**Five Things to Do Until You Master Greek**

[**David Alan Black**](mailto:daveblack@daveblackonline.com)

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So you’re studying New Testament Greek and finding it a bit of a challenge. A lot of people don’t stick with it. “I tried learning Greek and it didn’t work for me.” The problem with these people may just be that they never learned persistence. Do you want to master the Greek language and be able to use it in your walk with God and in your service for Him? If you do, you will have to put forth some effort. How can we “stick with it” in a practical sense?

One aspect of persistence is spending time in your Greek New Testament every day. Notice, I said *spend* time. It’s an investment, a conscious choice on your part. Don’t wait for it to just happen. Make time in the Greek text an indispensable part of your day. I do, and I never fail to benefit from it. If you need to, use any help that is out there, including interlinears. Yes, I said interlinears – which are usually considered anathema to Greek teachers. But if an interlinear can get you into the text, it’s worth the effort. As one preacher put it, “Halitosis is better than no breath at all.” Amen!

Second, take time to pray. Ask God to help you. For many Greek students, things go well for a few weeks. But as soon as a little difficulty comes their way they say, “Forget it. This is impossible.” That’s when you need to go to God in prayer. John wrote, “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will we know that we have the petitions we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15). Prayer is your lifeline to God and your only source of strength. Take advantage of it.

Third, those who want to master the Greek language must grow constantly in their knowledge of grammar. If you’ve already had a year of Greek but are floundering, why not pick up a good intermediate textbook and begin reviewing your paradigms and syntax? Dan Wallace’s [Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics](http://www.amazon.com/Grammar-Beyond-Basics-Daniel-Wallace/dp/0310218950/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1287589023&sr=1-2) is excellent for this purpose. Others find my [It’s Still Greek to Me](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0801021812/qid=1035570732/sr=1-7/ref=sr_1_7/102-0995288-6210517?v=glance) helpful. If you’re going to master Greek you’re going to have become a perpetual student of the language. I’m sorry, but there aren’t any shortcuts, no easy solutions. We can’t skip a grade or two.

Fourth, to master Greek means to be patient with yourself. You put one foot in front of the other. It’s a steady gait, not a foot race. As I said above, the only way to get the job done is to stick with it.

Finally, let me suggest that you teach others what you’re learning. It’s often been said that the best way to learn something is by teaching it. This can make all the difference. It’s interesting that my best students tend to be those who are teaching Greek to others, whether in their small group fellowships or to their children at home or in their Sunday School classes. Last year I taught beginning Greek in my local church every Monday night for a year. We started out with 55 students and finished with six. At times I almost decided to give up. It’s at times like these that I have to ask myself, “Who am I serving? Am I doing this for God or for me?” The Bible says, “Let us not grow weary while doing what is good, because at the right time we will reap a harvest if we do not lose heart” (Gal. 6:9). I’m so proud of those six students who finished the course, who ran the race to the end. I’m also deeply appreciative of the efforts of those who had to drop out along the way, some for serious medical problems. (My wife Becky, one of my very best students, had to leave the course because of her surgery and chemotherapy).

I know that Greek can be tough. If anyone ever experienced a sinking feeling while studying this language, it was me. I dropped out of my beginning Greek class at Biola after only three weeks! Thankfully I went on to take Moody Bible Institute’s correspondence course and, by God’s grace, aced it. Remember what Peter’s problem was when he was walking on the water? He took his eyes off the Lord. And that just about says it all.

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David Alan Black is the editor of [www.daveblackonline.com](http://www.daveblackonline.com/" \t "_blank).