

BIBLE WORD COUNT STUDY

A numeric study of Biblical word frequency.



A Quick Look at the “Good Book”

Is a literary work just the sum of the words and concepts contained in it? No. A key aspect that sets great literature apart from the more mundane is to evoke thoughts and feelings in the reader that go beyond the plain statements of the words. The use of metaphor, sarcasm, the design of parables and parodies come to mind as having a different connotation than the literal reading. A literary piece doesn't always literally mean what it says.

Books and stories are constructed with the brick and mortar of words, and the selection of the specific words chosen by the author under- lines what the author is trying to say and can further reveal, through the use of frequency study, the pathology of intent.

I contend that you can take any literary work, scramble the words randomly – resulting in gibberish, and still, through statistical analysis of the words and their frequency, discern the core concepts of any given work. Any beauty or eloquence in sentence construction may be lost, but core concepts remain and can be revealed.

The words, “stab” and “knife” could appear frequently in a crime novel. The words “happy” and “my friend” might be found more frequently when numbering the words of a children's book; more than would be found in a random selection. In cryptology, word and letter frequency analysis are used as the baseline when trying to break any code. Simple character replacement codes are naked to this method of decryption.

When applying this principle to religious and sacred texts, many questions arise that beg an answer. Would surveying the words used assay- ing a sacred book or treatise reveal much of the core principles for which that text is famous? Furthermore, do these revealed patterns of word frequency tell us anything about the underlying theology? And finally, do the beliefs and actions of adherents to a faith have any correlation to word frequencies within their sacred texts?

To put this idea to the test, I have decided to use what is the most common sacred text in my region – the 1611 King James Version (KJV). Word searches include the text of both the Old and New Testaments. Ut- terly invaluable to my search have been the Bible research web sites, bi- blegateway.com and christnotes.org, where one can search through many versions and editions of the Bible for words, concepts, talking points and catch-phrases. I suspect that biblegateway.com may have noticed some of my earlier articles on this subject, as they no longer return a total count of Biblical instances on a query at the time of this writing. Entering a word search in many online databases or searchable CD-ROMs will result in a list of the the number of times the word, phrase or concept occurs.

I must reveal and confess my agnosticism and plainly state that this piece is being constructed from a biased viewpoint. It is the worst kind of science to follow only the data that supports your premise, ignor- ing all countering data and arguments. This essay is not science and I am guilty of this point-to-point logic methodology, but at the end of the day, numbers are numbers.

Keep in mind this is an examination by a layman to support the premise that the words in the KJV reveal the core of its theological agen- da, and that many adherents are in full synchronization with the concepts revealed by the numerical frequency of certain words, phrases and con- cepts.

Word counting is easy, but drilling down on concepts is a bit more problematic and will be addressed in subsequent essays. I welcome any rebuttals and arguments against these preliminary results – it is likely that there are errors in the minutiae. “The sun appeered this morning,” is a valid statement, regardless of its bad spelling.

I have been examining the KJV to see how many times different words and concepts appear in it and their ratio to each other. The results are very interesting, and I think that this corner of Bible research could bear freethinking fruit. Hopefully, statisticians and other academics will examine this in greater depth.

Let's take a look at some words in the “Good Book” and see at what frequency they occur. It is my contention that if you strip the Bible down to its component words, the resulting underlying concepts are any- thing but good news. A good place to start would be at the beginning – the core concepts of good and evil.

GOOD
EVIL

778
707

As you can see , statistically the words are in a dead heat and have less than a 5% variance in the portion of total word count.

This Biblical dualist view of primary moral forces is almost perfectly balanced between the two. As seen below, the concepts of love/hate and life/death are also statistically very close.

LOVE/AFFECTION	442
HATE/DESPISE	420
LIFE	432
DEATH	417

Statistically the KJV makes mention of life and death on about par with each other. It could be accurately described as either life or death affirming. When we look at one of the major causes of death in the Middle East since time immemorial, war, we see in the figures below that violence is the default KJV setting for human interaction. The Bible is three times as likely to make mention of war than peace. This is not surprising – times of peace are not that newsworthy; there is no conflict and therefore not much to write about.

WAR	1225
PEACE	420

Drilling down a bit further, the trending becomes a bit more out of balance and trending toward the violent. In the KJV, destruction is brought to the dialog almost ten times as much as creation. The Bible seems to be much more about tearing things down than building them up.

DESTROY	443
CREATE	45

Of course the best way to have death, war and destruction is to instill fear into the population being governed. Being fearless is about 1/5 as likely to be found in the Bible as being fearful. This seems to be a theme recurring in modern times.

FEAR	501
FEAR NOT	103

Bad News for Women

The statistical variance between the sexes is glaringly apparent throughout the KJV. After looking at the simple search of “man” and “woman,” I felt I should dig deeper to try and shore up the feminine side of the statistics. I hate to massage data, but without doing so the first chart results with women mentioned only 347 times to the 4536 for the men. I try to put a better face on the statistics.

MAN	4536
WOMAN	347*

In addition to the word “woman”, I increased the feminine word count by adding daughter (505), Harlot (48), Whore (65), Virgin (64), Wife (373) and Concubine (37), which now brought the aggregate total to 1439; still a four to one leaning towards the masculine. The term “free woman” is only used in the KJV in reference to the end of a period of servitude.

MAN	4536
WOMAN	1439*

In the same vein are the concepts of killing and healing. Again the violent wins three fold in this comparison. These figures alone should slay you.

KILL/SMITE/SLAY	493
HEAL	160

And the Truth Shall Set You Free?

The concept of personal empowerment that is put forward by many Christian sects these days is not reflected in either the old or new Testaments of the KJV. Servants and slaves are six times more likely to be mentioned in the Bible than a free man. There are many “freedom fighters” in the Bible – at least from the Hebrew point of view. The concept of freedom is most commonly found in gaining freedom for the Hebrews from one of their many oppressors. Individual or personal freedoms are not a Biblical concept.

SERVANT/SLAVE	926
FREE MAN	160

Of course the best slave or servant is the obedient one; not likely to rebel or revolt against their masters. The trend continues when regarding obedience and revolt.

OBEY	240
REBEL/REVOLT	114

The Pitiful Record

Pity is handed out parsimoniously in the KJV. One would be three times more likely to be reminded to “pity not” rather than pity the suffering or less advantaged.

NO PITY/PITY NOT	34
PITY	9

A Sobering Look

Imbibing in wine (and frequently women) is a common occurrence in the Bible. Remember the Biblical hero Lot? You know, the only man righteous enough to escape alive from Sodom and Gomorrah? He was also a drunken pedophile who knocked up both his virgin teenage daughters and blamed the booze. Actually I’m not sure of the virgin part, as Lot offered his daughters to the sex-crazed crowd back in Sodom. Better a daughter raped than a guest sodomized. Samson’s drinking problem also bit him in the butt when trusting Delilah as his hair design consultant.

DRUNK	77
SOBER	15

The Truth of the Matter

LIE	902
TRUTH	225

Don't Worry Be Happy

Sadness is twice as likely to be the Biblical state of mind than happiness. According to many theologies, we are born to suffer, so this comes as no surprise.

SAD	52
HAPPY	25

Good Times Bad Times

PLAGUE/FAMINE	201
PROSPER	91

My Darling, You Weren't Wonderful Tonight

TERRIBLE	55
WONDERFUL	25

When seeking the source of the prideful ignorance of many contemporary Christian adherents, one can deduce a trend in the good book for prideful, strong and willful ignorance.

WEAK	57
STRONG	259
KNOW NOT	481
KNOWLEDGE	191

In conclusion, I would like to share the word count on a few other things and concepts that can give the seeker an idea about underlying theo- logical priorities in the "good book."

UNICORN	9
FREEDOM	2
TALKING DONKEY	1
EQUALITY	1
EDUCATE	0

ARE YOU A SINNER?

Of course you are. The church tells us that you are a miserable sinner before the doctor cuts your cord at birth. You are destined to carry this sin with you until you die and go to roast in Hell Eternal.

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