

The
HARVEST
HANDBOOK™
OF KEY
BIBLE WORDS
NEW TESTAMENT



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Introduction

The New Testament was not originally written in English, but in Greek—specifically, *koinē* Greek (“street” or “common” Greek). The New Testament authors used this form of Greek because it was what most people in their time and place spoke. The best way to read the New Testament is to learn *koinē* Greek and read it in its original language, but not everyone has the time, desire, or calling for that. Actually, Christians today need not understand Greek to grasp the message of the New Testament. Modern translations are everywhere. But to have some knowledge of certain Greek words definitely helps clarify the meaning of the text.

William Edwy Vine (1873–1949) recognized this, which is why he used his expertise in New Testament Greek to develop a dictionary of New Testament words for the average layperson of his time. *The Harvest Handbook of Key Bible Words* is a condensed and modernized version of *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W.E. Vine, which was originally published in 1940. The entries in this handbook are keyed to what are known as “Strong’s numbers,” named after James Strong, who compiled *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, first published in 1890. You can use these numbers to look up words in the Greek dictionary in the back of Strong’s *Concordance*, particularly if you want more concise definitions. There are 5624 Greek root words used in the New Testament, so there are 5624 Strong’s numbers. This handbook covers 250-plus of the most important New Testament words. Because they are keyed to various numbers between 1 and 5624, you will often see Strong’s numbers greater than 250. For example, *lēstēs*, “bandit,”

is keyed to Strong's #3027. A small glossary also appears in the back of this book for readers who may stumble across potentially unfamiliar terms such as “Septuagint” or “transliteration.”

If you already know New Testament Greek, you can use an exhaustive lexicon (*lexicon* is a fancy word for “dictionary”), such as *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.¹ This handbook is primarily for the layperson. It is not exhaustive—that is, it doesn't cover everything. It is a resource for those who don't know Greek but still want to understand New Testament words in a deeper and more accurate way. If you use this handbook for a while and then want to step up to the next level and learn New Testament Greek, you will find these helpful:

- *Greek for the Rest of Us*, by William D. Mounce, gives the bare essentials of biblical Greek if you don't want to spend a lot of money on a full course, or if you don't have a lot of time to work through a first-year grammar.
- *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, also by William D. Mounce, is sometimes a required text in seminary or Bible college courses, but it's very understandable and easy to use if you have the time and the desire to teach yourself.

The entries below often list the ways in which a word is used in the New Testament in addition to giving a brief definition. Many of the entries are accompanied by one or more quotes by popular Christian leaders or authors, either for an extra informational tidbit or for encouragement or inspiration. Some entries also include an additional insight related to the word.

We hope you find this handbook useful, as a Bible study tool, as a resource for Bible teaching, or simply for personal edification. A better understanding of key New Testament words can help Christians understand better and explain more clearly the message contained within all Scripture, which, as Paul tells Timothy, “is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant [*anthrōpos*, literally meaning “man” or “person”] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

A

Abba

The word *abba* is an intimate Aramaic word for addressing one's father. A small child would use this word to talk to his or her father. Jesus used this word to relate to God the Father, as did Paul (possibly echoing Jesus).

Definition

abba (noun, Strong's #5)

Abba is an Aramaic word, found in Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6. In the Gemara (a rabbinical commentary on the Mishna, the traditional teaching of the Jews) it is stated that slaves were forbidden to address the head of the family by this title. It is like a personal name, in contrast to the proper name "Father," with which it is always joined in the NT ("*Abba*, Father"). This is probably due to the fact that *abba* had practically become a proper name, and as a result, Greek-speaking Jews added the Greek word *patēr*, "father." *Abba* is the sound articulated from the lips of infants, and suggests unreasoning trust. "Father" (*patēr*) expresses an intelligent understanding of the relationship. The two together express the love and confidence of a child.

Insight

Aramaic is the language Jesus and the early Christians spoke. It is a language similar to Hebrew in that it uses the same alphabet and shares many of the same features.

Quotes

“When I relapsed [into alcoholism], I had two options: yield once again to fear, guilt, and depression—or rush into the arms of my heavenly Father; choose to live as a victim of my disease—or choose to trust in Abba’s immutable love.”

—Brennan Manning, *Abba’s Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2015), 4.

“Probably the word ‘Abba’ [in Galatians 4:6], the Aramaic term for ‘Father,’ derives from the term that Jesus himself used in addressing God (cf. Mark 14:36), signifying that God is the loving and dear Father of those who believe in Jesus the Christ.”

—Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 272.

Abyss

In Revelation, “abyss” refers to a bottomless pit where demonic hoards are imprisoned, a holding place from which they cannot escape without God’s consent.

Definition

abussos (feminine noun, Strong’s #12)

Abussos is used as a noun denoting the abyss (NRSV: “bottomless pit”). It describes an immeasurable depth, the underworld, the lower regions, the abyss of *Sheol* (see below). It refers to these lower regions as the abode of demons, out of which they can be let loose (Revelation 11:7; 17:8). It occurs seven times in Revelation (9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3).

Insight

This word primarily corresponds to the Hebrew Old Testament concept of *Sheol*, a shadowy underworld.

Admonition, Admonish

An “admonition” in the Bible has to do with warning, correction, and instruction. In the case of the most common examples, *noutheteō* (verb) and *nouthesia* (noun), it has to do with “putting a correction in mind.” None of these words are necessarily meant to have frightening or unloving connotations. Paul uses the verb *noutheteō* in 1 Corinthians 4:14 in the context of warning the Corinthians as a parent would a child, from love.

Definitions

1: *nouthesia* (feminine noun, Strong’s #3559)

Literally, a *nouthesia* is a “putting in mind” (*nous*, “mind,” *tithēmi*, “put”). It’s used in 1 Corinthians 10:11 about the purpose of the Scriptures (that they were written for our *nouthesia*). In Ephesians 6:4, it is paired with *paideia*, another “instruction” word that more specifically refers to the sort of teaching or discipline one would give to a child. *Nouthesia* occurs in Titus 3:10 regarding the “warning” to be directed at a person who causes trouble in the church. A difference between the words *nouthesia* and *paideia* is that *nouthesia* is generally training by word (whether through encouragement or reproof), whereas *paideia* generally stresses training by act, even though both words are used in each respect.

2: *noutheteō* (verb, Strong's #3560)

Compare with the noun above. *Noutheteō* means “to put in mind, admonish, warn” (see Acts 20:31; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 1:28; 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,14; 2 Thessalonians 3:15).

It is used of instruction and warning. In this way, it is different from the related verb *paideuō*, “to correct by discipline, to train by act” (Hebrews 12:6; compare Ephesians 6:4).

3: *paraineō* (verb, Strong's #3867)

Paraineō means “to admonish by way of exhorting or advising” and is found in Acts 27:9 describing an act of Paul (see also Acts 27:22).

4: *chrēmatisō* (verb, Strong's #5537)

Primarily, this word means “to transact business,” or “to give advice to those making inquiries” (especially of official pronouncements of magistrates), or “a response to those consulting an oracle.” It came to signify the giving of a divine “admonition” (instruction or warning, in a general way). See Hebrews 8:5, where it is translated as “warned” in the phrase “Moses was warned.”

The word is derived from *chrēma*, “an affair, business.” Names were given to people from the nature of their business (see the same word in Acts 11:26; Romans 7:3); hence the idea of dealing with a person and receiving instruction.

Quotes

“The verb translated ‘to warn’ [in 1 Corinthians 4:14] is a Pauline word in the NT. ‘Admonish’ probably catches the present nuance better. It has the primary connotation of trying to have a corrective influence on someone.”

—Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 200.

“We can choose to forget Him, forsake His commandments, and allow our

prosperity and pagan influences to woo us away from dependence upon the Lord, but we do so at our own peril.”

—Chuck Swindoll, *Parenting: From Surviving to Thriving* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 252.

Adulterer, Adulteress, Adulterous, Adultery

In the Bible, an adulterer or adulteress is one who has had sex with the spouse of another, which is in violation of God’s law. God also accused Israel in the Old Testament of “adultery” in the sense that they pursued the affections of other gods in violation of their relationship with God, where God is pictured as Israel’s spouse. God expresses displeasure with adultery committed among humans, as well as adultery committed by humans against God, even in the New Testament (for example, Revelation 2:22).

Definitions

1: *moichos* (masculine noun, Strong’s #3432)

This word denotes one “who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another” (Luke 18:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Hebrews 13:4).

2: *moichalis* (feminine noun, Strong’s #3428)

This word refers to an “adulteress” or a woman who commits adultery, and it is used

- a. in the natural sense (Romans 7:3; 2 Peter 2:14), and
- b. in the spiritual sense. In James 4:4, the author addressed hearers as “adulteresses” because of their wrong motives in asking God for something—from their love of the world. This is similar to Israel’s breach of their relationship with God through idolatry, which was also described as “adultery” or “harlotry” (for example, Ezekiel 16:15-22; 23:43). Similarly, believers who cultivate

friendship with the world (and who therefore break their spiritual union with Christ) are spiritual “adulteresses,” since they have been spiritually united to Christ as a wife is to her husband (see Romans 7:4). It is also used as an adjective to describe the Jewish people when they transferred their affections from God, and can be translated in these instances as something like “adulterous” or “unfaithful” (Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38). In 2 Peter 2:14, the literal translation is “full of an adulteress.”

Quote

“Adulterous relationships are based on deception. There is no truth involved.”

—Cindy Beall, *Healing Your Marriage When Trust Is Broken: Finding Forgiveness and Restoration* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2011), 199.

Angel

An “angel” in both Old and New Testaments is a “messenger,” either a supernatural messenger from God (which is one sense of the term) or a human messenger sent by another person. The verb *angellō* means to “send a message,” which is what the Greek term *angelos* (“angel”) is based on.

Definition

angelos (masculine noun, Strong’s #32)

An *angelos* is a “messenger,” from the verb *angellō*, to “send a message.” The message might be sent by God, by a human, or by Satan. *Angelos* is also used of a guardian or representative in Revelation 1:20 (compare Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:15).

Angels

- a. are superior to humans (Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:5),
- b. belong in heaven (Matthew 24:36; Mark 12:25), and
- c. to God (Luke 12:8); they
- d. are engaged in his service (Psalm 103:20),
- e. exist as spirits without material bodies as humans do (Hebrews 1:14),
- f. are either human in form or can assume the human form when necessary (Luke 24:4,23; Acts 10:3,30),
- g. are called “holy” in Mark 8:38,
- h. are referred to as “elect” in 1 Timothy 5:21,
- i. are contrasted with some of their original number who sinned and left their proper home (Matthew 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6), and
- j. are always spoken of in the masculine gender; a feminine form of the word does not occur.

Quotes

“Believers, look up—take courage. The angels are nearer than you think.”

—Billy Graham, *Angels: God’s Secret Agents* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 39.

“Some angels render service directly to God and Christ. Other angels bring judgment against nonbelievers.”

—Ron Rhodes, *The Secret Life of Angels: Who They Are and How They Help Us* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 24.

Anger

In the New Testament, “anger” (or “wrath”) is a strong emotion of intense displeasure or hostility felt by both God and humans. God’s anger often takes the form of judgment against sinful humans; we are saved from it through Jesus. Humans can be angry too, and our anger can be expressed in justifiable ways or destructive ways (for instance, see Ephesians 4:26).

Definitions

1: *orgē* (feminine noun, Strong’s #3709)

Originally any “natural impulse, or desire, or disposition,” *orgē* came to signify “anger,” the strongest of all passions.

It is used of

- a. the wrath of humans (Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 1:19,20),
- b. the displeasure of human governments (Romans 13:4,5),
- c. the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Gentiles (Luke 21:23),
- d. what the Law brings about (Romans 4:15),
- e. “the anger” of the Lord Jesus (Mark 3:5),
- f. God’s “anger” with Israel in the wilderness, in a quotation from the Old Testament (Hebrews 3:11; 4:3; see also Psalm 95:11),
- g. God’s present “anger” with Jews who don’t believe (Romans 9:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16),
- h. his present “anger” with those who disobey the Lord Jesus in his Gospel (John 3:36), and
- i. God’s purposes in judgment (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7; Romans 1:18; 2:5,8; 3:5; 5:9; 12:19; Ephesians 2:3; 5:6; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9).

Thumos is another term for anger in the New Testament, for an even more agitated state than *orgē*. The word *thumos* is used 18 times in the New Testament, ten of which are in Revelation; seven of those ten refer to the wrath of God. Everywhere else it is used in a negative way.

2: *orgizō* (verb, Strong's #3710)

The verb *orgizō* means “to provoke, to arouse to anger,” and in the eight places where it is found it is used in the Middle Voice (a Greek grammatical form), thus meaning “to be angry, incensed.”

It is said of

- a. individuals (Matthew 5:22; 18:34; 22:7; Luke 14:21; 15:28; Ephesians 4:26),
- b. nations (Revelation 11:18), and
- c. Satan as the dragon (Revelation 12:17).

Quotes

“Explosions of anger may appear to be the fruit of a moment’s waywardness, but in reality, they’re usually the result of a history of ignoring warnings about an impending fire.”

—Max Lucado, *God Came Near: No Wonder They Call Him the Savior* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1986), 106-107.

“We don’t sit down and say, ‘I think I will now experience anger.’ Anger is a *response* to some event or situation in life that causes us irritation, frustration, pain, or other displeasure.”

—Gary Chapman, *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), 18.

Anoint, Anointing

In the Old and New Testaments “anointing” was when one person poured or rubbed a substance such as ointment or oil on another, often on their head, but sometimes on other parts of the body. It symbolized setting someone apart for an important task, or appointing them to a position of authority, like that of a king, priest, or prophet. In the New Testament it is especially significant for Jesus, known by the title *Christ*, which means “Anointed One.”

Definitions

1: *aleiphō* (verb, Strong’s #218)

This verb is a general term for an “anointing” of any kind, whether of

- a. physical refreshment after washing (see the Septuagint’s Greek translation of Ruth 3:3; 2 Samuel 12:20; Daniel 10:3; Micah 6:15; in the New Testament, see Matthew 6:17; Luke 7:38,46; John 11:2; 12:3),
- b. the sick (Mark 6:13; James 5:14), or
- c. a dead body (Mark 16:1).

The material used was either oil or ointment.

In the Septuagint, it is used of anointing

- a. a pillar (Genesis 31:13),
- b. prisoners (2 Chronicles 28:15),
- c. a wall with mortar (Ezekiel 13:10-12,14,15), and
- d. priests, to ordain them for holy service (Exodus 40:15; Numbers 3:3).

2: *chriō* (verb, Strong’s #5548)

This verb, related to the Greek word *christos* (“Anointed One” or “Christ”), is more limited in its use than *aleiphō* above. It’s confined to “sacred and symbolic anointings,” and specifically to Christ as the “Anointed” of God (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38). In Hebrews 1:9, it is used metaphorically in