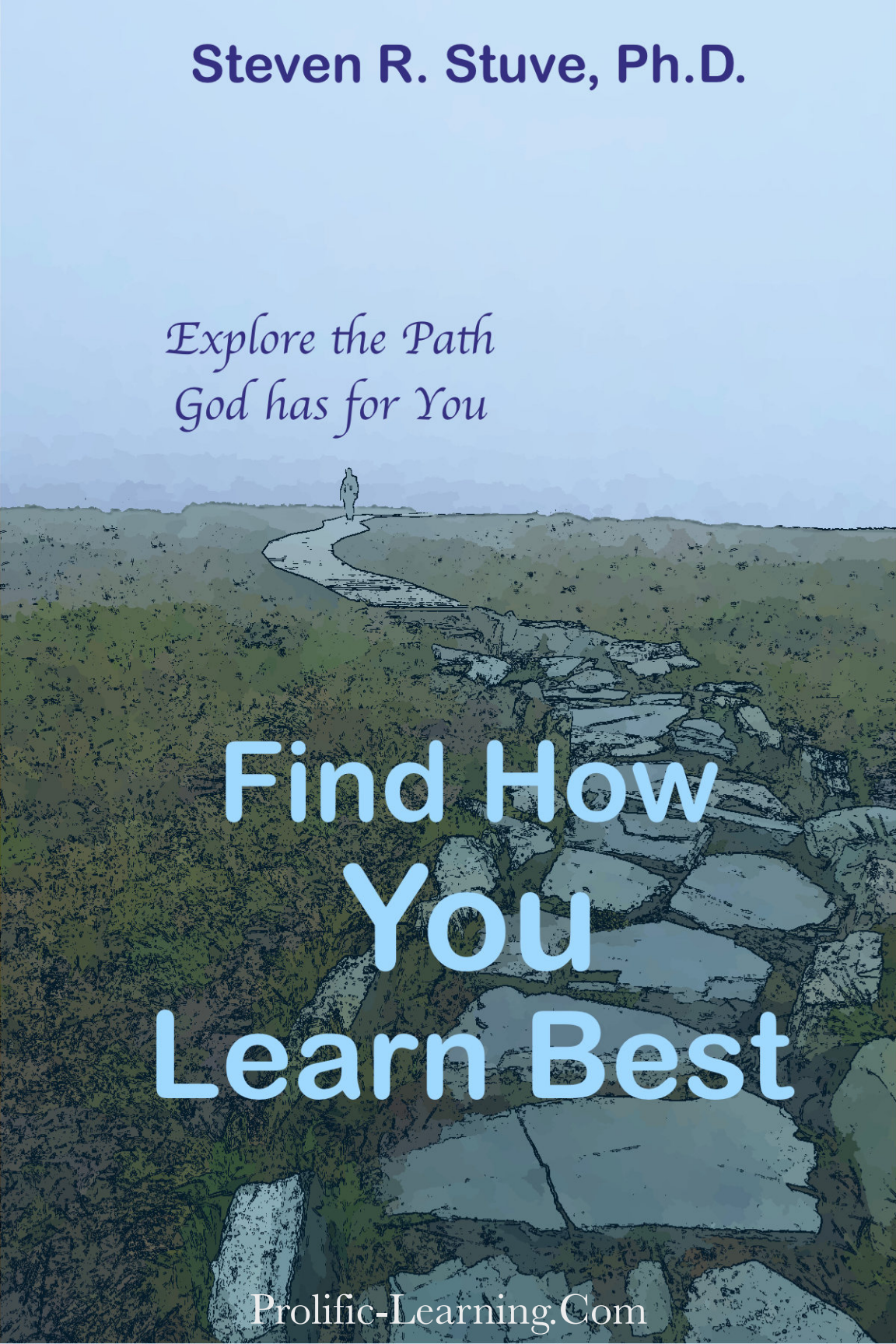


Steven R. Stuve, Ph.D.

*Explore the Path
God has for You*

A person is walking on a winding path that leads from a rocky, hilly foreground towards a distant horizon. The landscape is rendered in a sketchy, textured style with muted green and brown tones. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall mood is contemplative and suggests a journey or a path of discovery.

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Have you noticed how some people seem to have special God-given talent for learning or doing particular things? There are those things that just seem extraordinary for most of us. Using multiple languages. Playing several musical instruments. Being an accomplished artist. Knowing dozens of programs on a computer. Learning anything quickly and easily. There are those things that most people cannot do that seem to require a combination of special talent and hard work. But do they?

What if these people have simply discovered how to efficiently learn new things? This would mean that all of us are capable of learning like that. It would mean that we have set our expectations much too low. It would mean that the way we have approached learning has severe limitations.

You are capable of learning like this.

There is no shortcut or secret here. It is just learning how you best learn.

Learning is moving from the unfamiliar to the familiar to mastery. Our brain does it all the time for us. It does not take special work on our part. It is a natural part of life. God made us to be constant learners.

We've picked up bad habits that hinder our ability to learn. We make it harder for ourselves to learn. We've turned learning into hard work that gives meager results. We've become used to this situation as normal.

We need to pick up good learning habits. Our time and efforts will yield much more fruit. We will be able to do things we thought impossible for us.

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Chapter 1

You Were Created to Learn

What is learning? *Learning occurs when something unfamiliar slowly becomes familiar to us.* Our brain naturally likes to become familiar with things. We all know what it feels like when something is comfortable and familiar. Those are things we've learned. We all know what it feels like when something is unfamiliar and strange. Those are things we have not yet learned.

If you think of all the things we are familiar with, you'll realize our brain is good at learning. When we work with our brain, it is easy for things to become more and more familiar. When we fight

against our brain, it is harder for things to become familiar.

From Unfamiliar to Familiar to Mastery

This is the path of learning. This is how learning feels. Things start by feeling unfamiliar. As we learn more, they become more comfortable and familiar. As we learn even more, we start to master something. It doesn't matter how complicated something is. The path of learning will always be from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery.

Our Brains Naturally Learn

Think about all of the places you are familiar with. Think about all of the songs you know. From the Happy Birthday song to favorite hymns to a favorite song on the radio, your brain remembers many lyrics to songs without much effort. You may know the names and numbers of players on your favorite sports team. You may remember people's

birthdays. You could probably talk for several minutes about your favorite subject all the while easily pulling information from memory. Think of all of the words you know. There are thousands upon thousands of things that you are familiar with.

Your brain just quietly learned all of this with little effort on your part. It is a marvel. Much of this just happened naturally as you went through life. As we go through life, our brain constantly learns.

Sometimes Our Brain Refuses to Learn

Somewhere along the line, we stop using our brain's natural ability to learn. We replace it with hard boring work. We stop doing what our brain likes to do. We start doing things that are frustrating. Instead of working with our brain, we fight it.

Think about some of the things you were required to learn in school. How much do you remember of the periodic table of elements, world

geography, English grammar, and dates in history? How many skills can you still do from algebra or geometry? Chances are that most of what you remember is from classes you liked. You probably remember little from classes that you struggled in or thought were boring.

Why is it so easy to learn some things and so hard to learn others? That's what this entire book is about. I want to help you learn how to learn. You will then find many more things will be easy to learn.

How Our Brain Works

In the simplest possible terms that I can think of, here is how our brain works. Our brain remembers things it thinks are important. It forgets things it thinks are not important. It's that easy.

There is one problem. Our brain often disagrees with us about what is important. What does our brain think is important? Our brain remembers things that regularly happen around us, that we commonly focus on, and that affect our sur-

vival. As our brain sees something repeatedly in everyday life, it learns it. This just happens. We know it happens because things feel familiar instead of unfamiliar.

Storage and Retrieval

The human brain is very complicated. A detailed scientific explanation could fill up many books much larger than this one. Fortunately, there is a simple way to think of how our brain works. It's not perfect but is enough to help us understand how learning works.

We can think of doing two things with our brain. We can *store* things and *retrieve* things. Our brain stores memories, skills, information, and other such things. We then use those things by retrieving them. If something is stored in our brain, we can retrieve it and use it. If we have stored how to ride a bike, we can hop on a bike and retrieve the skill to ride it. If we have stored a particular guitar chord, we can retrieve it and play it. If we have stored the name of our neighbor, we can re-

trieve it and call them by name. We have stored $2+2=4$ and can retrieve it as needed.

Storage and retrieval are two different things. Think about seeing an old photo you had forgotten about. Memories come flooding back. It feels like just yesterday. For many days afterwards, you easily retrieve those memories. This is the difference between storage and retrieval. Those memories were still stored but you'd lost the ability to actively retrieve them. With some aid from an old photo, the retrieval was restored. *To remember something, the storage and retrieval both need to work.*

Learning Something New

Pretend you have a new game that you've never seen or played before. It will seem unfamiliar and strange. What happens when you pick up the game pieces and play for the first time? Your brain starts storing those memories. It will store a few of the things you see and do. You play the game again. You can start to retrieve what your brain stored the first time. You can look at a piece and

remember what it does. The game will seem a little more familiar to you. Your brain has stored more and you have retrieved more. When you play the game again, it will seem more familiar.

Something amazing is happening in your brain. It is slowly building a complicated network of storage and retrieval. It's like how a spider makes a web. It starts with a few strands. It then keeps adding more and more strands until the web is finished. Your brain is doing something similar. But the network in your brain is much more complicated than a spider web. Each time you play the game, your brain stores more and you retrieve more. The game goes from feeling unfamiliar to familiar. More and more connections are made in your brain. Familiarity starts to turn into mastery. You can start to make more complicated moves and know more strategy.

Our Attention Span

The process of learning causes chemical changes in our brain. This can only go on for so long before

our brain needs to rest. This is part of the reason we need to sleep each night. No amount of caffeine, fresh air, or discipline will make your brain work well once it needs to rest. For your brain, resting usually means either sleeping or doing something else.

Your brain starts sending you clear signals when it needs to rest. You just probably have not recognized it. It is that feeling of having studied too much. It's hard to focus. Your mind wants to wander. It feels like you keep forgetting what you are trying to learn. We've gotten used to this and have mistaken it for what learning feels like.

When you do heavy physical labor, your muscles eventually start to ache. At some point, you start to lose strength and coordination. You have to stop working in order to rest. It is the same with your brain. When you overwork your brain, it does not work as well. You can coerce your brain to remember things through hard work but it rapidly forgets those things.

Help Your Brain Learn

This is one of the most important ideas in this book. *In order to learn something well, we must set up a situation for our brain to develop a large interconnected network of storage and retrieval.* When we use enjoyable and effective methods of learning, our brain naturally develops these networks of storage and retrieval. What we are learning becomes familiar to us. When methods of learning are boring, frustrating, and ineffective, our brain does not develop a good network of storage and retrieval. What we are trying to learn remains strange, foreign, and unfamiliar to us.

Each of Us is Different

What makes learning enjoyable and effective is unique to each of us. Two people can sit next to each other doing exactly the same thing. They can see completely different results. This means that their brains are responding differently to the very same thing. This is probably obvious. We all know

what it is like to sit next to someone and have them react completely differently to something than we do.

You cannot just copy what someone else does and expect to get the same results. You need to take the responsibility to determine what works best for you. You can get ideas from other people and try new things. But in the long run, the progress you make depends on figuring out what works best for you. No one can do this for you.

You Were Born to Learn

Your brain is a marvel. Choose to reject the labels picked up from your school days such as *slow*, *average*, *dumb*, or *smart*. A lot of that was due to how well the chosen curriculum and methods worked for you. Over my life, I've seen many people who did poorly in school but excelled at those things that excited them. I've also seen people who excelled in school who did not excel as much in life.

If you use better methods of learning for you, your brain will naturally develop strong intercon-

nected networks of storage and retrieval that allow you to learn. You will see the change from unfamiliarity to familiarity to mastery.

Chapter 2

Out of the Ordinary Learning

Years of going to school have taught us what to expect. There are results we think are normal. We expect learning a new language will take years of hard work. We expect learning to play a musical instrument takes years of hard work. We expect to take a class for each new computer program we learn. We expect it will take much work to learn a new subject.

What happens when someone exceeds our expectations? This might be the person who can use a handful of languages, the person who can play several musical instruments, the computer guru

who seems able to answer any question, or the smart person who quickly learns and gets As in every subject. We believe that they have some God-given ability that we do not have. It might be intelligence, special talent, or a special gift of discipline. I used to believe this too. I've since however come to see this mainly as a result of how they learn.

Years ago, I tried to figure out why I was so bad at language learning. As I looked into this, I ran across independent language learners who could use several languages. I could not find a secret method they all used. I found that they each did different things. At first, I assumed they had a special gift I did not. But then I looked more carefully. I found they did have a few things in common. Their approach was *enjoyable* and *effective* for them. Because it was enjoyable, they kept doing it and made it part of their lives. Because it was effective, they made progress.

I realized that this applied to learning anything and not just languages. As I saw these out of the ordinary feats of learning in many fields, I started calling this *prolific learning*. I realized that prolific

learning is not due to exceptional gifts. It is due to knowing how to learn. All of these prolific learners had figured out different ways to make learning both enjoyable and effective.

I now believe anyone can do this. It doesn't require special talent. You must learn to work with your brain and not fight your brain. You do this by choosing good methods that are enjoyable and effective for you.

The Methods You Choose Are Important

Any method we use to do something will produce some type of results. Here is an example. Let's say you have a large pile of bricks which need to be moved a long distance to where they will be used. You could carry them by hand, use a wheelbarrow, or use a truck. These methods will produce different results. It doesn't matter how strong and well-conditioned you are, it will take a long time carrying a handful at a time. A person with a broken foot in a cast using a truck can do it much faster.

Our western system of education produces a set of results that we all consider normal. These are results of the methods we've learned to use. We've lost sight of the fact there are different ways to learn. When we see someone doing something exceptional, we believe they have a special talent. We don't consider that it might be due to them using a truck to move bricks while the rest of us are carrying them by hand. While we are trying to figure out how to walk faster carrying bricks or how to carry more bricks in a handful, some people are out renting a truck to move bricks.

Principles for Prolific Learning

You must choose good methods and work with your brain. The result is that learning will be enjoyable and effective. The challenge is that everybody must learn what methods best work for them. What works well for one person may not work for the next person. I believe this is what happens to many people in school. The methods they are forced to use do not work for them. I also think this is why many

Christians become frustrated when doing things like memorizing scripture. They use methods that do not work well for them.

As I looked into this, I found a number of principles that can give some guidance for choosing appropriate methods. In the rest of this chapter, I will give an overview of these. To the extent that you can use these principles, you can start to become a prolific learner in most anything that you want to learn.

Your Attitude Affects Learning

Emotions have a strong impact on our ability to learn. When we enjoy learning something, good things happen. We'll want to come back and do it more. Our brains will work better. When we do not enjoy learning, bad things happen. We lose motivation and reduce our efforts. Our brains do not work as well.

We must avoid frustration and stress. Stress changes our body chemistry and reduces our brain's ability to work. This is why many people

freeze up in front of people or on tests. Forcing ourselves to work hard at an unpleasant learning task is counterproductive. It raises stress levels and makes learning even harder.

The way we approach learning affects our feelings. We need to learn what makes us enjoy learning and what does not. We then need to take action to remedy things. When stress, frustration, and negative emotions start to arise, we need to take steps to reduce them. Sometimes that might mean taking a deep breath and reminding ourselves this is supposed to be fun. Sometimes it might mean doing something else for awhile. At other times, it might mean finding a new method to use.

You're a Unique Individual

We each have different personalities and preferred ways of doing things. This means that we each think and feel differently about things and respond differently to things. To the extent we choose methods of learning that work for us, we will see more progress. To the extent we are forced to use

methods that don't work for us, we will see little progress.

You have your own interests, strengths, weaknesses, passions, experience, and background. You will have different motives and desires than other people. You will have things you want to accomplish. You will have things going on in your life that put constraints on the amount of time, money, and effort you can spend on something. You will have things arise that change your priorities. These all affect how you best learn.

You need to learn to celebrate your God-given uniqueness. The path of learning looks different for each of us. We each need to learn what works best for us as individuals. It's also helpful if we can learn how to encourage others to do the same.

Holistic Learning in Context is Best

This is a surprise for many of us. It comes from our experience studying under deadlines and for tests. Most of us have this sense that breaking

something down into small isolated parts is easier and better. It does give a quick sense of apparent mastery over something. We can memorize things faster by working hard. However, we forget such things faster and have a harder time applying them to new situations.

In the long run, learning something in its context is more effective. It allows your brain to build a large interconnected structure of storage and retrieval for the entire subject. It takes longer, but the material becomes more familiar and you gain more ability to use it in different situations. This is what leads to familiarity and eventually mastery of something.

Skills are Retained Better than Information

For many of us, years of schooling has caused us to equate learning information with learning something. If we can memorize and repeat the information, we consider ourselves to have learned it. However, if we do not keep reviewing it, we for-

get it. In contrast, we can use actual skills much longer. If you learn a skill that applies information, you will remember the skill and information longer.

Learning information builds a weak structure of storage and retrieval in our brains. Learning skills which use the information builds a more complicated and larger structure of storage and retrieval in our brains.

Continuous Adaptation is Essential

Learning something new is a process from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery. What will best help you at various stages in this process will change. One method might work well when you are unfamiliar with something. Another method will work well as you become more familiar with something. Still other methods might help you toward mastery. You need to learn how to adapt to this. You need to choose enjoyable and effective methods that work at your current stage of progress.

There are two things to avoid. The first is sticking with a method too long after it is clear it is not working well. The second is giving up too soon on a method before it has a chance to kick in and give results. Yes, those are contradictory things. Successful prolific learners have figured out how to distinguish these situations. They've figured out when they need to stick with something longer as well as when they need to change methods. This is something that comes with experience.

Progress is a Continuum

What is progress in learning? It is our brain building a complex structure of storage and retrieval. It becomes stronger and more capable as we learn more. Things become more familiar to us and our skills grow. This is a process that proceeds at the rate our brain does this. This is a process akin to a tree growing. It starts off small. Then it grows larger and spreads out.

Meeting goals and deadlines ignores this process of growth. It causes us to try to rush the

growth process. This disrupts what our brain is trying to build. In the long run, we end up learning less than if we work with the natural process of our brain.

We need to see learning as a journey. We need to enjoy it. We need to rejoice in growth and progress. We cannot compare our progress to others because we each are on different paths through life.

Pursue Excellence Instead of Standards

What is the difference between a Broadway musical and a local amateur production? That is what excellence is. It is difficult to measure but we all have a sense of what it is. Both performances might meet a measured standard of zero mistakes, but they are different. People will pay hundreds or thousands of dollars for a ticket for the one but perhaps only five to ten dollars for the other. Excellence is really just mastery. It is part of the natural progression from unfamiliar to familiar to mas-

tery. It naturally occurs as we use good methods and keep improving.

We have to be careful when setting standards like zero mistakes or learning twenty things in one week. We will start trading long-term learning for short-term gain. We will start checking items off a to-do list rather than continually improve. For some people, measuring things can be a useful tool for tracking progress. However, such measures can easily turn into goals and deadlines.

Prolific learning is about pursuing excellence rather than meeting numeric standards. It is about us having a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in what we are doing.

Building a Learning Toolbox

Prolific learners have built up a repertoire of learning techniques, a collection of learning resources, and experience using these things. They are constantly adding to these things. Each new learning project helps them practice and gain experience at learning.

In the same way a master woodworker has a set of tools that they've used for years, a prolific learner has a set of tools they've learned to effectively use. A woodworker has learned to transform pieces of wood into various finished objects of high quality using their tools and skills. Similarly, a prolific learner is able to take a variety of materials and use them to build up new skills that they can use.

Prolific Learning is an Acquired Skill

The ability to choose good learning methods is a skill. Anyone can learn to do it and practice to become better at it. It can be applied to anything you want to learn. Years ago when I started investigating this, I started experimenting with my own learning. I started seeing surprising results that I did not expect in a range of endeavors. It made me realize that most people are capable of so much more than they think.

Throw off the expectations you learned from the world and start embracing what God gave you the capability to do. Do you remember the analogy of moving bricks? Start looking for phone numbers of places to rent a truck rather than trying to carry more bricks with each trip.

Chapter 3

Our Individual Path to Mastery

There is no one learning path that works best for all of us. We each need to discover what we each ought to do. In progressing from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery, mastery will look different for each of us. It might mean memorization for one, extensive reading for another, reading knowledge of original languages for yet another, and a deep knowledge of biblical history for still another. We are not meant to be copies but an original. We need to discover how to become the person we were meant to be.

The way we move from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery will be different. The methods that work well for one person will probably not work as well for someone else. You need to discover what works best for you. You may have to experiment to discover what methods work. The methods that work well at one point of progress might not work as well later.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

One pitfall is guilt at not being like someone else. We see someone with mastery of some type. We feel an obligation that we need to have that type of mastery as well. We then spend much time and effort failing to become that person. We need to see what type of mastery is suited for who we are meant to be.

Another pitfall is believing that unpleasant labor is a sign something is worthwhile. There seems to be this unspoken belief that forcing ourselves to toil makes us a better person. In fact, this is idolizing hard work and seeing it as more valuable

than seeing fruit grow. We need to find methods for which the yoke is easy and the burden light.

A final pitfall is prioritizing perfection and accomplishment over progress and growth. Many idolize perfection and accomplishment as something to achieve as quickly as possible. They miss the point that these are the *result* of consistent progress and growth over time. We need to give ourselves and each other grace and see the process of growth as our highest priority.

Discovering Your Path

You were created as a unique individual to uniquely reflect the glory of your Creator. This means that your learning path of unfamiliar to familiar to mastery will look different from everyone else. Your path will lead you to do things that many others cannot do. It will lead you to more fully express who you are meant to be to the world around you.

Chapter 4

Bible Familiarization and Memorization

Let's start building a system of Bible familiarization and memorization that will work for you. The key word is sustainable. The goal is that you will be spending perhaps 10 to 15 minutes per day and remembering verses several months later. This should be something you can do for the rest of your life. It is easy to expend time and effort to memorize a verse and remember it two weeks later. But this is usually not sustainable and people quickly burn out doing that.

You have a choice to make. You can spend some time sharpening the ax before you start chopping firewood or you can exhaust yourself chopping with a dull ax. Most Christians fail at this because they do not sharpen the ax. They impatiently hop in and start hacking away until they exhaust themselves. This chapter is about how to sharpen the ax so you can have a lifetime of effortless chopping. This is probably going to take a month or so to find a system that works for you. You will have to experiment and try different things. Be patient. It will be worth it.

Unfamiliarity to Familiarity to Mastery

The process of learning is moving from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery. These are not well defined stages. It is like talking about the difference between a seedling, a sapling, and a tree. A particular scripture passage will start out as unfamiliar. It will then become more and more familiar. At some point, familiarity turns to mastery. Mastery

can take many forms. For some, mastery might be fluent and flawless recitation on demand. For others, mastery might be an intimate familiarity with the background, context, and theological meaning of a passage. For others, mastery might be familiarity with the verse in several different languages. There is no way to measure mastery but we know it when we see it.

You can move as far along this process as you like. You do not have to proceed to mastery on everything you do. You also need to decide what form of mastery is best for you. This is a wide range of possible things that different people might want to pursue.

In order to provide focus, the rest of this chapter is written with memorization of some form in mind. The general ideas would apply to other things as well.

You Will Need to Use Multiple Methods

There will *NOT* be one single method that will work best for you. You need to learn what works best at each stage of familiarity. Some methods will work best when you are first exposed to a passage. Others will work best when you have some familiarity. Others will work best as you move to mastery.

Most Christians struggle with memorization because they choose one method and try to force that to work through sheer force of will and effort. This often does not produce a strong network of storage and retrieval in their brain. At best, it produces a chain of storage and retrieval where their brain sees each word as something between two other words. They end up continually repairing the chain because it seems to constantly break.

Let's Get Started!

You won't know what works well for you until you try a few things. *Remember that the results you see are mainly determined by the methods you choose.* Don't double your time and effort to see more results. Instead, experiment with different methods. This is what the old adage "work smarter, not harder" means. You want to find methods that work enjoyably and effectively for you. This will make the most of your time and effort.

You probably should only be spending a short time per day on each method for a passage. You need to figure out what length of time is right for you. It might be a few minutes or perhaps 5 or 10 minutes. Learn what it feels like when your brain learns at its natural rate. This should not feel like work. It should be relaxing and enjoyable. It should also be something that naturally fits into your daily routine.

You might want to start out with one passage or a small number of them. You could try different methods on one passage. You could try a dif-

ferent method on different passages to experiment and see which works best. I cannot tell you which will be best for you. I'll be writing as if you have only chosen one passage just to make it easier to write. Feel free to be experimenting with different methods on different passages at the same time.

Pick a passage to learn.

Ideally, it would be one that you are not very familiar with but which you like. Perhaps skim the book of Psalms and find a passage of about two to three verses in length that you like but do not know very well.

Create copies in different forms that are easy to access and use.

You will want a written form and an audio form. The written form could be a handwritten note, a flashcard, your Bible, or a copy on your computer or phone. The audio form could be from an audio Bible, you or a friend recording it on your smart-

phone, or an online Bible site. The key is that both are convenient and easy to use.

Moving from Unfamiliar to Somewhat Familiar.

There are four basic language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and reading are *receptive* skills. These are usually the best two to use at first when a passage is unfamiliar. As a passage becomes somewhat familiar, you can start adding speaking or writing. For now, use some combination of listening and reading to start with.

Every day, spend a few minutes becoming familiar with the entire passage. You could try listening to it a handful of times, reading it a few times, reading it out loud, or some combination of these. Do this for the entire passage. Another important thing is to only do a few repetitions of the passage with each method per day. One time won't be enough, but too many becomes counter-

productive. You need to figure out how many is right for you.

Your brain has a limited attention span for each sitting. As soon as it starts feeling like work, that is probably your brain telling you it is done for now for that method. You could try doing multiple methods in one sitting in combination with each other. You could do the methods at different times during the day. Develop a sense of how much is enjoyable and how much starts to feel like work.

Resist the temptation to start rote memorizing it. Using the receptive skills of listening and reading guarantees that your brain is becoming familiar with the *actual* passage. If you try to force yourself to memorize and recite it too soon, your brain will start to associate all of the hard work, errors, and false starts and partial repetitions with its memory of the passage. You want your brain gradually storing the entire passage correctly as a base to work from. Let your brain build a good foundation first.

Learn what familiarity feels like.

As some days go by, you will start to notice different parts of the passage are more familiar. As you listen, your brain might start to jump ahead and you simply know what is coming next. Some phrases will become memorable to you. You might find that you can simply remember parts of the passage without trying.

After a few weeks, the methods you are using will start to have diminishing returns. At some point, your familiarity will start to feel like it has hit a plateau and is not changing much. Putting in more time will not fix this. At this point, you need to experiment with adding different methods to what you are doing.

Start trying other methods.

Chances are that other methods can now improve familiarity more. These might not have worked well at first, but will now start to help. For example, speaking along with the audio (without looking at

a printed copy) would be difficult the first week. However, at some point, you will be able to do this.

Monitor your familiarity.

Perhaps weekly, you might do something to see how familiar the passage is. You could try to write down what you remember. You could try to recite as much as you remember. This type of thing can be helpful for some people. However, it might cause stress and pressure for others. It's helpful to have a way to measure your familiarity, but it's not vital. Remember that this is only a way to get feedback on how things are going. It should not become a goal to pursue having things perfect by this next week. Your brain becomes familiar at the rate it becomes familiar. Forcing yourself to meet goals will not change that.

Fill in less familiar details.

At some point, most of the passage will be familiar with a few sections that are foggy. You could

then probably start looking at individual parts of the passage and working on those. You could use some of the methods you've already been using on those sections. You might also sparingly use a few rote memorization methods for a few sections.

Reflect on What You Learned

This experiment will probably take on the order of two to four weeks. It will depend mostly on how lucky you were at quickly hitting methods that worked. You should now have some sense of what methods you like and which seem to work best for you. You should also have some sense of what it feels like to learn this way.

You could now repeat this experiment a few times with new passages. Use what you learn each time to do a better selection of methods and the timing of when to use them. Once you've done this a handful of times, you should have a good sense of what methods to use, how much time it will take, and what results to expect.

You will now be in a good position to start doing this in an ongoing way in your life. Once you have a comfortable system of methods to use, you can have different passages at different stages.

Over a period of several months, you will also start to get a sense of how well you are remembering verses. You might adjust what you are doing to improve this.

Possible Methods to Try

Here are some methods to try. Note that they probably won't feel like work. That is fine. They shouldn't feel like work. They need to be enjoyable and effective. These are also *suggestions*. You can modify and change them to work better for you.

There are four main language skills, reading, listening, speaking, and writing. The more of these you can use at different times, the better. At first, though, it is probably best to emphasize listening and reading to form a good foundation.

Replay the passage a handful of times and just listen. This is similar to listening to a song on the radio or listening to hymns. You could do this either with or without looking at the printed text.

Replay the passage a handful of times and speak along with it. You could do this either with or without looking at the printed text. This is like singing along with a hymn or Christmas carol.

Put several passages you are learning together and play them in the background during the day. This is unlikely to be a good method when initially starting a passage, but could be useful for passages that you are already somewhat familiar with.

Silently read your entire passage a handful of times during the day. You could create copies that you tape to a computer or other places. You could carry some small flashcards around. Note that this is simply reading a few times and not actively rote memorizing.

Read your passage out loud. You perhaps could mix this up and read with different emphases, intonations, and tempos. You could perhaps read

it through emphasizing different words or phrases each time.

Once you have good familiarity with the passage, recite it out loud with just glances at a written form. This is more like giving a well-rehearsed speech where you only need to make a few glances at the passage. You can vary emphases of word and make other changes as you read.

Other Ideas

You might creatively figure out ways of using the passage with other things you do. These are probably best used *after* some degree of familiarity is reached.

If you are learning calligraphy, you could practice with your passage. This might allow you to work on learning multiple things at the same time.

If you are an artist, incorporate the passage into something. There might be some conceptual or visual way to represent the main message of the passage.

If you are a musician, write a song for your passage. About 3 or 4 decades ago, there was a move in

Christian circles to write songs directly using various scripture passages. There are probably still many Christians today who still remember some passages due to these songs.

If you are learning a foreign language, you could work on this passage in multiple languages. Many of the exercises in this chapter can be readily adapted to foreign language learning.

You could do further research and Bible study on the passage. This could include looking up background information, reading commentaries, or using other means of learning more about this passage.

Expand Your Repertoire of Methods

Read other books and look online for various recipes and methods. You'll probably find some good ones. Just be sure to compare them against the prolific learning principles. Many methods and approaches are variations of brute force memorization methods. Methods that are a version of

cramming the night before an exam don't work for most people.

Start a group with your friends or community and exchange ideas. Compare what works and doesn't work. This book is free to distribute in many situations. (See the copyright page for details). Pass it around and listen to feedback from others.

Looking Forward

Once you have experimented with a handful of passages, you should have a very good idea of what works for you. Always remember the words *enjoyable* and *effective*. This is what it will take to have a sustainable system for the rest of your life.

Doing something like this should set you well on your way toward a lifetime of Bible familiarity and mastery. Remember to enjoy the journey. Do not get fixated on counting things. No one counts the leaves on a tree to see how successful it has been at growing. They just sit back and enjoy sitting in its shade.

Chapter 5

Improving Your Reading Skills

Being able to read is a foundational skill for much of the learning we do. Most of us take the ability to read for granted. It's a skill that most people in the western world have. However, many people read inefficiently. This can be a stumbling block for learning.

Reading is a skill that can be improved for many people. This chapter will talk about two different ways that you might be able to improve your reading skills.

Your Eyes Can Only Move so Fast

Many people have the mistaken idea that increased reading speed is about moving your eyes faster and faster. This is incorrect. Reading efficiency is actually about improving the efficiency of your eye movements. Fortunately, this is something most people can improve with some practice.

As it turns out, reading occurs when your eyes stop for a split second and look at a point on the page. They then move and stop again for a split second. In other words, your eyes follow a pattern of Move, Stop&Read, Move, Stop&Read, Move, Stop&Read. The physical speed at which your eyes move and stop is limited. Most people can manage a few hundred eye stops per minute at most.

One key to eye movement efficiency is how many words you can take in each time your eyes stop. One of the least efficient ways to read is taking in one word per eye stop. This means you are limited to a few hundred words per minute. A simple improvement is to read pairs of words with

each eye stop. This will nearly double your reading rate. Further increases in speed will come from looking at natural groups of words with each eye stop. Improving the efficiency of each eye stop is a critical part of improving your reading skills.

This is something fairly easy to improve because it is a physical skill which can be practiced.

Do You Understand What You See?

Some people have trouble understanding written words. Many words are like a puzzle to be figured out. You stare at it for awhile and suddenly you realize what word it is. If so, you probably struggle when reading out loud. When reading, you may get to the end of a sentence and have forgotten what the beginning was.

This is a problem often faced by beginning readers. It is probably exacerbated in English by our obscure spelling of many words. There is much research and debate over the best way to deal with this. There is the old school phonics approach which works to some degree but has limi-

tations. There is a new approach which encourages the reader to figure out each word using a series of clues to guess the word. Clues such as context, spelling, and (for younger students with picture books) the pictures you see can be used. However, research does call into question the long term effectiveness of this guessing approach.

For adults, it is more challenging because they are left on their own to deal with this. Most just accept it and deal with it. Later, I'll suggest a few methods for improving this.

Let's Work on Your Eye Movements

Eye movements are simply a physical skill. Here are a few exercises which might improve how they move. Don't spend too much time on these. These are *not* something to do for an hour per day for months. They are something to do for perhaps 15 minutes once or twice a day for a week or so. If you see no changes by then, more work probably won't make a difference. Also, if these cause eye

strain or other problems, *stop!* Do not do these exercises while doing your regular reading. If they are helping, the new eye movements should just start to naturally show up in your regular reading.

You will want to have a metronome. A metronome is a device that clicks a tempo for musicians. There are free metronome programs on various websites.

You will want to have a book to practice with. Make sure the print is easy to read. Make sure each page is formatted in one column without pictures or diagrams. You will probably want several pages of consistent text to view.

Practice Sweeping Lines

Set the metronome to a slow speed. Use your finger (or a pointer of some kind) to sweep across a line of text and then drop to the next line. Do one sweep per click of the metronome. The tip of your finger should be just below the line so you can see the letters. Follow your finger with your eyes. Don't worry if you miss words. Don't look back to

see them. This is about training your eyes to move forward consistently. It does not matter if you turn pages or just stay on the same one repeatedly.

As this speed becomes comfortable, speed up the metronome a bit. Practice at that speed. Then speed up some more. Keep doing this until you cannot move your finger any faster.

Afterwards, turn the metronome off and just try reading for awhile without the pointer. Make sure you keep moving your eyes forward. If you miss a word here and there, that is fine. This is about eye movement practice.

Practice Regular Eye Stops on each Line

Hold the book in a comfortable position. Look at one page. Mentally split it into three parts, a left-third, a middle-third, and a right-third. You should try to think of each line as being split into thirds. You are going to practice three eye stops per line at the center of each third. Look at the center of the left-third, then the middle-third, and then the right-third.

Set your metronome to a slower speed. Do one eye stop per click. Left-third, middle-third, right-third, quick-drop-to-next-line, Left-third, middle-third, right-third, and so on. As this speed becomes comfortable, speed up the metronome a bit. Don't worry if you miss words, just keep going. This is about practicing the eye movements. Keep speeding up until you cannot keep up.

Afterwards, turn off the metronome and practice reading at a comfortable pace. Don't worry if you miss words here and there, keep moving forward at a consistent pace.

You can also do this exercise splitting the page into two halves. You would then have two eye stops per line instead of three.

Exceed Your Speaking Rate

Efficient readers take in words much faster than they can speak. Some people mentally limit their reading to how fast they can speak. They read as if they are speaking the words. Practicing these eye movements can give you the opportunity to start

breaking the habit of mentally speaking each word to yourself.

Let's Work on Understanding Words

English is plagued by strange spelling. For example, the letter A sounds different in cat, gate, many, swan, and zebra. The combination OUGH has six different sounds as in though, through, rough, cough, thought, and bough. The only way to know these is repeated exposure to them. Unless someone tells you, how do you know cough is cough, cuff, or coo?

Here is an exercise that will probably help with this. You can use a Bible or some other book *that you enjoy*. You will need an audio version and a print version. You are going to look at one paragraph at a time. Only do this while your mind is fresh and you are enjoying it. As it becomes boring or hard work, take a break and leave it for awhile. At each step, you are not looking for perfection but improvement.

- Play the audio and follow along. Look at each word carefully as you follow along. Replay this a few times until you feel more comfortable with the paragraph.
- Turn off the audio and read the paragraph. You could do this silently or out loud.
- Go to the next paragraph.

You can of course mix up the listening, following, and reading in a way that you enjoy and that works for you. This is just a suggestion to get started. The goal is repeated exposure to hearing what written English sounds like. You'd probably benefit more from consistency in doing some amount every day rather than a large amount once per week. If you could incorporate this into your regular devotional reading, that might work well too.

This is not an overnight fix, but rather something that over weeks and months should help your reading become smoother and more comfortable.

Adjust Speed to Content

Efficient readers adapt to what they are reading. When reading complicated or thought provoking material, they slow down. They might even stop and think and re-read portions. When reading for general information, they might scan and read faster. When looking for something specific on a page, they might rapidly skim. When reading a fiction book, they'll adopt an enjoyable relaxing pace.

Don't fall into a trap of trying to measure your WPM (words per minute) ability to read faster and faster. Saying you can read 1000 WPM or 2000 WPM is meaningless without knowing what you are reading and for what purpose. The goal is to continually improve so that you can more efficiently convert written language into meaningful communication. This comes through practice.

Chapter 6

Reading Scripture

There have been volumes upon volumes written on this topic. I'll only add a small contribution in this chapter. That is the importance of finding what works well for you.

There are three general ways to read scripture. The first is to read it all the way through. The second is to read it devotionally as shorter passages. The third is to do in-depth study of sections. Each contributes to our understanding in a way that the others cannot.

It is not a matter of picking which of these three is somehow best for you. It is a matter of fig-

uring out the balance between the three that works best for you. At times, you might use only one. At other times, you might be using two or all three. You might be mixing them in some way. This is something that will likely change throughout your life.

Extended Reading

The main result of this type of reading is acquiring some familiarity with all of scripture. It provides a base and context for understanding scripture.

It usually involves regular reading of a set number of pages or chapters per day or reading for a set time per day. Some people do this regularly perhaps on a yearly basis. Others do this only a few times in their life. Some people might do this each day when they get up in the morning. Others might do their reading in bed at night. Some people prefer to read straight through. Others prefer using a reading plan of some type. You need to discover what works best for you.

One thing to consider is to decide on a good translation to use for this. Some might have one preferred translation to use for all reading. Others might prefer to use an easier to read translation for extended reading. It is important to have a physical copy with good formatting. The font size should be comfortable to read. The column width should be comfortable to read. You should also consider how much of a distraction or help extra notes and markings are for you.

Devotional Reading

This a slow paced meditative style of reading. It is about how various things apply to you personally. Most people have a favorite translation to use for this. There is no right way or wrong way to do this. Some might read a page or so and just stop to reflect on particular sections. Others might slowly work their way through a passage. You need to learn what works best for you.

Study

This is more in-depth reading where you might compare multiple translations as well as consult other resources. You might focus on a particular book or chapter. You might be comparing different sections. Many people have used many different methods for this. You need to find what works well for you.

Some Bibles are printed with study aids with maps and other historical notes included. These are referred to as study Bibles. Many study Bibles include much helpful commentary and information. Note that some study Bibles include notes which are doctrinally slanted toward particular groups.

Your study should include using study Bibles or other references which can give you solid information on the context of various books and sections. The historical, social, political, geographical, and religious context of particular books is important for understanding them.

Sustainable Reading

You will put in time and effort no matter what methods you use. If you choose methods that work for you, your time and effort will turn into good results. If you choose methods that do not work for you, you will have to force yourself to keep going and will eventually burn out and give up. You need to figure out what mix of extended reading, devotional reading, and study works best for you. This will probably change throughout your life. You need to figure out what type of schedule works best for you. You can get ideas from other people, but only you can determine what is working well.

If you've been frustrated in the past, it's likely you haven't figured out what methods and systems work best for you. We often attribute this to personal failings rather than merely being inept at learning. You need to find methods and systems that work for you. This may require some experimentation and trying different things. If your methods and systems are enjoyable and effective

for you, you will see good results that can be sustained.

Remember that your learning will progress from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery. You need to find what mastery means in your life and not just copy someone else. This is an individual journey to be enjoyed. Don't set goals and become frustrated when you fail to meet them. Discover what works and celebrate the progress you make.

Chapter 7

Learn through Exploration

Your brain has an amazing ability to remember places you have been. You can use this ability to learn new things. Some subjects naturally allow you to explore as if you are visiting someplace. I'll give you a few possible examples in this chapter.

“Visit” a Bible Location

There are many maps that show various locations in the Bible. There are some that add lines showing where someone probably traveled. For example, it's common to find a map of the Mediterranean area showing Paul's journeys. For many,

those places just become a list of names that they vaguely remember. Those who do learn these well are usually those who love reading and study. This is not the only way to learn about these places.

Why not “visit” them yourself? Let your brain experience them to some degree and become familiar with them. There are online sites that allow you to see any place in the world via satellite views. Some have street level views that allow you to see images of places today. Many people have posted pictures online of those places. It is possible to spend an hour or more clicking your way around some place mentioned in the Bible. Of course, this is not the same as being there. But, it is close enough that your brain can start to feel familiar with those places.

The key to this is interactively moving around. Don’t just look at random images. Zoom in and out on a map and move around. Try to mimic walking around, driving down a road, or flying over a place. Make it feel like moving around instead of looking at random pictures in a history book. Let your brain get used to the route taken

between images. It will start to store this in a way similar to how it remembers places you have really been.

Try the coordinates 37.941083 North and 27.341443 East in such a web site. It will drop you into the ruins of the ancient city of Ephesus. If possible, go into a street level or navigable mode and just explore it. You can “walk” down the same streets that Paul and his companions walked. Depending on the website you are using, there may be many pictures from different places available. You can look up more information about the city from other sources. Of course much has changed. However, the lay of the land, the climate, and the vegetation is much the same as it was. Often, modern roads and routes of travel follow the same valleys, mountain passes, and other geographic features that ancient roads followed.

As you look up places on a map, you can look up more information about them. You can read more about daily life, political history, and other things. Read about such things as what type of food is there. Often, this is similar to what people

ate centuries ago. People eat what easily grows in their part of the world. You might even try cooking a few of those dishes yourself.

“Follow” Someone’s Journey

Many Bibles have maps with lines showing someone’s journey. Paul’s missionary travels are commonly found. In the same way you could visit various places online, you could follow someone’s journey online. Modern roads often follow the same paths people used centuries ago. Some sites allow you to click along a road and see images around the road.

You could spend a few months slowly working your way through the various cities Paul and his companions visited. Stop and see various cities. This will give your brain a more familiar reference point when you read about such places.

Create Your Own Zoomable Charts

We are used to presenting and learning things via outline form. It is a convenient way of organizing material and learning it. However, modern technology has created better alternatives. A few sites allow you to view outlines as zoomable trees. You can move in and out along the branches. You can see the big picture or details. We can explore this information in much the same way we might climb a tree. We can move up the main trunk or branch to branch. Because we can travel around and explore, it is closer to how our brain naturally remembers places we've been. Instead of memorizing and reviewing outlines, we can explore and let our brain gradually become familiar with the subject.

This does not seem to be in common use yet. As time goes on, I expect more and more people will discover this and start making more information and subjects available in this form.

Chapter 8

Reading Greek and Hebrew

The focus in this chapter is on learning *to read* Greek and Hebrew. This is widely considered to be a very difficult skill only to be attempted by the highly intelligent and motivated and requiring years of labor. However, I believe that most people are capable of acquiring this skill. Most people who attempt to learn to read Greek or Hebrew put their time and effort into methods that won't yield reading skills. It is a matter of choosing systems and methods that will help you learn to read.

Reading Versus Parsing

Reading and parsing are two different skills that are learned through practice. Reading is looking at written text and simply knowing what it means. Parsing is analyzing a sentence to understand what it means. In other words, it is thinking in English about the new language. *Reading is NOT quickly parsing in your head. It is an entirely different skill.*

As we practice a skill, our brain is slowly building a complicated structure of storage and retrieval for that skill. For parsing, our brain is learning how to associate particular Greek or Hebrew words with grammatical terms in English and to predict their meaning. When reading, our brain is reacting directly to Greek or Hebrew to provide meaning to us. We can choose to build both structures in our brain, but having one does not mean we will have the other.

This is probably much of the reason why few Greek or Hebrew students develop comfortable reading skills. They spend the majority of their time and efforts honing parsing skills rather than

reading skills. This is probably a large part of the reason why reading Greek or Hebrew is generally considered nearly impossible unless one is both highly intelligent and motivated.

Choose Appropriate Methods

Methods based in listening to and reading from actual texts result in listening and reading skills. Methods based in memorizing tables and grammar result in parsing skills. It is that simple. You will develop the skills you put in time and effort practicing.

Many students spend countless hours honing parsing skills and rarely practice reading skills. There seems to be a tacit assumption that mastering parsing is what leads to reading skills. Sadly, this results in many giving up because they believe they are too lazy or untalented to develop reading skills. It was often not lack of effort or ability, but rather never having actually practiced reading skills. Their efforts went toward building a pars-

ing structure in their brain rather than a reading structure.

My Story

I started learning Greek in my early twenties. Fast forward to my late forties. I had just put in a few months of consistent effort of a few hours per evening. I took stock of where I was. Where had 25 to 30 years of on and off efforts memorizing (and re-memorizing) paradigm tables and vocabulary lists gotten me? I could laboriously parse my way through a few sentences per evening. I was little better than I was 20 years before. I could parse faster than before and knew much more about grammar. But I couldn't read. I realized that I'd never do more than slowly work my way through a book or two in my life. I had to question if it was worth it and was ready to call it quits. I decided to try one last time to see what I was missing.

I looked online to see if I had missed anything. I still saw the same advice for learning Greek that I'd been following for literally decades. Then I ran

across an online community of independent language learners. It shocked me to see people who thought success in language learning was normal. I started reading articles, posts, videos, and other materials from these successful language learners. The key point was that they saw language learning itself as a skill to be developed. It was about finding methods that worked for each of them.

I started using what I was learning. Within a few months, I had made more progress in reading Greek than I had in the previous 20 some years. Today I can enjoyably read some genres of Greek. I've read through the Septuagint twice and the NT a number of times. I've also started dabbling reading parts of classics. I am nowhere near fluent, but it has become an *enjoyable* part of my life. I have also reached a point where my Greek reading skills have become self-sustaining. Most of my vocabulary has now been learned from extensive reading rather than memorizing vocabulary lists. I've had periods of time where I've stopped reading for a few months or more with just a minor drop in skill level.

I recently started learning Hebrew with satisfactory progress. I can now enjoyably read a handful of chapters. I now know my goal is to *first* let my brain build a structure of storage and retrieval for understanding Hebrew. I spend most of my study time listening and reading. The script and sounds are now familiar. Many words and phrases are now familiar. Instead of starting with parsing, I'm now slowly adding that in at times to improve my understanding.

What Makes Language Learning Difficult?

There is a joke among successful language learners. *What is the hardest language to learn?* Answer: *The first one. You have no clue what you are doing.* This sums it all up. Language learning success is based on knowing how to learn languages. It is now why I believe most people could learn to read Greek and Hebrew or to use any other language. It is less about hard work and talent and more about

knowing what you are doing. At first, none of us know what we are doing.

As an aside, it was this experience with language learning that led me to prolific learning as a series of principles for learning in general. I realized that language learning was just one application. These principles apply to anything we want to learn. I've now applied it to other things and seen similar progress.

Start Learning to Read Greek or Hebrew Now

You can do this starting today whatever your age or what grades you got in school. Ignore the myths. Adults can learn a new language faster than children. This is not about having special talent or putting in years of toil. Indeed, if it feels like hard work you are doing it wrong. This is about moving from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery and enjoying the journey. It's just the same as learning anything else. Let your brain slowly become familiar with the new language.

Focus on Progress

I believe that you must focus on progress rather than having perfect understanding. *Having good understanding is the result of progress.* The progression of real learning is from unfamiliar to familiar to mastery. Good understanding is mastery which is the natural fruit of progress. Plant a seedling and let it grow into a tree.

Give Your Brain a First Taste of the Language

This is something much more easily demonstrated than written about. The prolific-learning.com website has more resources for this as well as a demo of how to do it.

Remember that you are helping your brain slowly build a structure of storage and retrieval for the new language. Your brain needs to get used to both the sights and sounds of the new language. This will only happen by consistently and pleasantly exposing your brain to the actual language.

Of course, it will seem like gibberish at first. However, you will probably be surprised how fast your brain catches on to the new language.

Many successful language learners start with listening to and reading actual language materials using English translations to learn meaning from. They will repeatedly listen and follow along with a particular passage several times until it moves from unfamiliar to somewhat familiar. It is like listening over and over to a song until it starts to become familiar. This is building a foundation in your brain for understanding the language itself.

Here are some details on how to get started doing this. You could treat this as a couple week long experiment to see how it works. It will probably feel like cheating at first because you are not forcing yourself to do tedious labor to memorize lists. This should feel comfortable and easy. After all, how hard and tedious was it to learn your favorite song off the radio?

You can get what you need for free on the internet. See the prolific-learning.com website for more information and links. You will need 3 ba-

sic things, the original text, an interlinear, and an audio of the text. Before going out and buying materials, take a test drive using the free ones. You will get a better sense of what you might want to have later on.

I'd recommend either Genesis 1 or John 1 to start. They are both familiar to many people and use fairly simple language and concepts. They will be relatively easy to understand and follow along.

There is nothing more to this method than listening and following along. Don't worry about what you don't know. Celebrate each time something becomes familiar. Enjoy the journey.

- Open up your original language text to that section and just look at it for a few moments. Just get a quick sense of how unfamiliar or familiar it seems. Then put this text away.
- Listen to the first 30 seconds or so of your audio. Please note that some recordings might start with words like “This is chapter

one.” Play this a few times. It will be gibberish at first.

- Open up the interlinear and try to follow along. Play and replay the audio a number of times. It will feel clumsy and awkward at first. You will get lost. However, at some point, your brain will just latch onto certain words. They will just suddenly jump out at you as unique words. Your brain will start to make the connection between the sounds and what is written. Feel free to jump between the language and English as you follow along.
- Do this while it is enjoyable and intriguing. As soon as it starts to feel like work or that you have to force yourself to continue, it’s time to take a break. Your brain needs to be relaxed for this to work!
- After you’re done, do a quick check. Open the original language text again. Take a look and see if anything looks familiar. Chances

are you might recognize the first few words or a common word.

Set aside some time each day to listen and follow along *with this same passage*. You can mix combinations of just listening, following along with the interlinear or following along with the original. As it starts to become familiar, you can just read the original or interlinear. The two important things are consistency and enjoying it.

After a time, this passage will start to feel somewhat familiar. You will be nowhere close to mastering it but it is no longer unfamiliar. You could then move onto the next section and repeat the process. Continue to listen and read the first one though. As time goes on, you will find that more and more of the chapter is becoming familiar to you. You will find that some parts just make sense when you look at them. You are starting to acquire the skill of reading your new language. It will take a long time for you to be able to look at something new and just understand it. But this is the first step. You are moving from unfamiliar to somewhat familiar.

Your brain is starting to directly process the new language.

When I've done this starting a new language, I've noticed that it often takes a handful of times before anything makes sense. But there will be one time through when a particular word or two will just jump out and be comprehensible. Once you hit that point, more and more words will start to follow suite. Your brain has started to lock onto the patterns of the new language.

In the past, I would have been in a hurry to look up vocabulary lists and piece together meaning as quickly as possible. Now, I realize that I need to be patient and let my brain react to the new language at its pace. I've found that after an initial period of priming the pump so to speak, my brain starts to latch onto the new language by itself.

Increasing Familiarity

This is a foundation that you can build further language studies on. After awhile, you will start to notice things about the language. You will start

to see patterns. You will start to feel how words go together. You are naturally starting to assimilate the grammar of the language. This is when reading grammar materials can be helpful. Don't memorize these materials. Just use them to answer questions and improve your understanding.

You will need to discover what methods will work for you to help you continue to advance. This is far beyond the scope of this simple book. But hopefully, this is enough to give you the confidence and base from which to grow.

A Few Comments

All systems and methods produce something. That is usually what is seen from it. What do we see with standard practice learning Greek and Hebrew? It appears that the predominant skill developed is writing essays and giving talks about the real meaning of a single word or sentence. While their skill at it varies, most people emerge from the system able to do this to some degree. This is not to be taken as a criticism of this skill but rather the

observation that the current system tends to primarily produce this.

If the predominant result we want is most pastors and many laypeople enjoying daily extensive reading in original languages, new systems and methods must be adopted. The first aim should be to build a structure in the brain that processes the new language directly. Initially, I think most time and effort should be spent listening, following along, and reading. This can be aided with initial grammar exposure which is general observations in non-technical language. I think this would provide a good foundation for most standard parsing based courses and materials which should be treated as intermediate to advanced level studies.

I think it is worthwhile for the church to consider new systems and methods that would give more actual language skills for our time, efforts, and resources. This is not just for Greek and Hebrew but other languages. We need to help individuals discover how they best can enjoyably and effectively develop new skills that they can use.

Learning languages is itself a skill that needs to be learned.

Chapter 9

Improving Learning in Other Areas

As many of you have perhaps noted, the learning principles in this book apply to anything and everything you might want to learn. I've applied them myself to learning foreign language, jazz/blues piano improvisation, digital art, and world geography. I've been pleasantly surprised at the progress I made. In hindsight, I realized I'd been using them throughout my life in things that I had much success in.

I'd encourage you to start becoming more familiar with this way of learning. It is a different

way of thinking. It removes many limits the world has placed on us. As you do it, it becomes more comfortable and feels much more natural. Each time I applied it to something else, I found that it started to feel more and more natural.

I also feel that I've only started to scratch the surface. Each time I write a new book draft or article or post, I start to see some things in a new light. I'm just an explorer in this new world of prolific learning. What I've written so far is just the beginnings of a map and guide. Feel free to visit my web site (prolific-learning.com) if you want to learn more. The site is a work in progress.

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