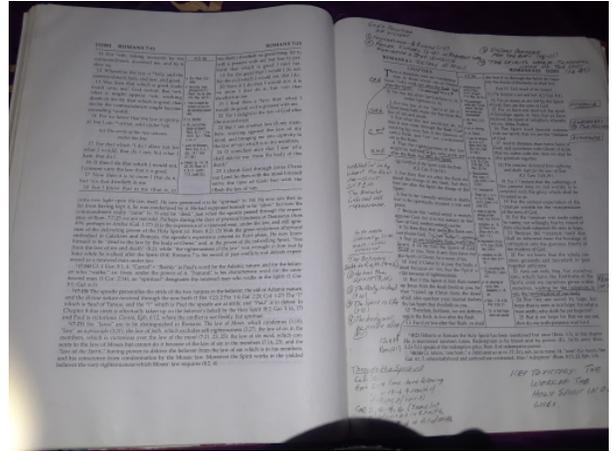


Study Or Be Diligent? 2 Timothy 2:15



**Study to shew thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.**

This verse has been discussed for many years. The point of intense controversy is focused on the very first word, “study.” Many have criticized the King James’ choice of translation here. Of course, the King James is always immediately considered to be wrong in any question, without spending the necessary *study* to find out the real truth. However, the issue of the correctness or wrongness of the KJB is not the only issue. The question extends to all languages, because translators must also decide how to translate the Greek word *spoudazo*. The difference is seen below in several other English translations.

NIV: **Do your best** to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

CSB: **Be diligent** to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.

CEV: **Do your best** to win God’s approval as a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed and who teaches only the true message.

ESV: **Do your best** to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

NKJV: **Be diligent** to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

These are only five modern translations. They all agree that the word should be translated “be diligent” or “do your best.” So which should it be? First, let’s look at how the King James translated this Greek word in the other places it is used.

- “diligence” – 2 Timothy 4:9, 21
- “diligent” – Titus 3:12; 2 Peter 3:14
- “endeavour” – 2 Peter 1:15
- “endeavouring” – Ephesians 4:3
- “was forward” – Galatians 2:10
- “Let us labour” – Hebrews 4:10-11
- “Study” – 2 Timothy 2:15

Several things should be clear from these examples. First, one meaning of the Greek word is to be diligent. Second, the KJB translators knew this. They translated the same word as “diligence” and “diligent” in the same epistle, 2 Timothy. Third, that should tell you they had a reason to translate it differently in 2 Timothy 2:15. In other words, they chose a different word **on purpose and with full knowledge**. It was not a mistake. What could their reason be?

At this point, it would be good to look at some definitions of the Greek word, *spoudazo*.

- to hasten, accelerate, expedite; to use one's endeavours; to be anxious. ¹
- to be in earnest; to endeavor, to strive, to hasten. ²
- To be diligent, earnest, or eager ... To make every effort to do one's best, to be eager. ³
- it signifies "to hasten to do a thing, to exert oneself, endeavor, give diligence" ⁴

Here are two older lexicons (1828 and 1832) along with *Vine's* and the *Word Study*. They all say the same thing. All four seem to be in agreement with how the King James translated the Greek word in all, but one place, 2 Timothy 2:15. It seems to mean diligence and earnest endeavor or effort. How do we account for the one difference?

Remember, a lexicon does not always give us a list of words we are to use in our translations. It gives us the meaning of the word. The *meaning* is to be used to *find* the correct target language word that fits the context. It is the same as a definition of a modern word in a dictionary. It is a definition. It may or may not be the word needed.

A translator and anyone who wishes to learn God's word should always consider **the context** of a word when trying to determine its meaning, and what is the best word to use for the target translation.

For example, the context of 2 Timothy 4:9, 21 is different than the context of 2 Timothy 2:15. In chapter four, Paul is expressing his desire that Timothy come to him before winter and come soon. His advice for Timothy is that he *is to be diligent* to do this. The same is true of the advice he gave Titus in Titus 3:12; “be diligent to come unto me.” However, the emphasis is a little different in 2 Peter 1:15, 1 Thessalonians 2:17, and Ephesians 4:3. In these passages something was to be attempted, but the ability to accomplish it depended too much on others or other circumstances. So, the word is translated “endeavor,” which means “To attempt to gain; to try to effect.” ⁵ The word endeavor fits nicely within the definition of the Greek word. In Galatians 2:10, the KJB uses the word *forward*, which means “Ardent; eager; earnest; violent.” ⁶ The word *forward* also agrees well with the definition of the Greek word and fits the context of Galatians 2:10 nicely. Finally, Hebrews 4:10-11 seems to be talking about qualifying to enter rest. In this regard, the KJB translates the Greek word as “labor.” This word labor means *exertion* mentally, physically, or any other way to do work. Again, this agrees well with the definition of the Greek word.

The particular choice of English term used to translate spoudazo depends on its use in the context.

The contexts of all other uses of *spoudazo* are different from that in 2 Timothy 2:15. None of the others speak about learning to “*rightly divide the word of truth*.” Remember, God inspired the New Testament in Greek. Therefore, *spoudazo* is the word God chose. It is the word that God inspired. Therefore, it is a perfect word of God. The question is whether the word “study” fits within the definitions of this Greek word. If it does, then it is a true and correct translation of the God inspired Greek word.

What is the definition of the English word, *study*?

To fix the mind closely upon a subject ... To apply the mind ... To endeavor diligently.⁷
Devote time and attention to gaining knowledge ... Investigate and analyse (a subject or situation) in detail ... Apply oneself to study ... Learn intensively about something.⁸

So, the word *study* meant “to endeavor diligently” at the time the KJB was translated. *That alone would make it an accurate term to use in 2 Timothy 2:15.*

However, the truth goes much deeper. The term *study* means to *use the mind* and the verbs attached to this use are *fix, apply, endeavor diligently, devote (time), give attention, investigate, analyze, and learn intensively*. All of that fits the definition of the Greek word. Furthermore, the context teaches that to be approved of God one must “rightly divide the word of truth.” He must learn the Bible. Tell me, if you are diligently endeavoring to apply your mind with intense effort to gain knowledge of the Bible, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? *YOU ARE STUDYING!*

In summary, The English word, *study*, means “an application of mind” and *application* is “intenseness of thought” and “the employment of means.”⁹ I repeat. If one is to make every effort and does his best to diligently rightly divide the word of truth so that he is approved of God, there is only one way to do it. He must intensely apply his mind and employ methods to learning the truth. *In other words, he must study!* Therefore, in the context, to “**study**” to show yourself approved by rightly dividing the word is defined as a diligent effort to learn the word.

“Study” is a correct and accurate translation of the Greek word *spoudazo* in the context of 2 Timothy 2:15.

¹ John Pickering. *A Greek English Lexicon*. (Hilliard, Gray, Little, and Wilkins: Boston. 1832). Google Edition. 5-2019.

² Samuel C. Loveland. *A Greek Lexicon Adapted to the New Testament with English Definitions*. (Printed by David Watson: Woodstock, Vt. 1828). Google Edition. 5-2019.

³ *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*. E-Sword. Rick Meyers. Version 10.2.1. Franklin, Tn.: 2013. Downloaded computer software.

⁴ WE Vine. *Vine’s Complete Epository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. E-Sword. Rick Meyers. Version 10.2.1. Franklin, Tn.: 2013. Downloaded computer software.

⁵ Webster. 1828 Edition. E-Sword. Rick Meyers. Version 10.2.1. Franklin, Tn.: 2013. Downloaded computer software

⁶ Webster

⁷ Webster

⁸ Oxford Dictionary Online

⁹ Webster 1828. Study.