

About Word Studies

How to Benefit from Them

Let's face it... Word studies can be quite BOR-R-R-ING!

If you want to benefit from a word study, you have to be willing to put effort into it. You must be willing to think about ("meditate" on) what you discover, ask questions and apply it to your life. You must be willing to take time to think - not only about the specific passage being studied, but also about other Scriptures, so that you can develop a better understanding of how various aspects of the Word link together.

There is a great danger if you approach such a study with the view that it is merely a list of *facts*. You must be willing to *submit* to the Word, and to let it change your life, or the best you can expect is to develop a mental "database" that might come in handy during some type of "trivia" contest. If your reason for studying is so that you can accumulate knowledge that could be useful for impressing others, it would be a sure indication that God's Word *hasn't* accomplished its primary purpose in your life. (It might also indicate that you need to study the word "humility"!)

Admittedly, not every passage that contains a specific word will have the same value. For example, if you study the word *love*, the mere fact that "somebody *loved* someone" might have less significance for you, than the command to "*love* one another." Even the same passage will have a different effect on different people, depending on what circumstances in life each has experienced. Yet, no matter how significant or insignificant any specific verse may be, it is impossible for God's Word to accomplish its purpose in your life if you are unwilling to work for it - if you are unwilling to think about what it means, to compare it with other Scripture passages, to apply it to your life (as appropriate), etc. "Life-changing" results don't occur without effort! "Sluggards" (lazy people) won't find it. You don't become a "spiritual giant" through "spiritual laziness."

Some of the word studies in this journal have "application" questions that can serve as a guideline for your study. Others will require more effort on your part. But it is worth the effort, if, by doing the study, you become more like the One who died and rose again, to save you.

A Few Additional Comments and Suggestions

A word study can be improved. You may be able to expand it, organize it better, write application questions, etc. - and you are encouraged to do this. But as mentioned before, for a word study to become useful (the way *God* intends it to be), you must be willing to work with it. You must be willing to meditate on God's Word - to spend time thinking about it and applying it

to your life. [This need to meditate also applies to any other method of studying God's Word. It is not to be confused with the *world's* concept of "meditation," which attempts to reduce or eliminate the thinking process.]

If you are studying for yourself, you can quickly skim over the parts that have less value, and focus more on those which have greater application to how a person should think and live. Be careful here. People often omit things as "less valuable," simply because they don't want to hear it, or because it goes against their preconceived notions. (If you include the "less valuable" parts, it may take more time, but it may "force" you to include verses you might otherwise overlook.)

If you plan to use a word study as the basis for teaching others, let it teach you first. Also, when you are using it, it is normally best if you *don't* just go down the outline verse-by-verse. Develop your own lessons, focus on the most important issues! (These may be different in different groups.)

You can use the word study in the same way that someone might use building materials for constructing a house. The study might be the "foundation" on which you build. The "house" would be the additional insights and Scripture passages, and the work you did on your own, to develop a well-planned lesson. In the end, the final result might not resemble the original word study.