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N.T. Word Studies

Anyone can do a New Testament word study without having any knowledge of Greek. Fortunately, most if not all concordances and interlinear Bibles published today are keyed to a numbering system. James Strong developed a numbering system for all of the Greek words found in the Received Text (Textus Receptus) on which the King James Version is based. Since most modern translations such as the NIV and the NRSV use the Critical Text as the basis for their translations, Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III have developed a new numbering system. Using either numbering system will allow one to move from the English word to the original Greek.

This guide will take you step by step through the process of doing a word study without ever having to know the Greek alphabet, using either the Goodrick/Kohlenberger numbering system or the Strong's numbering system. Specific reference works will be mentioned in this guide, but keep in mind that there are often a number of different works that are organized in a similar manner and can also be used.

(For a very basic NT word study, use only the underlined sources below and follow this guide as you are using these sources)

Step 1: Select a word from an English translation and identify the Greek original word.

Let's take Romans 4:3, which states that "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Someone could decide to do a word study on the word "righteousness." To locate the Greek original, one can consult an analytical concordance.

A good concordance is the:

Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance, Edited by Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004 [REF 220.5 2081C G655 N734 2004]; or the *Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance* [REF 220.5 2081C G655 N734 1999] or the 1st edition: *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. Edited by Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990. [REF 220.5 2083 G655 1990].

This concordance is an index of the New International Version of the Bible, listing all of the words that occur in this translation in alphabetical order. Under each word is a list of all of the verses that contain that word, along with a line from each verse so that we can see the word in its immediate context. At the end of each line opposite the verse is the Goodrick/Kohlenberger (G/K) number.

If we look up the word "righteousness" we find it on p. 960. The number in parentheses after the heading is 239, which represents the number of times that the word "righteousness" is found in the NIV. Below the heading we see a list of all of the verses in the NIV that contain this word. Opposite each verse is a number for the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word. If we skim down the list to locate Romans 4:3, we discover that the number for the Greek word which has been translated as "righteousness" in this verse is number 1466. This is the unique number that Goodrick and Kohlenberger have assigned to this word.

We can now turn to the last section of this concordance. At the end of the concordance is a table that lists the corresponding Strong number for each G/K number. If we look up number 1466 in the list we see that the Strong number equivalent is number 1343. We now have the G/K number and the Strong number and are ready for step 2.

Step 2: Determine the meaning of the Greek original word in a Greek dictionary.

The NIV Exhaustive Concordance contains a Hebrew to English and Greek to English index and lexicon (dictionary). If we turn to the Greek to English index-lexicon, we can look up the number 1466 (the G/K number) on p. 1542 to discover that the Greek word is *dikaiosyne*. This word occurs 91 times in the New Testament and is translated as righteousness, justice, and what is right. This gives you a basic definition of the word. However, you should probably consult a more substantial lexicon or dictionary to determine the precise meaning of the word as it is used in your text. To do this you can consult one of several Greek concordances to see how the word is used in other verses in Scripture and to discover where one can find more information on the word in question.

Now that you have the Greek word and the Goodrick/Kohlenberger and Strong numbers for that word, you can consult Greek concordances, lexicons and dictionaries to determine the meaning of the word. A very good, modern Greek English concordance is:

Kohlenberger III, John R., Edward W. Goodrick, James A. Swanson. *The Greek English Concordance to the New Testament: With the New International Version.* Grand Rapids: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1997. [REF 225.48 K79 1997].

Using our example of the word “righteousness” as found in Romans 4:3, the first step is to use the G/K number, 1466, to find the word in the concordance, since it is organized by the Greek word. We find number 1466, dikaiosyne, on p. 165, complete with a list of all of the verses in the New Testament that contain this Greek word. If you want, you could actually refer to a number of these verses to determine for yourself how the word is used in the New Testament. Eventually, you will want to refer to a Greek lexicon or a dictionary. To do that, you can refer to the last section of the *Greek English Concordance*, entitled *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary to the New Testament*, found on p. 1023. Look up the G/K number, 1466, and you will find it on p. 1048. After the brief definition, you will usually see three sets of abbreviations, referring you to other reference works.

In the case of number 1466, dikaiosyne, the first reference is S: 1343. This is the Strong number, which can be used to locate your word in a number of reference works. More will be stated later in this guide on these works.

The second reference is BAGD: 196B. This is a reference to the second edition (1979) of *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [REF 225.48 A747 1979] (A third edition was published in 2000 but the BAGD reference in Kohlenberger’s 1997 edition of “*The Greek English Concordance to the New Testament*” does not match the (2000) 3rd edition “*Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature*” REF 225.48 A747 2000). Use the 2nd edition unless you are familiar with the Greek alphabet. It is a well known Greek-English lexicon based on a German work by Walter Bauer, translated into English by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, and revised by Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (B[auer]A[rndt]G[ingrich]D[anker]). If we turn to p. 196 of the 2nd edition *Greek-English Lexicon*, we find a lengthy definition for the word “dikaiosyne.”

The third reference is CB: 347C. This is a reference to the four volume *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, edited by Colin Brown [REF 225.3 N532]. The reference CB: 347C is to p. 347, column C, in the index (volume 4). If you turn to the index, volume 4, p. 347, column C, you will find *dikaosyne* along with a number of references to the word in volumes 1-3. The references in bold indicate major articles on the word.

If this sounds too complicated, you can always refer to the abridged version of Colin Brown’s work, *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* by V. Verbrugge [REF 225.3 N734 2000], which is actually organized by the Goodrick/Kohlenberger number and gives a fairly thorough explanation of most New Testament words.

If you are still looking for more information on *dikaosyne*, you can consult other dictionaries and word books. Many of these books, as was stated earlier, use the Strong number. In our case we will use Strong number 1343.

For example, *The New Englishman’s Greek Concordance and Lexicon* is similar to *The Greek English Concordance to the New Testament* in that it contains an alphabetical list of all of the words found in the Greek New Testament. *The New Englishman’s Greek Concordance and Lexicon* uses the Strong numbering system. So, if we look up number 1343 we find it on p. 177. The entry lists all occurrences of the word in the New Testament, but it also has cross-references to three reference works. The first reference is to Arndt-Gingr., which is an abbreviation for the first edition (1957) of *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [REF 225.48 A747 1957]. The second reference is to Kittel, an abbreviation for the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich [REF 225.4803 T391]. This is a ten volume comprehensive dictionary of every significant religious and theological word found in the New Testament. The third reference is to Thayer, an abbreviation for the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Joseph Henry Thayer [REF 225.48 G864 1981].

To augment your research you should also refer to an expository dictionary, such as *The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* [REF 225.4803 V782 1984] or a commentary dealing with your Scripture passage to make sure you haven’t missed anything.

Finally, if you are in a hurry and you are looking for a quick yet substantial answer to the meaning of a word in the New Testament, you could begin by: (a) looking at the *Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance* [REF 220.5 2081C G655 N734 2004] showing the location of each word; (b) looking at your passage in *The NIV English-Greek New Testament* by William Mounce [REF 225.48 B582 N734 2000]. This Bible gives the NIV text with the Greek below, accompanied by the Goodrick/Kohlenberger number, and; (c) moving straight to *The NIV Theological Dictionary of New Testament Words* by V. Verbrugge [REF 225.3 N734 2000] to obtain a fairly thorough explanation of most New Testament words.