



A Didactic Poem for Students of the Word

This poem was written by a Nigerian missionary serving in Mali, West Africa. He is a key partner with OTAN as we train and equip pastors there.

Not by brilliance,
Nor by eloquence,
Not by the strength of human intellect,
Nor by the applause of scholarship,
But by the spirit,
Says the Lord of Hosts.

Before the sacred page is opened,
Before the sacred text is explored,
Before the mysteries of God are sought,
The humble student bows,
Like a traveler pausing at the edge of a vast,
uncharted sea,
For Scripture is not merely read—
It is revealed.

The Holy Spirit,
Author of the Holy Writ,
Walks beside the faithful learner
Like a gentle flame in the darkness.
He opens blinded eyes
As dawn breaks over a shadowed valley.
He awakens sleeping hearts
Like thunder stirring the still air,
He brings to remembrance
The Words of Christ.

The letter lies before us
Like ink etched upon fragile parchment,
Yet the Spirit gives life,
Breathing warmth into cold symbols.
The ink is visible,
But the meaning is unveiled
Only by Him
Who searches the deep things of God,
Like a diver descending into hidden depths.

Observation begins the journey,
Laying the foundation
Like stones set firm beneath a rising temple.

Observe the words.
Observe the context.
Observe the people.
Observe the place.
Observe the purpose.
Observe what God has spoken,
Before asking what He has meant.

Let no student rush to conclusions
Like one grasping at shadows.
Let no interpreter force the text
To echo personal opinions,
Like bending a mirror to distort reflection.
The faithful observer first listens,
Like one leaning close to hear a whisper,
For every inspired word
Was breathed by God,
Warm and divine breath.

From careful observation
Arises the need for deeper understanding,
Like roots reaching for hidden water,
And so the student moves forward
With reverence.

Interpretation follows
With reverence,
Like stepping into sacred ground.

“What did God intend?”
Not
“What do I wish it to say?”

The Spirit teaches truth,
Not imagination.
He harmonizes Scripture with Scripture,
Like threads woven into a single tapestry.
He exalts Christ,
Never confusion.
He leads believers
Away from private inventions,
Like guiding them out of a maze,
Into the unity of divine revelations,
Clears as a mountain horizon.

Human wisdom may impress
Like flickering candles,
But only the spirit illumines
Like the blazing sun.
Natural reasoning may speculate
Like mist drifting across a field,
But spiritual discernment understands
The mind of Christ,
Solid as bedrock beneath the feet.

The worker approved by God
Rightly divides the Word of Truth
Like a craftsman shaping precious stone.
He handles Scripture carefully,
Not carelessly.
Faithfully, not fancifully.
With diligence, not negligence.

Yet knowledge alone is not the goal,
For understanding must lead
To transformation,
Like seed breaking open into life.

Thus the journey continues
Beyond interpretation,
Calling the believer to respond
Like a voice echoing through the soul.

Application is the crown
Of true interpretation,
Like fruit ripened under the sun.

The Word must become life,
Flowing like living water.
Truth must become obedience
Like footsteps following a narrow path.
Doctrine must become devotion
Like fire kindled in the heart.
Learning must become living
Like breath sustaining the body.
For what profit is observation

Without transformation?
What value is interpretation
Without obedience?

The Spirit who teaches
Also convicts
Like a refining fire.
The Spirit who reveals
Also reforms
Like a sculptor shaping stone.
The Spirit who explains
Also empowers
Like wind filling the sails.

He writes upon willing hearts
What he has revealed
In sacred pages,
Etching truth deeper than ink.

Thus the student
Becomes the servant
Like clay shaped for purpose.
The learner becomes the teacher
Like a lamp lighting others.
The disciple equips disciples
Like branches bearing fruit.
The Church grows
Into the fullness of Christ
Like a body strengthened and alive,
Built together
By truth spoken in love.

Every Scripture,
Breathed from the mouth of God,
Teaches,
Reproves,
Corrects,
Trains,
And equips
Like tools placed in steady hands.

Not merely to increase information,
But to produce transformation
Like iron forged in fire.

Therefore,
Students of God's Holy Word,
Observe carefully
Like watchmen on the wall.
Interpret faithfully
Like stewards of treasure.
Apply obediently
Like servants answering their Master.

Study with diligence
Like miners seeking gold.
Pray with humility
Like children reaching upward.
Depend upon the Holy Spirit
Like branches clinging to the vine.
Reject every wind of false doctrine
Like anchors holding firm in the storm.
Handle the Word with reverence
Like holding something sacred and alive.
Teach it with integrity
Like clear water flowing untainted.
Live it with holiness
Like light shining in darkness.

For the Bible
Was never given
Simply to fill the mind
Like shelves crowded with books,
But to renew the heart
Like rain upon dry ground,

Transform the life
Like dawn chasing away night,
Build the Church
Like stones rising into a dwelling,
Glorify Christ
Like a banner lifted high,
And prepare faithful servants
For every good work
Like vessels ready for use.

May every page we read
Lead us to Christ
Like a path leading home.
May every truth we discover
Lead us to obedience
Like footsteps guided by light.
May every lesson we teach
Be governed by the Holy Spirit
Like a melody directed by a master hand.

Then our study
will become worship
like incense rising.
Our interpretation
Will become truth,
Clear and unshaken.

Our application
Will become testimony
Like a voice that cannot be silenced.

And the Word of God
Will dwell richly within us
Like a river flowing deep,
Until the world
Sees not merely students of Scripture,
But living epistles,
Written in flesh and spirit,
Let by the spirit,
Faithful to the Truth,
And devoted
To the glory of God.

Observation sees.
Interpretation understands.
Application obeys.
The Holy Spirit leads them all.

