8. Unfolded Truth

Psalm 119:130  NIV  “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

Cause: unfolded words

Effect: light

Far reaching effect: understanding to the simple.

Let’s start at the end and work backward.

The simple: Not a bad translation but not a compelling one. I am no Hebrew scholar, but from what I can comprehend, I would call this guy simplistic. The picture that comes to mind is an individual who has a moral code or a business mantra, and he makes all his decisions based on that very simple grid.

My world politics was simplistic when I was growing up. Americans were good. Commies were bad. Therefore, it was a really good thing for Americans to get into space bigger and better than the Commies over in Russia, because we were good therefore the space program had to be good. Simple.

Today, I have a much more complex worldview. An Exhorter president was highly prone to creating larger than life visions to inspire the nation to hitch their wagon to his star. Two of his signature programs were the Peace Corp and the race to space. Peace Corp was a do gooder program that did not benefit big business. It survived but made no big splash. Space research was a massive cash cow to private business. Hence, “America” (or big business) got behind it.

And in addition to those mildly cynical views, there are a dozen other layers of insights that could be added to the discussion. Whether I am more correct or less so in my opinions these days is neither here nor there. My point is, my thought processes leading to valuations are much less simplistic than they were in the 1960s.

Today there are many people whose theological grid is as simplistic as the political views of a “yellow dog Democrat.”
“The Prophet said . . .”

“He is Pro-Israel . . .”

“I am under apostolic authority . . .”

“He is Spirit filled . . .”

“I tithe faithfully . . .”

“I renounced all fourteen of the seven curses seven times . . .”

While all of those things might be good things, it is a very simplistic approach to the vast complexities of life in the Kingdom for a Noble Subject.

The objective of the causal action is to make some sort of impact on, or change in, these devout, passionate, simplistic God-followers.

In lieu of people having a knee-jerk reaction to life's situations because of a one dimensional simplistic theology, God wants them to have understanding.

And that, my friend, is a Hebrew word that causes me to wax eloquent in a most long winded way.

Any of my close students will know Strong's number 0995. Hebrew word biyn. A staple in my “How to study the Bible” rants as well as my slightly more stylized trainings.

Togrossly oversimplify a grand word, it means to perceive the variables in a situation and know how to leverage the variables in order to craft a way forward.

In a sedate manner, a superb Scrabble player can understand the potential of the letters he has and find a shrewd way to play on the complex board. A simplistic player can only see a seven point word from comparable letters and only a poor place to play on the board. They have roughly the same resources and opportunities, but one has much more biyn!

In a much faster paced situation, the difference between a good and a great quarterback is biyn. How skillfully can he discern the nature of the unfolding play, and how effectively can he craft a plan to leverage the ever changing reality in front of him?

A simplistic quarterback will stick with the original play and botch it when the other team defends well. A quarterback with a lot of biyn will find a way to move the ball, even though he is blocked in his first six choices.

So God’s heart is to take simplistic, non-thinking, highly obedient, righteous
God-followers and help them get to the place where they can see a bigger picture and can develop a more appropriate strategy to take more ground. The simplistic get some biyn!

How does He propose to do it?

Well, obviously it is light that moves the simplistic God follower into walking in biyn. But getting the light is another issue.

For that process, it involves “unfolding” the Word of God.

Technically, the Hebrew word translated “unfolding” in the NIV is a hapax legomenon. For the three or four of you who didn’t learn that word in Sunday School, it is not the latest social media platform. It is a high brow term for a word that only occurs once in a text. That makes it a bit harder to determine the exact meaning.

Here, however, we have 100+ uses of the root word, so we have somewhat of a contextual sense for the meaning of our word. The surface meaning of the root word is to open or to loose but neither of those really captures it. So let’s go to the Book and get a good feel for it.

For the great flood, it says the windows of heaven were opened. Rather tame. How about “The greatest rain storm of all time was unleashed.” Umm. . . too wordy. Try this. “God let it rip.” Yeah. A much better rendition than “opened!”

Joseph “opened” the storehouses of Egypt and fed the entire nation.

Solomon asked God to “open” His eyes and ears toward the activities going on at the Temple.

The bride in Song of Solomon “opened” herself to her suitor and it wasn’t with coquetry!

In Isaiah 22:22 it talks of Christ having the Key of David and opening a door no one can close.

And my favorite in Isaiah 41:18 is God’s promise to “open” rivers and fountains with such intensity that the hard baked land will become flooded with running water.

So in my mind, “unfolding” is a genteel action with minimal implications. I unfold my napkin and place it in my lap. Not earth shattering in its implications, because I fully intend to avoid dropping any food into my lap. This is more of a social nicety than a significant need.

By contrast when God “opens” His word, there is an explosion of light that transforms. The light shows us the complexities of the realities we are dealing with, but it also turns us from simplistic obedient robots, into Noble Subjects who can wrestle violently, pushing against an immense obstacle with the weapons of the Lord, eventually making a way when there was no way. Biyn!
Each of us is facing life. Few are basking in the glory, without a care in the world. Some of us are facing intense challenges. There is nothing we are facing that is not already addressed in Scripture in principle form. We simply need to see the right story, decode the principle that is woven below the surface of the story line, and apply that principle to our own world.

The reality is – there are a lot of stories in that Book. Finding the right one to match our mess and finding the principle in the story can be a piece of work if we are left to ourselves. Sometimes we get there with our own sweat equity. More often than not, we need what the theologians call “illumination.”

This is when the Spirit of the Living God unlocks the hidden truths in a passage of Scripture, and there is an explosion of light into our world that just moments before was dark and confusing.

“Father, I come to You today on behalf of myself and SLG, asking for You to explosively open the right Word to me, in ways that will release the blaze of light that will reveal the reality of the world I face as well as exposing the way forward when there does not seem to be a clear path.”

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