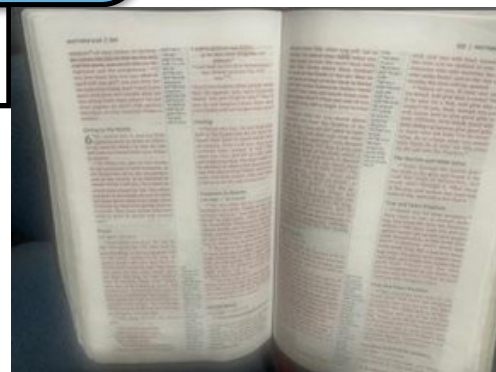


Ransom Notes

“Epiphany”

Have you ever experienced
an EPHIPHANY?



Yes, Yes! I know this is a seldom-used word, but when one has “a moment of sudden and striking realization or understand” of something - that “aha!” moment is exciting. The other day while leading a Q&A with Taichi, conductor of the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, my brain suddenly leaped with joy. He was discussing how he prepares for directing and helping the orchestra perform a new piece of music.

Of course players must mechanically play each of the notes correctly, BUT, and that was the “aha” moment. His challenge is to help the players understand the BIG picture the composer hoped to convey to the listening audience. Dynamics, tempo, rhythms, timbre, and harmony are but a few of the details the conductor must consider and then communicate to the players through a variety of ways. In a sense, Taichi must help each musician think and play with deep understanding of the “core” structural elements of the composition. There is far more to conducting than just waving the baton and his hands up and down and around in a steady manner. It takes thinking and reading beyond the literal level.

Now why was that an epiphany for me? Much of my professional career was helping teachers assist readers at all levels to become more proficient. Educators and the public have bounced back and forth on the teeter-totter of phonics vs meaning. Schools and state boards of education argue over what to mandate — often suggesting one approach over the other.

The answer, however, is not one or the other, but a blending of each. Of course, just like musicians who must mechanically play each note, so the reader must be able to pronounce the words. Having knowledge of phonics helps, but much of the English language is not “phonetically regular.” For example, the letter ‘g’ sounds different in “good” and “gym.” Our language has both a long and a short “a” sound (ate vs apple) plus other words using the “a” (e.g., **a**bout, **a**ll, or **a**ny). Readers must decode but also think what option makes sense.

Not only must readers pronounce the words, but knowing what message the author is attempting to share is even more important. The challenge is finding and helping developing readers who just “word call.” They pronounce the words rather well; but if you ask them what the author is attempting to share, they have trouble identifying the literal meaning, much less sharing how the character is feeling, thinking, or predicting what might be coming next in the story. Even adults often read at a literal level, word calling, and fail to let their emotions, opinions, or extensions of the text enrich their mechanical reading. The joy of reading goes w-a-y beyond word calling.

The Christian has the same challenges as the musician or reader. Perhaps you know of persons who can quote the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) without missing a word. However, what the Lord wants us to do is read BUT also internalize the concepts, to live the life that acknowledges that God is really our Father and let His light shine from our lives. We verbally read/pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, . . .” but then we fail to internalize His Great Commission challenge that Matthew closes out his writing in 28:19-20. We are to GO and Make disciples of ALL nations. Speak + Live the Life. We must read between the lines and fill the music in our lives with joy and actions that help others hear. **Incidentally, a friend shared that in Hebrew “Word” means “Deed.”** Isn’t that interesting? We must Read and Do.

Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and soul. Then when dark shadows encompass our lives, we fret, withdraw from His arms, forget what the word “trust” means, and sometimes even walk totally away from God. That’s word-calling resulting in a mechanical Christian in name only. The results are not beautiful followers of God.

**Hopefully, Each Reader Today Will Also Experience An Epiphany.
There is more to the Christian Life than just pronouncing or playing the words and notes.
Experience an “Epiphany.” Grow and Glow letting God Shine Forth.**