

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

September 27, 2018

My dear Friends:

One of the things that always strikes me as I read God's Word is this: each time I come to a passage, it seems to yield fresh insight. Things I had not noticed before, connections I make to other parts of the Bible, fresh applications to my life presently: all of that happens regularly as I read the Bible. Notice, I say "read" the Bible. I think we tend to make the Bible this mysterious book that is only accessible to seminary-trained teachers or preachers. While theological education is important, most of the insights I'm thinking about can occur to us as we are simply wide-awake readers of the Bible.

For example, in my morning devotional time, I always have a pen in my hand to notice and mark repetition of words or phrases. That's a great clue toward the meaning of any given passage. Think about it: when you are talking to someone else, you will repeat yourself for emphasis or clarity. God does the same thing in his Word through the repetition of words and phrases.

Another thing I do as I read the Bible is pay attention to the repetition of scenes. We'll see that this coming Sunday in Mark's Gospel: the scene in Mark 10:46-52 with Bartimaeus bookends a section that began with Jesus healing a blind man in Mark 8:22-27. The thing we ought to do is ask: why did Mark, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, sandwich the material between Mark 8:22 and Mark 10:52 this way? What's the importance of these two healings of men who are blind? How do physical and spiritual blindness relate to each other? How is Jesus the solution to this?

A third practice I have when I read the Bible is to look at the cross-references. Hopefully, you have a Bible that offers cross-references. That allows you both to see how phrases are repeated in the Bible and also to notice how Scripture interprets Scripture. That's the best approach to understanding the Bible—we don't yank passages out of context, either the narrow context of a given section or book or the larger context of Scripture itself. Neither do we play "Bible roulette," where we take our Bible, let it fall open, point and read the verse our eyes come upon, and take that as God's Word to us. Rather, we compare Scripture to Scripture in order to understand what we are reading.

These three approaches help us read the Bible "wide awake." Don't allow yourself to let your eyes run over the Bible as you read—by simply paying attention, you'll not only learn more about God and his Word, but you will also be able to hear the Holy Spirit speak through Holy Scripture as you understand it rightly.

In the grip of God's grace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sean".

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