

A Constructive Caution Regarding a Few Greek Grammar & Vocabulary Resources

Thankfully, there are a number of New Testament Greek grammar and vocabulary resources available in print and/or in some computer format. Use them often, and use them with an awareness of where each resource can be helpful. To that end, below are some cautions that are intended to allow you to use the Greek language resources wisely.

Kenneth Wuest: Wuest does well at bringing Greek grammar across without requiring use of the Greek alphabet or learning details of Greek grammar. Cautions have been expressed that Wuest:

- 1) has a tendency to overstate definitions or points of grammar at times
- 2) can at times lean toward an interpretation influenced by the views of the early church ‘fathers’ above that of Scripture (‘husband of one wife’ in 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5)
- 3) expresses the aorist tense as having an expression of time in some instances where it does not have a time significance (e.g., ‘present’ in Romans 12:1).
- 4) overlooks some points of grammar that have a bearing on the translation of a passage (e.g., the Greek word translated ‘urge’ is the governing verb, and its present tense controls the time sense of the word translated ‘present’ in Romans 12:1).

Ray Summers: Summers’ *Essentials of New Testament Greek*, especially in the version Revised by Thomas Sawyer, is simply an outstanding introduction. And that is where this and other introductions merit a caution: there may be finer points of Greek grammar, beyond what even a good introduction contains, that would change our understanding of a passage, sometimes substantially.

Daniel Wallace: Wallace’s reference, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, focuses almost entirely on Greek grammar, and his Scripture index can be a very useful tool. Pentecostals have complained that Wallace is biased against their view of Scripture, and others have noted that Wallace at times uses terminology that is not in line with what has been common practice, which can make it difficult to cross-check with other references on those points. Aside from those very minor precautions, this reference is highly recommended.

A.T. Robertson: Robertson (*Word Pictures of the New Testament & Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*) expresses the aorist tense as having an expression of time in some instances where it does not have a time significance (e.g., ‘present’ in Romans 12:1). He also did not have a full sense of the exceptions to the Granville Sharp rule, as in Ephesians 4:11, “...pastors and teachers”.

Ralph Earle: Ralph Earle’s text *Word Meanings In The New Testament* can be useful, with the following cautions: 1) his aim is to come up with a simple English word equivalent for translators, so deeper insights might be overlooked, and 2) Earle is from an Arminian background, so cannot be expected to bring out the security of salvation.

Kittel: Kittel’s *Unabridged Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* is a monumental work, but deserves some significant cautions, aside from the fact that it might be overwhelming. Kittel has been criticized by other scholars for deviating from clear word definition by using invalid derived words and word histories to arrive at word definitions. This pattern is common enough that cross-checking his definitions with others is advised.