

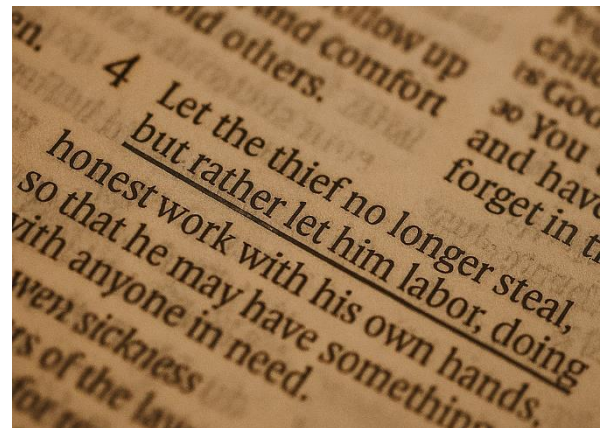
Prosody & Reading Aloud

RENEWING TECHNIQUE

Prosody has been called “the music of language.” Prosody applies emphasis to certain words or phrases in a sentence through volume or pitch, or tempo. In many cases, prosody helps us clarify and have a better understanding of the meaning of language.

Prosody can actually change the entire meaning of a word. If you are trying to reverse brainwashing, you are trying to “ConVERT the CONvert.” Same word, spelled exactly the same. But the emphasis on the different syllables changes its meaning and use from a verb to a noun.

Sometimes prosody involves short breaks or speed in the tempo of words in a sentence. Ephesians 4:28 in the King James Version says, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands.” I heard somebody apply prosody to make it read like this, “Let him that stole, steal. No more but rather let him labor, working with his hands.” In some versions of the Bible, the translators have added punctuation to better reflect the meaning that would have been obvious if you heard it read with prosody.



Dr. Patrick N. Allitt is a professor at Emory University, where he has taught since 1988. He is a master educator and knows how best to make students learn. In his classes, he requires students to use two techniques to help them with all their reading assignments.

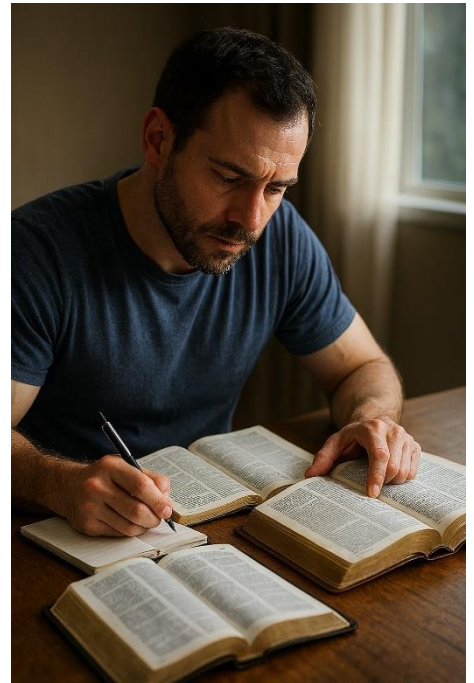
First, if they encounter a word in their reading they don’t know, they should stop and look up the definition. Second, Dr. Allitt says they should read the passage three times. The first time just reading silently. The second time, read aloud, using prosody. Then it should be read again, silently or aloud.

This is good advice from an expert on learning. When we consider the task of renewing our Minds, a good portion of that work involves reading God’s Word. Dr. Allitt’s method is a great technique to help us understand every nuanced meaning of the scriptures.

The vocabulary of the Bible is only about 15,000 words, and that includes the people and place names. That's about the same vocabulary size as a ten-year-old boy. English-speaking adults typically have a working vocabulary of 25,000-30,000 words. But occasionally you will run into a word that may be new to you.

But don't skip over the word or try to figure out its meaning by the context. That's like saying, "God, I didn't know what you meant and didn't care enough to ask." Instead, look it up. On-line Bible dictionaries and commentaries make this a simple task, but a printed dictionary will work as well. Write these new words into a file or notebook for later reference.

Colin MacLeod, a psychologist at the University of Waterloo, has researched the impact of reading aloud on memory. He found people remember texts better if they read them aloud. MacLeod named this phenomenon the "production effect." Not only does reading aloud help with memory, but it also makes us think deeper about the meaning.



So, when you study a passage of scripture, read it three times. The first time silently, while trying to discern its meaning. The second time, read it aloud. This time, think about the meaning of each sentence and use prosody to emphasize that meaning. You can read silently the third time, but you will remember the sound of your prosody, and you'll hear it in your mind while you read it the third time.

Try this technique on a familiar passage, like John 3:16, and you'll see how reading aloud with prosody reveals aspects of God's Word that you may have never considered before.