

HOW TO USE *THE STRONG'S CONCORDANCE*

BY PENN CLARK

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Some have asked me why I use *The Strong's Concordance* so much in the pulpit and in these study guides when there are other dictionaries that deal more extensively with the original languages. My answer is simply this: It is the most powerful tool available for the average person, and anyone can read it. Neither statement is true of the more extensive lexicons I've used. My desire is to encourage people to study, and they won't if the tools are too difficult to use.

As a new believer, I looked at all the concordances available and found *Strong's* to have the right amount of detail and the easiest system to follow. Since then, it has been my most trusted aid for deeper study, and I have not seen anything better come along, except, perhaps, the computerized version of *Strong's*.

DR. JAMES H. STRONG

He that walks with the wise shall be made wiser (Proverbs 13:20).

First, let me introduce to you Dr. James Strong, who was a Methodist minister and professor of theology at Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey. He spent thirty-five years of labor with over a hundred colleagues defining and categorizing every word in the King James Version of the Bible. He completed two very accurate and concise dictionaries of every Greek and Hebrew word that have stood the test of time. Not only was his vision for such a work rare and his accomplishment unique, but he did it without the aid of a computer. Just the thought of setting the type alone boggles my mind. His concordance was first published in 1890.

SAMPLE TEXT FOR USING *THE STRONG'S CONCORDANCE*

For this study, we will look carefully at the subject of fear from 2 Timothy 1:7. Here is the verse in its context from the King James Version:

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (2 Timothy 1:6-8).

Look up each of these key words in a *Strong's Concordance*:

- SPIRIT
- FEAR
- POWER
- LOVE
- A SOUND MIND

In *The Strong's Concordance*, each word has a number assigned to it. In the Old Testament Hebrew dictionary, the number is in bold type. The Greek New Testament is in italics.

Sometimes, there is a whole list of occurrences of the same number, which is often indicated by quotation marks (") under the number.

Notice that sometimes the number changes even though the word does not. This is an indication that the Greek or Hebrew word is different. Sometimes, the difference is small, and other times it is significant.

Also, notice the number beside the word *fear* across from 2 Timothy 1:7. The number is 1167. Now turn to the back of the concordance, and you will find two dictionaries. The first one is Hebrew, and the second is Greek. You want the Greek dictionary for this study because the New Testament is in Greek.

Look up the definition for the word *fear* by finding the number 1167 assigned to it.

Here is what it says:

FEAR GK. 1167 Δειλία *deilia*, di-lee'-ah; from G1169; timidity: fear.

First, we see the word written in Greek script and then the English rendering of the Greek word in bold type. It is then typed in a manner that enables us to pronounce it. This is always the same pattern for all the words listed.

After this, *Strong's* gives us one or two other numbers to help us trace the root words. Often, one Greek word is composed of two or three other words. In this case, it says "from 1169." (This time the root number is close by so you can easily look it up.) Sometimes, the root word is in another part of the dictionary.

After the root number, we find a semi-colon (;). This concludes the introduction to the word.

The actual definition then follows. In the case of the word *fear*, there is only one word given for a definition. It is the word *timidity*. The definition is then closed by a colon and two hyphens (:--). The words that follow are additional or alternative words, which share the same number code. In this case, there is none. Sometimes, people see this long list of alternative words and conclude that they are also part of the definition. This is the most common mistake students make. The definition is only the part in italics before the colon and two hyphens.

When you look up any of the alternative words listed, you will see how they sometimes are helpful in finding how the same Greek word is translated differently in another verse. This can be helpful and is the approach *Dr. Vine's Dictionary* takes for his Greek word studies.

SPIRIT

When you look up the word *spirit*, you see more examples of what I have said so far.

SPIRIT GK. 4151 Πνεῦμα *pneuma*, pnyoo'-mah; from GK.4154; a current of the air, such as a breath (blast) or a breeze; or fig. a spirit, such as a (human) the rational soul, (by impl.) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, demon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit:— ghost, life, spirit (-ual, -ually), mind.

Again, the alternative words are: ghost, life, spirit (-ual, -ually), mind.

ABBREVIATIONS

Within the definition, you will see many abbreviations. There is a page at the beginning of the concordance that lists all of the abbreviations that Dr. Strong employed. You will find the meaning behind all the symbols he used such as + x () [].

Two of the most common abbreviations are (lit) and (fig). Dr. Strong usually gives the literal (lit) rendering first, followed by the figurative (fig) use of the word. You have to decide which one best fits the word in its context. I have found that the figurative rendering is often the spiritual meaning intended by the writer.

For example, the word *spirit* used here has four possible figurative applications in the Greek definition. Let's itemize them in the order in which they are given:

1. a spirit, such as a (human) the rational soul, by implying the vital principal,
2. mental disposition,
3. or (superhuman) an angel, demon,

4. or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE GREEK WORDS

Let's take what we have learned and apply it to our study. Once again, here is the text we are working with:

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (2 Timothy 1:6-8, KJV).

People often quote this verse to support their view that fear is an evil spirit needing to be cast out. If you have ever had an extensive battle with fear, you will know that this concept only adds fear to your fears. While this is commonly taught in Charismatic circles, no one in the Bible had ever been delivered from fear. To be sure, fear is demonic in origin, but it came into man's heart through the fall, and it has affected the godly and ungodly alike since then.

My concern is twofold. One is that those who suffer from excessive fear find real freedom and not be subjected to deliverance, which only compounds the problem rather than relieves it. This misunderstanding causes people to focus on the wrong source of their fear. Secondly, I am concerned that we rightly divide the Word of God. There is only one verse in the entire Bible that speaks of a *spirit of fear*, yet it has become the basis for an entire doctrine and procedure to deal with fear. We should not build our doctrine upon one verse.

Besides that, Jesus spoke of fear thirty-three times but never dealt with it as a demon. If we use this verse as proof that people need deliverance from a demon of fear, then why did Paul not suggest that Timothy have deliverance?

Finally, we can see from our *Strong's* word study that the Greek word for *fear* found in 2 Timothy 1:7 is only used once in all the New Testament. It is different from any other Greek word for fear. The most common use of the word fear in the New Testament is the word *phobo* from which we get *phobia*. This is the kind of fear that happens when you feel scared or are frightened by danger. Paul did not use this word with Timothy. He used the word *deilia*, which means *timidity*.

FEAR GK. 1167. Δειλία *deilia*, di-lee'-ah; from GK. 1169; timidity: fear.

From the root word, we can see that it had to do with not having faith:

FROM GK. 1169. Δειλός *deilos*, di-los'; from deos (dread); timid, i.e. (by impl.) faithless:— fearful.

If you studied the different words for faith, you would see that it often has to do with trust or confidence in Christ. When you look up the word *timidity* in most modern dictionaries, they will say, “shy, or lacking self-confidence.”

This helps explain why Paul suggested that Timothy focus on love, power, and a sound mind. Each of these three things counteracts timidity. *Love* displaces all forms of fear according to the apostle John. The word *power* is an enabling word that reminds us that our confidence should be in the Lord’s ability, not our own. A *sound mind* is necessary to have control of our thoughts rather than their controlling us.

Then, there is the word *spirit* itself. *Strong’s* Greek dictionary gives us four figurative meanings to apply to the phrase *spirit of fear*. Don’t make the obvious mistake of applying them all to one verse. First, look at each verse in its context. Ask yourself if the writer is talking about a (human) rational soul, the vital part of a man, or his mental disposition? Does Paul mention anything in the surrounding verses that would cause you to conclude that he is referring to an angel or demon? Or is he talking about the spirit in terms of the (divine) God, Christ’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit? What application best fits the word *spirit*?

I would use *mental disposition* because Paul tells Timothy how to deal with his timidity, by applying power, love, and a sound mind—not deliverance. Being faithless or having a lack of faith is also a mental disposition. He did not suggest deliverance or dealing with it as a demon. He also said it was not given by God, so that rules out any divine source of fear. Fear is generated by the spirit of man yet is something that happens in our minds.

I believe fear occurs when our minds are disposed in a faithless or untrusting direction. Jesus confirmed this concept whenever He commanded people “*fear not*” and “*be of good cheer*.” Why would you command others not to fear unless it was within their ability to have control in that area? There are over four hundred injunctions in Scripture to “*fear not*.” Why would He tell them to be of good cheer unless they had the ability to change their mental disposition?

LOVE, POWER, AND A SOUND MIND

Fear is not a demon but a tool of the devil. It came because of the fall of Adam. Fear can be humanly induced, humanly generated, and humanly possible to stop. Often, we feel timid or lack confidence in our ability to help others or minister effectively. We can even use our timidity to remind ourselves of our need to yield to His power, not our own. I am often nervous before I minister. Whenever I look to Him, admitting my inability and asking for His power, it brings me to another level of confidence, confidence in His ability rather than in myself.

If I experience nervousness when ministering to others, it usually indicates that I am self-conscious rather than others-conscious. When I see their need, I can get past my own need and natural inhibitions. The fear of man holds us back and usually indicates there is a fear of failure or fear of being rejected by others. I can move past this with agape love as my motivation.

A *sound mind* involves mental discipline or *self-control*. When I function in *self*, I am always nervous or timid. If I don't control it, it can render me ineffective or motivate me to avoid being in the position of ministering to others at all. This is especially true when it comes to stepping out in the gifts of the Spirit. Interestingly enough, this was the context in which Paul addressed Timothy's timidity. We also know that Timothy had stomach problems. I have often wondered if it was related to his timidity. Nervousness can upset our digestive system and even cause ulcers.

Finally, for those who are truly affected by a *phobia*, resting in God's love for you, trusting in His power to help you and protect you will help give you the upper hand with fear. You will also have to exercise mental discipline and not allow fear to control you. Don't look for instant deliverance, but instead, look to Him to help you overcome this enemy of our souls by developing more faith, love, power, and discipline.