

Pastor Grady Covin
The Mission
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Lesson 4

Before we get started tonight, let me just explain something. One of the things you're going to find out about this class is that you're only going to get out of it what you're willing to put into it. And you can cram at the last minute and come in here and maybe make me or the person next to you think you've spent all week preparing for class, but at the end of the day, you're probably not going to get much out of it.

Now, your other option is to spend some quality time every week to practice and to put in to use what you learn; and if you'll do that; you'll get something from this class that will last and benefit you for a lifetime. But as always, the choice is yours.

And by the way, let me put in a plug in here for our Sunday school. Our Sunday School format has been redesigned; and it's now geared toward getting people more involved. In other words, it's designed around class participation. But if you don't look at it beforehand and do what the lesson tells you to do, like read the daily Bible readings beforehand, and like study the lesson beforehand, then you're not going to get out of it what God intended for you to get out of it.

The truth is, they call it Sunday school for a reason. We're supposed to be learning something on Sunday morning; not just going through the motions by coming to church and sitting and listening to what somebody else learned and leaving only to remember a small portion of what we heard and more or less leaving the same way we came in.

We ought to be bringing something with us when we come; to share with others and to make a contribution to the class. And so what we put it into it during the week will be directly proportionate to what we get out of it come Sunday morning.

And again, it's going to be same with tonight's class.

So with that does anybody remember the scripture I gave you to read and to make observations from last week?

Joshua 1:8,

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth,

but

you shall meditate on it day and night,

so that

you may be careful to do

according to all that is written in it;

for

then you will make your way prosperous

and

then you will have success.

Now, I don't think the author of our textbook could have picked a better verse in all the Bible for us to begin with, because we all want what those last two phrases suggest. We all want our way to be prosperous! Amen? And we all want to have success in our life!

And this verse tells us exactly how we can experience both of those things !

And so let's find out what God's word tells us to do in order to have those two experiences?

So now what did you see in this verse?

Observations

What's the first term? **“This”** And what kind of a word is “this”? It's a pronoun. What kind of a pronoun? A determinative pronoun. It's a person, thing, or idea that is present or near in place, time, or thought or that has just been mentioned. And so what has just been mentioned?

Look back at verse 7. **7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.** It was **“all the law which Moses My servant commanded you;** that's what was just mentioned.

And that's the next term as well. What's the next term? **The Book of the Law.** And what is the Book of the Law? It's Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy. The first five books of the Bible which were written by who? What's it say in verse 7? They were written by **Moses.**

Deuteronomy 31:9, So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying: “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

Deuteronomy 31:24, So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: 26 “Take this Book of the Law, and

put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;

So the Book of the Law is the first five books of the Old Testament which by the way is all they had at the time and it was God that gave it to Moses to give to the people of Israel.

So what's the next term you see?

Shall not depart

What is that? It's a verb right? What does the word shall mean? Well, if you look it up, you'll find it's an old English word that means "must". And so it means this Book of Law **must not** depart.

Now, what does depart mean? It means to leave; to deviate from; to forsake; not to adhere to, or follow;

I have a Webster's 1828 Dictionary; you can get it online as well that I use to define words from the KJV of the Bible. It's a great help especially when using the KJV or even the NKJV sometimes when you need to find the meaning of a word, because many times words change meanings over the years. And a word that meant one thing when the KJV was written may have evolved to take on a completely different meaning in modern times. And so a Webster 1828 dictionary is a great help to find those original meanings.

Well, I'm not going to go through this entire verse tonight. I trust that you did that already on your own and that you'll go back and do even more this week. The more you observe the better you'll get and remember the better you observe the better your interpretation is going to be in the next step.

So we're going to move on to something else.

Now, let me ask you. Have you ever closed your Bible in frustration and wondered why in the world you couldn't get more out of it. No matter how hard you tried, you just didn't seem to get anything out of your study of the Scripture?

Well, there could be a number of reasons and we won't go into all of them, but I do want to mention a few.

First, if you're not a true born again follower of Christ, then you don't have the ability to understand the Word of God. And you can read it from now until the end of time and you'll not understand it. The truth is without the Holy Spirit opening up the eyes of our heart, we don't have the ability in and of ourselves to understand the real meaning of the Word of God.

And the most important thing you can do, even as a Christian, is to pray for understanding and discernment and wisdom to understand what you are about to study before you ever even open the book.

But now there are other possible roadblocks even if you are a believer. One is that you don't know what to look for and that's what this class is all about, but another is that maybe you don't know how to read.

And I don't say that to insult anyone, because it's a really common problem with a lot of people; especially nowadays.

The fact is our culture has made a radical shift in the last century from being a word-based society of readers to an image-based society of viewers. And the way we gather information has changed at least for most people. We've migrated away from written material and reading and nowadays, we get most of our information and knowledge from movies, and television, and from the Internet. And the result is that many people just don't know how to read. It's becoming a lost art; much just like cursive writing and doing math problems by hand.

But the Bible hasn't changed. The Bible is a book to be read and to be understood and to be appreciated in that manner. And so if you want to be a good student of the Bible, then you're going to have to know how to read. And if you don't know how to read well, and you want to be a good student of the Bible, then you're going to need to spend some time learning how.

Now, some of you may think this is elementary or a waste of time or not needed, but believe me when I tell you, it's a much bigger problem than most people realize today. A lot of people struggle when it comes to knowing how to read. And so we're going to focus on this for a few minutes before we move on to learn more about what to look for in what we read.

Now, on at least eleven different occasions, Jesus asked some of the most well-read people of His time a question. He asked them, "Have you never read the scriptures?"

Well, the answer every time was "yes" they had read it. In fact, they had spent all of their lives reading it. But they didn't understand what they had read.

They were like the student that the teacher came across in his class one day. He was dead asleep in front of a book he was supposed to be reading. When the teacher asked him what he was reading he nearly jumped out of his shoes. The teacher said, "Tell me about what you've read?"

"Was it funny? Or was it tragic?"

The young man said, "What do you mean?"

The teacher said, Well you're on page thirty-seven of a hundred page book, what's the book about?

He said, I don't have the foggiest idea!"

Well, that's a tragedy that happens to a lot of people quite often, especially when they read the Bible. But the truth is, if you don't

understand what you're reading, then you're not really reading—you're just wasting time. And I'm afraid that many people come away from the Bible having basically wasted their time, because if their life depended on it, they couldn't tell you what they just read.

And if that describes you, then let me give you three suggestions to help you to learn how to read:

First, take the time and put forth the effort to learn how to read better and faster.

There's a direct correlation between your ability to observe Scripture and your ability to read. So anything you can do to improve your reading skills will be a huge step in the direction of improving your observation skills as a student of the Bible.

The sad truth is, there are students who graduate from high school who have a really hard time reading. One college professor asked his students, "If you graduate from this university and you still can't read and write and think for yourself, then what can you possibly do when you go out into the world?"

And one student hollered out from the back of the classroom, "You can watch television."

And that's true. It's sad, but it's true.

Now, why is learning to read so very important?

Well, suppose you want to study the book of Ephesians, but you happen to be a slow reader, so it takes you thirty minutes to read the entire six chapters. Well, suppose you learned to read those six chapters in fifteen minutes and also learned how to double your comprehension. Well, then for the same amount of time—one-half hour—you would increase your

effectiveness fourfold. And so that would be worth the investment; would it not?

Well, just for fun let's do an exercise.

You're about to receive a handout and when you get it, I want you to turn it over and don't look at it until I tell you. And when I say start; you're going to have 60 seconds to read it and when I say stop, you're going to turn it back over and don't look at it anymore.

And then I'm going to ask you a few questions and you'll answer T for true or F for false. And you can just write your answer if you'd like on the blank side of that same piece of paper. And when we're finished I'll give you the answers and you can see how well you did.

Exercise:

Read the following:

DRY ICE

Can you imagine ice that does not melt and is not wet? Then you can imagine dry ice. Dry ice is made by freezing a gas called carbon dioxide. Dry ice is quite different from ordinary ice, which is simply frozen water.

Dry ice was first manufactured in 1925. It has since fulfilled the fondest hopes of its inventor. It can be used for making artificial fog in movies (when steam is passed over dry ice, a very dense vapor rises), and for destroying insects in grain supplies. It is more practical than ordinary ice because it takes up less space and is 142 degrees colder. Since it evaporates instead of melting, it is cleaner to use. For these reasons it is extremely popular, and many people prefer it to ordinary ice.

Dry ice is so cold that, if you touch it with your bare fingers, it will burn you!

Now, answer write your answer for each of these questions. Remember T for true, F for false.

1. Dry ice is made from water, but because it is specially treated it does not melt.

T

F

2. The first dry ice was manufactured in the 1950s

T

F

3. Dry ice has more uses than ordinary ice.

T

F

4. Dry ice is not as cold as ordinary ice.

T

F

5. Artificial fog can be made by passing steam over dry ice.

T

F

So how did you do?

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T

Well, since we don't have time for me to teach a class on reading, let me recommend a few books to you that'll help you if you really want to learn how to increase your reading skills. The first one is written by **Mortimer J. Adler** and it's called **How to Read a Book**.

You can get it on Amazon and I promise if you'll read it and use what you read, it'll help you.

When I was in high school I was a fairly good student. I didn't have to study a whole lot and so I didn't and I still graduated by making A's and B's except for Conduct. I couldn't seem to keep my mouth shut.

Anyway I was particularly good in English and Math and Spelling or at least I thought I was until I applied to college and had to take the entrance exams.

I failed both the math and the English and had to take remedial classes in both subjects.

And my problem it turns out was my inability to read and to comprehend, neither of which I had practiced very much, because I hadn't studied very much. And even though I had managed to get by in high school; when those skills were really tested in college, I didn't fair too well.

And so anything you can do to improve those two skills will benefit you in studying the Bible and also if you want to go back to college.

Now, another good tool to have is a book titled **How to Read Better and Faster, by Norman Lewis.**

And this is really a workbook that's supposed to help you read 50 to 60 percent faster than you do now, and also with better comprehension. And so if you want to learn how to read better and faster and retain more of what you read, then get these books and put forth the effort and let us know how it helped.

And then the next thing we need to do is to learn to read like it was our first time.

There's an old saying that says, familiarity breeds contempt. Well, when it comes to Bible study, something else familiarity breeds is ignorance. The moment you come to a passage of Scripture and say, "Oh, I already know this one," then you're in deep trouble. Instead, you need to come to every text as if you'd never seen it before in your life.

And one thing that'll help you to do that is to read the Bible in different versions. Especially if you've been reading the same translation for years. It's good to try something different for a change or a version that's unfamiliar so as to maybe jar your attention so you'll see the Bible with a new set of eyes.

The point is, do whatever it takes to approach the Word of God with a fresh perspective. One of the worst things we can do when it comes to studying the Bible is to approach it with an, "I already know that" attitude.

And then next we need to do is to read the Bible like it's a love letter.

If you've ever been in love and received a love letter from the one you loved, then you know it means to hang on every word. And also you know

what it means to read something four or five times. Well, that's because you were in love with the person who wrote that letter.

Well, that's the way we should come to the Word of God. We should read it as though it were God's love letter to us, because it is.

When Mortimer Adler's book first came out, it was advertised in The New York Times under the slogan, "How to Read a Love Letter." And it had a picture in the advertisement of a young man who you could tell was intently reading this letter he had just received. And under this picture were written these words.

This young man has just received his first love letter. He may have read it three or four times, but he is just beginning. To read it as accurately as he would like, would require several dictionaries and a course in etymology.

However, he'll do just fine without them.

He'll ponder over the exact shade of meaning of every word and every comma. She has headed the letter, "Dear John." What, he asks himself, is the exact significance of those words? Did she refrain from saying "Dearest" because she was bashful? Would "My Dear" have sounded too formal?

Maybe she would have said "Dear So-and-So" to anybody!

A worried frown will now appear on his face. But it disappears as soon as he really gets to thinking about the first sentence. She certainly wouldn't have written that to anybody!

And so he works his way through the letter, one moment perched blissfully on a cloud, the next moment huddled miserably behind an eight-ball. It has started a hundred questions in his mind. He could quote it by heart. In fact, he will—to himself—for weeks to come.

Then the advertisement concluded,

If people read books with anything like the same concentration, we'd be a race of mental giants.

Likewise, if people read Scripture with anything like the same concentration, we would be a race of spiritual giants.

And so if you want to understand the Bible, you've got to learn to read—better and faster, as for the first time, and as if you were reading a love letter. Because we are. It's God's love letter and He wrote it to us in order to communicate to us in the twenty-first century.

Homework: Read 1 Corinthians 13 in at least four different versions of the Bible.