

5-DAY

LEARN GREEK CHALLENGE

DAY 1

WATCH THE INTRO VIDEO

Greek for the Rest of Us at StudyGateway.com
(17:02 min)

DAY 2

WATCH LESSON 1:

THE GREEK LANGUAGE (6:05 min)

Activity: Trace & write the Greek alphabet

DAY 3

WATCH LESSON 2:

THE GREEK ALPHABET (16:14 min)

Activity: Practice writing the Greek alphabet on your own

DAY 4

WATCH LESSON 3:

PRONUNCIATION (20:43 min)

Activity: Learn to pronounce the Greek alphabet & sing the Greek alphabet song

DAY 5

WATCH LESSON 10:

WORD STUDIES (43:42 min)

Activity: Learn to use Mounce's Reverse Interlinear Bible Translation Tool (free on BibleGateway.com).

Look up John 3:16 and read the Greek.

DAY 1

**THE GREEK
ALPHABET**

GREEK

FOR THE

REST OF US

**LEARN GREEK TO STUDY
THE NEW TESTAMENT WITH
INTERLINEARS AND BIBLE SOFTWARE**

**WILLIAM D.
MOUNCE**

 **ZONDERVAN
ACADEMIC**

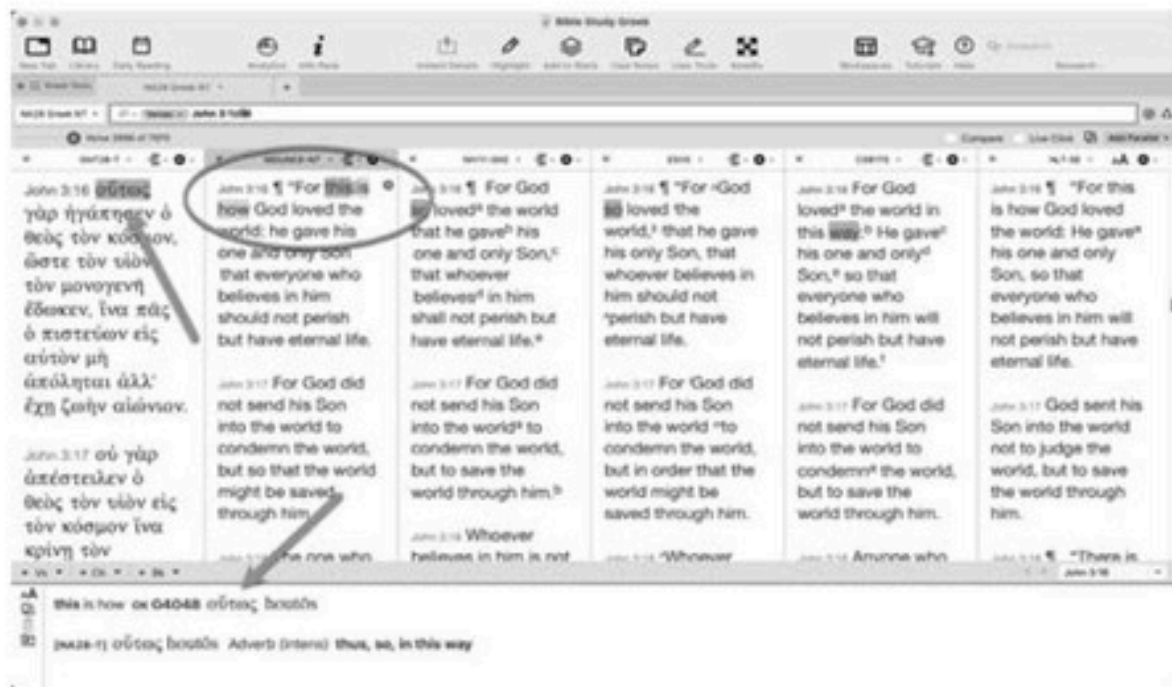
Greek for the Rest of Us, Copyright © 2022 by William D. Mounce. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed services, without the prior permission of the publisher.

WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE IF YOU KNEW A LITTLE GREEK?

What will you be able to do when you are done working through this book that, perhaps, you cannot do now?

1. *You will learn to use your Bible software and my interlinears.* Software can be a significant tool in your Bible study. You can call up a verse and mouse over an English word, and the software will show you all sorts of dazzling information. But what does it all mean? (The illustrations in this book use the Mounce translation and Accordance.)

If you check out John 3:16, you might see something unusual, not “For God so loved the world” but “For this is how God loved the world” followed by a colon.



You can look over at your Greek text and see what Greek word is being translated by “this is how” (οὕτως), but if you don’t know Greek that doesn’t help.

If you look in the Instant Details window at the bottom of the screen, it gives you some more information about this Greek word. But what does “Adverb (intens)” mean, and why does my translation treat οὕτως so differently than other translations (except the CSB and NET)?

If you have a fuller Greek dictionary, you could triple click οὕτως and see a fuller definition of the word, but can you understand it?

οὕτω/οὕτως *adv.* of οὗτος (*Hom.*+ *gener.* 'so'); the form οὕτως is most used, before consonants as well as before vowels; the form οὕτω (*En 98:3* before a vowel; *EpArist* only before consonants) in the *NT* only *Ac* 23:11; *Phil* 3:17; *Hb* 12:21; *Rv* 16:18 *w. really* outstanding attestation and taken into the text by most *edd.*; by others, with *Lr.*, also *Mt* 3:15; *7:17*; *Mk* 2:7; *Ac* 13:47; *Ro* 1:15; *6:19* (*B-D-F* §21; *W-S.* §5, 28b; *Mit-H.* 112; *W-H.* appendix 146f. Also in *ins* [*s. Nachmanson* 112], *pap* [*Mayser* 242; *Crönert* 142] and *LXX* [*Thackeray* p. 136] οὕτως predominates)

1. referring to what precedes, in this manner, thus, so

a. *w.* a correlative word καθάπερ . . . οὕτως (*s. καθάπερ*) (*just*) as . . . so *Ro* 12:4f; *1 Cor* 12:12; *2 Cor* 8:11, καθὼς . . . οὕτως (*just*) as . . . so *Lk* 11:30; *17:26*; *J* 3:14; *12:50*; *14:31*; *15:4*; *2 Cor* 1:5; *10:7*; *Col* 3:13; *1 Th* 2:4. ὡς . . . οὕτως as . . . so *Ac* 8:32 (*Is* 53:7); *23:11*

By the time you are done with *Greek for the Rest of Us*, all these mysteries and many more will be made clear!

You can download samples of my two interlinears in the Orientation lesson in the online class. Years ago I came up with the idea of a “reverse interlinear,” which keeps English word order and alters the order of the Greek words.

For	God	so	loved	the	world	that	he	gave	his	one	and	only
γάρ	ὁ	θεός,	οὕτως	ἠγάπησεν	τὸν	κόσμον	ὥστε	→	ἔδωκεν	τὸν	μονογενῆ	← ←
q	d.nsm	n.nsm	adv	v.aal.3s	d.asm	n.asm	q	v.aal.3s	d.asm	a.asm		
1142	3836	2536	4048	26	3836	3180	6063		1443	3836	3666	

Son,	that	whoever	believes	in	him	shall	not	perish	but	have	eternal	life.
τὸν	υἱόν,	ἵνα	πᾶς	ὁ	πιστεύων	εἰς	αὐτόν	→	μὴ	ἀπόληται	ἀλλ’	ἔχη αἰώνιον ζῶην.
d.asm	n.asm	q	a.nsm	d.nsm	pt.pa.nsm	pa	r.asm.3		pl	v.ams.3s	q	v.pas.3s a.asf n.asf
3836	5626	2671	4246	3836	4409	1650	899	660	3590	660	247	2400 173 2437

When I was done with that project, I did a more traditional Greek-English interlinear that keeps the Greek order and alters the English.

16	οὕτως	γάρ	ἠγάπησεν	ὁ	θεός	τὸν	κόσμον,	ὥστε	τὸν		
"For	this is how	For	God	loved	(the) God	the	world:	(that)	he gave his		
1142	4048	1142	2536	26	3836	2536	3836	3180	6063 1443 1443 3836		
adv		q	v.aal.3s	d.nsm	n.nsm	d.asm	n.asm	q	d.asm		
one	and	only	υἱόν	τὸν	μονογενῆ	ἔδωκεν,	ἵνα	πᾶς	ὁ πιστεύων	εἰς	αὐτόν
3666	3666	3666	5626	3836	3666	1443	2671	4246	3836	4409	1650 899
n.asm	d.asm	a.asm	n.asm	d.asm	a.asm	v.aal.3s	q	a.nsm	d.nsm	pt.pa.nsm	pa r.asm.3
→	μὴ	ἀπόληται	ἀλλ’	ἔχη	ζῶην	αἰώνιον.					
should	not	perish	but	have	eternal	life.	eternal				
660	3590	660		247	2400	173	2437	173			
	pl	v.ams.3s	q	v.pas.3s	n.asf	a.asf					

2. You will discover the meaning of the Greek words that lie behind the English. This is called doing “word studies.” Without learning how to use the Greek study tools, the best you can do is study what the English word means. But an English word rarely, if ever, has the same meaning as the Greek word it is translating. A word as simple as “a” or “the”

does not have an exact counterpart in Greek; there isn't even a word in Greek for "a."

Words have what is called a "semantic range." This means a word doesn't have just one meaning, but a range of meanings. Think through all the ways we use the words "can" and "run." The range of meaning of a Greek word will almost never be the same as the range of meaning for the English word used to translate it. So just because an English word can have a certain meaning, it's by no means certain that the Greek behind it has that same meaning.

A good example of this is the Greek word σάρξ, *sarx*. This word can be translated many different ways because English has no exact counterpart to it. In as short a book as Galatians, *sarx* is translated by the NIV (1984) as "flesh," "human effort," "illness," "man," "no one," "ordinary way," "outwardly," "sinful nature," and "that nature." All these English words partially overlap in meaning with *sarx*, but none is an exact equivalent.



So when you study Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh," you don't want to study the English word "flesh"; you want to study the Greek word it translates, σάρξ.

In 1 Corinthians 7:1 the RSV translates, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." Lots of good youth-group talks on dating come out of the word "touch." But guess what? The NIV (1984) translates the verse as, "It is good for a man not to marry," and the 2011 version reads, "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." Wait a minute! Are we talking about dating or are we talking about marriage? The fact of the matter is that ἅπτεσθαι, *haptesthai*, can mean "to touch," or it can be speaking of marriage or even sexual relations. Translators have to pick one meaning or the other.

Another example is John 3:16, the verse I talked about earlier.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal
life. (NIV)

What does “so” mean? Most readers think it means “a lot.” That’s about the only way someone would read the English. But did you know that the Greek word behind “so” most likely means, “in this way”? “For God loved the world *in this way*: he gave....” The giving of his Son shows *how* God loved the world, *not how much*. (This is why the footnote in the ESV reads, “Or *For this is how God loved the world.*”)

3. *You will learn the basics of exegesis.* “Exegesis” is a fancy word for Bible study. What meaning did the author intend to convey? The RSV translates 1 Corinthians 7:36 as,

If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.

Paul has been encouraging people not to marry in order to be more involved in gospel ministry, but then he says that if that’s not your gift, if your passions are strong, then there is nothing wrong with getting married. Go ahead and marry your “betrothed.” “Any one” refers to the fiancé.

However, when you read the same verse in the NASB (1995) it says,

But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

The italics in the NASB’s translation indicate that it has added a word, but the difference is more than that. The question is, who is the “man”? In the NASB, Paul is thinking of a father/guardian who believes his daughter’s fiancé is acting improperly. Either way you look at this verse, it can be confusing, and requires exegesis.

Part of helping you learn exegesis is to teach you a methodology I call “phrasing.” You will learn to divide a biblical story into smaller, more manageable, units, locate the main thought, and see how the other statements in the passage relate to the main point. You will then lay the passage out visually in a way that helps you see the author’s flow of

thought. This is the best way to help you learn what good commentary writers are doing.

For example, below is the salutation from Jude. How many main thoughts are there, and how many descriptions of the recipients does the author include?

1:1 Jude,
a servant of Jesus Christ and
a brother of James,
To those
who have been called,
who are loved by God the Father and
kept by Jesus Christ:
1:2 Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.

The salutation breaks down into three sections: author; recipients; greeting. Jude tells us three things about the recipients: they have been called; they are loved by God; they are kept by Jesus.

4. *You will often be able to understand why translations are different.* How many times have you been in a Bible study where the leader is discussing a verse, but your Bible appears to say something considerably different? How can the translations be so different? What does the verse really mean? Let me give you a few examples.

When Jesus instituted what we call the “Lord’s Supper,” he instructed his disciples concerning the cup: “Drink ye all of it” (Matt 26:27 KJV). My dad tells the story of how, when he was young, he made sure he drank every last little bit of grape juice in the communion cup. He would shake it until every drop was gone; he was going to obey Scripture and drink “all of it.” Only one problem: that’s not what the verse means. The “all” means “all of you,” not “all the liquid.” The CSB translates, “Drink from it, all of you.”

Luke 2:14 is one of the better-known verses in the Bible. In the KJV it reads,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will
toward men.

Is there anything in this verse that bothers you? It's a statement of blessing, but does God's peace really extend to all people? "Peace" is a marvelous biblical concept that designates the cessation of hostility between God and us; it's the result of justification (Rom 5:1). If you are not justified, you are not at peace. How can God's peace be extended to all people?

The ESV says,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!

Here, peace isn't extended to all people, but only to those who are the recipients of God's pleasure. Why are the KJV and the ESV different? The answer is that the Greek manuscripts are different at this verse. Some have *eudokias* with the "s" (the Greek sigma), which is followed by the ESV; others have *eudokia*, which is followed by the KJV. The "s" completely changes the meaning of the blessing.

Another example is Mark 16. If you are reading the chapter in the RSV, after the women see that the tomb is empty, the Bible says,

And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.

The gospel ends at verse 8 on a note of fear. But let me tell you a story that is related, although it won't sound like it at first. Have you ever seen those movies they often show in high school sociology class about the snake people of the Appalachians? They handle rattlesnakes as part of their church worship, and they don't die (usually). They also drink poison, and they don't die (sometimes). Why are these people doing this? Why are some of my distant cousins doing this? (Some actually are my cousins, by the way. My family is from Gravel Switch, Kentucky.) "Because the Bible says so," they might respond. If you are reading the KJV, it doesn't stop at verse 8 but goes on to verse 20. Verses 17–18 say,

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Wouldn't you like to know whether these verses truly belong in the Bible or not?

Here is a more subtle example. In 2 Corinthians 1:15 the ESV reads,

Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you may have a second experience of grace.

Sounds as if Paul is talking about a second work of grace subsequent to conversion. But see how other translations handle the passage.

In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing (NASB).

Because I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double pleasure (RSV).

Because I was confident of this, I wanted to visit you first so that you might benefit twice (NIV).

Since none of the other translations give any suggestion of a second work of grace, it's doubtful that the ESV means to suggest this. (I can say this with full certainty, since I was one of the twelve translators of the ESV.)

So what are we going to do with these differences? First of all, we'll work to understand why they are different. Second, we'll learn to see how different translations actually agree (for the most part), but are trying to convey different nuances, or one translation is more general and the other is more specific. So often in Bible study when the translations are different, we seem content to let them say different things, but we need to see how they actually agree.

5. *The final thing that I am going to help you learn is how to read good commentaries.* Let's say you're going to have a Sunday School lesson on Romans 1:17 and you need the help of a commentary. (A commentary is a book that explains what each verse means.) One of the best commentaries on Romans is by C. E. B. Cranfield, so let's say you pick it up and try to read his discussion of the verse. Here is a small part of his discussion (pp. 95–96).

The other main disagreement concerns the question whether in the phrase δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in 1.17; 3.21, 22 (cf. 10.3) θεοῦ is to be understood as a subjective genitive or as a genitive of origin, or—to put it differently—whether δικαιοσύνη refers to an activity of God or to a status of man resulting from God's action, righteousness as a gift from God. In support of the view

that θεοῦ is a subjective genitive and δικαιοσύνη refers to God's activity, a number of arguments have been advanced: (i) That in 3.5 (θεοῦ δικαιοσύνη) θεοῦ must be a subjective genitive (cf. also 3.25, 26)

Does this make sense? Probably not right now. But by the end of this book you will know what a genitive is. You'll know what a subjective genitive and a genitive of origin are. I want you to know enough about English and Greek grammar so that you can pick up an excellent commentary and be able to follow the discussion.

Stated in reverse, I don't want you to make silly mistakes that come from misreading commentaries or misapplying Greek grammar. For example, you probably know the passage, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all speak in tongues?" (1 Cor 12:29). Have you ever heard anyone claim the answer is "Yes," and insist that a "real" Christian must have spoken in tongues once? I have. But when you get your commentary on 1 Corinthians out, you will read something like this: "Questions preceded by μή expect a negative answer." What does that mean? It means that Greek can indicate whether the person asking the question expects the answer "Yes" or "No." (We do this in English by adding a phrase, like: "All don't speak in tongues, do they?") In 1 Corinthians 12:29, the Greek indicates that Paul's expected answer is, "No." The NLT has an elegant way of expressing this. At the end of the list of questions they have, "Of course not!" The answer to all the questions is, "No."

LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to our approach, and they are the same limitations placed on any first-year Greek student. You are at the beginning stages of learning Greek, and my concern is that you will forget that you know only a little. I'm going to give you the ability to sound authoritative by citing Greek words and grammar, and perhaps be completely wrong. I actually put off writing this book for several years because of this concern, but I finally came to the conclusion, as I've said, that it's not a little Greek that proves dangerous. It's a little bit of pride that proves dangerous.

If you don't respect the fact that you are only starting to learn Greek, then these tools can become just another way you can be wrong. I know a well-known speaker who was talking about how a Christian should not incur debt. I believe in debt-free living (for the most part), so don't

misunderstand me at this point, but the problem was in how he used Romans 13:8: "Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (ESV). He claimed something like the following.

Now what's really important in Romans 13:8 is that there are three negations. Unlike in English, where if you have two negations they cancel each other out, in Greek when you have double negations they pile up on each other making the statement stronger. Paul has three negations in Romans 13:8 and he's making the point that it's really a sin ever to go into debt.

But the fact of the matter is that there are no negatives in this verse in the sense this author speaks of negatives. You'll find μή used once in the idiom εἰ μή, *except*, and twice as parts of words meaning *to no one* and *nothing*. In none of these situations do the rules the speaker was citing apply. He is teaching thousands of people, and he's completely and totally wrong. So I say as a gentle warning: please remember what we're doing and what we're not doing. We're learning to use the tools; we're trying to follow good commentaries; we're trying to understand what words mean. We're not learning enough Greek to make complicated grammatical pronouncements that aren't supported by the commentaries.

I remember when I was in seminary sitting in the balcony of a large and well-known church, listening to the preacher say, "The Greek says this and the Greek says that." I'm looking at the Greek and I say (I hope to myself), "You're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong." He didn't really know Greek, but he was using it—it seemed to me—to elevate himself in a position of authority over his people. He should have been more careful, and more humble.

Jehovah's Witnesses are another good example of misusing Greek. They will cite John 1:1—"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was *a god*"—and argue that there is no word "the" before "God." Jesus is not "the" God but "a" god, a created god. But if they really knew Greek, they wouldn't make such a horrible and obvious mistake, for two reasons. (1) There's technically no such thing as the word "the" in Greek. There is a word, ὁ, that can be translated as "the," but it can also be translated as "my," as "your," or as many other words. There is no exact equivalent for the word "the" in Greek. (2) Grammatically the Greek explicitly states that Jesus is, in our language, "the God" (cf. *GGBB*, pp. 266–69).

One last illustration. Last year I was sitting at my desk grading papers, minding my own business, and I received a phone call from an elderly gentleman. He started talking and was evidently lonely so I listened, and within ten minutes he had accused every translator of being intentionally deceitful, of not knowing what they were doing, of mistranslating God's Word, and God was going to curse them. I said,

Sir, do you know any translators?

No, I've never met any of them.

Well, I know a lot of them, and they are godly men and women who would never mistranslate anything on purpose, and they know a lot more Greek than you.

But they don't translate 2 Peter 3:5 properly. The Greek says God created "die-uh" [his mispronunciation of the Greek preposition] "water." The earth is formed *through* water. "Die-uh" means "through" and so in this verse Peter is saying that God created the world "through" water, and they are translating it "out of" water.

He was absolutely insistent that *dia* meant "through," and he went through a fifteen-minute discussion in physics. (I didn't have any idea what he was talking about.) When he finally paused for a breath, I said, "First of all, it's pronounced 'dia.' There's a good chance that if you can't pronounce it, then you probably don't know what it means." (I was a little frustrated.) Then I tried to explain that all words have a range of meaning. *Dia* can mean "through," but it can also mean "out of" or "by," and the translators must make an interpretive decision as to which word they use. (By the way, the ESV did agree on "through," so he should be happy.) I tried to impress on him the fact of how dangerous it was to slander Christian brothers and sisters and to accuse them of intentionally doing things wrong when he didn't know what he was talking about.

So why should you learn a little Greek, if it's possible to make these types of errors? Because the personal rewards of deepening your biblical study are so great that it's worth the effort. Just remember the importance of humility (Phil 2:1-13) and meekness (Matt 5:5), and that while knowledge puffs up, love builds up (1 Cor 8:1).

PART I

FOUNDATIONAL GREEK

This is your first of two passes through the greek language. This is the easiest of the two sections of the book, although it may be more challenging if you have never learned a foreign language. In foundational greek we'll be meeting the basic concepts that make up the greek language:

- Greek alphabet and transliteration
- How to pronounce greek
- What "inflection" and strong's numbers are
- Basics of the greek noun and verbal system
- How to do greek word studies

THE GREEK LANGUAGE

The Greek language has a long and rich history stretching all the way from the fourteenth century BC to the present. The earliest form of the language is Mycenaean Greek that used a script called “Linear B.” The form of Greek used by writers from Homer (eighth century BC) through Plato (fourth century BC) is called “Classical Greek.” It was a marvelous form of the language, capable of exact expression and subtle nuances. Its alphabet was derived from the Phoenicians as was that of Hebrew. Classical Greek existed in many dialects, of which three were primary: Doric, Aeolic, and Ionic. Attic was a branch of Ionic.

Athens was conquered in the fourth century BC by King Philip of Macedonia. Alexander the Great, Philip’s son, was tutored by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Alexander set out to conquer the world and spread Greek culture and language. Because he spoke Attic Greek, it was this dialect that was spread. It was also the dialect spoken by the famous Athenian writers. This was the beginning of the Hellenistic Age.

As the Greek language spread across the world and met other languages, it was altered (which is true of any language). The dialects also interacted with each other. Eventually this adaptation resulted in what today we call Koine Greek. “Koine” means “common” (from the phrase κοινή διάλεκτος, the “common language”) and describes the common, everyday form of the language used by everyday people. It was not a polished literary form of the language, and in fact some writers of this era purposefully imitated the older style of Greek (which is like someone today writing in Elizabethan English).

Because Koine was a simplified form of Classical Greek, many of the subtleties of Classical Greek were lost. For example, in Classical Greek ἄλλος meant “other” of the same kind, while ἕτερος meant “other” of a different kind. If you had an apple and you asked for ἄλλος, you would receive another apple. But if you asked for ἕτερος, you would be given perhaps an orange. But in the Koine, ἄλλος and ἕτερος were interchangeable. It is this common Koine Greek that is used in the Septuagint, the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, the New Testament Apocrypha, Josephus, Plutarch, and to some degree Philo.

The Koine period lasted until the fourth century, which saw the rise of Byzantium, whose name was changed to Constantinople and eventually Istanbul. Byzantium Greek describes the language until 1453 when Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, and from that date until now we call the language Modern Greek.

For a long time Koine Greek confused scholars because it was significantly different from Classical Greek. Some hypothesized that it was a combination of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Others attempted to explain it as a “Holy Ghost language,” meaning that God created a special language just for the Bible. But discoveries of Greek papyri found in Egypt over the past one hundred years have shown that this language was the language of the everyday people, used in the writings of wills, private letters, receipts, shopping lists, etc.

There are two lessons we can learn from this. As Paul says, “In the fullness of time God sent his Son” (Gal 4:4), and part of that fullness was a universal language. No matter where Paul traveled, he could be understood.

But there is another lesson that is a little closer to the pastor’s heart. God used the common language to communicate the gospel. The gospel does not belong to the erudite alone, to the scholars and the clergy; it belongs to all people. It now becomes your task to learn this marvelous language so that you can more effectively make known the grace of God to all people.

By the way, I often hear that we should learn Latin because it is the basis of English. Not true. English is a Germanic language, and Latin is a Romance language.

Languages can be grouped into families. There is a hypothetical base language we call “Proto-Indo-European.” It developed into four language groups.

- Romance languages (Latin, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, and others)
- Germanic languages (English, German, Danish, Dutch, Norwegian, Swedish, and others). Technically the base language for this group is called “Proto-Germanic.”
- Greek languages (Linear B, Classical, Koine, Byzantine, Modern Greek)
- Indo-Iranian (Iranian, Sanskrit)

There was a lot of borrowing between Romance and Germanic languages (think where the countries are located), and both of these language groups borrowed from Greek. English especially was heavily influenced by other languages. This can be illustrated by words they have in common.

- From Greek (didactic, apostle, theology)
- From Latin (aquarium, name, volcano)
- From French (closet, resume, prestige)

On the other hand, Hebrew and Aramaic come from another family called the Semitic languages, and there was little borrowing between them and the Proto-Indo-European languages. Almost every Aramaic word would sound strange to you (and English to them).

So why learn Greek rather than Latin? I learned Latin and read Caesar's *Gallic Wars*; it was interesting. I learned Greek and read the Bible; it was life changing.

THE GREEK ALPHABET

In this chapter we'll learn the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet and the transliteration of each.

INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A transliteration is the equivalent of a letter in another language based on its sound. For example, the English "b" is the transliteration of the Greek "beta" (β) because they have the same sound.

This does not mean that a similar combination of letters in one language has the same meaning as the same combination in another. kappa + alpha + tau (κατ) does not mean "cat."

Some word-study books and commentaries avoid the Greek form and give only the transliteration. It's common in modern texts to set off a transliterated word in italics. "Jesus's last word from the cross was *tetelestai*."

ALPHABET CHART

- 2.2 The following chart lists the letter's name, its transliteration, the small and capital Greek form, and its pronunciation. The online class (billmounce.com/biblestudygreek/2) will help you with the pronunciation of the alphabet.

<i>letter</i>	<i>translit- eration</i>	<i>lower case</i>	<i>upper case</i>	<i>pronunciation</i>	
Alpha	<i>a</i>	α	A	a	as in father
Beta	<i>b</i>	β	B	b	as in Bible
Gamma	<i>g</i>	γ	Γ	g	as in gone
Delta	<i>d</i>	δ	Δ	d	as in dog
Epsilon	<i>e</i>	ϵ	E	e	as in met
Zeta	<i>z</i>	ζ	Z	z	as in daze
Eta	<i>ē</i>	η	H	e	as in obey
Theta	<i>th</i>	θ	Θ	th	as in thing
Iota	<i>i</i>	ι	I	i	as in intrigue
Kappa	<i>k</i>	κ	K	k	as in kitchen
Lambda	<i>l</i>	λ	Λ	l	as in law
Mu	<i>m</i>	μ	M	m	as in mother
Nu	<i>n</i>	ν	N	n	as in new
Xi	<i>x</i>	ξ	Ξ	x	as in axiom
Omicron	<i>o</i>	$\omicron$	O	o	as in not
Pi	<i>p</i>	π	Π	p	as in peach
Rho	<i>r</i>	ρ	P	r	as in rod
Sigma	<i>s</i>	σ/ς	Σ	s	as in sit
Tau	<i>t</i>	τ	T	t	as in talk
Upsilon	<i>u/y</i>	υ	Υ	u	as the German ü
Phi	<i>ph</i>	ϕ	Φ	ph	as in phone
Chi	<i>ch</i>	χ	X	ch	as in loch
Psi	<i>ps</i>	ψ	Ψ	ps	as in lips
Omega	<i>ō</i>	ω	Ω	o	as in tone

Learning the capital letters is not as critical right now, but they are easy and you might as well learn it all now.

Different books follow slightly different transliteration schemes. Be sure to check the book's scheme before looking up a word. If you would rather learn modern Greek pronunciation, see this lesson in the online class.

HELPS

- 2.3 The vowels are α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω. The rest are consonants.
- 2.4 Sigma is written as ζ when it occurs at the end of the word, and as σ when it occurs elsewhere: ἀπόστολος.
- 2.5 Upsilon is transliterated as “u” if it’s preceded by a vowel (εὐαγγέλιον → *euangelion*), and “y” if it occurs as a single vowel (μυστήριον → *mystērion*).
- 2.6 There are five letters that are easily confused.

Greek	English
η	n
ν	v
ρ	p
χ	x
ω	w

- 2.7 Notice the many similarities among the Greek and English letters, not only in shape and sound but also in their respective order in the alphabet. The Greek alphabet can be broken down into sections. It will parallel the English for a while,¹ differ, and then begin to parallel again. Here are those natural divisions.

α a	ζ z	ι i	ο o	φ ph
β b	η ē	κ k	π p	χ ch
γ g	θ th	λ l	ρ r	ψ ps
δ d		μ m	σ ζ s	ω ō
ε e		ν n	τ t	
		ξ x	υ u/y	

¹ Of course, Greek isn’t actually following English since Greek was created before English; it just looks that way to us.

PRONOUNCING THE ALPHABET

- 2.8 In pronouncing the Greek letters, use the first sound of the name of the letter. Alpha is an “a” sound (there is no “pha” sound); lambda is an “l” sound (there is no “ambda” sound).
- 2.9 There is some disagreement among scholars on the pronunciation of a few letters, but I have chosen the most common, called “Erasmian” pronunciation. This is a different pronunciation scheme than is used by modern Greek, which is a much more beautiful pronunciation than the Erasmian suggests.

You can download a chart from the online class that lists both the Erasmian and modern pronunciations. You can also listen to me and a modern Greek speaker work through the alphabet; all the vocabulary in the online class has both pronunciations.

- 2.10 The letter γ usually has a hard “g” sound, as in “get.” However, when it’s immediately followed by γ , κ , χ , or ξ , it’s pronounced as “n.” The word $\alpha\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ is pronounced “angelos” (from which we get our word “angel”). The γ pronounced like an “n” is called a “**gamma nasal**” and is transliterated as “n” (*angelos*).
- 2.11 The ι can be either short or long, like the two i’s in the English “intrigue.” When you are memorizing vocabulary and not sure how to pronounce an ι , just listen to how your teacher pronounces the words (or to me on the website).

MISCELLANEOUS

- 2.12 **Iota subscript.** Sometimes an iota is written under the vowels α , η , or ω (α , η , ω). This iota is not pronounced, but it does affect the word’s meaning. It normally is not transliterated. The vowel combination is called an “improper diphthong.”

- 2.13 **Capitals.** The Greek Testament was originally written in all capital letters without punctuation or spaces between the words. For example, John 1:1 began,

ΕΝΑΡΧΗΗΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ

The cursive script was created before the time of Christ but became popular in the ninth century. In cursive, the letters are connected like our present-day handwriting. Spaces were also added between words. In Greek texts today, John 1:1 begins,

εν αρχη ην ο λογος

In our Greek texts today, capitals are generally used only for proper names, the first word in a quotation, and the first word in the paragraph.

The first capital letters were written with straight lines, which were easier to carve into a writing material like rock. In the first century AD, a modified style of capital letters was created called “uncial.” These letters had more curves so they could be more easily written on the newer writing materials such as papyrus and parchment. The earliest New Testament documents are called uncials because of the style of script. In the eighth to the ninth century, cursive script was written smaller and in a style that could be written faster, saving both time and parchment. This script is known as “minuscule”; there are currently 2,867 New Testament minuscule manuscripts.

DAY 2

THE GREEK ALPHABET

ALPHABET

1. Write out the alphabet, saying the names out loud as you write.

α

β

γ

δ

ε

ζ

η

θ

ι

The Greek Alphabet

Κ

λ

μ

ν

ξ

ο

π

ρ

σ

ς

τ

υ

The Greek Alphabet

φ

χ

ψ

ω

DAY 3

PART ONE

This is the chart I use in the videos. Close your eyes and repeat the alphabet until you can do so perfectly.

α	ζ	ι	ο	φ
β	η	κ	π	χ
γ	θ	λ	ρ	ψ
δ		μ	σ / ς	ω
ε		ν	τ	
		ξ	υ	

DAY 3

PART TWO

Without looking at the chart, fill in the following chart with lowercase Greek, uppercase Greek, and transliteration. In my workbook, I will often give a sample answer to dispel any confusion such as “α Α α.” It will always be in italics.

α Α α				

Tips on Writing Greek Letters from BillMounce.com

1. Notice how α β δ ε ι κ ο ς τ and υ look like their English counterparts.
2. In Greek there are five letters that are transliterated by two letters. θ is th; ξ is xs; φ is ph; χ is ch; ψ is ps. These are called double consonants.
3. It is important that you do not confuse the η (eta) with the English "n," the ν (nu) with the "v," the ρ (rho) with the "p," the χ (chi) with the "x," or the ω (omega) with the "w."
4. There are two sigmas in Greek. ς occurs only at the end of the word and σ occurs elsewhere: ἀπόστολος.
5. The vowels in Greek are α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω.

DAY 4

PRONOUNCING

Practice pronouncing the letters with the Greek alphabet song:
https://bbg.billmounce.com/Alphabet_Song.mp3

More Tips on Pronouncing the Letters from BillMounce.com

1. You will learn the alphabet best by pronouncing the letters out loud as you write them, over and over.
2. The name of a consonant is formed with the help of a vowel, but the sound of the consonant does not include that vowel. For example, μ is the letter "mu," but when μ appears in the word, there is no "u" sound.
3. The following letters sound just like their English counterparts: $\alpha \beta \gamma \delta \epsilon \kappa \lambda \mu \nu \omicron \pi \rho \varsigma \tau$.
4. Gamma (γ) usually has a hard "g" sound, as in "get." However, when it is immediately followed by γ , κ , χ , or ξ , it is pronounced as a "n."

For example, the word ἄγγελος is pronounced "angelos," from which we get our word "angel." The gamma pronounced like a "n" is called a gamma nasal.
[Most are formed from the $\gamma\gamma$ combination.]

5. Alpha and iota can be either long or short. Iota may have changed its sound (cf. "intr_i_gue", "_i_ntrigue"); alpha may not have. [There is much discussion on this type of issue among scholars. The long alpha (e.g., "father") would have taken longer to say than the short alpha. (e.g., "cat").] Epsilon and omicron are always short while eta and omega are always long.

"Long" and "short" refer to the relative length of time it requires to pronounce the vowel (e.g., "father" and "cat").

6. Greek also has two breathing marks. Every word beginning with a vowel and all words beginning with a rho have a breathing mark.

The rough breathing is a ´ placed over the first vowel and adds an "h" sound to the word. ὑπέρ is pronounced "hyper." Every word that begins with a rho or upsilon takes a rough breathing.

The smooth breathing is a ˘ placed over the first vowel and is not pronounced. ὑπέρ (which is not a real Greek word) would be pronounced "uper." ἀπόστολος is pronounced "α πό στο λος."

DAY 5

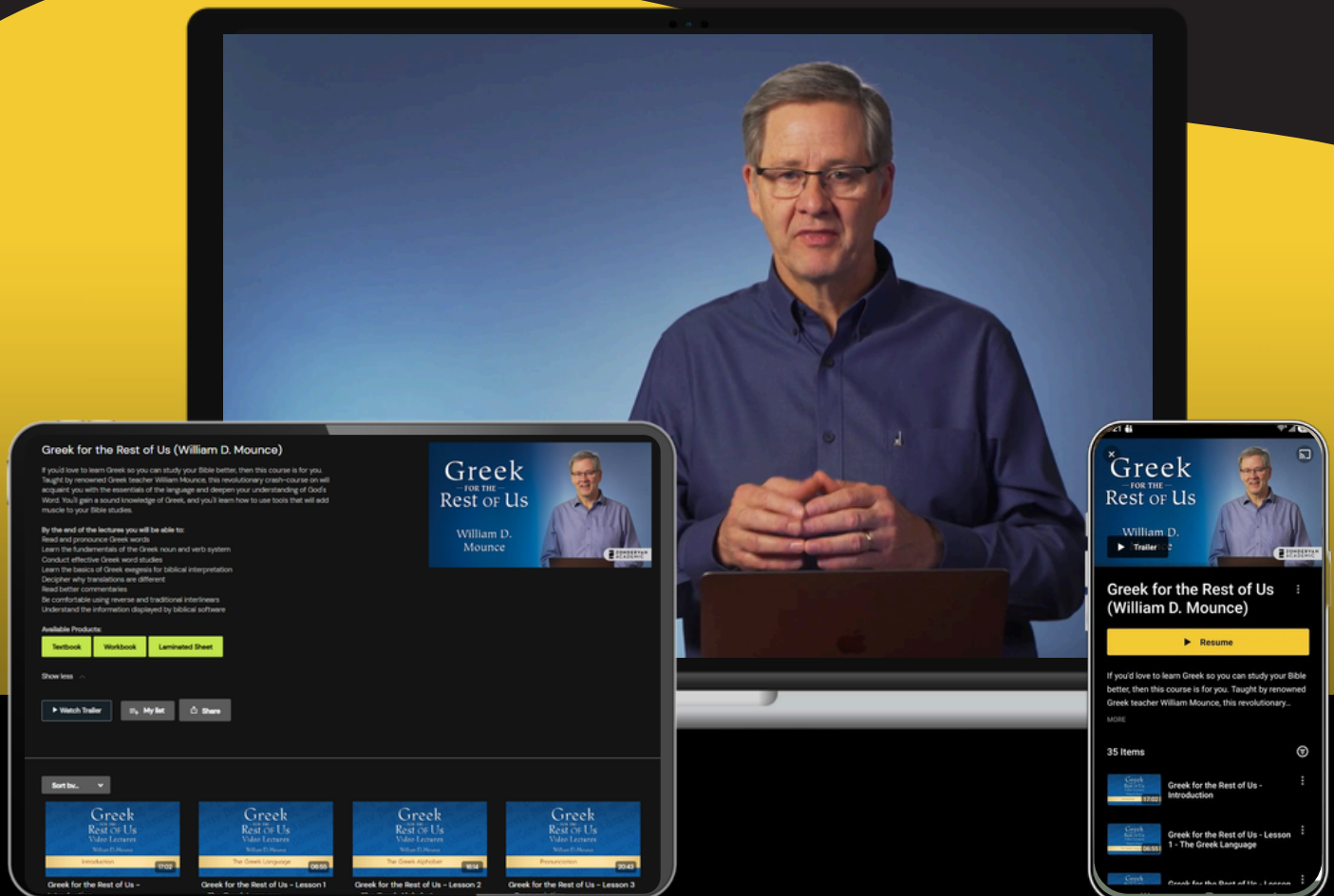
TRANSLATION TOOL

Learn to use Mounce's Reverse Interlinear Bible Translation Tool (free on BibleGateway.com).
Look up John 3:16 and find the Greek behind the English.



Want to Go Deeper?

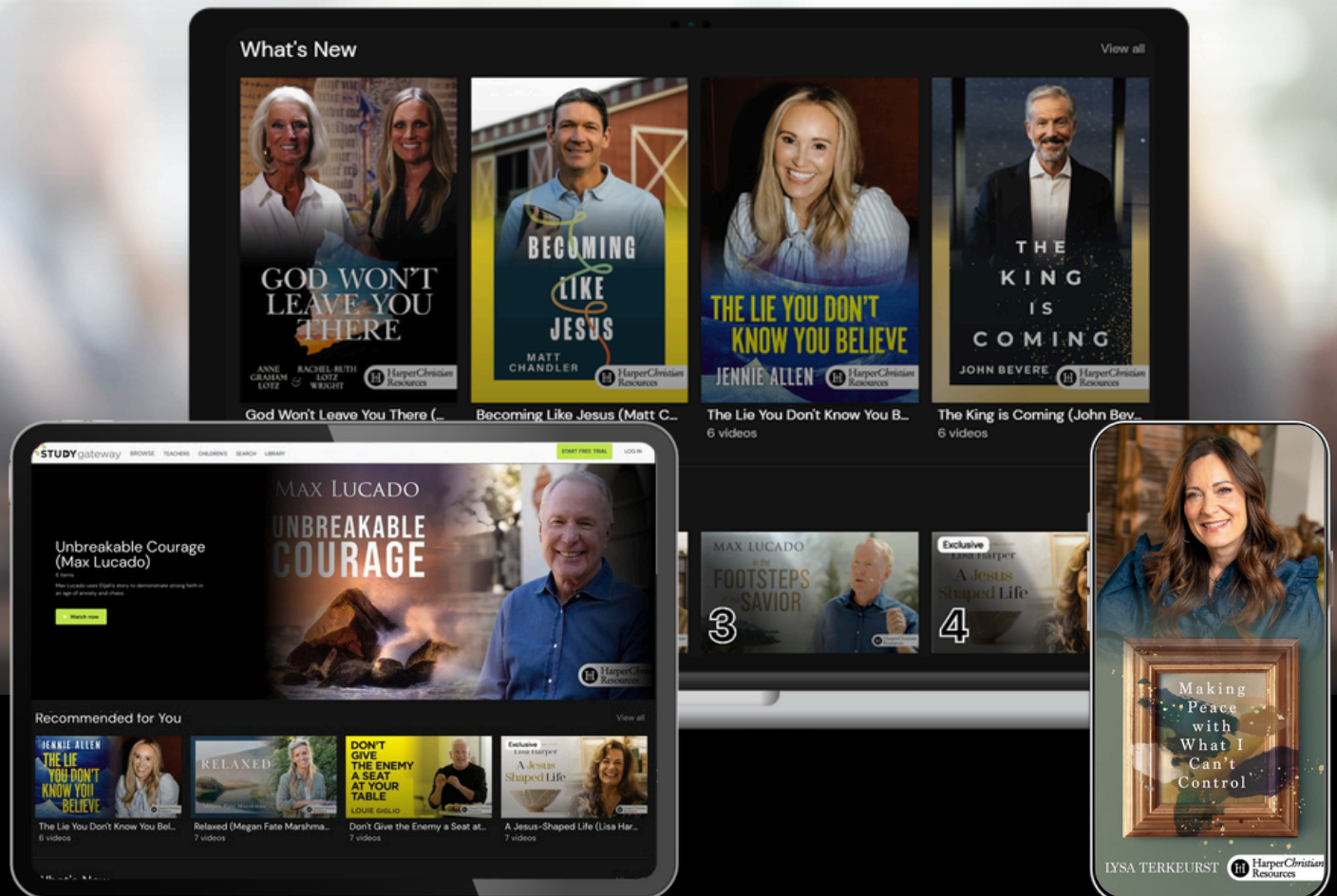
Watch all 34 sessions of
Greek for the Rest for Us with Bill Mounce



START FREE 7-DAY TRIAL



Thousands of Bible Studies.
Trusted Teachers.
Watch anytime, anywhere.



START FREE 7-DAY TRIAL