

This week an article was sent to me about missions and I was asked what I thought. It was filled with error, which I recognized as error while I was reading. Got me thinking about the need for critical thinking in reading.

I. ENLARGEMENT AND CRITICAL THINKING

A. Most of us have limited experience and limited wisdom

1. If we continually only minister from our ‘limits’ we will be small men with small ministries
 - a. *Preach the same issues over & over: We can become stale & minister staleness/smallness*
2. So we need to experience enlargement
 - a. Become broader/deeper so we can minister broader/deeper
 1. *Psalm 119:32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

B. Reading books and articles is an excellent and necessary way to enlarge our minds

1. Reading broadens our horizons: Forces our minds to go in ways we wouldn’t normally go/think
 - a. Helps us to access the wisdom of someone else
 - b. Can inspire us/challenge us

C. But there are dangers in reading

1. If you assume everything you are reading is true – you can get off track
 - a. *Ephesians 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*

1. **Some begin to implement things they read in their ministry – that are false!**

2. **In extreme cases men have abandoned sound doctrine for something they read**

a. *Brownsville: Books on revival caused some men to throw away the fellowship!*

D. What is needed is practical wisdom as we read: **Critical thinking (which is not simply being critical!)**

1. *Def: Reflective reasoning: It is a way of deciding whether a claim is always true, sometimes true, partly true, or false.*
 - a. *Phil 1:9-10 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;*

1. Judgment: To “decide between” or to exercise discernment; Approve only what is excellent

2. So we read with a simple understanding: This may not necessarily be true (completely or partly)
 - a. With time & wisdom, this will form a critical thinking filter as we read
 1. *Old saying: Eat the meat, and spit out the bones!*

II. 3 COMMON ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL THINKING IN READING

A. **Scripture comparison:** Most Christian writers will be using a story or verse to build their case

1. But we must use *the whole counsel of God Acts 20:27*

a. Scripture interprets scripture b. Paul uses OT scripture to defang false doctrine

1. *Article reading this week used Hebrews 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more...to make his point:*

How can a minister be disqualified for something that “never happened” in God’s eyes? I immediately flashed on 1 Cor 5:13 put away from yourselves that wicked person... or 1 Cor 9:27 lest after I have preached to others I should become castaway (disqualified)

B. **Extrapolation of logic:** If this is true...where will this logic wind up?

1. Writers often have an idea that sounds good in a certain situation – they don’t think it through

a. *Donald MacGavran “The Bridges of God” Getting converts 1 x 1 not good: We need converts to stay in their family/social structure in order to not offend them, so we can win the whole people group.*

1. *What if their family are Satanists? Criminals? Muslims? Should they stay/continue in order to not offend?*

b. *Worship as the key to revival: What about pioneer churches/non-musical pastors? Then they are doomed?*

C. **Recognizing doctrinal bias:** Why would they be saying this/making this argument if it is false?

1. **Doctrinal background:** Our doctrinal bias causes us to interpret scripture according to it.

a. Eternal security very common bias *Many fancy twistings and turnings done to ensure a scripture lines up with it!*

b. Anti-conversion spirit c. Lack of evangelism d. Despising of reproach

2. **Vision or end-goal:** *Where are they headed? What kind of Christians or churches are they desiring to produce?*

a. *I read a great book this week with many good points (Re-Launch) but the kind of church he has in mind is one built on pulling existing Christians from other churches – so we can’t apply some of what he says to our situation!*