

## How to Use These Readings

### *Levels of Readings*

Reading passages have been roughly graded with respect to the morphological difficulty of their verbs (that is, the forms whose grammatical function is signalled by prefixes, infixes and suffixes). Level 1 passages avoid non-indicative verb forms as far as possible and when these can't be avoided, give a complete equivalent rather than just a lexical gloss—i.e., tell you exactly how the verb might be translated, not just its meaning in its dictionary-entry form.

If you have not worked all the way through a beginning textbook yet, sticking to Level 1 passages will mean you should get most of the help you need to make sense of the passage, depending on exactly how far you have gone and the order in which your text treats various points of grammar. The beginners' readings presuppose you have been exposed to all the tenses and voices of the indicative mood, plus contract verbs. These readings give help with non-indicative moods of frequently-occurring verbs and with  $\mu$  verbs. They also assume you have been introduced to relative clauses, though not to subordinate clauses requiring subjunctives.

Level 2 readings assume knowledge of the whole of a beginning textbook, including non-indicative moods and  $\mu$  verbs. A beginner could still attempt these more challenging passages, but you might need to look forward in your text, just skimming through to get a general idea, and you may not be able to answer all the Questions.

Don't get too hung up on the levels I've assigned: when learning a language, you can almost always benefit from reading something that is below your current standard. Easy reading reinforces what you know and will help you to speed up your reading. Conversely, reading a bit beyond your comfort level can stretch you, as long as you don't get too fussed about what you can't fully understand.

### *Preliminary and Practice Passages*

Some of the Level 1 readings are divided into Preliminary Passages and Practice Passages. The Preliminary Passages precede the Practice Passages, simplifying them in various ways. In some cases, I have omitted phrases; in others I have substituted more easily recognisable forms (e.g., used a different tense). In every case where I have substituted, I have used a form which is found somewhere in the GNT.

The purpose of the Preliminary Passages is to lead the reader gradually towards the complete text in the original form. These passages allow the reader to get the sense of the passage as a whole and to deal with only some of the problems it may present for an early reader, and with greater competence being built up reading those passages, to take a smaller step up to the Practice Passage. Preliminary Passages are way stations, not places to rest in: they're meant to help you to arrive at the original Greek, not to substitute for it.

In all cases, after you've worked through all the Practice Passages, you should go over the text again in a GNT, reading the text without the help of the glosses and the lining and chunking of text.

### *Glosses*

To the left of both the Preliminary and Practice Passages there are brief glosses. These gloss vocabulary and provide guidance about odd forms and suchlike. The vocabulary I've glossed is all the words that occur fewer than 30 times in the GNT, apart from those proper names which can be readily figured out by transliterating. For compounds that occur fewer than 30 times but which are transparent (i.e., the whole matches the sum of the parts), I've simply noted the transparency. Sometimes I gloss common words (mostly verbs) that may be hard to recognise in the tense, mood or voice in which they appear in the passage. Where a gloss needs to be longer than can fit next to the Greek or where some other feature of the text needs a fuller explanation, I've put Helps on the left with a number, which corresponds to a note below the passage. When a form has been glossed in a Preliminary Passage, it does not get glossed again in the Practice Passages.

### ***Questions***

After each Practice Passage there are Questions. These are designed to draw the reader's attention to points of morphology, syntax or rhetoric, the last being important to grasp in order to read fluently and with understanding and appreciation of how the author is using language.

Sometimes I ask how you would translate a given word. That may surprise you, given that the goal of these readings is to improve your reading ability, not to teach or test your ability to translate. The translation questions have two purposes: most of the time, they are simply a way of probing your comprehension. Sometimes, though, I point out a translational issue so you can think about some complexity or ambiguity in the text and then suggest you look at parallel translations (in, e.g., Bible Hub) to see how professional translators have differed. The point is not to make you into a translator, but so that you can use your growing skills in Greek to be a more astute reader and appraiser of English translations.

The Questions may seem uncomfortably like the exercises you got assigned for class (if you learnt Greek in class): assignments designed to test you. If the Questions irk you, just skip them. This blog is not a class and I'm not the teacher who's assigning you a grade. The Questions are there only to help you identify areas where you're shaky and to reinforce the knowledge you do have, but most of all, to make you think about the Greek, especially the structure of the text. I've provided Answers to the Questions at the very end of the reading materials, but you'll learn more if you wait to look at them until you've made a good faith effort to wrestle with the text for yourself.

### ***How Much Grammar Do I Need to Know?***

In addition to assuming knowledge of the words which appear in the GNT 30 times or more and a knowledge of NT Greek morphology to the levels indicated above, I'm also assuming a general knowledge of basic terminology concerned with syntax: what a clause is; what an independent clause is versus a subordinating clause; what a finite verb is. If these terms are not familiar to you, click on the link to Conventions, Definitions and Abbreviations.

### ***Important: a Note about Accents***

It is usual, when citing Greek words in English prose, to alter accents which have changed in the Greek text to reflect the requirements of the surrounding text back to their dictionary form.

So, for example, the first words of the Gospel of Mark are 'Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου'. Ἀρχὴ would normally have an acute accent on the final eta; the accent has changed to a grave because of the following word. When citing a word like this out of context, it is standard practice to change the accent back to its original form, because there is no Greek word following it.

I have not followed this convention in these materials simply because I don't think it is pedagogically helpful: students are better off seeing the word as it actually appears in the text they are reading. This policy might irritate most scholars, but these materials are not for scholars. I want to help *learners* to learn.