

How to Work with Biblical Words

Part 1

1. Know the basics about how words work.

*Words are symbols written by a Source.
They have attached bundles of associations that give them meanings.*

- The Source is the person writing the words.
- Symbols are letters of an alphabet plus punctuation marks.
- Bundles of associations consist of the Source's *culture* and *personal experiences*.
- Words are written at specific times and places.

2. Culture is a treasure chest of information.

- Culture is a "*catch-all term*" that is applied to huge blocks of information that are passed on from generation to generation.
- *Behaviors, technologies, native languages, knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, religions, customs, concepts, habits, skills, institutions, & other capabilities of a given people in a given period.*
- *Culture is a comprehensive worldview and way of relating to other humans.*
- *Complex cultures do not spell everything out literally, they leave much to inference. A culture's strength lies not only in what it says, but also in what it chooses not to say, and this too must be learned.*

3. Know as much as possible about the Source's personal experiences.

- *Information about the Source's gender and family roles, relationships, profession, education, religion, collectives, and economic status.*
- *Information about emotionally laden experiences in the Source's life.*
- *Information about the Source's appetites, desires, longings, addictions, etc.*

4. **Create a Source Profile.**

- Identify the Source who wrote the words.
- Identify the symbols (language) of the words.
- Identify the time and place the words were written.
- Identify the Source's culture and factors related to the words.
- Identify personal experiences of the Source related to the message.
- Identify the Receptor(s), the person to whom the Source was writing.
- Identify the Purpose of the message, the reason the message was written.

5. **Identify the Contexts of the message.**

- Ignore chapter and verse markers; allow the narrative to define contexts.
- Identify the time and places in which the story takes place.
- Identify the beginning of the story.
- Identify the ending of the story.
- Identify immediate contexts between the beginning and end of the story.
- Identify the key characters, words, phrases and ideas.
- Identify cultural factors and personal experiences that may be related to the story.

6. **Conclusion**

The odds of identifying original Sources of books in the Bible are very small. However applying linguistic models to the words in the Bible reveal many unnoticed and unknown things. Most of all they allow us to see how the words of the Bible have evolved over time. There has never been one perfect Bible. Generation after generation has played roles in making the Bible what it is today.