an adverb ("perfect, sure", etc.), along with an adjectival phrase ("of the LORD"). And then, secondly, there is a participial phrase ("restoring, making", etc.). (A *participle* is a *modifying* verb that "participates" in the meaning of the *main* verb.) (The grammar here and elsewhere in this text can sometimes be a bit more nuanced that my simple description. My purpose is not to discuss grammar for grammar's sake, but to help us understand the message of God's Word better.)

Now, let's open these sentences further to show their various relationships more clearly:

> *The law of the LORD is perfect,*
> *restoring the soul.*
> *The testimony of the LORD is sure,*
> *making wise the simple.*
> *The precepts of the LORD are right,*
> *rejoicing the heart.*
> *The commandment of the LORD is pure,*
> *enlightening the eyes.*
> *The fear of the LORD is clean,*
> *enduring forever.*
> *The judgments of the LORD are true;*
> *they are righteous altogether.*

OK - now let's take this process one step deeper, making a simple change that will have a helpful impact upon our ability to see the words and phrases of this text.

> *The law of the LORD*
> *is perfect,*
> *restoring the soul.*
>
> *The testimony of the LORD*
> *is sure,*
> *making wise the simple.*
>
> *The precepts of the LORD*
> *are right,*
> *rejoicing the heart.*
>
> *The commandment of the LORD*
> *is pure,*
> *enlightening the eyes.*
>
> *The fear of the LORD*
> *is clean,*
> *enduring forever.*
>
> *The judgments of the LORD*

> *are true;*
> > *they are righteous altogether.*

This is how phrasing works. We simply open the text up so we can *clearly see* the phrases of the text. Very *revealing*, isn't it!

What do we have here? Well, we can now *see* several things. We can see that there are six *titles* for God's Word—law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, and judgments. We can see, secondly, but more importantly, that the writer repeats, for emphasis, "of the LORD" six times. Then we have six *descriptions*—God's Word is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true! And, finally, we see six *results* or *effects* of God's Word—it restores the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, and, finally, provides a kind of comprehensive righteousness. (Wow, that's the book I want to read!) We might want, then, to spend some time doing some digging into these words (word studies), but, even if you had to stop here, what a Bible study this would be!

Now, what specifically did we do? We began by breaking the sentences into their natural phrases. Then we took the *subject* of each sentence and moved it to the far left, and we indented the *modifying* phrases to the right and under what they modify. This helps us to clearly see the relationships. This is what phrasing is all about—*seeing relationships*.

By the way, some exegetical methods require that *each* sentence be broken out in a way that shows *each* individual word relationship (i.e., sentence diagraming). (You will remember this from high school. And, yeah, I never liked it either!) I believe that we do not need to take this process beyond the phrase level. That is enough to show us the primary syntactical *relationships* clearly. Anything beyond this might be helpful for linguists and grammarians, but for us regular folks, who just want to get at the words of the Bible, it's going a bit too far. It might be interesting, but it's not real helpful for our purpose.

Now let's look at another passage— Ephesians 5:18-21, this time from the NASB.

> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Ephesians 5:18-21 NASB/95)

First, let's break it into in natural phrases:

> *And do not get drunk with wine,*
> *for that is dissipation,*
> *but be filled with the Spirit,*
> *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,*
> *singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;*

> *always giving thanks for all things*
> *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*
> *to God, even the Father;*
> *and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*

Take a look at how I've phrased it:

> And
>> **do not get drunk** with wine,
>>> for that is dissipation,
>> but
>> **be filled** with the Spirit,
>>> *speaking* to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
>>> *singing and making melody* with your heart to the Lord;
>>> always *giving thanks* for all things
>>>> in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
>>> to God, even the Father;
>> and
>>> *be subject* to one another in the fear of Christ.

To make the phrasing clear, I separated the conjunctions to the left, I bolded the **imperatives,** and I italicized the *modifiers,* i.e., the participles. (Note: participles are pretty easy to spot because they nearly always end in "-ing.")

So, again, once we lay it out by its syntactical phrases, we can *clearly* see what's here. First, Paul gives two commands which contrast with each other ("don't do that; do this!"). Then he describes the Spirit filled life with four participles—speaking, singing and making melody, giving thanks, and submitting. (I see "singing" and "making melody" as one phrase.) Wow, that would make a good and clear Bible study!

Note: Participles are used *extensively* throughout the New Testament, especially in the epistles. *They will never be the primary verb. They will always modify it.* Look for those essential relationships! They are key to understanding meaning in a given passage, as you will see.

OK - Let's go for one more. Colossians 2:6–7. This will be a bit different!

> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. (Colossians 2:6–7 NAS95)

Let's break it into phrases:

Therefore
as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,
so walk in Him,
having been firmly rooted
and now being built up in Him
and established in your faith,
just as you were instructed,
and overflowing with gratitude.

Cool—now let's phrase it out!

Therefore
    as
      you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,
    so
      walk in Him,

      having been firmly rooted
  and
      now being built up in Him
  and
      established in your faith,
           just as you were instructed,
  and
      overflowing with gratitude.

Or, we could see it like this:

Therefore
    as
      you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,
        having been firmly rooted
    so
      walk in Him,
        now
          being built up in Him
           and
          established in your faith,
             just as you were instructed,
         and
          overflowing with gratitude.

The as/so relationship is pretty clear. But how do you see the rest? Is it a simple four part description of the our walk—rooted, being built up, established, and overflowing? Or does the "having been firmly rooted" describe the receiving, and the others describe the walking?

Sometimes your phrasing will reveal the text more clearly. Sometimes it will open up more questions than answers. Good! Remember Paul's admonition to Timothy, "Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2Tim 2:7, ESV). Questions lead to two good things. First, it gives us an opportunity to wrestle with the text—to consider and meditate on it. Second, when we read good commentaries we will not just understand what the pastor/scholar is writing, but we will grasp *why* he has come to a certain conclusion!

That's the joy of wrestling with the Word!

Note: Depending upon how much Bible study time you might have and how long the book is that you are studying, don't feel that you have to phrase out the WHOLE BOOK! If the book is short, fine. But if it is long your overview of the book and initial outline will give you a feel for what are the important sections to phrase.

Phrasing Illustrated: Philippians

Now, let's apply this to our (hypothetical) Bible study of Philippians. Remember that the process of exegesis is wrestling with the text of Scripture in such as way that we can *see* what the author wrote. Our understanding of what he wrote is absolutely dependent upon our *seeing the words and phrases he uses*.

So, let's take the text of Philippians, section by section, and phrase it out. First, copy out the opening section, verses 1:1-2. Here it is:

> *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* (Philippians 1:1–2 ESV)

Now let's begin to open it up. We don't have many sentences here so we can move right to the various phrases. Begin by inserting breaks after each phrase:

> *Paul and Timothy,*
> *servants of Christ Jesus,*
> *to all the saints in Christ Jesus*
> *who are at Philippi,*
> *with the overseers and deacons:*
> *Grace to you and peace*
> *from God our Father*
> *and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Good. This helps us to see the individual groups of words that make up the text. And we can see that some of the groups of words are *modifying* something. For instance, the phrase "servants of Christ Jesus" is a description of Paul and Timothy. And the phrase "in Christ Jesus" tells us something about the Philippians. What we can do is insert some tabs and position those modifying phrases under the text they modify. Like this:

> *Paul and Timothy,*
>   *servants of Christ Jesus,*
> *to all the saints*
>   *in Christ Jesus*
>   *who are at Philippi,*
>   *with the overseers and deacons:*
>   *Grace and peace to you*
>   *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Good, now we can see what's going on here. In classic epistle style (and unlike modern English style), the letter begins with who the authors are and a greeting to their audience. Paul describes he and Timothy as slaves of Christ, and describes the Christians in Philippi as saints who are both in Christ and in Philippi, and includes the leaders. Then he gives them a two fold blessing of grace and peace, stating that those blessings are from the Father and the Son. So, now that we've opened the text up so we can *see* it, it becomes a good basis upon which we can do our observational work.

The next section is much longer, chapter one verses 3 to 11. You will often need to break a section up into smaller more manageable sub-sections. We can break this section into two pieces, Paul's opening comments to the Philippians (vs 3-8) and his prayer for them (vs 7-9). The verses in this first sub-section are:

> *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 1:3–8 ESV)

Again, we start by separating out the individual phrases:

> *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,*
> *always in every prayer of mine for you all*
> *making my prayer with joy,*
> *because of your partnership in the gospel*
> *from the first day until now.*
> *And I am sure of this,*
> *that he who began a good work in you*
> *will bring it to completion*
> *at the day of Jesus Christ.*
> *It is right for me to feel this way about you all,*
> *because I hold you in my heart,*
> *for you are all partakers with me of grace,*
> *both in my imprisonment*
> *and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*
> *For God is my witness,*
> *how I yearn for you all*
> *with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

Now, as we lay out the phrases let's take it a step further. The phrases in a given text are, grammatically, not all equal. Some are *clauses* (that is, they have a subject and a finite verb) and some are *dependent* phrases (that is, they are dependent upon a main clause, and therefore, they

modify that main clause). Let's put the main clauses in a prominent position to the left of our page and move the dependent constructions (modifiers) under and to the right of the clauses they modify. We can also put a bit of space between the sentences.

(By the way, when I use the word "phrase," as in *phrasing*, I mean a *general* term which refers to the various groups of words in a sentence. When I make a *contrast* between "clauses" and "phrases" I am speaking of their *grammatical distinction*, that is, as independent or dependent groups of words.)

So, here is how I see this sub-section:

> *I thank my God*
> > *in all my remembrance of you,*
> > *always in every prayer of mine for you all*
> > > *making my prayer with joy,*
> > > > *because of your partnership in the gospel*
> > > > > *from the first day until now.*

> *And I am sure of this,*
> > *that he who began a good work in you*
> > > *will bring it to completion*
> > > > *at the day of Jesus Christ.*

> *It is right for me to feel this way about you all,*
> > *because I hold you in my heart,*
> > > *for you are all partakers with me of grace,*
> > > > *both in my imprisonment*
> > > > *and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*

> > *For God is my witness,*
> *how I yearn for you all*
> > > *with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

Wow! Paul's heart was really tied to these people. It's clear that they had struggled together for the Gospel in many and various ways, and, because of that, he cared for them deeply. These phrases then become the gems for a rich Bible study.

Remember, what we want to do is to separate out the main statements from the modifiers. You can tell a main statement because it has an *indicative* verb (a verb that indicates something). And you can tell a modifying phrase because it is modifying the main statement. Take that last sentence, verse 8, "For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." What is the main statement? Well, at first glance it might be "For God is my witness." But God is Paul's witness about what? Isn't it "how I yearn for you all"? Sure. So what we have in verse 8 is a simple statement about yearning, and two modifying phrases that describe that yearning—how God is his witness and how it is with the affection of Christ.

You can see that, although sometimes the phrasing appears a bit tricky, if you focus on "what's the main statement and what are the modifiers" you will do fine!

Now, let's take the other sub-section in our text. Verses 9-11 say:

> *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.* (Philippians 1:9–11 ESV)

Great prayer! So let's phrase it out. We start by separating the various phrases:

And it is my prayer
that your love may abound more and more,
with knowledge and all discernment,
so that you may approve what is excellent, and
so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
filled with the fruit of righteousness
that comes through Jesus Christ,
to the glory and praise of God.

And here's what our phrasing looks like:

> *And it is my prayer*
> > *that your love may abound more and more,*
> > > *with knowledge and all discernment,*
> > *so that you may approve what is excellent,*
> > > *and*
> > *so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,*
> >
> > > *filled with the fruit of righteousness*
> > > > *that comes through Jesus Christ,*
> > > *to the glory and praise of God.*

Great! What do we see here? Briefly, we see that the content of Paul's prayer is that the Philippians would *abound* in love. But not just any love; he prays that it would be a love that is full of knowledge and discernment. Secondly, we can see that the *purpose* of his prayer is that the Philippians would, with this knowledgeable and discerning love, be able to approve excellent things *so as to be* pure and blameless at the arrival of Christ. Then Paul uses a participle verb (*having been filled*) to show that this whole process is because of the fruit of righteousness that Jesus brings, to the glory of God.

OK. So how did I know that the verb "filled" is really a participle? It's simple, and I'll show you how when we get to our discussion about Greek verbs. Note also that Paul says that this filling is with, not "righteousness," but the "*fruit* of righteousness." What is the *fruit* of righteousness? Well, that is an *interpretive* question. That's the *next* step of exegesis. Here we are just concerned to see *what* Paul says, but noticing those kind of things is an important part of seeing.

So, these examples show us how the phrasing process can help us "open-up" the words of Scripture so that we can see their *relationships* and therefore come to grips with their *meaning*. *Again, the main point of phrasing is to identify the main statements and then those phrases that modify the main statements.* Go back through the examples in this chapter and the previous one and work them out. See why I did what I did.

And, by the way, depending upon the size of the book you are studying and how much time you have, you may not want to phrase out *every* verse. You may just want to do the "important passages." Trouble is, how do you know which passages are the "important" ones unless you've phrased it first?! I would suggest that if you are short on time do the phrasing *first*. Like our phrasing on Psalm 19 and Ephesians 5, you may feel that that provides a great Bible study in and of itself. And if you feel that you need to do some more work—like word studies and such —the phrasing will make it clear where you can do work.

Basic Word Studies

Once we've phrased a given passage, once we've discovered its basic statements and modifying phrases, we've made a good start on our observation process. And now is a good time to continue that process by looking at the key words of the passage.

We've said before that words have little meaning apart from their syntactical relationships. That's not quite accurate. Words can have many meanings, but its exact meaning will be revealed by the word's *syntactical relationships* and its use *in context*. Remember:

meaning = words + syntax + context

Remember my illustration using the word *dog*? "It's getting late. We'd better dog it." I don't mean that we need to go get some dogs! I'm using an idiom that means "we've got to work like a dog."

Another example: on Navy ships, water-tight integrity is important. (Destroy a ship's water-tight integrity and you sink the ship!) You want to make sure that after you go through a hatch, especially during general quarters, you shut the hatch firmly. A shipmate might tell me, "Make sure you dog down that hatch!" He is not speaking of literal dogs. He means to close the hatch completely. (Curious, no! We also had an expression "dog the watch.")

Here we have three (four) distinct meanings of "dog." How do we know which one is being used? We understand which meaning is being used because of the situation and the context.

The same thing is true of the Bible. The word *sarx* (σαρξ) has a number of meanings. It can mean someone's physical body; it can mean all of humanity as in "all flesh is like grass and withers"; it can mean someone's ethnicity as "Abraham's flesh" (descendants); and it can mean the "body of sin" i.e. the Flesh. The context will help us decide.

The words "dog" and "sarx" have a "bundle" of meanings. Scholars call this the word's "semantic range." What we want to do in word studies is to discover a word's semantic range and then, using a text's syntax and context, try to determine what particular meaning the Biblical writer intended.

Every text has a number of words. We don't necessarily want to research every one. That would be quite tedious and, probably, unnecessary. So what words do we research? Again, context will help us out. First, you look for words that are repeated. Biblical writers used words carefully and it is no accident that the writer used the same word a couple of times. This could be a key to the interpretation of the passage. Second, look for any significant theological terms. (I'm using "theological" in a broad sense.) Thirdly, if you've looked at the passage in several translations (a good idea!), there might be words that are translated differently. This might be a clue that the word is difficult to translate directly into English and may well be one we'd want to research carefully.

Also, during our phrasing process, we're going to identify the main points and the sub-points of the writer. Obviously, you'd want to study the key words of the main points (usually *the verbs*), but you would also want to spend some time on the modifiers of the sub-points. (Together those modifiers help you clearly understand the main points!)

Now, an English dictionary is a good tool to use to discover the various meanings of an *English* word. But we want to dig a bit deeper because we want to discover the meaning of the underlying Hebrew or Greek word. Those are the words the writers of Scripture used and, therefore, those are the ones we want to study. Helpfully, there are many good English resources we have available today to do this without having to learn Hebrew or Greek!

One of the most basic is a concordance. The best concordances are "exhaustive" ones (because they list every word in the Bible), and they are available for both NASB and ESB, the two best translations for exegetical work. Simply look up a word you're studying in the main body of the concordance and you'll find a number. (There are two kinds of numbers, "GK" and "Strongs." We'll define that at the end of the chapter.) Then look up that number in the Hebrew or Greek sections in the back of the concordance to find a simple meaning, or "gloss."

But a gloss is, well, glossy! We probably want to dig a bit deeper and the best way to do that is with an expository dictionary. An expository dictionary gives you a much deeper and fuller explanation of the words you want to study. The best available today is *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, by William Mounce. He is one of the better Greek scholars of this generation, and the son of one of the best of the earlier generation (Robert Mounce). Bill was the chair of the *English Standard Version* New Testament committee, and, for many years, was the head of the New Testament Greek department at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. (You can find the book here: https://www.christianbook.com/mounces-complete-expository-dictionary-testament-words/9780310248781/pd/248787?event=ESRCN)

Mounce's dictionary is divided into two parts. In the back are the lexicons where he gives you a working definition of the Hebrew or Greek word. You can look a word up by its Hebrew or Greek form, or by using either the Strongs or GK number. (Again, I'll define that in a moment.) In the front he has an English dictionary where he gives a much broader definition—a better semantic range—of the Hebrew or Greek word.

For example, if you looked up the word agape (ἀγάπη) in the back, he'll give you a quick definition (gloss) of it and tell you that there is a fuller definition in the front of the book under *love*. So you look up *love* in the front and it will discuss the various Hebrew and Greek words that are usually translated *love*.

When you research a word you need to keep a couple of concepts in mind. Most of the time, the semantic range of an English word is *not the same* as a Greek word. The semantic range of the English word *love* is really broad. For example, "I *love* my wife and I *love* chocolate cake." Those two "loves" mean different things!) Greek, however, has four different words for *love* and they are much more narrow than our English word. What you will usually come up with is a number of English words whose semantic range *includes* the Greek word. What you need to do is wrestle

with the context and come up with the closest proximity. You'll often arrive at a small group of English words which *together* approximate the Greek word.

A good example is the word "fellowship" from Philippians. The Greek word is *koinonia* (κοινωνία), and can be translated as "partnership," "participation," "association," and "sharing," and even other words in English that have a similar meaning. This *broader* definition will give you a *broader* view of the meaning of the Greek word.

You'll also find that there are Greek words which have been brought over into English. (They're called *cognates*.) Examples are *angelos* (ἄγγελος) which means *messenger or angel,* and *cardia* (καρδία) *heart*, from which we get cardiologist. You will also immediately recognize *prophetes* (προφήτης) or *prophet*. However, and this is very important to understand, there are other cognate words which have come into English which bear little relation to their Greek "cousin." For instance the Greek word for mouth is *stomatos* (στόματος) which, for what ever reason, was brought into English as "stomach." And when Albert Nobel invited an explosive compound in 1867 he gave it the name *dynamite* from one of the Greek words for power—*dunamis* (δύναμις). Although you have probably heard countless Bible teachers say that *dunamis* means "explosive power," it *does not*! It simply means "ability" or "capacity." Do not make the mistake of defining a 1st century Greek word by a 19th century invention. Basically, don't try to define a Greek word by its English cognate! Define it by *its own* Greek definition.

Another thing to keep in mind is that writers use words in their own fashion. Just because John uses a word in a certain way, it is by no means certain that Paul will use it in the same way. And Paul may use a word in a certain way in one epistle and use it in a slightly different way in another epistle. (Remember, although the two epistles may be separated by only a few *pages* in your Bible, they might be separated by many *years* in Paul's experience.) So the best rule of thumb is to stay as close to the passage under consideration as possible. Look for how the word is used in the same epistle before you compare it with another epistle. And look for how it is used by one writer elsewhere before you compare it to how it is used by another writer. (The good tools will help you do this. That is why they are good tools!)

Our best guide here is our translations themselves. The people who translate the best versions (NASB, ESV, NLT, NET) are gifted scholars. They know the languages. They have wrestled with the words. So look at how they translate a passage. Yes, do your homework, seek to gain a deeper understanding of the Bible's words, but don't rush off into an altogether different meaning. Our purpose is not to *correct* the translations but to *understand* them!

So, *remember our goal.* We want to research a word deeply enough so that we can begin to grasp its semantic range. Then we want to wrestle with the text enough so that we can see in what way our writer used that word. Remember:

meaning = words + syntax + context

Finally, a word about this "Strongs/GK" numbers thing.

Back in the nineteenth century, James Strong (one of the translators of the old *American Standard Version* (ASV)) indexed the Hebrew and Greek works in the *Authorized Version* (KJV). It was a massive undertaking which took many years and was finally published in 1890. (He didn't do it alone. Some colleagues helped him.) About a hundred years later, and with the aid of computers, Philip Goodrich and John Kohlenberger revised Strong's list. Although they are similar in function, the GK numbers are slightly different than Strongs. Some resources will favor the GK numbers, and some will favor the Strongs.

Note: For those of you who are interested in going deeper, at least as far as New Testament Greek is concerned, a much fuller definition of Greek words than Mounce gives is found in *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., by Walter Bauer and edited by Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, commonly referred to by the initials *BDAG*. This is *the* standard Greek lexicon. The downside for our level of study is that you must look up words in their Greek form and the writers do assume that you've had some Greek exposure. But it is worth the effort and the cost!

Verbs and Connectives

I'd like to go back and review a few grammatical issues and pickup a few items I left unsaid. Now, I know how much you all love grammar! I'm sure it was your favorite subject in school. (Well, maybe not!) But it is vitally important in our study of the words of the Bible.

The truth is we all use grammar everyday. It is so ingrained in our use of language that we use it *unconsciously*. It's like looking through a set of eyeglasses—when you do so you notice what you're looking at and don't notice your glasses. (For those of you who wear eyeglasses, you probably only think about it once a year when you visit the optometrist.) But, when we come to the Bible, seeing *unconsciously* is not a good idea.

To begin, all sentences have verbs. And there are two primary things we want to notice about the verbs in any given passage we are studying. First of all, the verb will have a tense. It could be past tense, present tense, future tense. Verbs can also be active or passive. Verbs can have modes, like imperatives (a command). It (almost) goes without saying that we should notice these details.

But verbs can also be *indicative* or *participial*. Indicatives "indicate" something—they will indicate the primary thing that is going on in a passage. And participles will modify or color the primary verb. Therefore, participles "participate" in the meaning of the primary verb. We looked at this distinction in our phrasing of Ephesians 5:18-21.

Let's look at it again in another passage—Colossians 1:28-29.
> *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.* (Colossians 1:28–29 ESV)

I'll phrase it out so you can see how this works.
> *Him we proclaim,*
>   *warning everyone*
>   *and*
>   *teaching everyone*
>   *with all wisdom,*
>   *that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*
>
> *For this I toil,*
>   *struggling with all his energy*
>   *that he powerfully works within me.*

Paul says he (and his companions) "proclaim" Christ. That's clearly an indicative verb. Being so, it is the primary verb and, therefore, the primary thing Paul is saying. But that primary statement is modified by three phrases. First, there are two participles—"warning" and "teaching." (Participles are usually easy to recognize because they end in "ing.") Then there is a

purpose statement showing us *why* they are warning and teaching—"that we may present…" Lastly we have a short modifying phrase "with all wisdom," which shows us *how* they are warning and teaching. (It's not a verb, just a modifying phrase.) So, what we see here is, so far, pretty straight forward—a primary verb with modifiers.

Then there is this last bit about toiling which is a simple indicative "toil" with two participles that shows us how he toiled, *struggling* with Christ's energy, *working* powerfully in him. (The participle "working powerfully" is not really clear in English, but at least you can see that it is a modifying phrase, which works out to be much the same thing.)

The thing to grasp here is that this passage has two pretty clear indicative verbs, "proclaim" and "toil" and some participles and phrases that modify those verbs. And it should be clear that this little exercise in grammar has a major impact on our ability to *understand* this passage. That's the point. As I said in the other chapter on grammar, the reason we do this is not to describe grammar, but to understand our Bible. When we grasp the syntactical relationships we are beginning to really understand what it is the writers of Scripture want us to see.

So, verbs are key to understanding a given passage. And there is another key—*connectives*. Connectives are the little words that have big meaning in a language. Remember our study of Ephesians 5:18-21. "Do not get drunk with wine…but be filled with the Spirit…" That little word "but" has a massive impact on our understanding of this passage. Paul is *contrasting* two things, *getting drunk* and *being filled* with the Spirit. And in the passage we just phrased (on the previous page), Paul *joins* two ideas by using the word "and"—warning *and* teaching.

These "connectives" are called *conjunctions*, and there are two kinds—coordinating and subordinate.

Coordinating conjunctions are used to link *independent* clauses. They can also link two sentences, two direct objects, etc. The most common coordinating conjunctions are "and," "but," "for," "therefore," and, don't miss this one, "or."
> I had a cheeseburger *and* fries for lunch.
> I went to the party *but* Brandon had to stay home.
> You can have either cake *or* ice cream.

Subordinate conjunctions are used to start a dependent *phrase* and thereby link it to an independent *clause.* The most common are "because," "so that," "if," and "when."
> I love grammar *because* it helps me understand my Bible better.
> Jesus died for our sins *so that* we might be saved.

I said that there were two conjunctions but there is also another kind that we call *correlative* conjunctions. These are those little words that work as a pair, like "as…so," or "both…and." We saw one earlier, "*as* you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk in Him." (Colossians 2:6)

I know that this is a brief discussion. (I don't want to go back to 8th grade English either!) but it is this kind of language distinction that is critical in Bible study. And this is the kind of thing you need to be looking for as you wrestle with the Words of God. That's one big reason I love

phrasing, because it forces me to *notice* the syntactical relationships. And "noticing" is what Bible study is all about!

The Heart of this Book

Like any new skill, whether learning to play the guitar or learning Morse code (and I'm finding *that* tough going!), it takes time and repetition to get it. What I'm doing in this little book is simply introducing you to some important concepts and ideas that I trust will lead you deeper into the Word of God and thereby deeper in your relationship with Him. So, I want to take a moment to review some of what we've been discussing.

At the risk of being redundant, the main point I want to make is that Bible study is mainly about *seeing*, seeing the *words* and the *relationships* of those words. That is where meaning is revealed in a piece of literature. And when something is not just mere literature, but the very Words of God, it becomes really important.

I believe that there are two keys to Bible study—verbs and conjunctions. Of *verbs*, you will notice that there are generally two types, what I call *primary* and *modifiers*. The primary verbs will usually be either indicatives or imperatives. The modifiers are pretty much everything else, the participles and modifying phrases. (New Testament verbs are more nuanced than I am describing here. But, at our level, this works just fine!)

The other important thing is the *connectives* that the writer uses. Go back and look at our phrasing of Colossians 1:28-29 above. You will notice that an understanding of the text is dependent upon the two primary verbs (warning and teaching), as well as the modifying phrases. But look at those little connectives—"and," "that," and "with." Notice how that opens up a deeper understanding of how the modifying phrases modify the primary verbs.

I have been greatly helped in this regard by the wonderfully simple tool we have been using called phrasing. The way that phrasing-out the text opens up our eyes to the syntactical relationships in a given passage is nothing short of amazing!

I want to encourage you to go back and study the phrasings we have done. Notice how they open the passages we have looked at. Pay primarily attention to the verbs and connectives. They will drive you deeper into the meaning of the passage you are considering.

And, above all, remember that while understanding the writer is *the* point of Bible study, it's not the *purpose* of it. The purpose of Bible study is that we might know, walk with, and worship God! But, before we can do that, we must understand the words of the authors that He inspired.

Note: We're going to move now to consider how we can use the Greek text of the New Testament, and especially the great Greek tools that we have available today, to deepen and enrich our study of the Bible. Unfortunately, many consider Greek to be a great mystery and difficult to learn. Well, that might be true if we're going to learn the Greek language as someone might learn French or Japanese. But that is not our purpose in Bible study. Sure, Greek is a wonderful language and there are some, such as myself, who will want to spend the time (much

time!) to learn it. However, there are many really wonderful tools we can use to "get at the Greek behind the English" without having to learn the full language. So, if you are nervous about the rest of this book, don't be. I think if you dive in and at least read the material you will find it is not as "mysterious" as you may have thought!

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY GREEK

Starting with New Testament Greek

Starting With Greek:

Classical and Koiné Greek

The language of the Greeks began sometime before the 2nd Millennium B.C. Its alphabet was developed from the Phoenicians. Beginning with Homer, about the tenth century B.C., and especially from the sixth century B.C., with playwrights such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, and philosophers like Plato, Greek blossomed into what many consider the greatest language ever. (Latin scholars will disagree.)

Philip of Macedonia conquered and unified Greece in the fourth century, B.C., and his son, Alexander the Great, who was tutored by the great philosopher Aristotle, set out and conquered the eastern Mediterranean world. As he did so, he spread Greek culture and language. His followers established a system of culture and trade such that Greek became, in effect, the unifying language throughout the Mediterranean world. This is similar to our day in which English is the international language of the world. When a German businessman goes to Japan to do business, the two usually speak English. Similarly, in the first century, when a Persian trader does business in Crete, they spoke Koiné Greek, or Common Greek.

(Interestingly, there were so many Jews scattered throughout the Mediterranean world, and who were more comfortable with Greek than with Hebrew, that the Old Testament was translated into Greek. This is called the Septuagint, after the number of scholars who translated it (seventy). It was the common scriptures of the Apostles. You might also note, though, that the Septuagint uses quite a bit more Classical Greek than the Koiné of the New Testament.)

When, in the providence of God, the time came for the expansion of the Gospel of Christ during the first century, the apostles and evangelists could travel, speak, and write in a language that could be understood all over the world. Funny, the Romans built roads to facilitate the movement of their armies; God used it to facilitate the movement of apostles and evangelists. The Greeks spread language for the building of culture and commerce; God used it for the building of the body of Christ.

In the Appendix there is a Greek Alphabet and Pronunciation Guide. It is *optional*, but I highly recommend it. Most of the better tools use the Greek form, not the English transliteration. And it's really not as hard as at first it might seem. Yes, it requires a bit of work, but it will serve you well if you put in some time. (And it's really a lot of fun!)

Inflection

Before we can dive into Greek verbs we need to discuss inflection. Sounds complicated, but it's really pretty simple. It's one of those things we use every day but hardly notice.

In English, the relationship of the words, and therefore their meaning, is mostly based upon their *word order*. Thus, we know what the *subject* and the *direct object* are by their *order* in the sentence. Switch the order and you switch the meaning. Thus, "The boy hit the ball," takes the opposite meaning when we say, "The ball hit the boy!" (Ouch!)

In Greek, word order is not that important. (Sounds weird, doesn't it. But its true!) So how did Greeks understand meaning if not by the order of the words in the sentence? By the *inflection* of the words. To inflect is to change the *form* of a word and thus its meaning. We do something similar in English. For instance we might say:

> "*She* put my book in *her* library."

Both "she" and "her" are pronouns that refer to the third person female, and we switch "she" to "her" in order to show possession, "her keys." In other words, we change the *form* of "she" to "her" to change the *meaning*. (We could also use "he" or "his.") To show possession in a regular noun we use an apostrophe, as in "*Ethan's* Bible."

Or, take the sentence, "Would you *lend* me your book?" "Lend" is a present tense verb. But what if we change the sentence to, "I *lent* him my book." Here the form of the verb changes, or inflects, to show a new meaning—the past tense.

(This is pretty common stuff, and we do it all of the time in conversation without much conscious effort. But when we come to the Bible we need to *slow down* and *think through* what's going on.)

Other than pronouns and verbs, English is not very inflected—but Greek is. It inflects (nearly) everything! So let's take a simple sentence about God and man. In Greek it would be:

θεὸς	ἀγαπᾶω	ἄνθρωπον	(Note the –ς, and –ν endings on God and man.)
theos	agapao	anthropov	(They show the subject and direct object, respectively.)
God	loves	man.	

And to switch it around it becomes:

ἄνθρωπος	ἀγαπᾶω	θεόν	(Again, note the –ς, and –ν endings.)
Man	loves	God.	

You'll also note that Greek uses capital letters differently—only for proper names and to begin paragraphs and quotations. And by the way, "God" is not a proper name in Greek. (I know, it sounds strange.)

(Please forgive me, but I have to use Greek letters below to make this inflection thing clear. Just note that, with inflection, the *form* of the word changes and thus its meaning. Like "she" and "her.")

We could even take our basic sentence, "God loves man," and say it four ways! (Note the inflected endings):

<div align="center">

θεὸς   ἄνθρωπον   ἀγαπῶ
God   man   loves

ἄνθρωπον   θεὸς   ἀγαπῶ
man   God   loves

ἀγαπῶ   θεὸς   ἄνθρωπον
loves   God   man

</div>

Or even: ἄνθρωπον   ἀγαπῶ   θεὸς
            man   loves   God

All four mean nearly *the same thing* in Greek.

The place where you will run into inflection the most is with verbs, like in this case ἀγαπῶ (agapao), which is the present tense of "love." Each different Greek verb *form* (inflection) tells us what kind of verb it is—present, past, future, etc. Thus ἀγαπῶ (agapao) is present tense, while ἀγαπησαντοσ (agapesantos) is past tense (aorist).

Now, if we were studying full Greek, we would have to memorize many, many lists of verbal endings so we could tell what the verb tenses are. But since we are studying Bible study level Greek, we don't have to memorize all of that stuff. We're going to "cheat"—we're just going to look them up in our Greek New Testaments! (You'll learn how as we move along.) But, for now, what we want to understand is that Greek words change their *form* which changes their *meaning* in a sentence.

An Introduction to Greek Verbs

The Greek verbal system is perhaps the most colorful and nuanced of any language in the history of humanity. And this is the language that God chose to use to instruct us regarding the appearance and meaning of our Lord's life and work.

Greek verbs, similar to English, have *person*, *number*, *tense*, *voice*, and *mood*.

Person & Number
The *first person* is the person doing the action of the verb ("*I* hit the ball," or "*We* went to the store"). The *second person* is someone or thing spoken *to* ("*You* hit the ball," or "*You* (plural) went to the store"). The *third person* is someone or thing spoken *about* ("He hit the ball," or "They went to the store"). *Number* just indicates whether the subject is singular or plural ("me" or "we"). (Note: in English, we use the same word "you" whether singular or plural. In Greek it is clear, whether singular or plural.)

Tense
English has three primary *tenses—past*, *present*, and *future*. English tenses also have *aspect* —such as when the action is spoken of as continuous ("I was playing golf.") or whether the action is just simply stated ("I played golf last week.) Thus, English verb tenses have both *time* and *aspect*, but, in English, *time is more important than aspect*. (Please do not confuse *tense* and *time*.)

Greek has six *tenses—present*, *imperfect*, *future*, *aorist*, *perfect*, and *pluperfect*. Like English, Greek tenses have both aspect and time. Unlike English, aspect is for more important in Greek verbs than time. (Please keep in mind that, although there are *similarities* between Greek and English, there is no exact *equivalence*.)

The Greek *present* tense usually describes a continuous action occurring in present time. "The teacher *is speaking* to the class."

The *imperfect* tense indicates an action continually or repeatedly occurring in past time. "The teacher *was speaking* to the class yesterday."

The *future* tense describes an undefined action that will happen sometime in the future. "The teacher *will speak* to the class later this week."

The Greek *aorist* tense usually describes an undefined action that happened in the past. "The teacher *spoke* to the class last week." (Some older resources speak of the aorist tense having a "punctiliar" aspect, that is a "one time" action, as in "the wave *hit* the boat." The aorist *could* be read that way but *the context will make it clear*. Generally it is best to view the aorist as *undefined*.)

The Greek *perfect* tense indicates the continuation and present state of a completed past action. "The teacher *has spoken* to us about that subject." As opposed to, "the teacher was speaking."

Notes the difference between imperfect and perfect. The imperfect is a continuous or repetitive past action; the perfect is a *completed* past action with *present* ramifications.

The *pluperfect* shows action that is complete and existed at some time in the past. "The teacher *had spoken* about that." The difference between pluperfect and perfect is a bit subtle in English, but it's clear in Greek.

Voice
Voice refers to whether the subject is *doing* the action (*active voice*) or is *receiving* the action (*passive voice*). "I drove to the dance." or "I was driven to the dance by my mother."

Like English, Greek has an *active* and a *passive* voice. And, unlike English, Greek also has a *middle* voice. The middle voice indicates that the subject is doing an action *in his own interest* or *on his own behalf*. Because we have nothing like it in English, the middle voice is very challenging. (Note, Greek also has a verb known as a "deponent" that is middle or passive in form (inflection), but is active in meaning. This is a bit advanced for our purposes, but you will run into it so you at least need to know that it exists. Please see the note at the end of this chapter.)

Mood
Mood refers to whether the asserted statement is actual or if there is only the possibility of its actual occurrence (from the perspective of the speaker/writer). There are four moods in Greek —*indicative*, *imperative*, *subjunctive*, and *optative*.

The *indicative* mood "indicates" a statement of fact or an actual occurrence from the speaker's or writer's perspective. This is in distinction to the other moods in which the speaker/writer may *desire*, *ask*, or *command* for the action to take place. "The teacher *taught* the class." "Jesus *healed* the blind man."

The *imperative* mood is a command or instruction given to the hearer. "*Be filled* with the Spirit!" "*Love* one another!"

The *subjunctive* mood indicates probability or possibility, often depending on certain objective factors or circumstances. It is often used in conditional statements (i.e. 'If...then...' clauses), in purpose clauses, and with conditional phrases. "*If* you believe in Me *you will be saved*."

The *optative* is the mood of possibility, often used to convey a wish or hope for a certain action to occur. (There are only a few optative verbs in the New Testament.)

Participles and Infinitives
There are two other types of Greek verbs you will run into—*participles*, and *infinitives*.

Participles are verbal adjectives or adverbs similar to English words ending in "-ing." They can modify a noun or, more often, modify and define (explain) the action of the indicative (primary) verb. You might say that participles "participate" in the meaning of the primary verb—they

modify and color it. Participles are used extensively throughout the New Testament, *especially* in the writings of Paul. (You will recall the phrasing we did in the first half of this book.)

Infinitives are "verbal nouns." They are often translated with "to," thus—"to live," or "to feel," or "to think."

Please note—Greek verbs are far more nuanced than English verbs, and the writers of the New Testament use them in many and varied ways. This rather quick overview of Greek verbs is not meant to give you a comprehensive understanding, but merely an introduction. I am NOT giving you enough information so you can *correct* any of our translations, but an overview so that you can *understand* them better.

And while all of this may seem like overload, keep in mind that as beginning Bible study Greek students *we want to look for two things, and basically just two things—primary verbs and modifiers.* We want to identify the indicative and the imperative verbs. (I'll show you how in a coming chapter.) Everything else will usually be modifiers of one kind or another. Of course you could have a clause in which an indicative verb modifies another indicative verb clause, but that will be fairly obvious. And remember, right now we're just getting out feet wet!

Lastly, I'd like to end this somewhat dry chapter on verbs with some fun. Let's look at the verbs from John 16:33, a wonderful verse! (I'm not doing a full phrasing.)

> *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

Here are the verbs:
"have said" - λελάληκα (lelaleka), perfect active indicative
"may have (peace)" - ἔχητε (exete), present active subjunctive
"will have (tribulation)" - ἔχετε (exete), present active indicative
"take heart" - θαρσεῖτε (tharseite), present active imperative
"have overcome" - νενίκηκα (nenikeka), perfect active indicative

You will note that the verse starts and ends with two *perfect* verbs. A perfect verb indicates the continuation and present state of a *completed* past action. In the first Jesus is saying that, *because of the words he has spoken*, we can have peace. "Peace" is subjunctive, which is a verb of probability, and indicates that, *because of the words Jesus has spoken* (that's the condition), we can or may have peace. So, *believing Jesus' words for us*, we can grasp His peace by faith. The third verb is present active indicative, indicating that tribulation is real and among us! But Jesus gives us a command, take heart (an imperative), because He has overcome the world. "Overcome" is the second perfect, again, indicating the continuation and present state of a *completed* past action. Jesus' victory over the world is done and complete! It is finished, as He said (John 19:30). This is a quick look at this wonderful verse. Meditate on the verbs! How richly they reveal this text to us!

NOTE: I need to mention something about deponent verbs. Remember, deponents are middle or passive *in form* but active *in meaning*. The issue here is that most of your parsing guides get this wrong. Because they are looking up the verb *form* in their database they correctly identify the *form* as passive or middle. (Passive and middle are often the same in form.) But that means that the parsing guides will misidentify deponents, showing them as passive or middle when they are really to be understood as active. So what do you do? How do you correctly identify deponents? Well, it really isn't all that hard. The dictionary form of a verb is in the present active indicative, such as βάλλω (ballo, "throwing"). You can see that the verb ends -ω. A deponent's present active indicative form ends in -ομαι, such as πορεύομαι, poreuomai, "going." When you parse a verb your software will show you the present active indicative form. So, what I recommend you do is, while parsing, look at the verb. If it ends -ομαι, then you know its a deponent!

By the way, the only Greek tool I know that parses deponents correctly is *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament*, by John Schwandt and C. John Collins, published by Crossway. I highly recommend this tool!

(Much of the material in this chapter is derived from Bill Mounce's excellent book, *Greek for the Rest of Us*. I highly recommend it! He gives a much fuller treatment of Greek verbs there than my summary of them here.)

AN INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY GREEK

WRESTLING II

Digging Deeper: Phrasing II

Now let's apply our new knowledge of Greek verbs to the practice of phrasing.

Matthew 28:18-20
Let's take a look at a well know verse — Matt 28:18-20.

> And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 NASB/95)

First, as is our pattern, let's divide the passage into natural phrases. (I'm dropping off the opening words, focusing on the statement by our Lord.)

> All authority has been given to Me
> in heaven and on earth.
> Go therefore and
> make disciples of all the nations,
> baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;
> and lo, I am with you always,
> even to the end of the age.

Now let's look at what verbs we have. There are eight—*given, go, make disciples, baptizing, teaching, observe, command* and *am*. Then, let's *parse* them, that is, discover their verb form in our Greek New Testament or our software program (which I will explain in the next chapter). Thus we find that there is one *indicative*, three of them are *participles*, three are *infinitives*, and only one, "make disciples," is an *imperative*. It parses out like this:

> *given* ἐδόθή (edothe) - aorist passive indicative (aor pass ind)
> *go* πορευθέντες (poreuthentes) - aorist deponent participle (aor dep part)
> *make disciples* μαθητεύσατε (matheteusate) - aorist active imperative (aor act imp)
> *baptizing* βαπτίζοντες (baptidzontes) - present active participle (pres act part)
> *teaching* διδάσκοντες (didaskontes) - present active participle (pres act part)
> *observe* τηρεῖν (terein) - present active infinitive (pres act inf)
> *command* ἐνετειλάμην (eneteilamen) - aorist middle indicative (aor mid ind)
> *am* εἰμι (eimi) - present active indicative/infinitive (pres act ind/inf) (εἰμι is a whole class of verbs by itself!)

Note: It is not necessary to list them out as I have here. All you have to do is note in your phrasing what the verbs are, as I have done below.

So, let's phrase it out remembering to show the grammatical (syntactical) relationships—clauses to the left, with modifiers to the right of the clause they modify. Thus:

All authority **has been** *given* to Me   (aor pass ind)
                in heaven and on earth.

therefore
                Having gone,   (aor dep part)
        make disciples of all the nations,   (aor act imp)
                baptizing them in the name   (pres act part)
                        of the Father and
                        the Son and
                        the Holy Spirit,
                teaching them to *observe*   (pres act part) (pres act inf)
                        all that I *commanded* you; (aor mid ind)

and lo,
        I **am** with you always,   (pres act ind/inf)
                even to the end of the age.

You will observe that I made one change to the translation. "Going" (πορευθέντες, poreuthentes) is a participle, and although it can carry some of the force of the imperative, it is still a participle. This is not smooth English, but it's good Bible study.

So, when we step back and look at what we *see* here...we have an imperative command from our Lord to "make disciples." We also see three participial phrases that modify and describe *the way* we make disciple—going, baptizing, and teaching. And we have two statements that bracket this command. First, we do this because all authority is in Jesus, and, second, we have the promise of His presence with us to enable us to accomplish the task.

Note: Phrasing is not exegesis. It is the prelude to it. Phrasing allows us to *open the text up* so we can *see what is there*. Remember the three steps of Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. Once we've done our phrasing we can begin to take note of what we see. This is the observation step. Since, in this course, I am mainly showing you how to phrase, I am not doing much observation. I am making just a few comments, mostly to help you see why phrasing is important.

Ephesians 5:18-21
O.K. Let's work on another passage, one we've looked at before, Ephesians 5:18-21. I want you to see it with the verbs parsed:

> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the
> Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
> singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks
> for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and
> be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. (Ephesians 5:18-21 NASB/95)

And here are the natural phrases:

> And do not get drunk with wine,
> for that is dissipation,
> but
> be filled with the Spirit,
> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
> singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
> always giving thanks for all things
> in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;
> and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

O.K., now let's parse the verbs:

> *get drunk* μεθύσκεσθε (methuskesthe) - present middle imperative (pres mid imp)
> *be filled* πληροῦσθε (plerousthe) - present middle imperative (pres mid imp)
> *speaking* λαλοῦντες (lalountes) - present active participle (pres act part)
> *singing* ᾄδοντες (adontes) - present active participle (pres act part)
> *making* ψάλλοντες (psallontes) - present active participle (pres act part)
> *giving thanks* εὐχαριστοῦντες (eucharistountes) - present active participle (pres act part)
> *being subject* Ὑποτασσόμενοι (upotassomenoi) - present middle participle (pres mid
>   part)

(Again, you don't have to list them out separately, as I have done here. Just write them out beside the verbs.)

Let's make a few observations that will help us phrase the passage. First, we have two imperative verbs ("do not get drunk" and "be filled") separated by a strong "but" (ἀλλα) (alla). We can also see that the first imperative has a single modifying phrase, while the second imperative has a much longer series of modifiers, in this case participial verbs—five of them. I included verse 21 because it is *syntactically* a part of verses 18-20. This is a common technique of Paul, linking one sub-section with another. (Interestingly, in verse 22 there is no verb commanding wives to *be subject* to their husbands. There is no verb at all in that verse! It is implied by the Greek *from the context*, but the translators have to provide a verb in order for it to make sense in English.)

Let's phrase it.

(I added a page break so the phrasing could be together.)

And

> do not ***get drunk*** with wine,   (pres mid imp)
>> for that is dissipation,

but

> ***be filled*** with the Spirit,   (pres mid imp)
>> *speaking* to one another   (pres act part)
>>> in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
>> *singing*   (pres act part)
>> and
>> *making melody*   (pres act part)
>>> with your heart to the Lord;
>> always *giving thanks* for all things   (pres act part)
>>> in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and
>> *being subject* to one another in the fear of Christ.   (pres mid part)

You'll notice I changed the translation on the last participle a bit to more accurately reflect the Greek. You can see the problem it presents to the translators. "Being subject" is syntactically a modifier of the verb "be filled." But it is necessary to provide a context for verses 22 and following. So the translators make it into a finite verb. This may seem strange to us *Bible Study Greek* students, but as you learn more Greek you'll see that the translators do it fairly often.

What we have here, then, is two imperative statements separated by a strong *adversative* ("but"). One tells us something *not* to do, the other something *to* do. Then he gives us five modifying participial verbs describing what it looks like when someone is filled with the Spirit—they will be speaking, singing, making melody, giving thanks, and submitting to each other. (Paul will go on then and describe what this *mutual submission* looks like in the context of marriage.) It is interesting to see that, of the five participles, four of them have to do with the heart-mouth relationship! Jesus said that "The mouth speaks out of that which fills (overflows) the heart" (Matthew 12:34).

Philippians 4:6-7

Finally, we are going to look at one more passage, but a much simpler one!

Philippians 4:6-7.

> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NASB/95)

I'd like you to try this one on your own. I'll give you the parsing:

     Be anxious μεριμνᾶτε (mermnate) - present active imperative
     be made known γνωριζέσθω (gnoridzestho) - present middle imperative
     surpasses ὑπερέχουσα (huperechousa) - present active participle
     will guard φρουρήσει (phouresei) - future active indicative

(My phrasing is on the next page.)

Godspeed!

Philippians 4:6-7 Phrasing

       Be anxious for nothing,   (pres act imp)

but

            in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving
    let your requests ***be made known*** to God.   (pres mid imp)

And   the peace of God,
           which *surpasses* all comprehension,   (pres act part)
    will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.   (fut act ind)

Parsing: How to Identify Greek Verbs

Time for me to explain the mystery of identifying Greek verbs! When I was a young Greek student, in the Dark Ages before personal computers, we had to look up each verb in a parsing guide, kind of like looking up a word in a dictionary. Very tedious! Today, however, we have tools that make the job super simple!

You will recall from our discussion on inflection, different Greek verbs have different forms. This is just like in English when we make a distinction between the verbs *teaching* and *taught*, as in "I am *teaching*," and "I *taught* yesterday." One is present tense, the other past. Greek uses inflection extensively to distinguish between the various verb forms we learned in the chapter on verbs. Thus, to parse is to identify the verbs, as we did in the previous chapter.

There are two different methods to parse verbs. One uses a book, the other a software app. I'll start with the book-based method.

To do this you will need a copy of the Greek New Testament that has parsing information included. A Greek New Testament that has both the Greek and the English is called an interlinear. Some follow the Greek text with the English underneath. Some follow an English translation with the Greek underneath (called a reverse interlinear).

Most interlinears *do not* include parsing information. The only standard interlinear I know that does is Zondervan's *NASB/NIV Greek and English Interlinear New Testament, by* William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce. For Bible Study Greek students, however, I prefer *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament*, by John Schwandt and C. John Collins, published by Crossway. This interlinear uses the ESV for the English text. Let me layout part of a verse for you so you can see what I mean.

Matthew 28:19

Go	therefore	and	make disciples	of all nations,			baptizing	them...
πορευθέντες	οὖν		μαθητεύσατε	πάντα τὰ ἔθνη,			βαπτίζοντες	αὐτοὺς
poreuthentes	oun		matheteusate	panta	ta	ethne	baptizontes	autous
VPNPMAD	C		VF2PAVA	JAPN	RAPN	NAPN	VPNPMPA	PPAPM
4198	3767		3100	3956	3588	1484	907	846

Here is a wealth of information for our purposes! The first line is the ESV text.

The second line is the Greek text.

The third is the transliteration of the Greek.

The forth line is the parsing code for each word.

The last is the Strong's number for each word.

Not only do you have the ESV text which you can use as a regular daily New Testament, but you have the corresponding Greek text just below the English. You also have the transliteration of the Greek and the parsing information. (There is a code at the bottom of each page which tells you how to decipher the parsing information. *Make sure you read the introductory material!*) And lastly you have the Strong's number for each word. How cool is that! (I talked about Strong's numbers back on page 39.)

So, taking the first verb here, *poreuthentes*, we see that the parsing code says it is a VPNPMAD. If we glance down at the bottom of the page we find that this verb is a "verb, participle, nominative, plural, masculine, aorist, deponent." (Remember, a participle is a verbal adjective, so it has some noun characteristics.) *For our purposes,* all we need to see here is that this verb is an "*aorist participle*." All of the other information is not necessary for us. Also, we *do not* need to identify each word. We only have to find out *which verbs are primary* (imperative and indicative) and *which are modifiers* (mostly participles).

Do you see how easy parsing can be! With a quick glance we can see what the verb is! And with a software app it is even easier!

I need to mention one important point before we discuss software apps. There are a number of Greek texts flouting around the Inter-verse. (I'll talk about texts in a later chapter.) For our purposes as Bible Study Greek students we only need to concern ourselves with the better Greek texts and that would be the Nestle-Aland 27/UBS 4, or the Nestle-Aland 28/UBS 5, with the later being the latest edition. Because these texts were done by *living* scholars, as opposed to dead ones, these folks have mortgages and bills to pay and so would like to get paid for their work (1 Timothy 5:18). In other words, these texts cost money. But they are much better than the free texts that flout around. Get good tools. God's word is worth it.

Now, there are a number of good Bible study apps, the best being either Accordance (accordancebible.com) or Logos (logos.com). I prefer Accordance and it's the one I'll describe here, although Logos works almost as well.

You need two things to use Accordance (or Logos). You need the software "engine" that makes the whole thing work (Accordance 13) and a library of books. There are a number of prepackaged libraries you can buy, but the best for our purposes is the "Starter Collection 13 - Greek Language Specialty." This will give you the basic engine, the Nestle-Aland 28, and a few other resources including the ESV text. That bundle costs $99. You might also want to get the software version of *Mounce's Expository Dictionary* ($35). Basically what you need to do is create an account with Accordance and download the software. Once you have everything installed you can always add to your library. (There are literally thousands of titles. You can get BDAG for a mere $150!) If you have any questions you can always call Accordance. I've found them to be very helpful. (Logos is basically the same, with their Greek beginner's bundle about the same price.)

Oh, and once you're setup, go to the Apple App Store (iPhone/iPad) or the Google store (for Android) and get the app for your phone. (The app is free; the library of resources cost some money!) Then you can login and download your library on to your phone! Very convenient!!

(I am assuming that you will want to install Accordance/Logos on your computer first. But you don't have to do that. You can get either software app for your iPad/tablet, or just for your phone. Either way you will need BOTH the engine (the app itself) and the resources library. And one more thought—there are lots of free resources out there, most of them are not really worth your time. If you are a serious student of God's Word, get serious tools. You will be much happier in the long run!)

Now you're ready to parse! Just open the app, point to the word you'd like to look at and, bam, the parsing appears! (On the phone, just press on the word.) Couldn't be easier!

Happy parsing!!

Note: You will remember from our discussion on verbs that deponents are passive or middle in *form* but active in *meaning*. Because the software data base that looks-up verbs uses the *form* of the verb, most deponents will be parsed as passive, not active. *For our purposes*, however, we are really only interested in knowing whether a verb is primary or modifying. So, don't sweat this detail. Just work with primary/modifier. If you go deeper into New Testament Greek you can learn more about deponents—and subjunctives, and genitives and all sorts of other fun stuff! (The *ESV Reverse Interlinear* identifies deponents correctly.)

An Introduction to Greek Syntax

My whole purpose for this course is to encourage you to get into the text of Scripture, to open the Word and wrestle with its message. That is why I want to teach you how to phrase out the text—to "open it up" so you can see what is there to be seen. Remember, the message is not so much in the words as it is in the *relationships* of the words. And we call those relationships *syntax*. Syntax just means the *structure* of a passage—what are the writer's main points and how does he illustrate or modify those main points with his words.

Greek gives away its meaning primarily in two ways. First, as we've discovered in our phrasing practice, much of the meaning of a text is conveyed by the verbs, and more so, by the *arrangement* (syntax) of those verbs. We look for the main verb, and then see how that main verbal clause is modified by participial or prepositional phrases. This is called *hypotaxis*, where meaning is conveyed through main clauses and several supporting phrases arranged under the main clause. (Hypotaxis, from *hypo,* "under," and *taxis,* "arrangement.") This is distinguished from *parataxis (*from *para,* "alongside," and *taxis* "arrangement"*)*, where meaning is conveyed by one clause, followed by another clause, after another.)

> *Hypotaxis*: "Make disciples—going, baptizing, teaching…" (From Matthew 28:19)
> *Parataxis*: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
> > He makes me lie down in green pastures.
> > He leads me beside still waters." (Psalm 23:1–2)
> > (Just a series of pretty equal phrases; no hypotactic arrangement here. The
> > Hebrew language is very paratactic.)

The other way Greek shows its meaning is by the use of *conjunctions*. Conjunctions are those little connecting words used to link clauses and phrases together, such as *and*, *but*, *therefore*, *then*, *for*, *that*, and others. Conjunctions link phrases together and thus contributing to the hypotactic structure, and thus, to the meaning of a passage. (As you will remember from our chapter on connectives, page 42.)

Coordinating conjunctions are used to link independent clauses. They can also link two sentences, two direct objects, etc.
> *Linking independent clauses:*
> > The boy hit the ball *and* the runner moved up to third base.
> > I went to the game *but* Bob had to go to class.
> *Linking direct objects:*
> > I like chocolate ice cream, *and* chocolate cake, *and* chocolate pie.

(Continued)

Subordinate conjunctions are used to start a dependent *phrase* and thereby link it to an independent *clause*.

> *Linking phrases to clauses:*
> I love Greek (independent clause) *because* it helps me understand my Bible better (phrase).
> Jesus died for our sins (independent clause) *that* we might be saved (phrase).

Greek Coordinating Conjunctions:

καὶ (kai) is the most common coordinating conjunction. (It occurs 9,161 times in the New Testament!). It usually means "and," but can also mean "even" or "also."

δε (de) is also common. It can be the equivalent of several English conjunctions. All it usually does is show that there is some link between the preceding and the following. Sometimes it can strengthen into an adversative ("but"), and sometimes it can weaken so as to not even be translated at all.

αλλα (alla) is a "strong" adversative conjunction, indicating that the following clause stands in contrast to the preceding. It is usually translated "but," but it can be translated many other ways that indicate a contrast.

γαρ (gar) gives the reason or explanation for something. It is usually translated "for."

οὖν (oun) is an inferential conjunction usually translated "therefore."

ἢ (e, pronounced like a long "a" as in "ate") is the main conjunction for saying "or."

Greek Subordinate Conjunctions

ὅτι (hoti) usually indicates the basis for an action and is usually translated "because."...οτι can also be rendered "that".

ἵνα (hina) usually indicates purpose and is translated "in order that," or "so that." But it can also indicate the result, and so is translated "that."...ἵνα can sometimes lose its purpose/result meaning and just introduces the content of what is expressed by the verb.

εἰ (ei) is the main conditional conjunction and it is usually translated "if."

ἐὰν (ean) is another form of ει, also usually translated "if."

ὅτε (hote) is a temporal conjunction usually translated "when."

Correlative Conjunctions

These conjunctions work at a pair. The most common are:

μεν ... δε (men/de)	on the one hand ... but on the other
καὶ ... καὶ (kai/kai)	both ... and
η ... η (e/e)	either ... or
μητε ... μητε (mete)	neither ... nor
ουτε ... ουτε (oute/oute)	neither ... nor
ουκ ... αλλα (or δε) (ouk/alla)	not ... but
τε ... καὶ (te/kai)	both ... and

Idioms

Idioms are words whose meaning is NOT reflected by the words used. They are like slang words—their meaning is something different than what the words describe. For example, you might hear someone say, "You're pulling my leg." They do NOT mean that someone is actually pulling on their leg. They mean, that someone is kidding them or joking with them. (Others could be "beat around the bush," or "that's putting the cart before the horse.") Greeks do the same thing. (All languages do.)

There is a type of idiom which is made up of two words that together have a different meaning than the words might normally have. Here are some that will effect the phrasing process:

οὐ μὴ (ou me)   never
ἵνα μη (hina me)   lest
μη γενοιτο (me genoito)   may it never be
δεῖ (dei)   it is necessary
Διὰ τοῦτο (dia touto)   therefore (often starting a new paragraph)
καθ᾽ ἡμέραν (kath' hemeran)   daily
τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν (tout' estin)   that is
δια παντοσ (dia pantos)   always
ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτο (epi to auto)   together

Keep your eyes open for others.

Good. This will get your feet wet. ("feet wet"—that's an idiom!)

Really Digging: Phrasing III

Now, let's apply both our knowledge of verbs and our (new) knowledge of conjunctions to the art of phrasing. We'll start with a fairly easy verse—Romans 5:10. Here are the words:

> *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* (Romans 5:10 NASB/95)

Again, we start by separating the verse into its phrases:

> For if
> while we were enemies
> we were reconciled to God
> through the death of His Son,
> much more,
> having been reconciled,
> we shall be saved
> by His life.

Now, you will notice that I separated this verse a little more tightly than some of the others we've been working on. That's because of the significant conjunctions that appear here. Conjunctions are quite helpful to us in the phrasing process.

Now, let's parse the verbs:
 (we) were (enemies) (ὄντες) (ontes) - present active participle
 were reconciled (κατηλλάγημεν) (katellagemen) - 2nd aorist passive indicative
 having been reconciled (καταλλαγέντες) (katallagentes) - 2nd aorist passive participle
 we shall be saved (σωθησόμεθα) (sothesometha) - future passive indicative

(Remember, it is not necessary to list them out as I have above. All you have to do is note in your phrasing what the verbs are, as I have done below.)

Phrased out, it looks like this:

> For if
>   while we *were* enemies   (pres act part)
>   we ***were reconciled*** to God   (2aor pass ind)
>   through the *death* of His Son,
> much more,
>   *having been reconciled*,   (2aor pass part)
>   ***we shall be saved***   (fut pass ind)
>   by His *life*.

Now, the first thing you will notice about this verse is that there are *two* clauses ("we were reconciled to God" and "we shall be saved"). That is a bit unusual. Then we see that the two clauses are proceeded by a conjunction (with an "if" statement) and separated by the words "much more." (This gives us a clue to the syntactical structure of this verse.) We also have two phrases that modify the first clause and one phrase that modifies the second. Now that we can visually see what is here, we can focus on what these clauses and phrases *say* and *mean*. That is the heart of Bible study.

Roman 5:10 is structured as what is called an *a fortiori* argument (from Latin meaning "from the stronger"). The syntactical structure here gives it away. Paul is saying, "If this is true (and we know that it is) then this must certainly be even *much more* true." For example, "If the local high school football team is good than *how much better* are the Super Bowl Champions." That is the force of the "if that...*how much more* is this." I have seen many Bible teachers focus on the *words* of this passage and completely miss the *relationships* of the words, the syntax! Focus on the syntactical *structure* of the verse first and the details will fall into place. The Biblical writers do not use words haphazardly!

Philippians 2:5-11
Now, let's work on a harder one—Philippians 2:5-11. Here are the verses:
> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 NASB/95)

O.K. Let's open it into its phrases:
> Have this attitude in yourselves
> which was also in Christ Jesus,
> who, although He existed in the form of God,
> did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
> but emptied Himself,
> taking the form of a bond-servant, and
> being made in the likeness of men.
> Being found in appearance as a man,
> He humbled Himself by becoming obedient
> to the point of death,
> even death on a cross.
> For this reason also,
> God highly exalted Him, and
> bestowed on Him the name

which is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow,
of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and that every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Now let's parse the verbs:

Have this attitude (φρονεῖτε) (phroneite) - present active imperative
existed (ὑπάρχων) (huparchon) - present active participle
did not regard (ἡγήσατο) (hegesato) - aorist middle indicative
to be grasped - no verb
emptied (ἐκένωσεν) (ekenosen) - aorist active indicative
taking (λαβών) (labon) - 2nd aorist active participle
being made (γενόμενος) (genomenos) - 2nd aorist middle participle
Being found (εὑρεθεὶς) (heuretheis) - aorist passive participle
humbled (ἐταπείνωσεν) (etapeinosev) - aorist active indicative
becoming (γενόμενος) genomenos) - 2nd aorist middle participle
exalted (ὑπερύψωσεν) huperusposen) - aorist active indicative
bestowed (ἐχαρίσατο) (echarisato) - aorist middle indicative
will bow (κάμψῃ) (kamspe) - aorist active subjunctive
will confess (ἐξομολογήσηται) exsomologesetai) - aorist middle subjunctive
is - no verb (It's supplied by the translators to make the English understandable.)

Here's my phrasing:

(To preserve the phrasing intact, I continue it on the next page.)

Think! this in you which also in Christ Jesus,   (pres act imp)

        who in the form of God *existing*   (pres act part)
    not a thing to be grasped did **regard**   (aor mid indic)
          to be equal with God

but

    himself **emptied,**   (aor act indic)
        the form of a slave *taking*   (aor act part)
        in likeness man *becoming*   (aor mid part)

and

        having been found in appearance as man   (aor pass part)
    he **humbled** himself   (aor act indic)
        having become obedient unto death   (aor mid part)
          and death by a cross.

Therefore

    God **exalted** him   (aor act indic)
  and
    bestowed upon him the name above every name   (aor mid indic)

that at the name of Jesus
        every knee *should bend*   (aor act subj)
          of in heaven and on earth and under the earth
    and
        every tongue *should confess* Lord is Jesus Christ   (aor mid subj)

    to the glory of God the Father.

You will note that I retranslated this a little bit so that it more closely follows the Greek text, especially the force of the imperative "be thinking!"). (I want to give you different looks at the phrasing process.) And you can see how the conjunctions help us with the phrasing of this passage. In it, Paul gives the Philippians a command to have the same kind of attitude about giving themselves up as Christ did. Then he makes two statements, one about giving up, the

other about receiving. In the first, he uses three clauses separated by a "but," then an "and." He uses a "wherefore also" to introduce the second statement, which begins with a double verb, then uses a " ἵνα" (hina) conjunction to link two subordinate phrases.

As I've said before, the phrasing process forces us to examine the syntax of a given passage and lay it out in such a way as to clearly see its flow. I trust that, as you work with these examples, you will grow in your ability to "wrestle with the Word."

Biblical Genres and Phrasing

The Word of God is so sweet and wonderful, and I trust that you're seeing how the phrasing process can open the text up so we can "see what is there to be seen." Once the text is open it is far easier to do the kind of observation that will make your interpretation of the text much clearer. Then we can understand it and move into a deeper, more sweeter, abiding relationship with our Lord Jesus. (Just as we want to "get at" the Greek behind our English translations, let's not forget to "get at" the Jesus behind the Greek!)

So far in our phrasing we have worked with texts that are clearly *didactic*, or teaching passages. Didactic passages are strongly hypotactic and this kind of text lends itself quite readily to phrasing. But what about other Biblical genres? Can you phrase them too?

The answer is yes, but you will handle them somewhat differently. Narrative passages, such as the Gospels, Acts, and Old Testament books like Samuel and Kings, are more paratactic than New Testament epistles. They don't have a clear hypotactic structure with main clauses and modifying phrases, but they still have clauses with modifiers. Some of the important clues to understanding the passage will be in the clauses and some of it will be in the narrative details. (It will become clear as you work with it.)

There are huge chunks of the Old Testament where the Law is given and expounded, where prophets urge the people to faithfulness, and where long lists of genealogies are given. These passages are treated much as you will do with narrative passages.

Hebrew poetry, as in the Psalms, doesn't use rhyming as English poetry does, but the "rhyming" is *in the repetition*. Over and over again you will read things like:
> "for you have been my refuge,
>> a strong tower against the enemy." (Psm 61:3, ESV)
>
> Note the repetition of "refuge" and "strong tower.

or
> "The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
>> he is their stronghold in the time of trouble." (psm 37:39, ESV)
>
> And, again, note the repeated images of "salvation" and "stronghold."

So, what is the difference between a "refuge" and a "strong tower"? Well, really nothing, it is just a repetition which emphasizes the metaphor. Hebrew poetry does this all the time! And Hebrew proverbs do much the same thing, either a two-line repetition or contrast. Finally, Old Testament prophetic passages, as well as much of Revelation, uses evocative images and poetic contrasts. Not much hypotactic syntax here; it will be mainly paratactic.

(I know that this is a short chapter, but the phrasing of these passages *will* become clear as you work with them. I just want you to get a feel for other types of genres.)

Rhetorical Analysis: Putting It All Together

Let's return now to our (hypothetical) study of Philippians. What are we after? Well, we want to understand what Paul is trying to teach us in this letter, and therefore grow in our understanding of God's Word.

We said before that the message of a book comes from the sections, the paragraphs, the sentences, and the phrases of the text. We started off our study by reading all of Philippians several times, then breaking it into its basic sections. Then, taking the opening sections, we broke them down into their various phrases. That process gives us a clear vision of the most basic parts of Paul's message. Then, when we add up those parts, they give us the message of a section; and when you add up the message of the sections we get the message of the book!

How a writer structures his message, then, is called rhetoric. Whether he is giving us his primary points and then supporting it with individual sub-points, or whether he is building up to his primary points with his sub-points, either way, he is using rhetoric to guide us into the understanding he wants us to have.

Now, we often use the word "rhetoric" to describe the "empty words" that someone is using, such as a politician's "vain rhetoric." Certainly, rhetoric *can* be used to mislead, but rhetoric is simply how a speaker or writer *structures* his message. The writer's of Scripture structure their communication so that we might more clearly understand God's truth.

So, now, in our hypothetical study, we have broken down Paul's message. We have examined its individual basic phrases. What we want to do now is build it back up, that is, put the individual phases back together so that we understand Paul's rhetoric, and therefore his message.

You will recall that, at the beginning of our study, we wrote out a simple outline of Philippians, that is, from a "big view" perspective, we wrote out the main idea of each section. Well, now that we looked carefully at the phrases of the book, we're in a pretty good place to write out a much better outline. What we're going to do here is, taking the phrases of the section as our sub-points, we want to write out the main point of each section.

Let's take the phrasing I did for Philippians 2:5-11 as an example. Here is the phrasing:

> ***Think!*** this in you which also in Christ Jesus,   (pres act imp)
>
> > who in the form of God *existing*   (pres act part)
> > not a thing to be grasped did ***regard***   (aor mid indic)
> > > to be equal with God
>
> > but
>
> > himself ***emptied***   (aor act indic)

the form of a slave *taking*   (aor act part)
                    in likeness man *becoming*   (aor mid part)

        and

                    having been found in appearance as man   (aor pass part)
            he ***humbled*** himself   (aor act indic)
                    having become obedient unto death   (aor mid part)
                        and death by a cross.

    Therefore

            God ***exalted*** him   (aor act indic)
        and
            bestowed upon him the name above every name   (aor mid indic)

        that at the name of Jesus
                    every knee *should bend*   (aor act subj)
                        of in heaven and on earth and under the earth
                and
                    every tongue *should confess* Lord is Jesus Christ   (aor mid subj)

            to the glory of God the Father.

What we want to do now is to identify the sub-points, or what you could call "rhetorical pieces," that make up Paul's rhetorical argument. What I do is write out my description of those sub-points under each of them. (I copy my phrasing on to a separate page so that I can still refer to the phrasing without my comments being in the way. I also use italics and parentheses so that I don't confuse my rhetorical analysis with the text of the passage.)

        Think! this in you which also in Christ Jesus,   (pres act imp)
(Paul commands us to have an attitude that Christ had, then he describes Christ's attitude.)

                    who in the form of God *existing*   (pres act part)
            not a thing to be grasped did ***regard***   (aor mid indic)
                        to be equal with God
(Jesus exists in the form of God (He is God) but he did not hold on to that place of privilege.)
        but
            himself ***emptied***   (aor act indic)
                    the form of a slave *taking*   (aor act part)
                    in likeness man *becoming*   (aor mid part)
(Instead he emptied, set aside, his place and became a man, even a slave.)
        and
                    having been found in appearance as man   (aor pass part)
            he ***humbled*** himself   (aor act indic)

having become obedient unto death (aor mid part)
and death by a cross.
(Even going so far as to humble himself by obedience by death on a cross.)

Therefore

God ***exalted*** him (aor act indic)
and
bestowed upon him the name above every name (aor mid indic)

that at the name of Jesus
every knee *should bend* (aor act subj)
of in heaven and on earth and under the earth
and
every tongue *should confess* Lord is Jesus Christ (aor mid subj)

to the glory of God the Father.
(Therefore, because of His humble obedience, the Father has exalted Him and given Him Lordship, so that every one will humble themselves (bend the knee) and confess Him so! All to the glory of God.)

We can, then, go back to the beginning of this passage to pick up the *reason* for this example of Jesus that Paul gives us (that is, Christian love and unity), as well as pick up the *other examples* that Paul gives us toward the same idea of humble sacrifice, namely Timothy (Philippians 2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-30).

This is a *brief* example, but you can see one way how you can pickup and describe the rhetorical pieces of Paul's argument. Your rhetorical analysis might look different than mine. Fine! The most important thing is not to get it "right," but to wrestle with the message of the Word. The Holy Spirit will lead you into the truth as you study His Word deeper and deeper!

Some folks like to put their descriptions on the side of the passage using a short word or phrase:

Think! (pres act imp) this in you which also in Christ Jesus, **Imperative**
who in the form of God *existing* (pres act part) **Attitude of Christ**
not a thing to be grasped did ***regard*** (aor mid indic)
to be equal with God
but
himself ***emptied*** (aor act indic) **Attitude of Christ**
the form of a slave *taking* (aor act part)
in likeness man *becoming* (aor mid part)
and
having been found (aor pass part) in appearance as man
he ***humbled*** himself (aor act indic) **Action of Christ**
having become (aor mid part) obedient unto death
and death by a cross.

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You can use various rhetorical terms to describe the various sub-points, like *assertion, content, purpose, manner, result, reason* and others. (As you work with the text you'll think of many!)

The point here is to begin to *come to terms* with the rhetoric of the passage. As you do so you might think of questions like "*what does it mean to empty,*" or "*how did Christ become a man?*" Good! Those observational questions become the basis for the next step in the exegetical process, interpretation. Write down your "interpretive questions," along with your descriptions.

To review, we began by looking at the book as a whole (cf. pp. 13-22). We broke it into sections and we phrased out the text (cf. pp. 25-35). Now we can begin to describe the rhetoric of those phrases and any interpretational questions we have. This process then becomes a natural bridge into interpretation, from "*what does he say*" (observation), to "*what does he mean*" (interpretation).

What we want to do, of course, is walk all the way through that process, from overview, to phrasing, to rhetorical analysis, and then into interpretation and application. In *Wrestling with the Word* I have emphasized phrasing because it is the most important step. (And it get's you into the Greek text—always a good thing!) Once you "open the text up" the rest of the steps flow fairly well. I wish I could write more, but it would not be "an introduction." It would be a book. And Bill Mounce already wrote it. I just want to introduce you to it!

Go deeper! Further up and farther in!!

FINISHING

Using Commentaries

Let's review what we've done so far. (I know, I review and repeat myself a lot! But remember what the famous Roman statesman Cicero said, "Repetition is the mother of learning." (Yes, but then Groucho Marx said, that "Repetition is the father of boredom!"))

We began by getting a "big picture" overview of our book and then breaking that book down into its natural sections and subsections. Then we began to break those subsections into their natural clauses and phrases, noting particularly their syntactical structure which is revealed to us primarily by the text's verbs and conjunctions. This opened the text up for us so that we could see what is there to be seen. Once we could see the text clearly we noted the important words that need careful definition. And, finally, we "rebuilt" the rhetorical structure of the book.

So, in doing all of this, we've been able to do what we set out wanting to do—studying the Scriptures on our own.

But we aren't alone in this process. Other folks have wrestled with the text of Scripture. Some of them are near, in time and place, some are far away. Many of them are wonderfully gifted and have spent many years with the Word. We should hear what they have to say.

We can make two mistakes here, I believe. One is that, before we even wrestle with the Word on our own, we run to commentaries. This robs us of the *joy of discovering* God's Word on our own. (And then, when we read those commentaries, we won't be well equipped to understand what they are talking about!)

The other mistake is thinking that we don't need them, that we are well equipped to learn a given Biblical book completely on our own. That is folly! First of all, at the Bible Study Greek level, none of us are well equipped. Secondly, we all need to learn from these good and gifted people. Even the most learned are learned because they expose themselves to good teaching.

There are basically three kinds of commentaries—devotional, expository, and exegetical. *Devotional* commentaries can be wonderful to read. They can urge you to surrender your heart deeper to Christ but they aren't real helpful in leading you into an understanding, exegetically, of the text.

Exegetical commentaries are the opposite kind. They aren't immediately real helpful in your daily walk with Christ, but they can be very helpful in understanding the Word. (Which, of course, *will* help you in your walk with Christ.) Exegetical commentaries come in two flavors— those which do their exegesis in English, and those who exegete using the original languages. These later can get quite technical and aren't much help to us at our level. What you want to look for is one that does its discussion in English, but references the Greek text. These can get technical too, but you should be able to follow the discussion.

Expository commentaries are the broadest category. Some of them can get technical, like exegetical commentaries, and some can be so "glossy" that they are no better than devotional commentaries. (Many of them are based upon sermons, so they reflect the exegetical abilities of the pastor.) What you want to find here are ones that teach the text *from an exegetical basis*.

With these distinctions in mind, let me make some general recommendations.

First off, I don't recommend any one volume commentaries. They are so glossy that they aren't much use. Better to have a good study Bible. I recommend the *ESV Study Bible*. (You also might want to take a look at the *MacArthur Study Bible*. It's generally pretty sound. I'd get it with the *New American Standard*. That way, since the *ESV Study Bible* comes with the ESV text, you have both of these outstanding translations.)

Next, rather than give you a list of recommended books, let me give you a list of *good men*. These brothers are capable and godly. In many cases, they have written many commentaries covering several (or more) books of the Bible. You will find them to be of great value. (Speak also with your pastor. He can recommend others.) I'll put them in two groups—pastors and educators.

Pastors	**Educators**
Ray Stedman (my old pastor and favorite)	Robert Mounce (Bill's dad)
D. Martyn Llody-Jones	D. A. Carson
John Piper	Gordon Fee

As far as commentary series are concerned, the excellent *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Revised, edited by Tremper Longman III, David E. Garland, is helpful. And so is *the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, edited by Leon Morris (IVP). (There is a revised edition out now as well.)

Two series that are more technical (but still useful to Bible Study Greek students) are: the *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Moisés Silva (Baker), and the *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, edited by D. A. Carson (Eerdmans)

Lastly, I have found that the very best commentary series for us ordinary folks, but one that uses a solid exegetical and expository method, is the teaching of Ray C. Stedman. God used men like he and D. Martyn Lloyd Jones to bring the church back to good expository preaching. (And they influenced a whole generation of men like MacArthur, Piper, and others.) Dr. Stedman preached through much of the Bible in his 30 years at Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto (California). You can find just about all of it at raystedman.org. And a really good example is his sermon "The Whole Story" which you can find here: raystedman.org/thematic-studies/new-covenant/the-whole-story (He taught about 1955-1985, so there are some fun historical anachronisms.)

Bible Study and Teaching

Good Bible study is rooted in two things. First, a deep humility and submission to the Spirit of God, that He would be our teacher. And, secondly, working carefully through the text exegetically.

Therefore, the *fruit* of good Bible study is good Bible teaching, and the same two aspects apply. Having done our careful exegesis (including humbly listening to other godly people), we look to the Spirit to anoint our words of instruction.

I believe that all Christians need to be good students of God's Word. I also believe that all Christians need to be ready to share God's Word in love and graciousness with those He will bring our way. But I also believe that God calls and anoints some with the gift of teaching. If that is your gifting, my prayer is that you will submit yourself deeply and humbly to God's Spirit and let Him mature and guide you.

There are two types of Bible teaching—hortatory and expository. Both are important. Both are good for the Body of Christ. Both have their place when properly done.

Hortatory is teaching *what* the Bible teaches. You go to the Word, study out a *subject*, and present what you have found to your audience. It might be sharing the Gospel to a group of people who don't yet know Jesus. It might be teaching the Biblical principles of a healthy marriage. What ever your *subject*, you study it from the Bible and present it.

Expository is teaching *as* the Bible teaches. It is not the presentation of a *subject*, but the presentation of a *text*. You are teaching young believers how to walk with Christ, so you teach them Romans. You are encouraging Christians to "hang in there" in the midst of life, so you teach them Hebrews.

We can contrast the two in this way. With hortatory teaching you stand *between* your people and the Word of God. You have studied your subject (hopefully!) and now you are teaching them what you found. In expository teaching you *step out of the way* and lead your people *into* the Word of God. You, in effect, let Paul, or Peter, or Jesus be the teacher. You just open the text with them (exposit, or *expose*, it).

And please note: you are *not* teaching your exegesis! That's the mistake a lot of young pastors make, especially recent seminary graduates. No, that's not *teaching*. You need to study out and "digest" your text, understanding both the syntactical and rhetorical relationships as fully as you possibly can. But you need to present it to your audience in a different fashion. You need to *re-rhetoricalize* it for them. That is, lead them into the text in such a way that, when you are finished, they will understand the text, what its issues are and how to live out what the text is teaching.

The downside of expository teaching is that it takes quite a while to work your way through the Scriptures. There are often some things about the Christian life that may not be dwelt within the book you are studying at the moment. So, you may need to do some hortatory teaching about some specific subject along the way.

One of the downsides of hortatory teaching is that it is all too easy to harp on a few favorite subjects and people never get exposed to the breath of the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Another problem is that it is easy to avoid difficult subjects. Expository forces you to have to deal with some hard passages. A third problem with hortatory teaching is that the folks in your church become dependent upon you, not the Word of God. They have to look to you because they don't know how to get into the Word for themselves. If you teach expositorially they will be given a good example of digging into the Word themselves, thus experiencing the deep riches of the Scriptures, bringing them closer to knowing and worshipping God. (It is interesting to note that cult teaching is always hortatory.)

There needs to be *both* in the church of God, both hortatory and expository. But I believe that the base, the solid foundation, is leading people expositorially into the Word of God. That way they can learn the Scriptures and be able to study out some things for themselves. Yes, from time to time you will need to do some hortatory. But always return to your base, to teaching through the Scriptures expositorially, verse by verse. (For that matter, you might even want to teach your hortatory *expositorially*! For example, when you teach on prayer, teach it expositorially from texts like Matt. 6:5-15, Luke 18:1-14, or Eph 6:10-20. That way they are getting both subject and Biblical text.

Note: Again, I'm going to put a plug in for the teaching of Ray Stedman. It perfectly illustrates what I've said above. My editor (my wife Audrey) also wanted me to recommend her favorite—*Authentic Christianity*, a study of 2 Corinthians. (It's probably my favorite too!)

Understanding Texts and Translations

There is a lot of confusion about New Testament manuscripts and translations, especially if you wander around the Internet. (Not an especially good place to *wander*.) Things like the *Da Vinci Code* movie kicked-up a lot of dust, and there are some who would like to keep it that way. This is a broad subject and we can only touch upon it, but hopefully we can settle some of the dust a bit.

Contrary to what the *Da Vinci Code* folks say, there are *thousands* of New Testament manuscripts. They range from a full copy (*codex)* of the New Testament to rather small fragments. The degree to which they harmonize is nothing short of a miracle. There *are* differences, but they are rather small and insignificant. (These remarks cover the New Testament documents, but the Old Testament has a similar story.)

On the Greek Texts
There are basically three "families" of New Testament manuscripts. One group comes mostly from areas around Turkey and Istanbul, or what used to be called Constantinople. Constantinople used to be the capital of the Roman Empire. (You will recall that Emperor Constantine moved the capital from Rome to this city about 330.) When Constantinople fell to the Muslims in the 1450s, many Greek Christian scholars fled to the West, bringing their Greek manuscripts with them. These are the so-called *Byzantine* texts, after the name of the old capital (Byzantium), before Constantine named it after himself.

It was from a few of these manuscripts that Erasmus derived his *Greek New Testament* in 1517. This is the Greek New Testament from which Luther translated his German New Testament (1534) and which the Puritans used for the *Geneva Bible* (New Testament in 1557). Erasmus's text was edited by Calvin's son-in-law, Theodore Beza, Stephanus, and others, and published under the Latin name *Textus Receptus* (meaning, from Latin, "Received Text"). This is also the textual basis of the *Authorized* (King James) *Version* of 1611.

Research has continued to find Byzantine manuscripts, even up to our day. (Professor Dan Wallace leads a team that goes into monasteries to photograph and digitize these treasures so that scholars can research them without having to travel to see them. Visit www.csntm.org) Because these manuscripts are relatively late copies of the New Testament there are many, many of them, and they constitute the majority of manuscripts. Thus they make up the "Majority" family. The relatively few that Erasmus had available are a part of this family, but because they differ in many places from the Majority, they are considered separate—the *Textus Receptus* family.

Note: There is a so-called *Textus Receptus* that is used by King James Only advocates. It was a product of a man named Scrivener who simply put together a Greek text that matched up with the King James English. In other words, he used the English King James as the textual basis for a Greek New Testament!

As the nineteenth century dawned, archeological excavation was beginning to turn up Greek New Testament manuscripts in other areas. Many of them were being discovered in Egypt, where the dry and hot climate helped preserve them. Many of these documents were quite older than the ones from Constantinople and Turkey. And, more significantly, there were some real differences between these textual families. These are the so-called *Alexandrian* texts, named after the old Roman city in Egypt and the location of, what was for hundreds of years, the world's greatest library.

Additionally history and archeology have revealed much more than just New Testament Greek manuscripts. There are many, many very early New Testament translations in Coptic, Old Latin, Old German, and other languages, documents that can be compared to the Greek texts. We can *also* compile a complete New Testament from the Early Church (Greek) Fathers, who, of course, quoted extensively from the New Testament in their writings. (As did the Latin Fathers, a bit later.)

So, what we have today is this. We have lots of Byzantine texts. Some (a few) make up the *Textus Receptus* family, some (many more) the Majority family. But they are mostly from a relatively late time period, about 800 to 1100. This puts them many hundreds of years from the writing of the New Testament. Then we have the Alexandrian texts. These are relatively few in number, but are much closer to the time of the New Testament, from about 200 to 500. (We even have a fragment of *John* from about 30 to 40 years after it was written!) In addition we have many early translations of the New Testament and thousands of New Testament quotations from the Greek and Latin Fathers.

Now, one might think that taking a simple majority of the texts as our New Testament is a good idea. However, because these manuscripts are relatively late, and the early manuscripts are somewhat different, perhaps the best method is to "weigh" the manuscripts as to their relative value. So scholars have carefully compared the manuscripts and today have provided us with a solid and dependable New Testament. (See the work of men like Dan Wallace.) This is reflected in the Nestle-Aland 28th edition and the United Bible Societies 5th edition Greek New Testaments.

OK, so we have all of these manuscripts (over 5000!) and there are differences, many thousands of them! Let's be honest about that. What, then, do we make of these differences?

Well, first of all, the *vast* majority of the differences are very minor and quite insignificant. They are things like spelling and punctuation differences. If you spelled my brother's name Garry or Gary it won't make much difference. And what if I spelled "do not" as "don't?" Does that make a significant difference? Although these are *a kind* of difference, they are not very significant. About 95% of the differences between manuscripts are of this type.

But there are some rather *significant* differences. If we compare the Alexandrian texts with the two Byzantine families, which are hundred of years later, we find some interesting details. A good example is Matthew 2, where the shepherds visit the baby Jesus. The King James has this familiar passage as, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host

praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'" (Luke 2:13-14 KJV). The ESV text says, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'" (Luke 2:13-14 ESV) Wow, that is quite different.

The key to understanding this is the Greek word εὐδοκίας (*eudokias*, or "good will"). That is what is in the Alexandrian text. The Byzantine texts have *eudokia*, with no final sigma. This little difference in the inflection of the word has a big difference in the meaning of the Greek. (Remember our chapter on inflection!)

Another good example is Philippians 4, where Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13 KJV). The ESV renders it as, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13 ESV) Oh dear! Are the Alexandrian texts removing Christ from our Bibles, as some allege? It might *appear* so.

So, how do we evaluate these differences? What is going on here?

Well, it boils down to only two possibilities. Either the Byzantine texts added to or slightly modified what the originals said, or, if in fact the Byzantine text truly reflect the originals, the Alexandrian texts deleted something from what the originals said. Remember, the Alexandrian texts are hundreds of years earlier than the Byzantine. We can certainly consider that, in being closer to the originals, they might be more accurate. Might be.

Consider the case of replacing "Christ" with "him" in Philippians 4:13. We have two possibilities. Either a scribe removed "Christ" and replaced it with a "him", or they replaced "him" with "Christ." Is it likely that some scribe wanted to "remove" Christ from the text for some theological reason? Remember, there are *many* other references to Christ in Philippians, and some of them are much more theologically important than the one in 4:13. Certainly, if he wanted to "remove Christ" from the text he would have had much more opportunity to do so eleswhere. Or is it more likely that some later scribe, wanting to make the text clearer, made the implicit reference (a pronoun) more explicit by writing in the pronoun's antecedent.

And what about the case of Matthew 2. Which is more likely? That a scribe intentionally added a sigma to *eudokia*. Or that a later scribe unintentionally dropped it?

I am not a textual scholar. I can certainly *see* the problem, but I defer to the scholars about the answer. I really have no business making unlearned judgements about things I really am not equipped to judge. (And, unfortunately, there are many who are not trained or equipped but none the less seem only too happy to make judgments!)

When competent and godly men examine this question, when they evaluate all of the evidence, most come to the conclusion that the earlier Alexandrian texts more closely follow the original manuscripts. A few competent men support the Majority texts. (There is a very small but vocal group which supports the *Textus Receptus* texts. Interestingly, few of them are scholars and their most vocal spokesmen know little to no Greek. They seem to support the *Textus Receptus a priori*,

that is, "before the facts," only because the *Textus Receptus* underlies the *Authorized* (King James) *Version*.)

Fortunately, by God's grace, the bottom line is this: there is amazing harmony between the text families, with only a very few real differences. Furthermore, these differences do not effect *any* Christian doctrine. *That* is nothing short of a miracle!

Additionally, the fact that we have over 5,000 manuscripts is a huge blessing! Think of it this way. If you had only five manuscripts you'd only have a handful of differences. If you multiplied the five by ten, you'd have ten times the differences. If you multiplied the five by a thousand you'd have many, many more differences. *You'd also have many more to compare and arrive at a solid text.* Dan Wallace gives his graduate students different copies of the Gettysburg Address, each with differences. Some say this, some say that. But in the place where one differs *there are many more that agree*. So, by comparing *the agreements*, you can arrive at the true text! Those who would point to the "hundreds of thousands" of differences as proof that our New Testaments are corrupt grossly over-state their case. They neglect to reference the "hundreds and hundreds of thousands" of agreements! The grace of God—in what at first appears to diminish the authority of the New Testament, actually demonstrates it! To God be the glory!

Note: For those of you who would like to dig into this more I would recommend *New Testament Textual Criticism*, by David Alan Black (Baker); *The Text of the New Testament: From Manuscript to Modern Edition, by* J. Harold Greenlee (Baker); and *Revisiting the Corruption of the New Testament: Manuscript, Patristic, and Apocryphal Evidence, by* Dan Wallace (Kregel). (The last two after quite academic, by still readable.)

On Translations
I'm often asked which translation I recommend. I usually respond by asking, "Recommend for what?" The truth of the matter is that the best translation for exegesis is not the best translation for reading, and the best translation for a well educated adult may not be the best for a young person.

That's because of the nature of language. It is quite difficult to translate from one language into another. While some Greek words can best be translated with one English word, some may require several. Some theologically technical words (like propitiation) can be difficult to understand by some, and getting the right meaning of Greek verbs, as we have seen, can sometimes be downright baffling. As you move toward "tighter," more syntactically accurate Greek, you end-up writing rough, wooden English. As you move toward writing smoother, easier to understand English, you move *away* from clear Greek.

Each translation team must work within its own translation philosophy or purpose. Some choose to use English that is more understandable to the modern English-speaker. Others want to write as exacting Greek as they can. And these are at cross-purposes. You just can't do both.

A few examples will help clarify this.

Eph 5:18-21
And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (ESV)

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NIV, 1984)

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (NLT)

Comments: NIV changes "that is debauchery" to "leads to debauchery." A minor difference, but it gives a different feel to the sentence. They change the "but" to "instead." They accurately translate the imperatives "do not get drunk" and "be filled," but completely ignore the participles, completely losing the grammatical clue to the passage's syntactical (hypotactic) structure. (The NIV does this all the time.)
NLT gives the participles for "singing," and "making music," but then translates "thanks" with an indicative. Curious mix. According to their philosophy of translation, "debauchery" is too difficult an English word to use, so they just tell us its effect, "that it will ruin your life." More readable English, but not good for Bible study. They also insert "Holy" with Spirit to better define it.
Note that both NIV and NLT push "submitting" to a new paragraph, turning it into an indicative verb, thus loosing its connection with the above primary verb.

Eph 6:13-20
Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (ESV)

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

   Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (NIV)

Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

   Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

   And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should. (NLT)

Comments: We'll see similar things to what we've seen before. ESV, NIV, and NLT are very consistent in the application of their translation philosophies.
NIV, again, does not pick up the syntax of the passage, therefore losing the hypotactic structure. But it makes for smoother English.
NTL - Note how short the sentences are. This is consistent with their philosophy. And notice how they separate prayer from the rest of the armor.

Rom 5:10
For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (ESV)

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! (NIV)

For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. (NLT)

Comments: NIV preserves the *a fortiori* argument (cf. p. 74). They add "God's" enemies, to make the antecedent clearer.

NLT nearly completely loses the *a fortiori* argument, dropping the "much more." They reverse the first clause and phrase to make smoother English (which is their translation philosophy) but it loses impact. They define reconciliation as "friendship with God." That's true, but a bit over-translated. They also add "God" and "Son," like the NIV, clarifying the antecedent.

These examples, although only three, are representative of what you'll find when comparing translations. NASB and ESV try to hold to the Greek grammar as closely as possible, while still writing understandable English. NIV and NLT translate the Greek into easier to understand English, but to do so they have to move away from the Greek much more so than NASB or ESV.

You can chart the translations in this way:

More Syntactically Accurate Greek   Smoother English

$\longleftarrow$ $\longrightarrow$

Interlinear   NASB   ESV   NIV   NLT
                            KJV/NKJV   JB Phillips

Although I believe that smoother translations (NLT or Phillips) are very helpful for people who are new to the faith or who want to read to gain an overview of a book, I recommend using more syntactically accurate translations for Bible study and personal meditation and prayer. (How else will you get at what is really there?!) Overall, I like the *English Standard Version* best, and I highly recommend it. NASB is very good in its use of Greek, but its English can be a little rough or wooden. The same can be said for the NKJV, although it is based on the "*Textus Receptus*."

Continuing Your Study of Greek (and Hebrew)

We've only been able, in a short time, to start us down the Greek road, whether "low" or "high." If you want to go further in "Bible Study Greek" I suggest you move from here to Bill Mounce's *Greek for the Rest of Us*. I've designed *Wrestling with the Word* to be a primer to, and hopefully, a motivator, into Bill's book. He will ground you deeper in what we've only been able to touch on. Then, for those who want to learn more, I'd recommend his *Basics of Bibilical Greek*. It's the first year Greek grammar used by many colleges and seminaries.

If you want to jump into Hebrew, I'd start with the companion volume to *Greek for the Rest of Us* —*Hebrew for the Rest of Us*, by Lee Fields. If you get through that book, you will see his recommendations for getting deeper into Hebrew.

For those of you who want to dig deeper into exegesis, one of the best books is *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart. And I would also recommend E. D. Hirsch's classic *Validity In Interpretation.*

Lastly, *everyone* should read Mortimer Adler's great book, *How to Read A Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading.* Adler's book is, to me, the most important book you should read, after the Bible. You might also enjoy *How to Read Slowly*, by James Sire.

Further up and further in! - C.S. Lewis

APPENDIX

Apologia:

Our Approach to the Study of New Testament Greek

From cover to cover the Bible is quite clear—these are not merely human words (although they were penned by human hands). They are the very words of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matt 4:4, ESV) And the Apostle Paul agrees, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." (2Tim 3:16-17, ESV)

It is from these most precious Scriptures that we discover who God is and what His purposes are. By the Word we become convicted of our sinful and rebellious selves, but we also find out the saving grace that God has for us in Christ and His wonderful plan of redemption that He began before the world was created. Here we also discover the adventure of being caught up into a life of living in His love and grace, in His purposes and glory!

Any student of the Scriptures will quickly learn about the amazing and wonderful story of how the Bible was translated into English. Godly men like Wycliffe, Tyndale, and others, who risked their lives (and some gave their lives) that we might have the Bible in our own language. And what wonderful translations they are—good, strong, reliable translations of those holy words originally penned in Hebrew and in Greek by God's prophets and apostles.

But, as good as our translations are, I believe that if you really want to study the New Testament—fully, carefully—you need to do so with reference to the Greek text. There is just no substitute. The Greek text is *so much clearer*. Think of it this way. Imagine watching a baseball game on an old black and white TV. For instance, you can see the pitcher throw the ball and then see the batter hit the ball into right field. Or you can watch the same game on a modern UltraHD TV. Not only can you see the pitcher throw the ball but you can see its very seams, watch the rotation of the ball as it moves toward the batter. You can see the ball jump off his bat and then see it kick up the dirt as it skips by the second baseman's glove and into right field. Same situation, same events, but wow, what a difference! The HD TV is just so much *clearer,* so much more *revealing*. And *clearer*, more *revealing*, is what we're looking for when we study God's Word.

Why is this so? Are not our translations clear? Well, part of it is in the nature of translation itself. When you move from one language to another you lose a bit of the meaning. If you've studied another language you'll know what I mean.

But there is more to it than that. Greek is a *hypotactic* language. Greek writers will structure their argument by stating a main point and then give supporting points *under* the main point, or "hypo," from the Greek prefix meaning (in this case) *under* or *below*. For instance, in Ephesians Paul commands the Christians to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18-21). He uses an imperative verb (*be filled*), then he gives five supporting verbs that modify the main verb, describing Spirit-filled believers. They will be "*addressing* one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing* and *making* melody to the Lord with your heart, *giving thanks* always and

for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *submitting* to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:19–21 ESV)

Discovering the writer's main point and how he develops his supporting points is *the* point of Bible study. Sometimes our English translations reveal these subtle but important details, but sometimes they do not. That's because English is mostly a *paratactic* language, meaning that a writer will give a main point and then give the supporting points *along side* the main point (from the Greek prefix "para"). Thus, English translations, if they are good English, will often obscure the hypotactic nature of the Greek text.

Bible study using Greek tools reveals this much more clearly than Bible study in just English. And that's why it is essential that those who would endeavor to teach the Bible clearly and carefully, whether they are a pastor or a Bible study leader, need to do their study with reference to the Greek text. They've got to develop some facility with Greek. But how are they to do that?

I have been observing the study of Greek for many years now, ever since I was a student of the incomparable Dr. Moisés Silva at Westmont College. There seem to be two roads to Greek—that which I'll call the "high road" and the "low road." Most of us trod the "low road." This is where we've learned how to do simple word studies using Strong's numbers, and make some general observations of the text. That's about all we can do on our own. Then we turn to commentaries and other Bible study materials which have pre-digested the Word for us. But in doing so we lose the joy of discovering on our own the riches of God's Word.

Then there is the "high road" which is usually reserved for those who strike off to seminary or Bible college. They spend hours and hours memorizing countless verb paradigms, noun declensions, and lists of vocabulary. They spend one, two, or even three years vigorously pursuing the acquisition of Greek. And yet, amazingly, the language that they learned at such great cost, many hardly use after graduation!

What we need is a different paradigm, one that helps the basic Bible student get deeper into the text of Scripture and experience for himself or herself the joy of discovering the Word of God. And, the more advanced student can use it as a *foundation* upon which to build a richer and more mature understanding of the New Testament.

Let's be honest. You don't need to memorize all of the Greek verb forms to do Bible study. Today, with the power of a super-computer in the palm of our hands, we have tools to do *that* job. But what you *do* need is an understanding of *how* Greek verbs work, how they add meaning and color to the text. Most importantly, we need some basic understanding of Greek *syntax*, that is, how the *relationships* of words help us understand a Biblical writer's message.

Let me give you an example. At the end of Matthew's Gospel Jesus gives a command to His disciples. He says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt 28:19-20) In this short passage there are four verbs—go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. When we consult our Greek tools, we find that one of these verbs is an imperative—"make disciples"—the other three are what we call *participles*, that is they "participate" in the meaning of the primary verb. What Jesus is saying is that we are to make disciples, and we do so by going, baptizing, and teaching.

Do you see how understanding the *relationship* between the primary verb and its modifying verbs is critical to understanding Matthew 28:19? This is the primary thing the Greek text gives us—an insight into the syntactical structure (the relationships of words) of the passage under study.

I am trying to accomplish two things with *Wrestling with the Word.* The first is I want to help the beginning Bible student get deeper into the text of Scripture by himself or herself. I want to give them the tools to learn to use the Greek text effectively. They don't have to spend years learning verb forms or vocabulary—the tools do that for us. But I want them to understand something of how language works, how we get at the meaning of a passage by understanding the *relationships* of words, that is, syntax.

Secondly, *Wrestling with the Word* provides a bridge—a bridge between the "low road" and the "high road." I cannot possibly teach you everything about Greek in a few hours. But what I *can* do is provide a *paradigm for learning.* I want to give the serious student of Scripture a *working model* or *pattern* whereby they can get into the text of Scripture and discover for themselves the riches that are there. You can begin to gain a working knowledge of Greek, something you can really use to do good exegesis, to really get at the text, with a bit of diligent effort. Then you can build upon that foundation as you mature in your study of the New Testament.

And this same paradigm can help the student who has already learned some Greek get back into the language. So often the way we teach Greek is by forcing the student to memorize a bunch of verb and noun paradigms and lists of vocabulary that are divorced from the study of God's Word. That paradigm is fine if you want to learn to read and write French or to join in on a Spanish conversation. But most Bible students don't really want to learn the Greek language! They just want to get at the Greek behind their English Bible. Yes, that does mean *some* Greek, but, I believe, doesn't mean having to learn the full language. *Wrestling with the Word* provides a way to get deeper into the text, and a paradigm for learning more Greek. You can start with a simple beginning and then go on ever and ever deeper.

But, a word of warning, *and* a word of encouragement. The study of the Bible is a lifetime endeavor. I am going to give you some tools to help you get deeper into its text. Please don't make the mistake of thinking that these tools will make you anything like an expert. There are godly people who have spent a lifetime learning Greek who will not make that claim. How much less us! What these tools *will* do is enable you to take a couple of steps deeper into the text and joyfully wrestle with it. Let it grip and change your life!

And that is what God's Spirit will do—lead us deeper into the text and change our lives by conforming us to the image of Christ. So be encouraged. Use the tools humbly and wisely. Allow yourself time to mediate on what you're learning. Listen to godly pastors and teachers who have wrestled with Scripture too. And always remember the admonishment of John 5:39-40—the Word of God is not an end in itself. It is a means to the end of discovering and knowing the real Triune God and walking with Him, for our joy and His glory!

Greek Alphabet and Pronunciation

Alpha	A α	a	f<u>a</u>ther
Beta	B β	b	<u>B</u>ible
Gamma	Γ γ	g	<u>g</u>one
Delta	Δ δ	d	<u>d</u>og
Epsilon	E ε	e	m<u>e</u>t
Zeta	Z ζ	z	da<u>z</u>e
Eta	H η	e	ob<u>e</u>y
Theta	Θ θ	th	<u>th</u>ing
Iota	I ι	i	intr<u>i</u>gue
Kappa	K κ	k	<u>k</u>itchen
Lambda	Λ λ	l	<u>l</u>aw
Mu	M μ	m	<u>m</u>usic
Nu	N ν	n	<u>n</u>ew
Xi	Ξ ξ	x	a<u>x</u>iom (ks)
Omicron	O o	o	n<u>o</u>t
Pi	Π π	p	<u>p</u>each
Rho	P ρ	r	<u>r</u>od
Sigma	Σ σ, ς	s	<u>s</u>tudy
Tau	T τ	t	<u>t</u>alk
Upsilon	Υ υ	u/y	German ü, über
Phi	Φ φ	ph	<u>ph</u>one
Chi	X χ	ch	lo<u>ch</u> (*not* church)
Psi	Ψ ψ	ps	li<u>ps</u>
Omega	Ω ω	o	t<u>o</u>ne

Note carefully the difference between "ε" and "η"; the first is short and the second long. The same is true for "o" and "ω"; the first is short and the latter long. "ι" can be short or long.

Note also the difference between the English "n" with the Greek "η" (eta), the English "v" and the Greek "ν" (nu), the English "p" with the Greek "ρ" (rho), the English "x" with the Greek "χ" (chi), and the English "w" with the Greek "ω" (omega).

Greek vowels - α, ε, η, ι, o, υ, ω.

Capitals are used for proper names, and for the first word in a paragraph or quotation.

Pronunciation

Gamma Nasal - The "γ" is pronounced as a hard "g" as in *get*. When it is followed by another γ, or by a κ, χ, or ξ it is pronounced as an "ν," as in angel (αγγελος).

Diphthong - a combination of two vowels that make one sound. The Greek diphthongs are:

αι	as in <u>ai</u>sle
ει	as in <u>ei</u>ght
οι	as in <u>oi</u>l
αυ	as in s<u>au</u>erkraut
ου	as in s<u>ou</u>p
υι	as in s<u>ui</u>te
ευ, ηυ	as in f<u>eu</u>d

Note: two vowels that would often form a diphthong have separate pronunciations when used with a **diaeresis** (¨) over the second vowel, as in Ησαϊας (Isaiah).

Breathing Marks - all words that begin with a vowel or a "ρ" have a breathing mark.

Smooth -	as in ἐστιν	(no effect on pronunciation)
Rough -	as in ἅγίος	(adds an "h" sound in front of the word)

Iota Subscript - Some Greek words have an "ι" under the vowels α, η, or ω. It has no effect on pronunciation, but does effect meaning. Examples are - αὐτῷ, ἀφῇ.

Accent - Almost all Greek words have an accent mark over the stressed syllables' vowel. It can be acute (ἀγάπη), grave (θεὸς), or circumflex (Ἰησοῦς). In early Greek it showed a raising pitch, descending pitch, or a raising and descending pitch. Before the Koine period it changed to mean just which syllable was stressed. Note that *some words can be recognized only by the accents,* such as ἢ ('or') and ἡ (a form of 'the'), both very common words. Also note that some words can have two accents, some none, and sometimes the accented syllable will shift!

Note: We're not going to concern ourselves with learning the rules of accenting. If you go on in Greek you will find some teachers will teach them and others will not. I don't believe doing so is necessary because we are not learning to write Greek, as some older generations were. We just want to read the New Testament, and in our Greek New Testaments the accents are *already* given for us!

Elison - Sometimes in English we drop a vowel by contracting a word, such as "do not" can become "don't." Greek does the same thing. If a word ends in a vowel and the next word begins with a vowel it can morph, such as αλλα to αλλ'. It is also fairly common to see the final ν dropped from a word.

Punctuation

θεος,	comma
θεος.	period
θεος·	semicolon
θεος;	question mark

      (This is not real Greek, I'm just using the word to show the placement of the punctuation.)

For Fun!

ἰχθύς **(fish)**   ΙΧΘΥΣ

Ι –	Ἰησοῦς	(Jesus)
χ –	χριστός	(Christ)
Θ –	θεοῦ	(God's, or "of God")
Υ –	υἱοῦ	(Son, together as "Son of God")
Σ –	σωτὴρ	(Savior)

Helpful Links
Pronunciation Practice with Bill Mounce
    www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXCJknAcldE

Bill's website!
    www.billmounce.com

Pronunciation Practice

John 3:16

οὕτως   γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν
in this way for   loved   the God the world   that the Son

τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ
the one of a kind he gave so that all   the believing   in   him   not

ἀπόληται   ἀλλ᾽ ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
will perish   but   have life   eternal

The Disciple's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

Πάτερ ἡμῶν   ὁ   ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·
Father of us which in the   heavens

ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά   σου·   (Note that θέλημά has two accents and σου none!)
 Be sacred! the name of you (your)

ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·
 Come! the kingdom of you

γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,
 Be done! the will   of you

ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·
 as in heaven   also on earth

τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον·
 the bread of us (the) daily   give to us   today

καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,
and forgive us the   debts   of us

ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·
 as also we   have forgiven the   debtors   of us

καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,
and not   bring   us   into temptation

ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.
 but rescue   us from the evil (one)

Some Fundamental Principles of Using New Testament Greek

Rule #1 - *Greek is not English!* You don't understand Greek by applying English rules of grammar, syntax, or vocabulary!

Rule #5 - Please never define a Greek word by its English cognate!

Rule #4 - All languages use grammar both prescriptively and descriptively, that is, they normally follow the standard rules of grammar. Normally—but, now and then they surprise you! (Be flexible, be alert, and let your syntactically accurate translations help you.)

Rule #2 - You don't, and probably won't, be learning enough Koiné Greek to make clear grammatical judgments about uncertain Greek.

Rule #3 - Our job, as "Bible Study Greek" students, is not to *correct* translations, but to *understand* translations and to *compare* them effectively.

Rule #6 - Above all, remember that while understanding the writer is *the* point of Bible study, it's not the *purpose* of it. The purpose of Bible study is that we might know, walk with, and worship God!

"Professor" Krum's Handy Dandy Greek Verb Cheat Sheet

(For a fuller explanation, see *Greek for the Rest of Us* by Bill Mounce)

Tense
The Greek *present* tense usually describes a continuous action occurring in present time. "The teacher *is speaking* to the class."

The *imperfect* tense indicates an action continually or repeatedly occurring in past time. "The teacher *was speaking* to the class yesterday."

The *future* tense describes an undefined action that will happen sometime in the future. "The teacher *will speak* to the class later this week."

The Greek *aorist* tense usually describes an undefined action that happened in the past. "The teacher *spoke* to the class last week."

The Greek *perfect* tense indicates the continuation and present state of a completed past action. "The teacher *has spoken* to us about that subject." As opposed to, "the teacher was speaking." Note the difference between imperfect and perfect.

The *pluperfect* shows action that is complete and existed at some time in the past. "The teacher *had spoken* about that."

Voice
Voice refers to whether the subject is *doing* the action (*active voice*) or is *receiving* the action (*passive voice*). ("I drove to the dance." or "I was driven to the dance by my mother.")

Greek also has a *middle* voice. The middle voice indicates that the subject is doing an action *in his own interest* or *on his own behalf*. Because we have nothing like it in English, the middle voice is very challenging. (Be careful about putting too much weight on a middle voice verb!)

A *deponent* verb is a verb that is middle or passive in *inflection* but active in *meaning*.

Mood
The *indicative* mood "indicates" a statement of fact or an actual occurrence from the speaker's or writer's perspective. (This is in distinction to the other moods in which the speaker/writer may *desire*, *ask*, or *command* for the action to take place.)

The *imperative* mood is a command or instruction given to the hearer.

The *subjunctive* mood indicates probability or possibility, often depending on certain objective factors or circumstances. It is oftentimes used in conditional statements (i.e. 'If...then...' clauses), in purpose clauses, and with conditional phrases.

The *optative* is the mood of possibility, often used to convey a wish or hope for a certain action to occur. (There are only a few optative verbs in the New Testament.)

Participles and Infinitives
Participles are verbal adjectives or adverbs similar to English words ending in "-ing." They can modify a noun or, more often, modify and define (explain) the action of the indicative (primary) verb. You might say that participles "participate" in the meaning of the primary verb—that is, they modify and color it.

Infinitives are "verbal nouns." They are often translated with "to," thus—"to live," or "to feel," or "to think."

Please note—Greek verbs are far more nuanced than English verbs, and the writers of the New Testament use them in many and varied ways. This rather quick overview of Greek verbs is not meant to give you a comprehensive understanding, but merely an introduction. I am NOT giving you enough information so you can *correct* any of our translations, but an overview so you can *understand* translations better.

Keep in mind that as beginning Bible Study Greek students we want to look for two things, and basically only two things—primary verbs and modifiers. (The primary verb will be either indicatives or imperatives.) Everything else will usually be modifiers of one kind or another. It's the relationship of these two, primary verbs and modifiers, that is of real importance in Bible study.

Acknowledgments

No book is a solo affair. There are many whose life and instruction have "rooted and built [me] up in Him, and established [me] in the faith, just as [I] was taught" (Colossians 2:7.)

My parents, Bob and Joyce, were the first. Many mornings, as my brother and sister and I headed off to school, we would stand by the door and pray with my mom. And my father and I spent many hours wrestling together over the Scriptures, some times with heat. They are both rejoicing in glory today!

Steve Springstead was the first to introduce me to the Greek New Testament when I was in high school. (I didn't know that such a thing even existed!) And it was Dr. Moisés Silva, when I was at Westmont College, who gave me a strong foundation. Bill Mounce's teaching is reflected on almost every page of this book, whom I gratefully acknowledge. I've been "writing" this book for 30 years, and it would have been fine, but Bill's *Greek for the Rest of Us* made it better!

Oh, the happy day when I first went to Peninsula Bible Church and heard Ray Stedman open up the Scriptures! I first learned the principles of exegesis and exposition not from a book or class but from his teaching. He is one of the most gifted of the wonderful godly expositors of the mid-twentieth century. How great it was to sit week after week under his instruction.

Most importantly, I want to thank my precious sweetheart, Audrey, who for almost 40 years has stood by my side, heart in heart. How lonely life would have been without her. It was our mutual love for the Scriptures that brought us together and the love of Jesus that has kept us so.

It has been my joy to share these thoughts with you. How dark our lives would be without the Scriptures! Rejoice in them; they will lead you to Life—Jesus Himself!