

The Example of the Bereans

In chapter sixteen and seventeen it is written that Paul came into the regions of Macedonia, and there he established churches—first in Philippi, then in Thessalonica, and after that in Berea.

And when he entered Berea, he went, as was his custom, into the synagogue of the Jews and taught them.

Now let us read from Acts 17:10–11:

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were nobler than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”

The Spirit of Enquiry

Mark ye the word *searched* — for it signified *research*.

When Paul preached unto them, he possessed not the New Testament, for it was not yet written; he reasoned with them out of the Old Testament concerning Christ.

And these Jews received the Word eagerly, yet they searched the Scriptures daily to discern whether these things were so.

Thus were they noble, for they sought not to believe blindly, but to prove all things by the Word of God.

Even so today, when the Word of God is preached in the Church, blessed are they who open their Bibles and verify whether the preacher speaketh according to the Scriptures.

The Meaning of Research

The word *research* signified to *seek out*, to *discover* that which lieth hidden.

The first and chief source of all true enquiry is **the Holy Scriptures**.

For ye are students of Theology, and your foundation is none other than the Word of God.

If ye read it not, how then shall ye research it?

After the Holy Bible, there are other sources—commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, and scholarly writings; yet all these are secondary to the divine Word.

There are also journals, magazines, and online writings that may serve as instruments of learning; but the root of all enquiry is the Bible itself.

The Term: Analysis

The second word is **Analysis**, which in our tongue is *Tajziyah karna*—to divide and discern.

It meant to take a whole thing and separate it into its parts, that each part may be examined.

Thus in research, one who can analyse rightly is a true student.

In theological study, when a man written a thesis or dissertation, he must be able to analyse, for *a thesis without analysis is no thesis at all*.

Analysis is the breaking down of the matter into its several members that each may be understood distinctly.

The Term: Synthesis

The third word is **Synthesis**, or *Tarkeeb karna*—to combine.

If in analysis we divide the whole into its parts, then in synthesis we gather the parts together to form a complete whole.

This is the art of putting together that which hath been divided.

Many write four or five chapters as though they were four different theses, for they have not learned synthesis.

But the wise researcher learned both to analyse and to synthesize.

Both are essential to sound study; for analysis without synthesis is disjointed, and synthesis without analysis is shallow.

The Term: Assimilation

The fourth word is **Assimilation**, or *Tahleel karna*—to digest and apply.

Even as food is eaten and digested that it may give strength to the body, so the knowledge received must be digested in the spirit and applied unto life.

In research this meant to comprehend the thought of another and express it anew in thine own words.

This also is called *paraphrasing*—to restate a truth faithfully in one's own language.

For the Word of God must not only be understood but also applied.

The Term: Comparison

The fifth word is **Comparison**, or *Mu'āzna karna*.

It meant to place two things side by side—to see wherein they agree and wherein they differ.

This also pertained to research, for truth is oft discerned by the comparing of one Scripture with another, or one idea with another.

The Term: Evaluation

The sixth word is **Evaluation**, or *Parakhna*—to test, to examine, to prove.

Even as the mathematician re-checked his calculation, so the theologian must verify his conclusions.

Evaluation meant to weigh and judge, to discern the worth of a matter, to see if it be true.

The Summary of True Research

Therefore, beloved students, true **research** consisted of these sacred disciplines:

1. **Research (Enquiry)** – to seek and discover.
2. **Analysis** – to divide and discern.
3. **Synthesis** – to unite and form a whole.
4. **Assimilation** – to digest and apply.
5. **Comparison** – to examine by likeness and difference.
6. **Evaluation** – to prove and test.

He that learned these shall be a skilful and faithful student of the Word of God, able to search the Scriptures daily as did the noble Bereans, to discern whether those things be so.

The Discipline of Research and Its Sacred Practice

Understanding the Terms of Inquiry

Even as there is *evaluation*, so are there many terms within the realm of research that must be understood. For all these things pertain to the circle of inquiry. He, therefore, that understandeth them, when he applied them in his research, discerned how he hath conducted his *analysis*, how he hath performed *synthesis*, and how he hath done *simulation* and *description*.

And when he bringeth these things face to face, he perceived what things are alike and what things differ, and finally maketh *evaluation*, that is, he judged with a critical mind, proving and testing whether the matter be so indeed or not. All these belong to the sphere of research; and whoso learned them well becomes a skilful inquirer, a good researcher, yea, a wise writer also.

Of Practice and Application

When thou hast understood these things with ease, then must thou exercise thyself therein? For understanding without practice profited little. Therefore practise thou, saying within thy heart: How shall I compare? How shall I arrange? How shall I analyse? How shall I discern? And how shall I prove? For all these fall within the compass of research; and they that exercise themselves therein become apt and excellent scholars.

Of Synthesis and Gathering Together

Now concerning *synthesis*, as when in *analysis* thou didst divide a matter in twain, even so in *synthesis* thou gathers together again that which was scattered. Many, when they preach, scatter their thoughts abroad; they wander hither and thither, not knowing how to bring all together in order. They write much, yet know not how to arrange the matter properly. Therefore, as it is needful to divide aright, so also must one learn to gather together with due order.

Of Assimilation and Paraphrase

And as for *analysis* or *assimilation* (which some call *understanding*), it is as when a man digested his food. For to digest is to understand. That which thou hast comprehended becomes part of thine own knowledge.

Moreover, assimilation signified *application*: when thou hast understood a thing, how dost thou apply it? How dost thou apply it to thine own life, to thy family, to thy church, and to the society about thee? For true understanding is not barren, but bringeth forth fruit in application.

Also it meant that thou art able to declare the same in thine own words. If thou canst not express it, thou hast not truly understood it. But when thou hast digested and comprehended,

then thou art able to *paraphrase* — that is, to set forth the same thought in thine own manner of speech.

Thus when a student readeth ten lines of Holy Scripture, let him write the same thoughts in three lines of his own words, changing not the sense but the speech. He that doeth so hath learned the art of *assimilation* and *description*.

Of Comparison and Contrast

Now *comparison* is to set one thing against another: to behold wherein they are alike and wherein they differ. As, for example, the works of the Spirit and the works of the flesh — these are contrary one to another. The comparison therefore revealed both likeness and contrast.

Of the Difficulties of Research

The hardest part in all research is that many, though they complete all their course, yet when they come to the work of investigation, they stumble and delay. For they have not learned the manner thereof, neither have they practised it.

Therefore arise many *hindrances* unto research in our land and in our society. Let us then consider these obstacles.

First Hindrance: The Lack of Education

The first and chiefs problem is *the lack of education*. Many come not forward to learn, neither do they desire to advance. Where there is no education, there can be no research.

When men learn, their hearts are stirred to seek further, to discover what lieth within, and to progress in understanding. Yet our people read little. Even in schools, children read only their course books and no other. Their knowledge is narrow and confined. But in other lands, children are urged to read beyond their courses, that their knowledge may be enlarged.

In our country, even unto the level of the master's degree, men study by guess papers and short notes, and thus research is neglected. Therefore, as a nation, we have fallen behind the world.

Second Hindrance: The Lack of Confidence

The second great problem is *the lack of confidence*. Many say, "I cannot do this research; it is too hard for me." They weep and despair. Yet hath not God given us the power to think, to reason, to read, and to write?

The failure is not of capacity but of courage. If only there be firm resolve and patient labour, all things are possible. Many begin well, but faint by the way and cease their work. But thou, be strong and of a good courage. Say not, "I cannot," but rather, "By God's help I will."

Third Hindrance: The Lack of Practice

The third hindrance is *the lack of practice*. Many have time and opportunity, yet they exercise not themselves. Research is not wrought in a day. Begin with little: write a short article, a page or two. Thereafter write a small thesis; afterward, a book. Thus thou shalt grow by practice.

He that written not cannot learn to write. Many students are troubled when told to write even one paragraph by their own thought. Yet writing bringeth skill. Though at first it seem poor, continue thou; the second shall be better than the first, and the third better than the second.

For truly it is said, *Practice maketh a man perfect*. Even so in the study of the Holy Bible: he that readeth daily increased in understanding, but he that opened not the Book remained ignorant.

Therefore keep thy hand to the pen. Write thy thoughts, write thine experiences, yea, write thine own prayers. Keep a *Prayer Diary* before God — the petitions thou hast made and the answers received. Record the days of waiting and the days of fulfilment, that thou mayest behold the faithfulness of the Lord.

Write stories for the young, messages for the church, articles for the people, yea, write thy sermons before thou preach them. For many go forth to speak with but scattered thoughts, yet he that written in order shall speak with power.

The Blessing of Research

Thus we perceive that all progress — in science, in invention, in medicine, and in every field — cometh from research. They that inquire discover new things. They that seek find.

Even so in the Word of God: if we study deeply, the Lord shall reveal new treasures of truth. For the Scripture is as a mine of gold and of salt; they that dig therein find riches.

Therefore let every student of the Word give himself to study, to practice, to confidence, and to perseverance. For in *research* is both wisdom and blessing; and they that diligently seek shall surely find.

The Principles and Challenges of Research

The Path of Progress in Research

Beloved, that thou mayest know that practice bringeth forth perfection; for as thou continues to write and to labour in diligence, thy hand shall grow skilled, and thy thoughts shall be ordered with wisdom.

The lack of knowledge, the lack of confidence, and the lack of practice are hindrances upon the path of the learner.

Comparing Thyself with Others

Moreover, many fall into error by comparing themselves with others, saying within their hearts, "*Behold, that man hath great ability, and I have none.*"

But hear ye this truth: the Lord hath bestowed gifts upon all His creatures. Each hath received grace according to His will.

If a man used not that which is given him, then shall another excel him; for the diligent shall be set before kings, but the slothful shall be forgotten?

Therefore, envy not the talents of another, neither let jealousy take root in thy heart; rather rejoice at thy brother's increase and pray for him.

Use thou the gift which the Almighty hath planted within thee, that it may bear fruit unto His glory.

The Purpose of Writing

Again I say, many write without purpose, and their words fall to the ground.

But he that written with purpose buildeth with wisdom.

If thou art bidden to write a story for children, set before thy heart a righteous goal: that through thy tale they may learn truth, honesty, and virtue.

Let thy writing teach that lying is a grievous sin, and that truth is a crown of honour.

Even so, when thou writes a book, set before thee a clear intent.

Ask thyself, *"Who shall profit from this?"*

If it be for the students of the Holy Word, for the teachers of Scripture, or for the shepherds of God's flock, then let thy pen labour for their edification.

For when purpose is plain, perseverance is strengthened;

but when there is no aim, the writer fainted in the way.

Delivering and Publishing Thy Work

Then spake one, saying, *"Master, when we have written aught, how shall we make it known, seeing we have not the means to publish it?"*

And it was answered him, *"Despise not the day of small beginnings."*

Write thou faithfully; though none may print it, yet copy it and share it with a few that others may read and be blessed.

For many great poets were not known in their lifetime, yet their words endured after them.

Therefore, faint not if no publisher cometh to thy door.

Continue to write, for in due time the Lord shall open a way.

The gift that is in thee is no small thing, for writing and poetry are holy crafts, given by inspiration.

Encouragement from Fellow Labourers

Then a brother arose and said, *"There is a place in Faisalabad, once called David Villa, now known as the Pakistan Bible Correspondence Institute.*

If any write articles or poems, let them send them there, for they publish a magazine each month."

And this saying was good, and they that heard it were encouraged to labour and not grow weary,

for God hath granted each one a measure of creativity to be used for His glory.

The Steps of Research

And a daughter asked, “*Sir, are all six steps of research needful?*”
He answered, “*They are not all bound as law, yet knowledge of each is needful.*”
For if a man knoweth not comparison, nor synthesis, nor evaluation, how shall he discern the truth of what he written?

Even as in study, he that gathered facts without understanding performed not true research.
And many err, copying from others without discernment—this is called *plagiarism*, a theft of labour.
But the true researcher is he who analysed, combined, and judged his own work with righteous balance.

Self-Evaluation

Then said another, “*How may we evaluate our own work?*”
And he replied, “*Yea, thou canst and thou must.*”
For when I had written an article for publication abroad, I read it again and judged it by my own measure,
asking, ‘*Is this worthy of international review?*’

Then I sent it to a friend, skilled in research, saying, ‘*Read this and tell me wherein it may be improved.*’
When he returned it with counsel, I corrected it, and then sent it unto the editors.
They praised the work yet showed me wherein I might strengthen it further.
Thus by counsel, revision, and humility, the work was perfected.

Even so must every preacher examine his sermon before he speaketh it, asking, ‘*What shall my hearers learn? What spiritual nourishment shall they receive?*’
If the message lack order or purpose, let it be reworked till it be fit for edification.

The Order and Structure of Writing

Lastly, hear this wisdom: many have gathered material, yet know not how to order it.
Without structure, writing is as a body without bones.
One must learn how to begin, how to proceed, and how to conclude.

A paragraph is made when thoughts are rightly joined;
many paragraphs form a chapter; many chapters a book.
Even so, research must have order, that the reader be not confused but edified.

For disorder bringeth weariness to the mind,
but structure guided the reader as light in a dark place.
Therefore learn how to frame an introduction, how to build a body, and how to write a fitting conclusion.