

READING COMPREHENSION

John 14:26 ... "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my [Jesus] name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."

The Governor's Commission on Education, on which I serve, constantly looks for ways to remove the numerous barriers that prevent children from attending school in Sarangani Province. One such barrier is their own performance. At different milestones in primary and secondary education, students become vulnerable to failure and many give up. As adults we understand this because we, too, are often tempted to give up on something (a job, marriage, church, or project) when the effort becomes too difficult. A child can perform adequately in Kindergarten and grades one and two, then find grade three too difficult because he or she never mastered reading comprehension. Our education system does a pretty good job of teaching the fundamentals of reading and writing, but it has less success (confirmed by the DepEd central office) in teaching kids to understand what they read, which is a critical ability after grade two. Therefore, numerous children drop out of school during and following their third year.

As believers, we can become frustrated or disillusioned in Bible reading and study. Perhaps you have found the Bible too hard to understand, and have largely given up reading it. Or, perhaps you only read portions of scripture that are relatively clear to you. Many believers ask why it is important to read the Old Testament, especially books such as Kings, Numbers, or Leviticus. "What do those accounts of early Jewish history have to do with me today?" many ask. Some believers only read the book of Psalms and the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). I'm happy they are reading some of the Bible, but God did not create His Word just to have us ignore major parts of it. We must conclude that God had an excellent reason for speaking to us from the entire Bible.

Unlike the challenge school students have trying to comprehend what they read, believers have the perfect instructor living inside us. One of the Holy Spirit's roles is to help us understand what we read in the Bible. And, not only to understand, but to apply it to our lives. The Commission, DepEd and NGOs are studying interventions in our schools to help students acquire the skills to comprehend what they read. It is a formidable challenge that may take many resources (Pesos) and time to address, with no guarantee of success. But, as believers who face an even greater challenge of comprehending the Bible, we already have a helper; God himself intervening to help us understand what we read. Plus, both the instructor and the chance of success, are guaranteed. I urge you to pray a brief prayer before you pick up your Bible. Ask God to illuminate His Word and give you understanding. If you are a genuine, born-again believer, with the Holy Spirit active in your life, God will answer that prayer and give you understanding.

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