

Beyond Mere Words

Wk7: Discerning and Doing the Word

What is the role of the Holy Spirit when we read the Bible?

“As the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, so the literary act proceeds from the author, and so does the perlocution (persuading, convincing) proceed from the illocution (claiming, asserting). A text, then, has a mission of meaning, that we may provisionally define in terms of illocutionary success: the goal of a literary act is to accomplish the purpose for which it was sent. The Word of God in Scripture, similarly, has a mission, and this in turn determines the mission of the Spirit.” Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in the Text*, 410

- Does the Holy Spirit aid us only in receiving the Scriptures (conviction to receive it) or does he assistance in understanding (giving us insight into it)?
- Does Holy Spirit speak to us directly or only mediated through Scriptures?
- If he does continue to speak, does he reveal new truth?

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 *(How does this compare to Jesus in Luke 24:25-32)

John 14:26

John 16:8, 13-14

Acts 2:17-21

1 John 2:27

What Is The Holy Spirit's Role In Bringing The Reader To Understanding?

1. Transformation of our hearts.
2. Illumination of minds.
 - a. What it meant (sense)
 - b. What it means (significance)
3. Accomplishing the purpose (communicative action) for which it was sent. The Spirit convicts the reader, bringing realization and commitment that the meaning of the biblical text deserves the appropriate response.

“The Spirit's work in interpretation is not to change the sense [i.e. the meaning of the text] but to restore us to our senses.” Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in the Text*, 428

What Is 'New Truth'?

1. Create or developed truth? (Negative/dark room illustration)
2. Personal or normative truth? (While God's revelation is always authoritative, its not always normative)

Test All 'Truth' (Community, Experience, Tradition, Reason, & Scripture)

1. Does it affirm the person and work of Jesus? (1 John 4:1-3)
2. Does it build up the church? (Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 14:26)
3. Does it contradict the historical orthodox teachings of the church? (2 Thessalonians 2:15)
4. Have you submitted it before the wise counsel of your church community and leadership? (1 Corinthians 14:29, Acts 15:1-35)
5. Does it contradict where the Holy Spirit has previously spoken (i.e. the text of Scripture)? (2 Peter 2:20-21)

“The Bible is best read in the context of a community of disciple readers, not because there is no meaning in the Bible apart from its reception by Spirit-led community, but because the church is the place where the Spirit cultivates righteousness and the willingness to hear the word.” Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in the Text*, 414

Can We Understand The Scriptures Apart From The Holy Spirit? (Duvall and Hays (from Grasping God's Word, 196-202)

1. Yes.
 - a. Grammatical content is understandable
 - b. Historical content is understandable
2. Yes, but only to a degree.
 - a. Sin has dulled our ability to perceive truth
 - b. We bring baggage to the text (pre-understandings)
 - c. Understanding is much more than knowledge
3. No.
 - a. Understanding is greater than intellectual comprehension...it involves the whole person.
 - b. True change of heart, mind, and life, is impossible without the Holy Spirit

“Our polluted cognitive and spiritual environment darkens understanding of all texts. Self-centered readers do not wish to understand the other, particularly when the other has a claim on them. Self-love perverts the course of interpretation as it does every other human activity. Of course, not every text lays claim to us; not every text challenges our self-understanding, as does the Bible. If there is no perceived threat, there may be less reason for readers to resist the meaning of the text....The Spirit enables us to avoid falling prey to self-deception, not by working a miracle on our rational faculties, but by shedding grace abroad in our hearts. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in the Text*, 415

Four Substitutes For Application *(Four Things To Avoid) (Howard Hendrix, *Living By The Book*, 290-296)

1. We substitute interpretation for application (hearing for doing)
2. We substitute superficial obedience for substantive life-change (blind spots)
3. We substitute rationalization for repentance
4. We substitute conviction for change (emotional experience for volitional decision)

Practices To Maximize The Holy Spirit's Impact On Your Bible Reading

1. Pray, ask for the Holy Spirit's help understanding, discerning, and doing
2. Read with a willingness to allow the Holy Spirit to change your mind and heart
3. Allow time to reflect on previously read passages (journaling helps)
 - a. How is this working/ not working? Why?
 - b. What have you done in my life? / What fruit are you producing?

The goal is not to master the Word, but to be mastered by it.