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## Resources for Reading Greek: A Review Article

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Many new resources are becoming available to help us read and understand Greek. The basic information you need in order to read Greek includes the parsing and meaning of words, and how the words work together to convey the author's thought, that is, the grammar and syntax. In this brief survey, I will begin by discussing several wonderful resources to consider using for each of these aspects of Greek, and then note some pedagogical guides that have come out in recent years. I will conclude with a brief list of a few websites that offer great help. My focus is on practical helps for reading the text, rather than current issues in the study of Greek.

### Vocabulary

- Frederick William Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. ISBN: 0-2260-3933-1.

In the early 1970s I heard John Stott say that the book that most helped him understand the New Testament was Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon*. Danker's revision of this standard Greek-English lexicon for the New Testament increases greatly the usefulness of this tool and sets this third edition in a class by itself among lexicons. Danker made use of the material in the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, edited by J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida (2nd ed.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), which enabled him to explain the meanings of words instead of just giving suggested English translations. For example, one of the ways we can translate the preposition ἐπί (*epi*) is "over." Danker lists this translation but also explains it: "marker of power, authority, control of or over someone or something, *over*" (365). His explanation greatly clarifies the particular meaning of "over" that is in mind. While this lexicon is not infallible, it makes available a wealth of information and insight. Rodney Decker has written a helpful introduction which enables you to get the most out of Danker, available at <http://www.ntresources.com/bdag.html#Intro>.

While Danker is the most important tool for understanding the meanings of words, there are several recent resources that provide quick vocabulary help, enabling you to read the Greek New Testament rapidly.

- *The UBS Greek New Testament: Reader's Edition*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007. Hardback: 978-3-438-05150-9; Paperback: 978-3-438-05149-3.

This edition of the Greek New Testament provides the standard scholarly text of the Greek New Testament (UBS<sup>4</sup>/NA<sup>27</sup>), along with a lexicon for the words used 30 times or more in the Greek New Testament. All of the words used fewer than 30 times are provided right on the page as footnotes to the Greek text, along with many of the parsings. The definitions given are ones the editor considers best for each specific context. This means you are dependent on the editor's interpretation, but it also means the definitions are not cluttered with lots of possibilities which slow you down. For rapid reading this limited definition is helpful since the editor's choice is always a viable option. The font and layout of the page is very attractive and readable. For most people this is probably the single most helpful resource for rapid reading in the Greek New Testament.

- Richard J. Goodrich and Albert L. Lukaszewski, eds. *A Reader's Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-3102-7378-3.

This Greek New Testament also has vocabulary notes right on the page, providing definitions for words used fewer than 30 times in the New Testament. This edition, unlike the one noted above, lists multiple definitions for each word, often including numerous definitions that are not appropriate for the context. So you are able to see a range of meanings for a word, but this process slows down your reading. A major disadvantage of this Zondervan edition, compared to the one mentioned above, is that no parsing help is included. Furthermore, the Greek text is not the standard text of UBS<sup>4</sup>/NA<sup>27</sup>, but rather the text followed by *Today's New International Version*. The footnotes include reference to places where this text differs from the standard text, but this clutters things and will slow you down. Note that the first edition of this book used a very poor font that was difficult to read. The font has been changed in the second edition (though the print is still very light, perhaps due to the thinness of the paper), and the second edition has also added a lexicon of words occurring 30 times or more, though the definitions are much less extensive than in the dictionary included in *The UBS Greek New Testament: Reader's Edition*, discussed above.

- Michael H. Burer and Jeffrey E. Miller. *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8254-2009-2.

This is an updated version of a standard tool for many years by Sakae Kubo. Instead of providing a Greek text with footnotes, this book simply lists the vocabulary used fewer than 50 times in the Greek New Testament, arranged verse by verse. Usually more than one definition is given, though they are all context specific and usually follow Danker's lexicon. Each entry also includes interesting word statistics so you can see how often the word occurs in the document, as well as in the writings of the author and in the New Testament as a whole. For most people an advantage this book has over the two New Testaments just discussed is that fewer words are assumed. That is, it only assumes you know the 319 words that are used 50 times or more in the Greek New Testament, rather than the 466 words that are used 30 times or more. The book lacks a list of vocabulary used 50 times or more, but I have posted a copy of such a list on the Trinity website, namely, the list that I included in my *Patristic Greek Reader*. For many, the main disadvantage of Burer and Miller's *Reader's Lexicon* will be the lack of help with parsings. For rapid reading in the New Testament I prefer to use this tool since I want to be reading from a copy of Nestle-Aland text with its cross references and textual apparatus. I find that my memory of a text is aided by seeing where the words are on a page, so I want to be working from only one edition as much as I can in order to become familiar with the text.

### Parsing

If you can recognize noun and adjective forms fairly well, then the parsing help in *The UBS Greek New Testament: Reader's Edition* is probably all you will need.

If you do not have the time to review the forms for nouns and adjectives, and if you do not have the money or desire to buy a good software program like BibleWorks (discussed in *Trinity Journal for Theology & Ministry*, vol. 1, no. 1, though for the latest update see <http://www.bibleworks.com/>), then you will have all the help you need in Mounce's *Analytical Lexicon*, an updating of a standard tool first published in the 1800s.

- William D. Mounce. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993. ISBN: 978-0-310-54210-0.

This book lists every form found in the Greek New Testament in alphabetical order. It also includes a helpful review of the Greek paradigms. For a detailed discussion of morphology use William D. Mounce's *The Morphology of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. ISBN: 0-310-41040-1).

- Rodney A. Whitacre, "A Review of Basic Hellenistic Greek Morphology."

For those who want to work on their knowledge of Greek morphology, I have posted on Trinity's website a comprehensive review of Hellenistic Greek morphology (i.e., the Greek of the New Testament), including practice worksheets and an answer key. The amount of rote memory work has been reduced as much as possible, fitting on a single standard sheet of paper. A detailed explanation is given for how the forms on that sheet relate to the various paradigms, and therefore how the memorized material enables you to recognize forms as they occur in a text.

## Grammar

- Daniel B. Wallace. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament With Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. ISBN: 0-310-21895-0.

At 827 pages, this is one of the most comprehensive grammars available, but what makes it especially valuable is the clarity and thoroughness of the explanations and the frequent discussion of the theological significance of grammatical constructions found in particular passages of the New Testament. Like Danker's revision of Bauer's lexicon, Wallace is not infallible (nor even completely comprehensive), but it is a goldmine of insight into the meaning and significance of the New Testament. Danker and Wallace are the two basic tools everyone should have for work in the Greek New Testament.

- Lee Irons, "Greek Syntax Notes."

Very convenient help with the basic grammar of the Greek New Testament verse by verse is now available free on the internet. Lee Irons, a doctoral student at Fuller Seminary, has provided a set of basic grammar

notes to be used in conjunction with *The UBS Greek New Testament: Reader's Edition* to help people read quickly. His material is available at <http://www.upper-register.com/papers.html#GNT>.

## Workbooks and Readers

Several resources are now available to work on intermediate Greek inductively, through the study of particular passages. Working through any of these books would greatly improve one's Greek beyond the first year level.

- William D. Mounce. *A Graded Reader of Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. ISBN: 0-310-20582-4.

This is a companion volume to Mounce's very popular textbook for basic Greek, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). He provides the Greek text of twenty passages, along with a brief introduction to each passage, vocabulary help and exegetical notes. Along with passages from the New Testament, arranged in order of difficulty, he includes Psalm 41 and a few selections from the *Didache*. The brief exegetical notes highlight points of grammar and lexicography, and point out the issues they raise for the interpretation of the passage. These notes not only provide insight into the particular texts but also examples of how to dig into the Greek text in responsible and profitable ways. The book includes a "partial summary" of Wallace's *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, and also a guide to Mounce's "phrasing," which is a simplified method of sentence flows.

- Daniel B. Wallace and Grant G. Edwards. *A Workbook for New Testament Syntax*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-310-27389-9.

This workbook is arranged by topics of grammar, with the first chapter on the nominative and vocative, the second on the genitive and so on through the major points of grammar. Each chapter begins with "warm-up passages," a few verses which are particularly helpful for working on the point of grammar to be covered. Then the bulk of a chapter focuses on a "syntax passage," a target passage of 15 to 30 verses. The book includes 16 passages, totaling about 400 verses. For both the warm-up verses and the target passage Wallace and Edwards give vocabulary help and grammatical questions. Brief introductions to the content and context of the target passage are also provided. Since an answer key is not

provided, this book will be frustrating for many who use it on their own rather than in a course.

- Jerry L. Sumney. *Philippians: A Greek Student's Intermediate Reader*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-56563-991-1.

Unlike Mounce and Wallace/Edwards, Sumney makes use of a single text in its entirety to help students improve their Greek. This book is basically a brief commentary on the Greek text, with much more help in understanding the Greek than is found in regular commentaries. While walking through the Greek of Philippians, Sumney comments on most of the constructions and provides very helpful summary sidebars for particular points of grammar as they are met. He engages many significant studies and commentaries on Philippians and provides useful bibliographies throughout the book. This engagement with the interpretation of the text is helpful as far as it goes, and he engages several major commentaries at many points, but the book itself is not intended to be a major commentary on the letter. Working through Philippians with Sumney as your guide would certainly improve your Greek.

- S. M. Baugh. *A First John Reader: Intermediate Greek Reading Notes and Grammar*. Phillipsburg: P. & R. Publishing, 1999. ISBN: 0-87552-095-2.

This book is a sequel to Baugh's basic Greek textbook, *A New Testament Greek Primer* (Phillipsburg: P. & R. Publishing, 1995). For each section in his *Reader* he has you begin with a review of select sections of the *Primer*, followed by reading part of a section in his *Reader* called, "Sketch of Greek Word and Phrase Syntax," which is a brief outline of Greek syntax. Once you have completed this work you turn to the assigned section of 1 John and work through it with Baugh's vocabulary help and exegetical discussion. For each verse he engages the syntax and the issues it raises. He does not provide an answer key to the questions he raises, but he does indicate where help is provided by citing paragraph numbers in his *Primer* and/or his "Sketch," and often cites one or more of the major grammars. When he asks for the parsing of a form, he provides the answer in a footnote, along with an explanation of the form which will help you understand the morphology better. In this way the book guides you through a review of first year material, a systematic survey of basic intermediate syntax, and an inductive engagement with a document of the Greek New Testament. This combination makes this book one of the most helpful of those I am surveying if you want both to solidify basic

Greek and advance into intermediate Greek, while also working on exegetical skills. The fact that Baugh's discussion is brief and to the point also makes it an attractive tool to use for many people—the whole book is only 150 pages, 54 of which is his syntax sketch.

- Herbert W. Bateman, IV. *A Workbook for Intermediate Greek: Grammar, Exegesis, and Commentary on 1-3 John*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8254-2149-5.

If Baugh is not detailed enough for you then you have the option of using Bateman's guide, which weighs in at 612 pages plus a CD containing further material. Bateman, like Baugh, guides you systematically through a review of basic Greek and a survey of intermediate grammar. But unlike Baugh, instead of using his own material for these tasks, Bateman lists the relevant sections in five basic textbooks and six intermediate grammars, so you can work with your choice of resources. For the assigned section of biblical text in each lesson Bateman gives vocabulary help, a brief introduction to the passage, and then extensive discussion of a wide variety of interpretive issues raised in each verse, along with questions on the grammar. He provides references in the intermediate grammars to help students sort out the grammatical issues raised, and on the CD he provides an answer key. Bateman aims to cover the major steps in exegesis, so he includes work on simplified sentence flows and also a number of exegetical steps not directly related to the Greek, such as application. It would take a great deal of time to work through this workbook, but it would be very valuable to do so.

- Rodney J. Decker. *Koine Greek Reader: Selections from the New Testament, Septuagint, and Early Christian Writers*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8254-2442-7.

As the title indicates, there is a wide variety of material in this reader, including nine passages from the New Testament, arranged in order of difficulty, six passages from the Septuagint, four from the Apostolic Fathers, and four of the early Creeds. Each chapter begins with review of basic Greek grammar, morphology and vocabulary. Extensive notes are provided for the target passages, including a brief introduction to the passage and verse by verse notes on most of the details of the Greek of the passage. For the biblical passages Decker includes a "supplemental reading" selection which provides the text for the passage following the target passage, set in parallel columns with an English translation. A similar additional passage is provided for the Apostolic Fa-

thers, though these are passages that precede the target passage rather than follow it. For the selections outside the New Testament he provides an English translation. The book includes several helpful appendices, including an introduction to Danker's lexicon. Decker's website (<http://ntresources.com/reader.htm>) contains further resources for several of the passages covered in this reader. The breadth of the passages covered and the depth of the notes provided make this one of the best resources for improving your Greek.

- Rodney A. Whitacre. *A Patristic Greek Reader*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-59856-043-5.

This reader offers notes that enable a person with a knowledge of basic Greek to read selections from fifteen authors/sources that range from the late 1st century through the 11th century. The passages represent a variety of genres and levels of difficulty. The notes assume a knowledge of the words used fifty times or more in the New Testament, and a list of these words is provided. Each author/source is introduced, and a very literal translation of the selections is given at the back of the book. The notes focus on the information needed to read the passages and do not provide further pedagogical guidance, unlike other readers surveyed here.

### Websites

A great deal of help with Greek is available on the web. I will mention a mere handful of the sites that I have found particularly useful, each of which contains further links to many other sites that contain valuable material.

- Mark Goodacre, "New Testament Gateway"  
<http://ntgateway.com/greek/>

This is the most comprehensive website for New Testament studies that I know of. The subsections for the Greek resources section include: Greek New Testament Texts, Learning New Testament Greek, Fonts, Grammars, Language, Lexica, Discussion List, Computer Software, Bibliography, Septuagint.

- Rodney J. Decker, "New Testament Resources"  
<http://ntresources.com/>

Decker's website is less comprehensive than Goodacre's, but contains many helpful resources, especially for Greek. The items are mostly materials that Decker has prepared for his classes.

- Gregory R. Crane, editor-in-chief, "Perseus Digital Library"  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>

This wide-ranging library includes a large collection of ancient Greek texts and various tools for studying them, including a searchable copy of the main lexicon for Greek by Liddell, Scott, and Jones. Each word in an ancient text is linked to this lexicon, so you need only click on it to access the lexicon's entry for the word, as well as a parsing. This resource is especially helpful when you want to check a passage in a document from the Classical period of Greece. It is worth exploring this website beyond the Greek resources it contains, such as photographs of ancient sites.

- "Thesaurus Linguae Graecae"  
<http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>

This website is the most comprehensive collection of Greek texts available, including most of the Greek works of the Church Fathers. The site can be linked to Perseus, enabling the same use of the lexicon as on Perseus. This site requires a subscription that is fairly expensive, so unless you have access to a library with a subscription you might not use it much. But a free sample of a number of texts, including Patristic texts, is available on the homepage.

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