

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

What Is A Bible Concordance?

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**“I am astounded at the lack of the fear of the Lord,
and the lack of Biblical knowledge
among those who call themselves ministers of Christ”**

Paul Washer

What is a Bible Concordance? Have you ever listened to a sermon in which the pastor focused on a word, then gave the “original” language word (Hebrew, or Greek) from which it was translated into English? It helped you understand the concept a lot better, didn’t it? This is a common practice of Pastors who desire to help you to absorb the scriptures. One of the problems with English is that it is an evolving, fluid, plastic language. Many of our words have multiple meanings and our modern society often morphs words to mean new things.

Fast: 1. Rapid, quick. 2. Immovable. 3. Abstain from eating.

Band: 1. A group. 2. A ring, bracelet or strap that goes around something.

Bail: 1. To remove water from a boat. 2. To release from jail/prison. 3. To jump out of, or off of something.

Park: 1. A public place to enjoy the outdoors. 2. To secure an automobile in one spot. 3. To sit.

New English words are also created with great regularity, and are given credence based on their widespread use:

Bigsie: Having an exaggerated sense of one’s own importance; arrogant, pretentious, conceited.

Fantoosh: Fancy, showy, flashy; stylish, sophisticated; fashionable, exotic. Often used disparagingly, implying ostentation or pretentiousness.

Illustration: Consider two possible translations of the same event in the Bible. Jesus is explaining how to react to the Scribes:

King James Version – Mark 12: 38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, “Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,…”

The Totally Rad Bible: Mark 12: 38 And He said to them; “Give no cred to the Scribes. They are bigsie and fantoosh.”

Now, I made that second one up, but you could show it to a teen, today, and they might just get the idea. If “bigsie” and “fantoosh” are common language to that generation, the phrase; “...love to go in long clothing and love salutations in the marketplaces.” might fail to communicate its meaning. It might require additional explanation. Actually, doesn't the “TRB” translation seem more accurate, now that you understand the meanings of those new words?

The Bible, itself, is a Miracle of God. One of the miraculous things about it is that God had it recorded in languages that do not change. One can always go back to the original text and get the word and its meaning in a Bible Concordance.

Illustration: While walking through the woods I came across a stone foundation with a fireplace fully intact and firm. The wooden house that once sat on it was long gone; fire, storm, decay, etc. Only the foundation and fireplace stood. A new house could be confidently built upon that ancient foundation and it would last for many generations. The languages of the original scriptures are like that foundation; permanent, immovable, and able to support any structure that is built upon it.

Versions VS Translations

Language matters. It was 1999, and David Howard, head of the Office of Public Advocate, Washington DC was forced to resign after using the word "niggardly" in a conversation with two employees about funding.

"I used the word 'niggardly' in reference to my administration of a fund," Howard said in a written statement. "Although the word, which is defined as 'miserly', does not have any racial connotations, I realize that staff members present were offended by the word.

Get that? The man used the word properly, as Webster's defines it (miserly), and lost his job. Why? Two staff members who were ignorant of the word's meaning

interpreted it as a racial slur and reacted harshly. The smart guy got fired, the dumb ones remained.

Some folks, likewise, use important words out of ignorance. A common criticism of the Bible is that there are many “versions.” The implication is that one ‘version’ leads to the next, and the next, and so on. That means that there are cumulative, compounding errors in the Bible. (Like the game “Whisper Down the Lane”) As the message is re-interpreted, it changes, so nobody can know what is true or false in the Bible.

That criticism is born out of pure ignorance. God inspired the writing of His Word into Hebrew and Greek and the meanings of the original words never change. Yes, there are NEW words in those languages, but the original meanings of the original words will never change. Therefore, when a new “version” of the Bible is made, it is done with the original language as its base and NOT a re-interpretation of the previous “version.” You will not, for instance, find that an English Bible will be the basis for a translation into Bengali.

Let’s look at how Webster’s defines two important words, here:

Version: 1. A form or variant of a type or original. 2. A translation from another language

Translation: A rendering from one language into another

When critics of the Bible say there are many “versions,” they ignorantly mean the first definition and not the second. There are no “variants” of the original scriptures – except among cults. Are there differences between certain religions’ Bibles and the Christian Bible? Yes; those belonging to cults and Christian cults. I guess we’d better define “Cult” before we go further. From Webster’s:

Cult: a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious

Spurious: outwardly similar or corresponding to something without having its genuine qualities: FALSE

There are false “Christian” Bible translations that either omit, alter or add to the Christian Bible. These can be easily found out using basic tool, such as a concordance. Just remember; there are but two leaders of religions in the world who are still living; Satan and Jesus. The rest are in graves and you can visit their bones. Biblical Christianity is the only legitimate religion in existence.

God Is A MISSIONARY God

There are many translations of the Scriptures into languages that either have no Bible of their own, or in cultures whose language has evolved so that it requires updating. God WANTS us to translate His Word into every language on the planet:

Revelation 5: 9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

Matthew 28: 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The single most important element in evangelizing the unreached is the ability to provide God’s Word in their language. In order to keep the NEW translation pure and accurate, it must be written with the original languages of the original scriptures translated into that language. Two language tools are indispensable:

Dictionary: Defines words that are accepted as part of a language (some cultures are not this advanced, so missionaries work to learn the language in order to standardize the meanings of words and work out the translations)

Concordance: Lists the words in a document and connects them with the word(s) and their meaning in the original source from which they were derived.

The first English translation of the original scriptures were into the “King James” version in the 1600s. Most of us find it hard to understand the KJV because of the antiquated English. Numerous modern English translations have come along to help us with our understanding. Here’s an example

King James Version - Genesis 15:4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, “This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.”

New International Version – Genesis 15:4 Then the word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.”

Translators for the KJV used the word “bowels” as the most appropriate term for the Hebrew word that means; “Stomach, uterus, (of men, the seat of generation), the heart, the womb.” In other words, the innermost parts. This was in the 1600s, well before modern science. Today, we don’t use that term the same way, in fact, “bowels” scientifically reference the digestive system. A modern American might have difficulty understanding this passage. While the antiquated version is not incorrect, it’s just more understandable when modernized. THE KEY is that the same original Hebrew word was the basis for the translation. The tool used is the Concordance, which gives us the connection between the original language and the translated words.

There are two main languages used in the Scriptures. If it came from the Old Testament, the original language is Hebrew and Chaldee. The original language of the New Testament is mostly Greek. Those languages are unique in that their original meanings do not change. Thought centuries old, we can always go back to the original texts and find the original meaning of each word that was translated into our English Bible....or ANY language translation. Though many pastors study these original languages, they often use a “Concordance” to ensure accurate understanding of the original texts.

If you read this phrase; “cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”, what would you make of it? Would you think of an old western movie in which someone was hanged for cattle rustling? How could you consider that this refers to the crucifixion...if Jesus wasn’t actually hung on a tree? Let’s look at two passages, written seven centuries apart, and see if we can discern the meaning:

Deuteronomy 21: 22 If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is executed, and you hang his body on a tree, 23 you must not leave the body on the tree overnight, but you must be sure to bury him that day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Looking in our concordance, we find the Deuteronomy use of the word “tree” comes from the Hebrew word meaning; “tree, wood, timber, gallows, carpenter.” So, we see that the Hebrew for “tree” in this context is not just the literal tree, but also products of a tree and/or one who works with wood. This definition can suggest that the “tree” in this passage may be a man-made wooden structure, as well as an intact tree.

In the Galatians passage the Greek word translated to “Tree” means; tree, timber, wood (fuel/materials) wooden article or structure, stocks (restraints). Again, it can mean an intact tree, or a man-made wooden structure.

Note how the intent of both words is the same. It was common for criminals who were put to death to be hung on a tree, or other wooden structure. It was a visible statement that such crimes were not acceptable. To be placed on such a “tree” was to demonstrate God’s curse on the lawbreaker. How could the writer of Deuteronomy know that our savior would be placed on a “tree?” He could not; only the one who inspired the writing could have known that, 700 years later, Jesus would be cursed and hung on a “tree” for our crimes.

And, now, a challenge for you. These passages make sense to those of us who were raised in a time when capital punishment was common. Even though half the states in the USA still exercise the Death Penalty, it’s so rare that most of our culture does not understand it. How would you communicate capital punishment to a young person, today? How would you convey that capital punishment is actually biblical?

OK, We Have A Bible. Now What?

For those of us who are saved by Jesus’ sacrifice, we have now to read, study and LIVE the words written in our Bible. We are to share the message of Jesus’ salvation with the world around us. Jesus did not come only to bail you out of hell. He came that you would receive His mercy and also, reach those around you.

Romans 10: 8 But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 that if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God

raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with your heart you believe and are justified, and with your mouth you confess and are saved.

11 It is just as the Scripture says: “Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame.” 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Greek: The same Lord is Lord of all, and gives richly to all who call on Him, 13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14How then can they call on the One in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? 15And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

If you have a pulse, you know what dangers lie ahead of this nation. The USA has long ago abandoned God and we are experiencing the labor pains of what is about to be birthed in this nation; a terrible tyrant that will oppress generations. We have only to look to the church for the culprit. Consider what Paul Washer of HeartCry Missionary Society had to say at a training conference:

Q: What is the greatest threat to the church in our generation?

A: “Pastors.”

“The Bible has given three offices to the Church: Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. Wherever you see a weak church, you’ll see weakness in these offices. Either they are non-existent, they are unbiblical, or they are unconverted. In all this discussion about God’s judgement on our country, never forget that God’s judgement always begins with the household of God.

I am astounded at the lack of the fear of (respect for) the Lord and the lack of Biblical knowledge among those who would call themselves ministers of Christ. If you have a church that does not pray it’s because you have leadership that does not pray. If you have a church that is unbiblical, it’s because you have unbiblical elders.

When I look at the nation, I don’t focus on a political party or professors, groups of people, I focus on myself as a minister of Christ. That’s why one should not enter into the ministry lightly. All you young people here need to understand;

the reformers weren't reformers because they wanted to make change. They wanted to be Biblical.

You're not reformed just because you adopted some academic view of some sort of sovereign grace of soteriology (theology dealing with salvation through Jesus). You follow the spirit of the reformers because you're trying to take every aspect of your thought, your doctrine, your disposition, your life, your family, and your church and submitting it to what is written in God's Word. "

Paul Washer is an Elder with The HeartCry Missionary Society, which is a ministry of Christ Church of Radford, Virginia, whose staff, elders and members are committed to the work of missions.

Conclusion

If you are going to call yourself a Christian, you need to understand the mind of God. That mind of God is in written form in our Bible. Words matter. You need to understand our own language (Dictionary) and the original language from which key words were translated (Concordance) into our English version.

In today's electronic age, we have little computers that we carry on us all the time. You can easily put the Bible and a Concordance App on your phone, or access them on your computer. I love the big, hefty, concordance I have had in my office since it was gifted to me by a godly elder back in the 1980s. It's been an invaluable resource.

With such tools at your disposal, you need to be in the Word daily and sharing the Word whenever possible. As Christians, our purpose...our job...is to be Christ to the world around us. How can we do that if we don't have the mind of our Father?