

Finer Grounds

How to Study the Bible Lesson 10: Cross-Referencing

Another important process to add to your Bible study is cross-referencing. Cross-referencing is simply referencing another scripture that relates to the one you are studying in some way. Remember that the Bible was written as separate books and letters, but the authors commonly reference one another. It is very common for New Testament writers to reference Old Testament writing. Cross-referencing a topic can also give us insight into what different scriptures say on the subject. A word of caution about cross-referencing though: It is very easy to simply hop from verse to verse and take things out of context. Make sure you understand each verse fully in its location and don't try to apply meanings to things that aren't supported by the context.

Once you have fully defined your keyword as we discussed in the previous chapter, a great thing to do next is to see where it appears in other verses. This will allow you to come to a more full understanding of the word based on the context. Remember you should make sure that the word you are searching for is the same in the original language as the one you started with. It is a good idea to look for other instances of this word in the same book; most likely if they are in the same book, the author will use the word in the same way. The next step will be to search for instances in other books that the same writer used that word. The way John uses a word may be different from the way Paul uses it. Always allow context to have input into the definition of a word. The final step would be to compare and contrast the way this word is used throughout scripture. Once you accomplish all of these steps you will have a much better understanding of the meaning and significance of this particular keyword. My

favorite tool to accomplish this is www.blueletterbible.org.

Step-by-step:

- Go to www.blueletterbible.org
- In the "Bible/Dictionary Search" box type the verse you'd like to study
- You will now see a list of verses: the one you typed and all surrounding verses. Find your verse. When you hover over the "tools" button you will notice six boxes to the side of each verse that say "K," "C," "L," "I," "V," and "D." If you select "K" you will see a topical cross reference which can be useful; however, for the purposes of this lesson we will be cross-referencing the exact word so click on "C" to bring up the interlinear.
- Click on the Strong's number for the word you would like to cross-reference. This will take you to the page you saw when we did our word definitions.
- Once you reach the page that contains the definitions scroll down and you should see a list of places that this specific Greek word is used. You will want to take special note of any places that this word is used within the book you are studying. You may also want to look at other uses of this word within the writings of the same author.

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Let's look at the word "believe" in John 1: 7 for our example. This is a central theme throughout the book of John and is used many more times that we will look at here, but examining the various instances of this word throughout the Gospel of John will give us a more full understanding of what John meant when he used the word "believe." Here is a list of instances of this word and what we might glean from them:

- *John 1:12, 13-those that believe were the ones that received Christ and were born of God*
- *John 3:36-John uses opposites in this verse: Believe=eternal life and on the flip side non-obedience to Jesus=the wrath of God. Because of this contrast we can see that belief and obedience are tied together.*
- *John 5:44-the one who believes is one that is seeking glory from God not from man*
- *John 6:36-there is more to belief than simply seeing something*
- *John 6:69-the idea of belief is connected with coming to know Christ*
- *John 12:37-40-hardness of heart hampers belief*

You will also notice as you go through the list of the verses that contain "believe" in John, that the idea of belief is usually linked to someone experiencing Christ and witnessing His power. Looking at these verses back to back like this gives us a better idea what John was talking about when he used the word "belief." This wasn't a simple concept, not everyone who was a witness to Christ and His miracles believed. Belief entailed receiving and obeying Christ; it was more involved than simply something felt in the head or the heart.

Remember that this is a technique that is used to accompany a verse by verse study of a book. You should never use cross-referencing in order to "proof-text" and idea; always make sure you fully understand the context of each instance of the word you are studying. When used correctly, this will help you pull your study together and understand the themes a specific writer was trying to get across.

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Chapter 10: Homework

Exercise 1:

Read James 1:2-4

Cross-reference the word "faith" with the other instances of the same word in the book of James. List the other verses where this word is used.

List the things that we learn about faith by examining these passages.

What conclusions can we draw about the way James uses the word "faith" in his letter?

Exercise 2:

Read Philippians 2:1-4

Choose one or two words to examine more carefully through cross-referencing. List the other occurrences of these words in this specific letter.

What do we learn from the usage of your chosen word/words?

Exercise 3:

Read 1 John 1: 5-10. Choose one or more words and use cross-referencing explain how John uses those words in this letter and what we can learn from that usage.
