



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Learning to Read Greek??

Learning to Read Greek?? - posted by repentcanada, on: 2007/5/21 21:24

I am interested in the thoughts of brothers and sisters here on SI on learning Greek to read the New Testament.

Is there much additional benefit to taking the time to learn to read and understand Greek, or would you say that with Strong's Concordance and different Bible versions we can understand the Word of God almost as well without learning the original language?

As well, does anyone know how much time one would have to study (approx.) to learn to read Greek? Is it possible to learn it via correspondence?

Thanks much,
Ricky

Re: Learning to Read Greek?? - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2007/5/21 22:14

Quote:

Is there much additional benefit to taking the time to learn to read and understand Greek, or would you say that with Strong's Concordance and different Bible versions we can understand the Word of God almost as well without learning the original language?

I think taking the time to learn some Greek is much more beneficial than through the usage of a Strong's Concordance. At best, Strong's might allow you to do a decent word study. However, it will not let you know various grammatical things that are happening in the text that are essential to having a good idea what the Greek "really says." For these grammatical things will often be essential to determining even the proper translation of a particular word depending on various grammatical things. Otherwise, if you simply do Strong's, you will do like most people do, and simply look up a word and determine which of a wide variety of meanings and definitions you personally like, and not necessarily what the grammar and context determine.

Learning Greek is not essential to having a knowledge (even in-depth) of God's word. A good word-for-word translation can go quite a long ways in this regard. However, I think there are some nuts-n-bolts type things that you will not come to understand apart from a divine revelation.

Quote:

As well, does anyone know how much time one would have to study (approx.) to learn to read Greek? Is it possible to learn it via correspondence?

In seminary, we learned a working knowledge of Greek in two semesters. I don't think you need to take any sort of correspondence class. Such might help you be more disciplined in your own studies if you lack such. However, I think you would do well to look into excellent material available by Bill Mounce in his series "Learn Biblical Greek." His Grammar/Workbook are outstanding. You could also spend a \$100 and buy his lectures that he actually gave at the seminary I attended. His work is used everywhere. See (www.teknia.com) www.teknia.com for more info.

Also, you might consider "Greek for the Rest of Us" by Mounce as well. Such will not be nearly in depth, but will give you a knowledge of the Greek language enough to pick apart basic grammatical functions, read the actual Greek language, and make use of better commentaries.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2007/5/22 3:18

I think Jimmy has answered this well. However personal giftings will have an impact on how useful a little Biblical Greek might be.

Vines Expository Dictionary is still a great help and 'safer' than a little Biblical Greek in the wrong hands. There is truth in the old saying that 'a little learning is a dangerous thing'. However if we understand that our 'learning' is only 'a little learning' we will not rush into rash conclusions based on the little Biblical Greek that we have.

Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2007/5/22 11:12

I agree completely with KJ and Philo. I started learning Greek a few months ago. It has really been a joy to me. It's really aided my understanding of why things are translated they way they are.

Here is a thread I started awhile back.

(https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?mode=viewtopic&topic_id14705&forum35&start0&viewmode=flat&order0) Studying Greek

Also, I posted the below after seeing how some "little Greeks" can run into trouble.

First off, I'm no scholar or anything of the sort. I'll just share a few things I know. Since some seem to be getting into "studying the Greek," this might be helpful.

Words are very important, but how often do we think about what a "word" is or does? Words are more than just a common string of sounds. Words convey ideas and thoughts to another person. It's amazing to think about how a noise coming out of someones mouth could be received to actually be intelligible. Amazing! One thing we need to realize is that when we acquired our native tongue, we didn't do that by studying a dictionary. Of course not! We couldn't have even read it! Truly, words don't have definitions but histories of meanings. A word is used in a common manner so we slap upon it a string of words and call it a definition, but really this isn't how you know what the word means. To be able to understand a word you have to have a history with that word. Again I stress that words aren't really learned, but acquired through a history of usage either in hearing, reading, or speaking. You can "learn" a word, but just being able to add a string of words together about that word, doesn't necessarily mean you understand it's meaning.

What was the point of that first paragraph, you might ask? I say that because in translating from another language you don't just match up words. It's more than that. It can be commonly thought of when looking at a "Greek definition" that a particular word can mean X amount of things. Well, that may or may not be true. Translating a word or phrase is not like pulling a word out of a bucket and hoping it's the right one. Neither is it like having a list of words that it "can mean" and matching it with the one "you want." It may look like that if you were to just look at a dictionary, but it's just not so. Again, words don't merely have definitions, but convey a certain meaning.

A huge problem can arise when "looking at Greek" if you think that a word can always mean X amount of things into English. Here is the thrust of this whole post: **For you to truly translate a word from Greek into English, you have to understand it in Greek before you can translate it into English.** It is detrimental that you be able to understand it in Greek because you must acquire the meaning of the word. After you have acquired the meaning of the word in Greek, then you can put your mind to work by thinking of the words/phrases that convey the same meaning into English.

Do I fully understand Greek? Not on your life! This is why I know that if I come up with a "translation" that no reputable Bible has, I'm wrong.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2007/5/22 12:25

Quote:

Truly, words don't have definitions but histories of meanings. A word is used in a common manner so we slap upon it a string of words and call it a definition, but really this isn't how you know what the word means. To be able to understand a word you have to have a history with that word. Again I stress that words aren't really learned, but acquired through a history of usage either in hearing, reading, or speaking. You can "learn" a word, but just being able to add a string of words together about that word, doesn't necessarily mean you understand it's meaning.

...

Translating a word or phrase is not like pulling a word out of a bucket and hoping it's the right one. Neither is it like having a list of words that it "can mean" and matching it with the one "you want." It may look like that if you were to just look at a dictionary, but it's just not so. Again, words don't merely have definitions, but convey a certain meaning.

Indeed, and this is something many people forget. In my opinion, many people whose knowledge of Greek consists of what they know from Strong's are taking a rather artificial approach to knowing Greek. We typically don't use English this way save for highly specialized jargon in a specialized field. Paul's readers probably didn't have dictionaries, let alone a dictionary that would tell how to better understand Paul's usage of Greek words. Words simply have different meanings in different contexts, and it isn't simply a matter of looking up a definition and choosing whichever one you want.

I learned this quite well in a Greek word study we did in seminary on the word "lestes." The word lestes generally means a robber/thief. However, sometimes it is employed to refer to a specific, organized group of insurrectionists of the Zealots movement. Context will aid us in understanding which is being indicated. In the NT, most usages are probably refer to the more common type of thief. However, in reference to Barabbas, who was released in the place of Christ, he seems to have been something more than just a common thief, which is why the people probably wanted him released. He was as a sort of superstar.

Re: Learning to Read Greek?? - posted by repentcanada, on: 2007/5/22 23:27

excellent, thanks brothers