

The primary use of an adjective in the Bible is to give a modifying description of a noun or other substantive. An adjective will always be related to some noun or substantive in the context. It can be just about any word that modifies another noun. So a critical key is to look for the noun to which the adjective connects.

In **Romans 7:12** the noun “commandment” is modified by three descriptions:

- 1) The commandment is “holy.” We can understand this as meaning a holy commandment.
- 2) The commandment is “righteous.” We can understand this as a righteous commandment.
- 3) The commandment is “good.” We can understand this as a good commandment.

When looking at an adjective, we may observe that sometimes there is an article “the” that includes the adjective with the noun. This is the easiest way to determine the adjective God wanted to use to modify or qualify the noun:

In **Matthew 4:5**—We see that the Devil took Jesus “into **the holy city**.”

In between the article “the” and the noun “city” is the adjective holy.

In **Luke 6:45**—we see Jesus speak of “**the good man**.”

In between the article “the” and the noun “man” is the adjective good.

In **Revelation 1:11**—Jesus tells John to write what he sees and send it to “**the seven churches**.”

In between the article “the” and the noun “churches” is the adjective seven.

Sometimes there is no article and the adjective is seen in a comparative context:

In **Matthew 21:28** “a man had **two sons**.” In the context, the two sons will be compared by using an adjective “first” son and then the adjective “second” son.

In **I Corinthians 3:10** we read “like a “**wise master builder**.” The adjective “wise” is used in the context to compare how Paul built his ministry and how others should build theirs.

In **II Timothy 3:16** we read “All **Scripture is inspired** by God.” The adjective “inspired” modifies “all Scripture.” We could literally understand this as meaning “all God-breathed, inspired Scripture” is profitable. It is all God-breathed and it is all profitable.

Sometimes an adjective will be used in a superlative way to express, what Dan Wallace called, a “par excellence” (*The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 132).

In **Matthew 13:32** the adjectives “smaller” and “larger” are used in a comparative way by Jesus.

In **Luke 9:48** we read “the one who is **least** among all of you, this is the one who is **great**.” We have two superlatives—on the negative side there is the least; on the positive side the greatest.

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In **I Corinthians 13:13** a superlative adjective “greatest” is used in context of faith, hope and love.

In **Hebrews 9:3** we read “the **Holy** of Holies.” Of all the holy places in the tabernacle, this was the holiest of all.

Pay attention to adjectives, for God put them in His word to carefully modify and qualify many different things He has revealed.

QUESTION #19 – What is an adverb?

An adverb is a word that is used to modify, describe, limit and qualify a verb, adjective or another adverb or phrase. Adverbs are in the verb family and are used to help state a matter with exactness and precision.

Adverbs may be divided into four categories:

Category #1 - Adverbs that express matters pertaining to time—“then,” now,” “always,” “early.”

In **Philippians 1:4**, Paul uses the adverb “**always**” in regard to times he prayed.

In **Ephesians 5:8**, Paul uses the adverb of time “**formerly**” to describe our status before Christ.

Category #2 - Adverbs that express matters pertaining to place—“here,” “there,” “near,” “away.”

In **John 19:20**, John uses the adverb “**near**” in regard to the place Jesus was crucified.

In **John 19:42**, the adverb “**nearby**” is used to describe the location of Christ’s tomb.

In **Philippians 4:5**, the adverb “**near**” is used to describe the nearness of the Lord.

Category #3 - Adverbs that expresses action pertaining to manner or quality—often end “ly” - Quickly, swiftly, gently, godly, softly, earnestly.

In **Ephesians 1:6**, Paul says God “**freely**” bestowed sovereign blessings upon those He saved.

In **I Thessalonians 3:10**, Paul says he prayed “**earnestly**.” He wanted to qualify this.

In **Revelation 22:7, 12, 20**, Jesus says He is coming “**quickly**.”

Category #4 - Adverbs that express matters pertaining to degree—“very,” “rather,” “enough.”

In **II Corinthians 12:9**, Paul says God’s grace is “sufficient” or “enough.”