

LESSON FOUR · CHAPTER 3

How to Read a Sentence.

Serious reading begins with seeing — observing every detail before we ask what it means.

AN INVITATION TO DINNER

You came for *meat*. Don't
settle for baby food.

God's Word is loaded with rich, substantial food. If we only ever get soft mush out of it, that's not the Word's fault — it's that we never learned to extract the meat.

WHY WE MISS THE MEAT

Jump straight to application, and you stay where you started.

Race from a quick first reading to "what does this mean for me," and you stay chained to what you already thought.

You rarely see anything new.

The Bible starts to feel boring.

Your conversation with God stays shallow.

THE FIX

Serious reading.

It takes work — hard work. The reader has to decide: shallow baby food from casual reading, or mature food from serious reading?

WHAT SERIOUS READING LOOKS LIKE

How to read a love letter.

Zach liked Kaitlyn. Then she left for two months in rural Ghana — no phone, no email. Two weeks of silence. Finally her team reached a town with Wi-Fi, and the email he'd been longing for arrived.

He read it three or four times — and he was just getting started. He weighed every word, every comma. It opened with "Hiya!" — and he turned that single word over and over. Was she being shy? Were they just friends? Would she say that to anybody?

A SERIOUS READER

Reads it again and again.

Ponders every word and punctuation mark.

Could quote the whole thing by heart.

He scrutinizes the text for every detail — even the smallest.

THE ONE DISCIPLINE FOR TONIGHT

Don't ask what it *means*. Ask what it *says*.

Read like a CSI team works a crime scene. See as many details as possible. Refrain from interpreting or applying — that comes later. **First, observe.**

A STARTER KIT — NO GREEK REQUIRED

Nine things to look for in a sentence.

01 Repetition of words

02 Contrasts

03 Comparisons

04 Lists

05 Cause & effect

06 Figures of speech

07 Conjunctions

08 Verbs

09 Pronouns

01

REPETITION

Look for words that repeat.

First within your sentence, then across the surrounding passage. Repetition is the author waving a flag.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3–4 · ESV

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**, who **comforts** us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to **comfort** those who are in any affliction, with the **comfort** with which we ourselves are **comforted** by God.

Five times — in one sentence. Alarms should go off.

1 JOHN 2:15 · ESV

Do not love the **world** or the things in the **world** . If anyone loves the **world**, the love of the Father is not in him.

"World" three times in two sentences — and "love" too. The passage is about loving the world.

02 CONTRASTS

Look for ideas set against each other.

Differences. Two people, two paths, two outcomes — often hinged on a single word like *but*.

ROMANS 6:23 · ESV

For the wages of sin is **death**, **but** the free gift of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Death set against life; wages against gift.

1 JOHN 1:6–7 · ESV

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in **darkness**, we lie... **But** if we walk in the **light**, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

Light vs. darkness — God's nature and our walk.

03 COMPARISONS Look for things likened to each other.

The flip side of contrast — similarities. Often flagged by *like* or *as*. Try to see the image.

PROVERBS 25:26 · ESV

Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

Once clean and useful — now contaminated.

ISAIAH 40:31 · ESV

But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings *like* eagles; they shall run and not be weary.

Picture it — gliding on a warm current, not even flapping.

04^{LISTS} More than two items? Write them down.

Is there an order? Are the items grouped? Listing them out reveals what reading past them hides.

GALATIANS 5:22–23 · ESV — THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Love	Joy	Peace
Patience	Kindness	Goodness
Faithfulness	Gentleness	Self-control

Nine in all — and "against such things there is no law."

05 CAUSE & EFFECT

A cause stated — then its effect.

Be transformed by the renewal of your mind → that you may discern the will of God

ROMANS 12:2 · ESV

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son → whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life

JOHN 3:16 · ESV

The wages of sin → death

ROMANS 6:23 · ESV

There may be more than one effect from a single cause. Always be on the lookout.

06 FIGURES OF SPEECH

Words used to paint an image.

Not literal — figurative. See the picture, and let it land emotionally.

PSALM 119:105 · ESV — COMFORT

Your word is a **lamp** to my feet and a **light** to my path.

Not a literal lamp — one that lights our way through life.

MATTHEW 23:27 · ESV — JUDGMENT

Woe to you... hypocrites! For you are like **whitewashed tombs**, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones.

Beautiful outside, death inside. Feel the recoil.

07 CONJUNCTIONS

The mortar between the bricks.

We skip over *and, but, for, therefore, since, because* — don't. Without the mortar, the bricks fall into a jumbled mess.

"But" → suspect a contrast.

"Therefore" → a conclusion. Ask: what's
/ **"so"** it is there for?

ROMANS 12:1 · ESV

Therefore , I appeal to you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice...

This "therefore" reaches back over eleven chapters of theology — connecting who we are to how we live.

08 ^{VERBS} Where all the action is.

NOTE

Tense — past, present, future.

Imperatives — often God's commands to us.

Active vs. passive — passive often marks what *God* has done for us

COLOSSIANS 3:1 · ESV

If then you *have been raised* with Christ, **seek** the things that are above.

***"Have been raised"** — passive, God's work.*

***"Seek"** — active, our response.*

09 PRONOUNS

Find what every pronoun points to.

Every pronoun has an antecedent — the noun it stands in for. Tracking them keeps you from misreading who's doing what to whom.

EPHESIANS 1:3 · ESV

Blessed be the God and Father of **our** Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed **us** in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Who are "our" and "us"? Name them — and the verse opens up.

A STARTER KIT, NOT A CHECKLIST

Nine ways to slow down and see.

(1) Repetition

(2) Contrasts

(3) Comparisons

(4) Lists

(5) Cause & Effect

(6) Figures of Speech

(7) Conjunctions

(8) Verbs

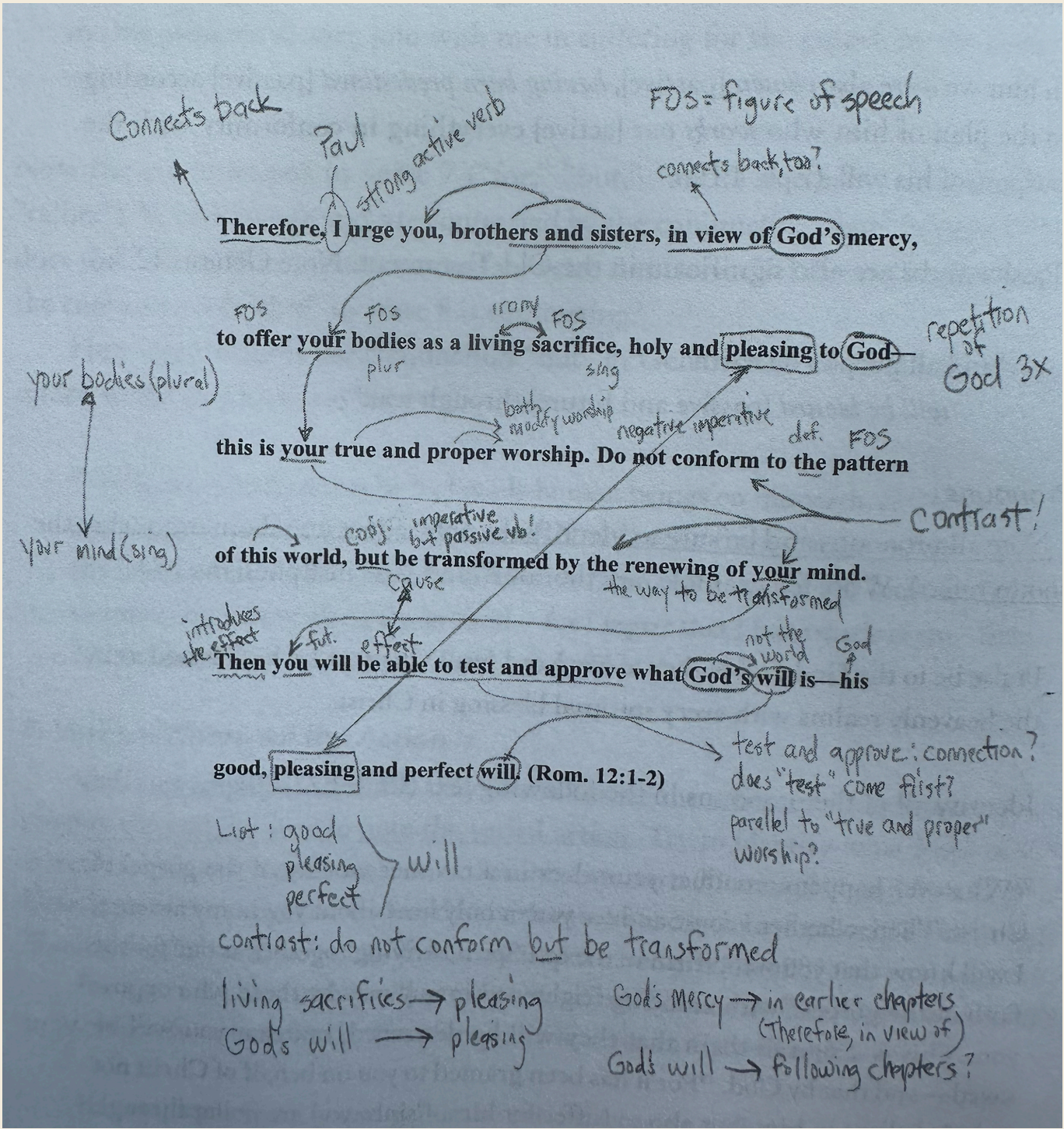
(9) Pronouns

BEFORE WE PRACTICE

Read the whole. Then dig into the parts.

If you want to hear and understand some of the deep and wonderful truths that God has placed in Scripture for you—if you desire to pull out of God’s Word some of the serious “meat” he has placed there for us to sink our teeth into—you will have to exert considerable effort. It takes work—hard work! And you, the reader, have to decide whether you are content with shallow “baby food” that comes from casual reading or you want to work for the “mature food” that comes from serious reading. — Duvall & Hayes

PRACTICE PASSAGE · ROMANS 12:1-2 · ESV



READ IT SLOWLY. WE'RE ASKING WHAT IT SAYS — NOT YET WHAT IT MEANS.

TAKE IT HOME

This week's homework.

- 01 Complete at least two of the assignments from chapter 3 of the book.**

NEXT LESSON · CHAPTER 4

From sentences to *paragraphs*.

We move up one level — how the bricks fit together into rooms. Same discipline: observe before you interpret.

THANK YOU · SEE YOU NEXT WEEK