WORD search: State of the Art Concordance!

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary—Seminex Professor of Old Testament, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and editor of Currents in Theology and Mission.


2. Q. Where are Peter, James, and John listed in one verse? A. Two times in Matthew, four times in Mark, three times in Luke, once in Acts, and once in Galatians.

3. Q. How many times are gold and silver used in parallel lines in the Psalter? A. Five times, and always in the order silver-gold.

4. Q. How many times do we find a combination of the terms know, knowing, knowledge, known, knows, wisdom, wise, understand, understanding, or understands and one of the words fool, fools, foolish, foolishly, foolishness, or simple in one verse? A. Seventy-six.

5. Q. How many times are the words Lord, God, or Almighty used of the deity? A. 4,906.

6. Q. How many of those 4,906 uses have "love" or "friend" in the same verse? A. 192.

7. Q. How many times are the names Peter and Paul used in the Bible? A. 125 and 129 respectively. No.

8. Q. Could you type out all the passages referred to in the seven questions above? A. Sure, but it'll take at least two seconds for each one!

If you have an IBM computer (or compatible) with a hard disk, you, too, can become an electronic concordance expert. There are several such concordances on the market, but the one I have tried with high delight is
called WORDsearch. It sells for $189.95 (WORDworks Software Architects, 5014 Lakeview Drive, Austin, TX 78732:1-800-888-9898).

The concordance is based on the New International Version, whose literal character is an advantage in this case and makes negligible any theological shortcomings. As with every English concordance, there sometimes is slippage between the original languages and the English text, but again NW is probably about as consistent in its Hebrew/Greek—English equivalents as any of the other modern versions. To find the NT references to ἐπίσκοπος one has to look up "overseer" instead of "bishop." It pays to have a copy of the NIA handy.

The computer program lists chapter and verse where the word being sought occurs. Press one button and the complete English text for all those verses appears instantaneously on the screen. Press another button, and you are given context verses. Any of the above findings can be printed out, or they can be stored in a computer file and taken up into your word processing program. In my system (Compaq 286, with Notabene word processing), the words being sought stand out smartly since they are enclosed in angle brackets.

In a flash you can type out every verse in which the name Moses appears (547 in this count), but if you are a researcher in 1 and 2 Chronicles, as I am, you can easily bring the list down to the nineteen references to Moses in those two books. Take the numbers with a bit of salt since the computer counts references to Moses in two or three successive verses as one occurrence.

If you are even mildly literate about computers, you can figure out the relatively simple and brief manual. I found a minor mistake in it, but with a little hacking around I solved the problem — as you will too.

In short, this concordance will do anything any other English concordance will do, but much, much faster. Most concordances print out a four or five word context; WORDsearch gives you complete verses and even the surrounding verses if you wish. WORDsearch also finds things that would be virtually impossible with a regular concordance — just think about answering the questions with which this review began with Strong's or Young's concordances. The ability to print out your computer search or include it within a word processing program will prove extraordinarily useful for sermon preparation or Bible class materials.

I hope someday the authors will add a feature that will enable the user to seek out via English the underlying Hebrew or Greek text — as one can do very laboriously with Strong's or Young's, but even now word study via the English Bible has become almost eschatologically new. When you think about the time you'll save and the new information you will discover, the cost is really a bargain.

This concordance will do anything any other concordance will do, but much faster.

Postscript: 
Search the Scriptures

This computer concordance, published by BibleSoft. Inc. (Route 3, Box 182, Monroe, LA 71203), is available in either a KJV or NIV version and has strengths and weaknesses different than WORDsearch.

Its principal difference is that it is both a concordance and a word processing program. A nifty advantage is that one can access the concordance from within the word processor—while one is working on a sermon, for example. Pull-down menus make this system a bit easier to use, based on the demonstration disk that was sent.

But there are also several disadvantages. The price is $250 (instead of $189), perhaps because one is also getting a word processor.

A more serious disadvantage in my judgment is that only questions 1, 3, and 7 listed at the start of this article could be done with "Search the Scriptures." Thus, some of the intricate searches discussed above could not be done.