

Greek 101

BEREANDASHBOARDTRAINING

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.”*

JOHN 1:1

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Ed Smith · Smith For Christ

1 Why Greek

The street language God chose for the New Testament

The New Testament was not written in a holy language. It was written in Koine — “common” — Greek, the everyday tongue of the first-century marketplace. That is not an accident; it is a statement.

When the apostles wrote, Greek was what English is now: the language everyone’s neighbor could read. God’s deepest self-revelation went out in grocery-list Greek, and there is a sermon in that before you learn a single letter. The Old Testament your New Testament authors usually quoted was Greek too — the **Septuagint (LXX)**, a translation made two centuries before Christ, and the Dashboard carries it in the translation picker.

As with Hebrew, the aim here is not mastery. It is familiarity: recognize the alphabet, understand why word endings matter more than word order, meet a dozen words worth knowing on sight, and read John 1:1 in the language John wrote it.

How to use this document

Read it straight through once. Then open the Dashboard to John 1, put this beside it, and work section by section. Section 6 walks John 1:1 word by word; section 7 maps the buttons; section 8 hands you to the best free video teachers.

2 The alphabet at a glance

Twenty-four letters, left to right, half of them old friends

Greek reads **left to right**, like English — one less thing to learn. The alphabet has **24 letters**, and you already know more of them than you think: A B E Z I K M N O T are close cousins of ours, and you have met alpha, beta, delta, pi and omega everywhere from math class to Revelation 1:8.

A α alpha	a as in father
B β beta	b
Γ γ gamma	g as in gift
Δ δ delta	d
E ε epsilon	e as in met
Z ζ zeta	dz
H η eta	ay as in they
Θ θ theta	th as in think — <i>theos</i> , God
I ι iota	i as in machine — the “iota” of Matthew 5:18
K κ kappa	k
Λ λ lambda	l
M μ mu	m
N ν nu	n
Ξ ξ xi	x as in box
O ο omicron	o as in not
Π π pi	p
Ρ ρ rho	r
Σ σ / ς sigma	s — ς only at the end of a word
T τ tau	t
Υ υ upsilon	u, said like French u
Φ φ phi	ph as in phone
Χ χ chi	ch as in Bach — the Chi in “Chi-Rho”
Ψ ψ psi	ps as in lips — <i>psalmos</i> , psalm
Ω ω omega	o as in tone — “the Alpha and the Omega”

Two small marks matter: the **rough breathing** (Ͱ) over a starting vowel adds an h-sound — ô is “ho” — and the smooth breathing (ͱ) adds nothing. The accents you will see everywhere marked the melody of the word; you can read happily for years without parsing them. The Dashboard prints a transliteration under every word, so — as with Hebrew — you can always sound the text from day one.

3 Endings do the work

Why Greek can scramble its word order and lose nothing

English tells you who did what by position: “the dog bit the man” and “the man bit the dog” are different news stories. Greek tells you by **endings**. The subject wears one ending, the object wears another, and once the endings are on, the words can stand in almost any order — which frees word order to do something English mostly cannot: **emphasis**. Whatever the writer put first, he put first on purpose.

Those ending-jobs are called **cases**, and there are five:

Nominative	the subject — the one doing: <i>ho logos</i> , the Word
Genitive	the “of” case — possession, source: the love <i>of God</i>
Dative	the “to / for / in” case — <i>en archē</i> , in the beginning
Accusative	the object — the one acted on: <i>pros ton theon</i> , with God
Vocative	direct address — <i>Kyrie</i> , Lord!

You never have to memorize the ending tables — the Dashboard’s dictionary tells you the case when you tap a word. What you gain by knowing cases exist is the ability to see *why* the entry says what it says, and to notice when a translator had a genuine choice on his hands.

4 The article, and how Greek verbs see time

Two ideas that repay everything you invest in them

Greek has no word for “a.” It has one mighty word for “the” — ὁ, ἡ, τό — and it uses it with a precision English cannot copy: *ho Christos*, THE Christ; *ho theos*, THE God. When the article is missing, the writer is usually pointing at quality rather than identity, a distinction that matters in John 1:1 (see section 6).

Greek verbs, like Hebrew ones, care more about the **shape** of an action than its date. The **present** paints action as ongoing — “keep on asking” is often a fair reading of a present imperative. The **aorist** presents an action whole, as one thing — a snapshot, not a movie. The **perfect** is the treasure: an action completed whose result stands — Τετέλεσται, “It is finished” (John 19:30), is a perfect: finished then, finished still, finished forever.

The same caution, Greek edition

You will hear people say “the aorist means once-for-all.” It does not — it is the ordinary way to mention any past event. As with Hebrew: use the Greek to slow down and see, never to build what the text’s own sentence does not build. When a form truly is load-bearing, the commentaries in the Deeper tab will say so.

5 Words worth meeting on sight

A dozen New Testament words you will now recognize everywhere

λόγος logos	word, message, reason — John's name for Christ (John 1:1)
ἀγάπη agapē	love — the self-giving kind; the word of 1 Corinthians 13
χάρις charis	grace — free, unearned favor; the first word of every Pauline greeting
πίστις pistis	faith, trust, faithfulness — one Greek word, all three English ones
εὐαγγέλιον euangelion	gospel — literally “good news”; an emperor's birth announcement, commandeered for the true King
μετάνοια metanoia	repentance — literally a change of mind that turns the life
κοινωνία koinōnia	fellowship, sharing — from <i>koinē</i> , common, the very dialect's name
εἰρήνη eirēnē	peace — the Greek carrying Hebrew <i>shalom</i> on its back
δόξα doxa	glory — as in doxology
σὰρξ sarx	flesh — the Word became <i>sarx</i> , John 1:14
κύριος kyrios	Lord — the word the LXX used for YHWH; calling Jesus <i>Kyrios</i> was never small talk
ζωή zōē	life — “in Him was <i>zōē</i> ”, John 1:4

One famous pair deserves its footnote: in John 21 Jesus asks Peter about *agapaō* love and Peter answers with *phileō* love. Preachers have built cathedrals on that distinction; many careful scholars note John elsewhere uses the two words interchangeably. Tap the words, read Thayer's entries, weigh it yourself — that is exactly the kind of question this app was built to let you hold with your own hands.

6 John 1:1, word by word

Seventeen words, three clauses, and you can read them all

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

En archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ en archē	“In the beginning” — the LXX’s exact opening of Genesis 1:1. John is rewriting Genesis on purpose, and his first readers heard it instantly.
ἦν ēn	“was” — continuous past: the Word already was, no starting point in view. When creation begins, the Word is already there.
ὁ λόγος ho logos	“the Word” — with the article: THE Word, a specific someone.
καὶ kai	“and” — the workhorse conjunction, Greek’s <i>ve-</i> .
πρὸς τὸν θεόν pros ton theon	“with God” — <i>pros</i> is face-toward: not merely alongside God but turned toward Him. Distinction of persons, intimacy of communion, one preposition.
θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος theos ēn ho logos	“the Word was God.” <i>Theos</i> stands first for emphasis and without the article — stating what the Word IS (fully God in nature) while keeping the Word distinct from the Father he is <i>pros</i> . Grammar carrying theology on its shoulders.

Read the verse aloud from the transliteration. Then tap λόγος in the Dashboard and read Thayer’s entry — you will find the whole Greek mind in it: word, speech, reason, account. John reached for the biggest word his language had, and it still was not too big.

7 Doing all of this in the Dashboard

The buttons, in the order you will press them

Open the text	Go to berean-dashboard.pages.dev , pick John 1. The Greek column (headed GREEK · TR — the Textus Receptus) sits beside your English, transliteration under every word.
Hear a verse	Tap the small ► beside any Greek verse, or ► Greek in the column header for the chapter. ■ stops.
Slow it down	Lexicon tab → Speed (start near 0.4×) and Pause sliders — silence between words is where recognition happens.
Hear real Greek	Tick Speak the Hebrew / Greek instead to hear a tapped word in the native voice.
Study a word	Tap any word in the Greek column — Thayer's entry opens in the Lexicon tab with the case, the tense, and the range of meaning.
Follow the numbers	Blue G -numbers in tagged translations are Strong's numbers — G3056 is <i>logos</i> . Type one into the lookup box any time.
Read the LXX	Pick LXX in a translation column to read the Old Testament in the Greek your New Testament authors quoted — Genesis 1:1 begins <i>en archē</i> there too.
Keep what you find	Dictate the observation, mark the word in color, and let the Search tab find where else it surfaces — ask in your own words; the search understands meaning now.

8 The teachers on video

The most-loved free Greek courses on the internet

These are the teachers to sit under — all free:

Alpha with Angela

From the same family as Aleph with Beth, and taught the same gentle way: entirely in Koine Greek, with pictures and repetition, no grammar tables at the door. The most approachable on-ramp to biblical Greek there has ever been. Free forever.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/AlphawithAngela>

Daily Dose of Greek

Two minutes a day through the Greek New Testament, verse by verse, with Dr. Rob Plummer. The perfect habit once the alphabet is yours — the same daily shape as Berean study itself.

<https://dailydoseofgreek.com>

Bill Mounce — Basics of Biblical Greek

The classic classroom route, from the author of the textbook most seminaries use. When you are ready to know *why* the endings do what they do, Mounce's free lectures are the deep end, warmly taught.

<https://www.billmounce.com>

How to pair the videos with the Dashboard

Same rhythm as Hebrew: a lesson on video, then ten minutes in the Dashboard finding that lesson's letters and words in John's Gospel. John wrote the New Testament's simplest Greek on purpose — start there, and let the app's voice and transliterations carry you while the videos build the foundation.

9 A gentle path for your first month

Four weeks, no memorizing, all of it out loud

Week 1	Letters. First Alpha with Angela lessons; in the Dashboard, find the letters in John 1 like faces in a crowd. Notice how many you already knew.
Week 2	Sounds. Tap ► on John 1:1–5 daily, Pause slider high, reading the transliterations along with the voice.
Week 3	One word. Take λόγος or a word from your current study; read Thayer's, search it, and watch it surface across the New Testament.
Week 4	John 1:1 by heart — in Greek, out loud. <i>En archē ēn ho logos</i> . Seventeen words you will carry for the rest of your life.

The apostles wrote in the common tongue so common people could read God's deepest things. Learning even a little of their Greek is not scholarship for its own sake — it is accepting the invitation exactly as it was sent.

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