

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT CHRIS PALMER AND GREEK WORD STUDY...

In *Greek Word Study*, Chris Palmer has tapped into an ancient tradition, one which holds that every word in Scripture is a key that unlocks truths of God's Word. According to this tradition, which is older even than Christianity, each new room hides other keys that unlock other doors, so the more we learn, the more we realize there is to learn. And along the way, no effort is wasted: the breadth and length and heights and depths of Scripture open at every point on the infinite love of God, which surpasses knowledge. A study of this kind cannot help but end in prayer.

—Dr. Chris E. W. Green

Author, *Surprised by God:*

How and Why What We Think about the Divine Matters

Have you ever wondered how the people living in the early days of the church might have heard the good news? There are so many nuances to Koine Greek, the written language back then, that we may not be getting the full picture that God's Word is trying to tell us. Well, miracles happen! In his new book, *Greek Word Study: 90 Ancient Words That Unlock Scripture*, Chris Palmer offers a lot of insight into some Greek words found in the New Testament. And he does so with humor and sound teaching. He makes learning a little Greek fun, while giving you much food for thought. I highly recommend this book to everyone seeking closer relationship to God.

—Joan Hunter

Author and healing evangelist

Chris Palmer has produced a truly enjoyable book for readers from all walks of life. *Greek Word Study: 90 Ancient Words That Unlock Scripture* is a user-friendly guide to the original language of the New Testament for anyone who desires a better understanding of God's Word. Palmer has "done the work for you" in explaining the use of key words from biblical Greek, in a way that is both clear and simple to grasp. Not only will you gain a deeper understanding of Scripture, you are also likely to discover elements of truth you never knew existed, right there under your nose the whole time!

—*Daniel Kolenda*

Evangelist; president/CEO, Christ for all Nations

CHRIS PALMER

GREEK
μελέτη λόγων Ἑλληνικῶν
WORD STUDY

90 ANCIENT WORDS
THAT UNLOCK SCRIPTURE



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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Boldface type in the Scripture quotations indicates the author's emphasis.

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Light of Today Ministries
www.lightoftoday.com
www.instagram.com/chrispalmer

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This book is dedicated to those committed to the Word of God.

*Ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος
ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ διϊκνούμενος ἄχρι
μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, ἄρμῶν τε καὶ μυελῶν,
καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας.*

(ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ 4:12)

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged
sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of
marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

(Hebrews 4:12)

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Writing a book is not a venture one undertakes alone. Mark Twain said, “Write what you know,” and much of what I know is the result of others who have informed me and guided me along the way. Therefore, it should not be considered unusual that I sensed the influences of these individuals while I was doing research and writing *Greek Word Study*. I’d often imagine I was hearing them caution my treatment of the text, implore me to dig deeper in my research, challenge me to rely on the Holy Spirit, or chide me for overusing the exclamation point, particularly in my first draft. It’s a bad habit I still haven’t been able to kick. Their wise counsel has given you the book you are holding in your hands, so I’d like to acknowledge them here.

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Beyond writing and research, a successful book project requires the love and support of those closest to you. Here’s where I’d like to thank Light of Today Church and, most of all, my loving family.

Finally, thank you to Whitaker House and its magnificent team.

May every investment that has been made into *Greek Word Study* be for the glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I want to take a moment to explain how I have treated the Greek words throughout this book. In most languages, words change depending on how they're used. For example, in English, the verb *cook* can be *cooked*, *cooking*, or *cooks*. This is known as inflection—word changes based on their grammatical function. It occurs even more often in Greek. For instance, the Greek word *legō* (I say) can be *legeis* (you say), *legei* (he/she/it says), *legomen* (we say), *lete* (you all say), or *legousin* (they say). And this is only the present tense, active voice, and indicative mood. The little verb *legō* can change tense, person, gender, and so on in many more ways than these. Sometimes when it does so, it doesn't even look like *lego* at first glance. For instance, "he said" is *elegen*.

Although this isn't a grammar book meant to teach you Greek language construction, I felt it necessary to be pedantic here so you know what's going on as you read each chapter. In *most* of the studies¹, I introduce a Greek word the way you'd find it in a lexicon—and probably how a preacher would bring it up on a Sunday morning. But after that, in the body of the studies themselves, I will give you the inflected form of the word as it is found in the Scripture we are looking at. You'll often notice me saying, "The Greek word here..." That's just me nodding at its inflection. In other places in the New Testament where the word is used, it may not

look the same. Should I reference the word again in the study, I will return to using its lexical form.

I really wrestled with whether I should put every mention of any Greek word in its lexical form and hope that those who know Greek would understand and everyone else would not mind. But I decided against this option, choosing to make this work more comprehensive. You may find yourself reading a section and thinking, *Hey, why do some of the words look different?* Now you know why: that's just language for you. And Koine Greek is no exception.

Finally, if you should be curious enough to look these words up in a lexicon, you may notice that many of them take other meanings that I have not indexed or cited. I did this on purpose. Many words have multiple meanings; I have indexed only the definitions used in *Greek Word Study* and nothing beyond that. Doing otherwise would not have benefited nor complemented this particular study.

INTRODUCTION

Albert Einstein once said, “If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.” That’s quite a statement coming from the man who won the Nobel Prize in physics and introduced the world to his revolutionary theory of relativity, $E=mc^2$. Despite the complicated nature and depth of theoretical physics, Einstein never abandoned simplicity. Although a truth might be relatively deep, it is also simple and should be explained as such, especially to a green audience endeavoring to learn the truth firsthand.

It was our own Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who happened to exhibit the perfect example of this art of simplicity. Although His teachings contained profound mysteries concerning the kingdom of God, Jesus found ways to place these truths into everyday language that was basic enough for tax collectors, fishermen, shepherds, and poor people to understand. He did this by using concepts of the day to enhance the meaning of the eternal truths He was sharing:

The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened. (Matthew 13:33)

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and

go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matthew 18:12–14)

What woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:8–10)

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24)

Flour. Sheep. Coins. Wheat. Jesus never abandoned the familiarity of His time even though what He had to say was celestial or deep. Instead, He took advantage of what people already understood and used those concepts to be part of His teaching. In doing so, He didn't just leave us a way of salvation, but also a pattern of teaching to follow. This alone was my inspiration for the method I have chosen to write *Greek Word Study*. It's my prayer that it helps you to better understand the eternal truths from the Word of God that, sadly, are misunderstood all too often.

And, here, I'd like to mention something: I have two different opinions about commentaries. Oh, sure, as a scholar I'm often tucked away in them. Like a mechanic underneath a car, I like to bang together meaning and crank out ideas in order to present truth that can drive people closer to the Lord. I like commentaries, but I suspect most people don't, so I have certain qualms with them. While I appreciate commentaries and certainly understand their place, I believe only those who are excessively detail-oriented care to put up with their technicalities. You know—people like me. I'll be the first to say that managing a consistent study within a scholarly work sometimes feels as laborious as probing a long stretch of nighttime sky for a single shooting star. During certain times of the year, you may see one eventually...if you know where to look. But on a typical night, you may be gazing for a long time.

For this reason, I have done the searching for you and have placed my findings alongside ideas you'll understand from the twenty-first century, as well as some everyday examples from my own life. In each study, you'll find insight into key Greek words. These will present you with picturesque examples that will, hopefully, relate first-century living to your own busy, technology-filled life.

You don't need to be scholar to read this book and you don't need to know an ounce of Greek either. In fact, you don't need to know much about the Bible at all. I've gone to great lengths to give you the insight you need to enable your understanding. Just kick back and enjoy.

I've also endeavored to provide enough insights to appeal to veteran Bible students, too.

Start with Study 1, or begin with your favorite number, whatever that might be. There's no order to these studies, although I do think they complement each other in the order I've presented them. If you complete all of them, you'll come away with a solid understanding of important themes in the New Testament. You'll have read portions of most of its books and something from every author. My prayer is that while reading these studies, you'll experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, your heart will be drawn closer to Jesus, and you'll be better able to articulate the Word of God...simply, of course.

Maranatha.

μαράνα θά.

Chris Palmer

1

IMITATOR: *MIMĒTĒS* (μιμητής)

Therefore be **imitators** of God, as beloved children.

(Ephesians 5:1)

γίνεσθε οὖν **μιμηταὶ** τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ

(ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ 5:1)

Memes have taken over the Internet. If you have a smart phone and Wi-Fi, then you know exactly what I'm talking about. They are the backbone of social media and probably the best part of your group texts. Everyone loves them and sends them around, including celebrities, religious leaders, and even the president. The moment news breaks, there's no doubt that the memes will break with it in a matter of seconds. Giant hurricane coming? The president met with the leader of a communist coun-

try? A kicker missed a field goal? Worldwide pandemic? A space telescope broke? Memes, memes, and more memes. We've got memes for it all.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that some of the most popular social media platforms—the ones with the most follows, views, and likes—are the ones dedicated solely to nicely curated memes. There are Christian meme accounts, conservative meme accounts, and liberal meme accounts. I even follow a meme account for Ph.D. students. No better way to take a study break than to look at some memes made by others who can relate to my frustrations.

What can I say? I'm a meme-ster² and I like to meme.³

(For those who've been living off the grid, a meme is simply an image that's embellished with text and makes fun of whatever it's embellishing.)

However, the word *meme* was born long before there were these Internet images that imitated and teased their subjects. It was first coined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins needed a word to express how culture spreads information—"cultural transmissions," as he calls it—within itself.

Dawkins chose the word *mimeme*, the Greek word for "imitation." Hence, it represents a way that culture is imitated and passed along. Dawkins, however, thought to abbreviate the word to "meme" because it sounded like "gene" and was monosyllabic. Since he invented the word, let's let him define what it means. He says:

Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches...memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students...If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain.⁴

Essentially, Dawkins is saying that a meme is cultural transmission spread by imitation. If we buy a pair of upcycled, patchwork jeans, our friends may decide to imitate our fashion sense. When we play a song by a new artist, we imitate what's trending in music and perhaps someone else

listening might give that singer a try. Ever come back from a trip to another county and, suddenly, you are appreciating their art, trying out their recipes, and using their figures of speech? They spread it to you through imitation, by “memeing” it.

Believe it or not, before Dawkins was talking about memes, God’s Word was already on it. We find this in Ephesians 5:1, where the apostle Paul was urging the church in Ephesus to live like Christ. Paul had just finished talking about how God forgave each of us and imploring the Ephesian believers to do the same for one another (4:32). For them to accomplish this, Paul tells them to “*be imitators of God.*”

Actors in ancient Greece were exalted by society, much like today’s Hollywood stars. In ancient Rome, however, actors were slaves and foreigners who were often detested by society for their lack of morals and theatrical political critiques.

The Greek word here for “imitators” in 5:1 is *mimētai*. That’s right; it’s in the same word family⁵ as *mimeme*. It means “a model” or “an impersonator.” In antiquity, the word was used to describe actors who imitated their subjects, studying them closely so they could offer their best embellished impersonation. Through this, the subject they were “memeing” was transmitted to those watching.

Paul was telling the Ephesians to meme, or imitate, God. They were to take note of how God forgives and then replicate that forgiveness to one another. This would transmit the concept of God’s forgiveness to the rest of the church community so it could become part of their culture. Right there was first-century, Christian memeing for you.

So, you see, memes aren’t that new after all. Sure, “Internet memes” are kind of a new thing, but imitating the love of God is not.

Remember that you and I are living “memes” for God. We are called to transmit the love of Jesus and spread the culture of the kingdom everywhere we go by imitating the Lord. There is no better way to communicate the character of God than to impersonate Him in everything we do.

A coworker got mad and cussed you out? Someone borrowed money and didn't pay you back? Your spouse snapped at you? You overheard another parishioner gossiping about you?

Here's an idea: send them a meme. Impersonate the love of God and forgive them instead of trying to get back at them. Now *that's* being a true memester—a memester for the kingdom.

Are you ready to start memeing?