



Huffman, Douglas S.

The Handy Guide to New Testament Greek: Grammar, Syntax, and Diagramming

Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2012. Pp. 112. Paper. \$16.99. ISBN 9780825427435.

Nick Norelli

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

My first attempt to learn Greek came through a website that I discovered years ago via a link on Mark Goodacre's NT Gateway website. At the time I knew nothing about critical scholarship (I hadn't a clue who Mark Goodacre was; I didn't know that it was even his website until a couple of years later!) or the ins and outs of exegesis. All I knew was that the NT was originally written in Greek and I wanted to learn the language. I didn't learn much past how to read John 1:1 (with a horribly bad pronunciation) and how to recognize certain case endings.

I don't consider the first attempt to really be much of anything though. So when I really decided to give it a go I contacted Daniel Wallace in an email and asked him what tools I'd need to learn the language. The exact email said:

Dr. Wallace,

I was writing to ask as a beginning student of the Greek language, what lexicons and Greek grammar references should I absolutely have? I'm starting with zero knowledge on the language, and am hoping to learn by book/CD/video. What are the key books that will help me the most?

Thanks for taking the time to respond.

God bless!

He responded by suggesting a UBS4, *BDAG*, and Mounce's *Basics of Biblical Greek*. Poor as I was at the time, I could only afford one item on his list, so I opted for the UBS4. I then found another online course offered by the Quartz Hill School of Theology. The Greek lessons were prepared by Jim West, whom I would come to know later through blogging. I started off strong and made it through the first five lessons (Alphabet; Accent Marks; Verbs: Present, Active, Indicative; Nouns: First Declension; Nouns: Second Declension) and then lesson 7 (Prepositions) before I finally got a hold of Mounce's Grammar.

I started from the beginning in Mounce's book and made it through the first 15 chapters with relative ease. Once I got into verbs (which I still feel he introduces much too late) I lost steam. But in order to help with my learning I purchased Zondervan's *Biblical Greek Survival Kit*, which included the *Basics of Biblical Greek Vocabulary Cards*; the *Zondervan Get an A! Study Guides: Biblical Greek*, which is a laminated sheet containing the Greek alphabet, various paradigms, a preposition chart, and some other info (e.g., irregular verbs); and a vocabulary CD. I also made use of Trenchard's *Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament*. All of these resources were helpful but my own slothfulness never allowed me to continue at the pace I would have liked.

The Handy Guide to New Testament Greek: Grammar, Syntax, and Diagramming takes the best of these helps and beefs them up by addressing not only grammar and syntax, but also diagramming. This compact volume (purposely designed to be roughly the same size as the standard critical Greek New Testaments) is intended for the second year Greek student and beyond. It doesn't purport to be an instructional tool so much as a guide to helping the student remember things that they've already learned.

The first part focuses on grammar and is full of helpful paradigms, which is an absolute joy. As far as I can tell Huffman has included every paradigm one will ever need to remember. I remember well writing many of these out by hand and drilling them until I got the laminated sheet from Zondervan. *The Handy Guide* is much more attractively designed than the Zondervan sheet and contains much more in terms of explanations. It will take a bit of getting used to if one is already familiar with the layout of the Zondervan sheet.

The second part focuses on syntax and contains a number of descriptions and summaries that are designed to help the student remember the particular concepts under discussion. For example, Huffman describes the vocative case as the "calling case" that "vocalizes who is being addressed." The nominative case is the "naming case" that "typically *nominates* the subject" (53). The

accusative “makes accusation about what the subject did” (57). So on and so forth. Similarly helpful descriptions and reminders are given for verbs as well as conditional sentences.

The third and final section focuses on diagramming and is the most instructive of the three. Here, Huffman not only refreshes the memory, but he explains what diagramming is and shows how it is done with plenty of examples from different types of passages in the New Testament. This chapter highlights well the intended audience since those just getting their feet wet in Greek language studies will have little use for this exegetical practice. This is for those who already have a grasp of grammar and syntax.

The select bibliography at the end of the volume is filled with a plethora of works that students at every level of learning will find helpful. Huffman has done the student of NT Greek a great service in producing this little gem of a reference. The title is as apt as any in that this is truly a handy guide. I can't imagine any student who wouldn't benefit from a resource such as this.