How to Read the Bible

O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine. I have more insight than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, Because I have observed Your precepts. (Psalm 119:97–100, NASB)

I have to admit, I have never read The Little Red Book—not the one written by Chinese Communist Mao Tse Tung, the one written by Harvey Penick.

Actually, I have not read the one written by Mao Tse Tung either. But that is neither here nor there because I want to focus on one quote from the book.

The quote is, “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” Sorry. Wrong book.

The quote is: “Take dead aim.” It is probably the most famous quote from Penick’s classic instruction book on golf. Just three simple words.

If you think about it, those three words don’t sound particularly profound. There is no alliteration, antithesis, or any other rhetorical advice there that makes them memorable. If you or I said them, people would think, “Yeah, whatever.”

The point though is that we didn’t say them. Harvey Penick said them. And it is who he was that gives the words gravitas. Because we know Penick was a genius golf instructor, we rightly seek deeper meaning in the words.

We trust the speaker, which causes us to look for deeper meaning in the words, and that opens the door to understanding.

When we do look for deeper meaning, we see how those three words free us from the mechanical so we can execute the physical; how those three words orient all of who we are toward the target; and how those three words shut out all that would distract us from the ultimate goal of golf—putting the ball in the hole.

The key, though, that unlocks the meaning of those three words is trust. We trust Harvey Penick, so we assume there is wisdom in his words, even when that wisdom is not immediately apparent. Our trust causes us to look deeper, and to search harder, and to find something we otherwise would have missed.

It’s the same with how we approach God and His word. Jesus had just finished a teaching where He said He was the bread of life and that those who followed Him should eat His flesh and drink His blood. See John 6:48-58.

Some disciples, in one of the great understatements of the Bible, said, “This is a difficult statement. Who can listen to it?” Then many left.

Jesus turns to the Twelve and asks, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Peter says, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” The disciples stayed, not because they understood what Jesus said but because they understood who He was. And because they stayed, they would eventually understand.

“Take dead aim.”

Just three simple words, until we believe.

Prayer: Lord, help me always to come to Your Word in faith. Amen.

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