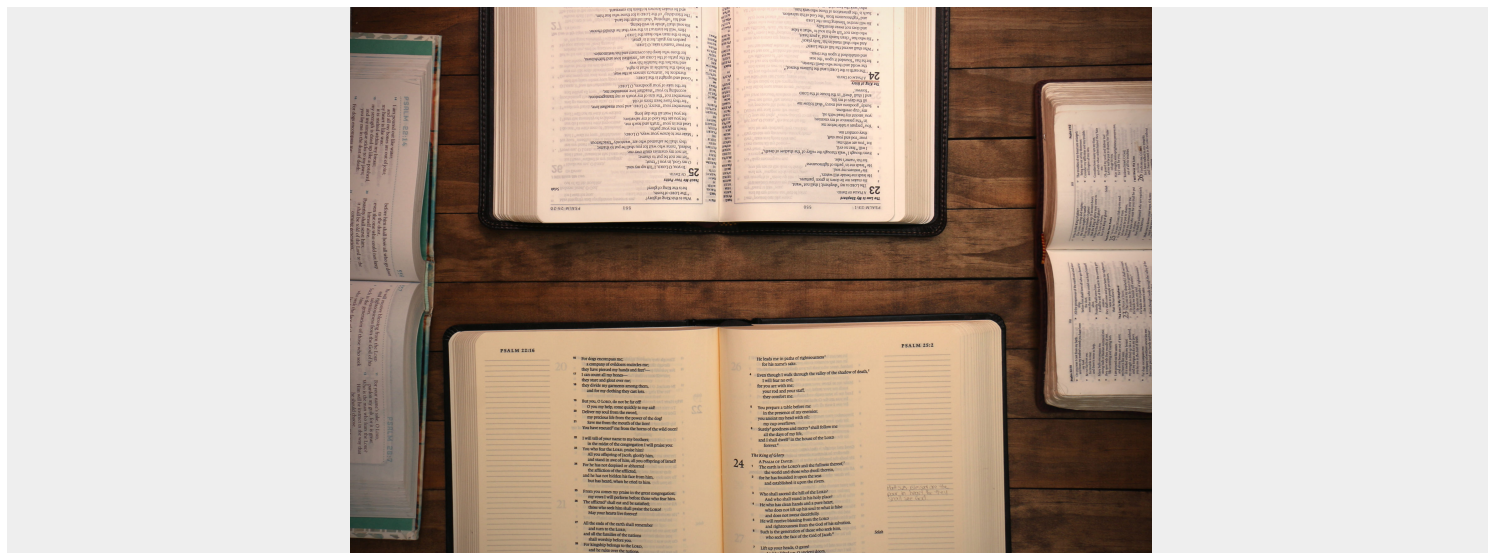


# WORD STUDY... A LAUNCH INTO INDEFINITE DISCOVERY

Posted on March 24, 2022 by Seth Herrington



Language is an incredible thing. The ability to communicate is, in and of itself, such a gift. Much more than words, it cooks in the culture where and when it exists like meat in bone broth, creating rich and dazzling ways to communicate. And we know this! But **how often do you consider language when reading scripture?**

How often do you consider the original language in the Bible?

How often do the language, wordplay, and layered references throughout the Bible dazzle you? How often does the Word of God leave you speechless?

For many of us, myself included, I'd wager it could happen more often.

Why doesn't it happen more? Because language is...weird. Consider this: a few weeks back, the city of Austin (where my family lives), put out a boil notice for our water. It started with a robocall:

"Hello! Residents in your area are cautioned to boil all water for drinking and cooking purposes *indefinitely*."

*Indefinitely*? What does that even mean? Technically, it just means there's no defined terminus. No end in sight doesn't mean it won't end. But something about that word makes it sound like it could be...forever. Like we better stockpile some clean drinking water now because pretty soon there's going to be a run on Dasani and [life straws](#) like toilet paper in 2020 (still embarrassed).

You'd need to know a little more of the meaning around the word *indefinitely* to understand the initial stress that created under our roof. There's a semantic meaning around that word that is tough to translate, but if you know, you know.

**Language is dynamic in nature and much more than words.** It's fluid - constantly adapting and filling the space required, simultaneously shaping life and reacting to it within time, context, and culture. That makes it a bit difficult to pin down - how many times has language been hijacked and turned into something it was never intended to communicate?

Errors in communication abound within the same language.

Even more so between languages.

Even more so between time periods.

Even more so between cultures.

**Translation itself is never seamless.** In fact, it's painstakingly slow, cognitively challenging, and rife with almost-but-not-quite-right linguistic parallels that reflect original meaning but rarely capture its essence.

We laugh at things like the *indefinitely* robocall. We understand the nuance. But what about someone thousands of years from now? In a different language? Would they understand what we felt? Would they get it? Probably not. And what if it isn't a text about boiling water for a few days? What if it's someone trying to understand the very deepest longings of their heart, but in a text that's been translated multiple times and passed through a few dozen generations, cultures, and more? Talk about tough.

For a group of texts written in relatively close geographic proximity and in large part, within similar (although still diverse) cultural influences, the Bible is remarkably diverse. Written by authors who communicated in different languages, existed in different times, lived in different cultures, responded within different contexts, and expected different things out of their readers. Studying the language in scripture is a

great starting point to deeper understanding.

So, over the next few months, **we're going to work through some language used in scripture together, using it as a springboard to explore the Bible more deeply.** We'll look at a few words, and might even get into some wordplay and passage-level study. I encourage you to join in and apply what we do to your own study. **My hope is that you'll discover layers of biblical epiphany that stretch on (wait for it) *indefinitely*.**