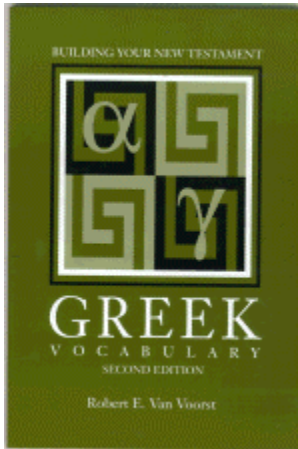


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Van Voorst, Robert E.

Building Your New Testament Greek Vocabulary

Resources for Biblical Study 40

Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999. Pp. xii + 107, Paperback, No Price Available, ISBN 0788505521.

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One can easily identify the nature of this book by its title. It intends to help Greek learning students build their vocabulary, probably after taking the first year's New Testament Greek course. Starting with the most frequently used words is a common, systematic way of learning vocabulary, especially when learning a dead ancient language like New Testament Greek, and many books cater to this purpose (e.g. B. M. Metzger). Van Voorst, however, finds the shortcomings of this approach if comprehensive vocabulary learning is intended (p. ix).

Excluding the preface and a rather long index (pp. 92-107), this book is divided into eight sections. Part One serves as a user's guide to the book. Part Two introduces some basic principles of Greek word building, which would be helpful to students who have just learned NT Greek's basic grammar. Parts Three and Four are the most important sections of the book (pp. 12-77). Part Five gives hints for verb analysis. Part Six to Part Eight list tables of prepositions, conjunctions, numbers and others (pp. 86-91).

Specially designed is the separation of cognate and non-cognate words in Part Three and Part Four respectively. All the words, which appear at least five times in the New Testament are listed with basic English meanings according to their frequencies of appearance. A word can, without a cognate, stand alone in the New Testament, for example, γαρ (1042x), δε (2801x), παλιν (141x). One can only learn this type of word one by one. The list of these words by frequency gives the reader the idea of the occurrences of these words in the New Testament. However, the case is different for

words with similar stems or roots. There are related words that share the same roots with cognate words. For example, δωδεκα (75x), δεδα (24x) and δεκατεσσαρες (5x) are listed together with occurrences between 50-99 times. All these words are further listed alphabetically. There are altogether seven groups of cognate words categorized according to different ranges of frequency of appearance. However, a word that occurs less than five times in the New Testament is unfortunately not listed in a group according to the definitions in this book, even if it shares the same root with a cognate word.

There is no doubt that learning and memorizing Greek vocabulary with cognate words is easier and more effective. This is the very contribution of this book. I do not doubt that students need to know some basic vocabulary before they can read the New Testament independently and joyfully, which is probably the aim of most students for learning Greek. I often ask myself when the appropriate time would be for students to start reading the text on their own. However, the problem is how much time a seminary student can afford to spend on New Testament Greek when he or she is engaged in a fully packed theological curriculum. Van Voorst's tool, however, is surely helpful for those who want to master the language of New Testament Greek.