Frontline BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

God's Word for Life

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE BIBLE

How to Do Word Studies

Mark Ward

Beyond Chapter and Verse The Authority of Biblical Application

Ken Casillas

The Role of Genre

Bryan Smith

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How to Do Word Studies (And How Not to Do Them) Mark Ward

Dictionary editors make a wise comment that, believe it or not, can help you in your Bible

Book Studies: Mining Scripture for Thematic Gold

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This Is How We Know

bster defines hermeneutics as "the science of interpretation; esp[ecially] the study of the principles of Biblical exegesis." Nevertheless, a well-educated person may have no understanding of hermeneutics. In a conversation with a college professor from a well-known conservative (non-Christian) college, he challenged a clear interpretation of Scripture with the charge, "That's your opinion."

When I countered, "I agree that personal opinions should never overrule the science of interpretation, but honest exegesis leads us to what you are calling an opinion," his mind was closed. His final word was, "It is absurd to refer to Bible interpretation as a science." In other words, he argued that we cannot have objective knowledge about the meaning of the Bible, just

subjective opinions.

More disappointing than the wrong opinion that Bible interpretation is a matter of opinion is that many Christians, even Biblically literate believers, fail to appreciate the importance of hermeneutics. In a recent meeting of Fundamental Baptist leaders, an extended discussion of controversial trends repeatedly led to the root problem: hermeneutics. This issue is critically important. Fundamental Baptist Churches and families are distressed, even divided, over matters of interpretation, particularly over matters of application.

Although that distress can lead to utter frustration, there is hope. Ronald Reagan's oft-quoted words have been applied to Bible doctrine and the state

of Fundamentalism today.

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years

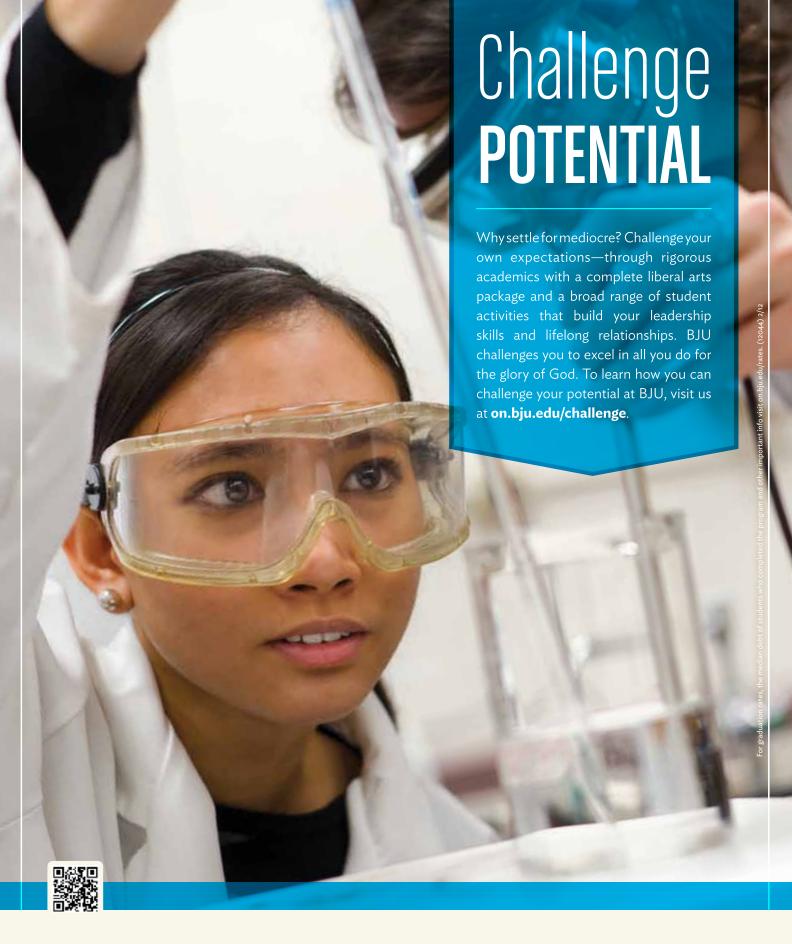
telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.

substituting the word "Fundamentalism" for the word "freedom," when remembering "what it was once like in our movement where men were true separatists," nostalgic appeals are made to relieve distress. But nostalgia may serve merely to compound our distress. After many years of preaching and teaching truth, it may be tempting to say, "This is what my teachers told me and I trusted them, and now I'm telling you and you need to trust me." No. Our task is to say, "This is the truth, and this is how we know." To help our readers, the authors of the articles to follow have fulfilled that task well.

John C. Vaughn

Jermeneutics is the study of how **T**people understand or interpret books, drama, art, music, architecture, and any number of other aspects of life. Biblical hermeneutics is the study of how people understand or interpret the Bible. Often Biblical hermeneutics is used to describe how people ought to study the Bible. This issue of FrontLine highlights some practical methods for Bible study. It includes articles about how to do word studies and book studies. It also includes articles that highlight some of the bigger issues of understanding Scripture: Why should Scripture be interpreted literally, and what does that mean? Is there a place for mystery in our understanding of Scripture? Can we apply the Bible to issues it does not directly address? It is our hope that this issue will help us all learn how to better understand Scripture, so we can better hear and obey our Lord.

Brian Collins





Mail Bag & News from All Over

astor Vaughn, I want to thank you for bringing to the attention of FBC members Sunday morning the seriousness of Islamist desire to rule the world through terror and destruction. The first targets are obviously Christians and Jews. Why? Because so-called Christian churches are silent on the issues of evil and decadence in the society today, and because of this, the nation and the world are sliding further and faster into the cesspool of Hell. Thanks for giving those interested copies of the *FrontLine* magazine on Islam religion.

Bill Watkins Taylors, SC

We regularly receive a copy of your *FrontLine* magazine here at the Berean Baptist Bible College [India]. I am the Secretary over here and served under Dr. Jacob Chelli for thirty-eight years. After his demise I am working for his two sons, Dr. Edwin Chelli and Rev. Johanan Chelli. I have met with many of the writers of your magazine, such as Dr. Bradley Smith, Dr. Bob Taylor, Dr. Wendell Heller, Dr. Bob Jones III, Dr. Dave Sproul, Dr. James Singleton, and many others through the years.

I am a regular reader of your magazine and want to say that it has been a real blessing to me in my own life.

Mary Swinden

India

We want to hear from you!

Let us know what you like or don't like about *FrontLine*. Address your comments to Managing Editor, *FrontLine* 2801 Wade Hampton Blvd, Suite 115-165,

Taylors, SC 29687 or send them by e-mail to info@fbfi.org.

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.



FBFI Civil Air Patrol Chaplain Michael Marshall has recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Please pray for him and his family that God will give him wisdom concerning what treatments to pursue.

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Alan and Jan Patterson are missionaries who minister to other missionaries through their responsibilities at the Gospel Fellowship Association home office. This year they traveled to visit missionaries in Mexico, Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey. They are thrilled



with the openness of the country of Georgia. Armenia was once one of the first Christian nations; however, today it is strongly influenced by the Greek Orthodox Church, with very few Bible-believing Christians. Turkey is mostly an Islamic country; however, it has approximately four thousand Bible-believing Christians.



Wally and Norma Higgins

have been missionaries to Mormons in the western United States for many years. They praise the Lord for a new church plant in Ely, Nevada. They recently held evangelistic meetings in Ruth, Nevada. Pray for this small town of

only six hundred people which once had three churches but now does not have a church at all.

Don and Karen Winch are missionaries in Douala, Cameroon, serving under Baptist World Mission. This

year they saw the planting of a new church and the calling of a godly man to be the pastor of their church. They have also faced several trials this year and praise the Lord for His faithfulness through them.





Tim and Kim Melton serve the Lord on the mission field in Nagoya, Japan. They celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in early June. Tim praises the Lord for His faithfulness to them through their years

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The Relevance of Scripture

A Hermeneutical History

In 1670 Baruch Spinoza anonymously published his *Theological-Political Treatise*. With this work he created modern Biblical criticism. Spinoza

had a much larger goal in writing the treatise.

He wanted to undermine the political establishment of his day by undermining their Bible. But Spinoza was seeking more than just religious freedom in a society that rigorously censored what was printed or taught. He wanted to free society from any kind of religious influence, since liberty and tolerance, in his view, were incompatible with religion or theology.

In seeking to achieve this goal Spinoza had to tread carefully. He could not forthrightly state his aims. He instead made seemingly uncontroversial claims. But in putting these claims together he concluded that the goal of interpretation is to discover the historical meaning of Scripture. The interpreter, Spinoza said, needs to distinguish between truth (as determined by reason) and the meaning of the text. Thus for the first time the text of Scripture was made a historical artifact rather than a guide for thought and life. The goal of Spinoza's project was the "irrelevance of biblical authority."

Even though Spinoza intended his new approach to the Bible to undermine religion, liberal Christians attempted to use Spinoza's method while holding on to their religion. This created an "ugly ditch" between history and religion that the liberals did not know how to bridge. Oftentimes they would go looking in Scripture for kernels of philosophical truth wrapped in historically-bound husks which they thought could be discarded.

By the late twentieth century, however, scholars serving in theologically liberal denominations increasingly realized that this approach to interpreting the Bible was of very little use to the church. These scholars still reject the orthodox view of inspiration and inerrancy, and they still accept many of the critical theories about how the Bible was written. Face-value readings and applications of Scripture are therefore not a possibility for them. To cross the ugly ditch created by Spinoza, these scholars appeal to the allegorical approach practiced in the first centuries of the church.²

The ancient Greeks used the allegorical method to conform the writings of Homer (which they viewed as religious texts) to the philosophies that had grown up later. The church fathers picked up on this approach to face challenges from unconverted Jews who argued that literal interpretation could not support the view that Jesus was the Messiah and from heretics who claimed that literal interpretation proved the god of the Old Testament was evil. The church fathers also used allegorical interpretation to make Scripture relevant. Apart from allegorical interpretation, Origen wondered what benefit could be found from knowing of Lot's incest, Abraham's polygamy, and of the various begettings and battles in Scripture.

Though the allegorical method continued on into the Middle Ages, the literal meaning of Scripture began to gain more attention.³ The medieval interpreters began to stress that a right understanding of the literal sense of Scripture was a necessary foundation for the other senses. Heretics had begun to use

Scripture . . . remains God's relevant Word for people of every age.

allegorical interpretation to forward their agendas, and this helped drive the greater appreciation for the literal sense.

With the Reformation the tide turned decisively toward literal interpretation. One Reformer even completely rejected the allegorical method of interpretation as Satanic.⁴ The Reformers instead emphasized placing a text within its context. This contextual interpretation enabled them to see the present-day relevance of even obscure parts of Scripture. Instead of using allegory to make a historical narrative relevant, they demonstrated the theological significance of a passage by showing its place in the book's argument and thereby connecting it to the major themes of the book.

For instance, Origen wondered what benefit the reader of Scripture has in knowing that Abraham was a polygamist. But the Reformers recognized that the Hagar account occurs in narratives in which justification and faith are major themes. In taking Hagar as a wife, Abraham is not receiving the promise by faith alone. Thus Abraham and Sarah both still believe the promise of God, but they are seeking to achieve the promise by their own efforts. The application for us is the same one Paul makes in Galatians 4—justification is by faith alone and not by faith and works.

The way to discover the relevance of Scripture today is neither to return to the allegorical approach of the Church Fathers nor to embrace the reader-response theories of postmodernism. The way forward is to reject the critical theories of Spinoza and to embrace the belief that Scripture, in its literal sense, interpreted contextually, remains God's relevant Word for people of every age.

Brian Collins (PhD, Bob Jones University) serves as an elder at Mount Calvary Baptist Church and as a Bible integration assistant at BJU Press.

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¹ J. Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

² These scholars also advocate approaches to reading Scripture in which communities of readers determine the

The Internet has made it possible to answer all sorts

of interesting little questions you didn't know you had. For example, which words are looked up in the dictionary more than any others? The editors at Merriam-Webster.com tell us that the word "love" is one of them. It is, in fact, the third most looked-up word on their website.

But the dictionary seditors make a wise comment on this fact that, believe it or not, can help you in your Bible study: "We're guessing that many people arrive at our site with a question—'what is the meaning of love?'—that actually requires answers beyond a dictionary definition."

What, indeed, is love? Many people in Bible-believing churches would, I think, answer that question by cooking up what's called a "word study." They would (1) collect the ingredients by looking up "love" in a Bible concordance, (2) mix all the instances in a broth, and (3) hope that their resulting conclusions taste good. Unfortunately, some common errors can ruin the soup.

Common Problems with Word Studies

Let me humbly offer some of my concerns about that three-part recipe.

- 1. For step 1, have you ever considered that the Bible might have a lot to say about love without using the word? All three of the synoptic Gospels manage to tell the whole story of Christ's crucifixion without ever mentioning "love"—but is there a greater example of love in all the world? Will a study of love be complete without those passages?
- 2. For step 2, what exactly are you supposed to do once you've gathered together all the instances of "love" in the Bible? I would guess that most word-studiers feel they can safely ignore a verse such as the following: "The hatred wherewith [Amnon] hated [Tamar] was greater than the **love** wherewith he had **loved** her" (2 Sam. 13:15). But why skip that entry in the concordance? It uses the same Hebrew word for love (*ahav*) that God used in Deuteronomy 6:5, "Thou shalt **love** the LORD thy God with all thine heart."

How to Do Word Studies

(AND HOW NOT TO DO THEM)

Mark Ward

3. For step 3, I think many word studies end up amassing a pile of verses that happened to grab the reader and then conclude that all-those-verses-lumped-together is what the word "love" in the Bible means. But can a single word bear all that weight?

Let me offer a brief list of suggestions for avoiding these errors.

1. Distinguish between Word and Concept

The Merriam-Webster editors in their comment above were pointing to a very important idea that can help us get word studies right: the difference between *word* and *concept*. The word "love" is one thing; you know what it means by looking in the dictionary. But the broader *theological concept* we often point to with the word "love" is something different, something you won't find in a dictionary.

And that's okay! You will never get people—even your own kids—to stop using the word "love" to describe their feelings for cookie-dough ice cream as well as their feelings for their spouses, their favorite football teams, and God Himself.

That's because language is capable of giving multiple meanings to one set of sounds, and context is generally sufficient to let you know which meaning a speaker or writer intends. A conversation about favorite Baskin-Robbins flavors is one context. The vows in a wedding ceremony are another. And nobody gets confused when the word "love" gets used in both contexts—except those who confuse word and concept.

2. Focus on Sentences and Paragraphs, Not Individual Words

Here's my second piece of advice: it is possible to place too much weight on individual words, weight that should be borne by sentences and paragraphs.

The Greek word *agape*, for example, is often said to mean a great deal. Fundamentalists, Evangelicals, and liberals all commonly say the same thing: *agape*—the main New Testament Greek word for "love"—means a rational and unselfish choice to perform the action that best serves someone else, regardless of how you feel and regardless of whether that person deserves it.

I'm not necessarily saying it's wrong to talk about the concept of Christian love in these terms (that's a question for another article). But I will suggest that you ought to be carefully suspicious when a massively significant theological statement hinges on the meaning of one word in a language you don't speak—rather than on a sentence you can read for yourself in your Bible.

Are there any actual statements in Scripture saying the things that appear in that very common definition of *agape*? Is there a Bible sentence or paragraph that says you can love regardless of how you feel? Does Jesus or Paul or Moses ever say that love is a gift given to someone regardless of whether they deserve it or not? And remember how important these questions are: love for God and love for neighbor are the most important commandments in the whole Bible—the pegs from which the whole law hangs (Matt. 22:34–40).

Christians often hang a lot of weight on the definition of *agape*, a weight it is not meant to bear—and a weight it clearly doesn't bear in multiple verses. The Bible is not a mere list of character qualities we're all supposed to cultivate: love, joy, peace, gentleness, adaptability, determination, courage. The Bible instead provides stories and letters that give the rich context and detailed reasoning behind Christian concepts such as love.

3. Use Up-to-Date Resources

Two more quick points. One is that you need to use upto-date resources in your word studies. Strong's Hebrew and Greek dictionary is ubiquitous because it's free. It's free because it's old. But because it's old, it has missed out on some of the important developments that have taken place in the study of Greek in the last century. The same goes for Vine's *Expository Dictionary*. I've seen anti-spanking moms on the Internet, for example, base huge arguments on the one sense of "rod" that they most happened to like in Strong's dictionary. (They also place so much weight on the word "rod" that it obliterates the actual sentences in which "rod" appears.)

Here's a suggestion: Mounce's new *Expository Dictionary* corrects some of Strong's and Vine's faults.² And its introduction on "How to Do Word Studies" is a great place to start for my next point.

4. Do Some Homework before Doing Your Homework

Here's that point: you love God's Word, so get to know words. Do some homework on how God made words to work. Mounce's introduction would be a good beginning. D. A. Carson's *Exegetical Fallacies* is a wise, incisive, and (above all) brief book. For the advanced student, Vern Poythress's *In the Beginning Was the Word* is penetrating, and Moisés Silva has written a fantastic book, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*.

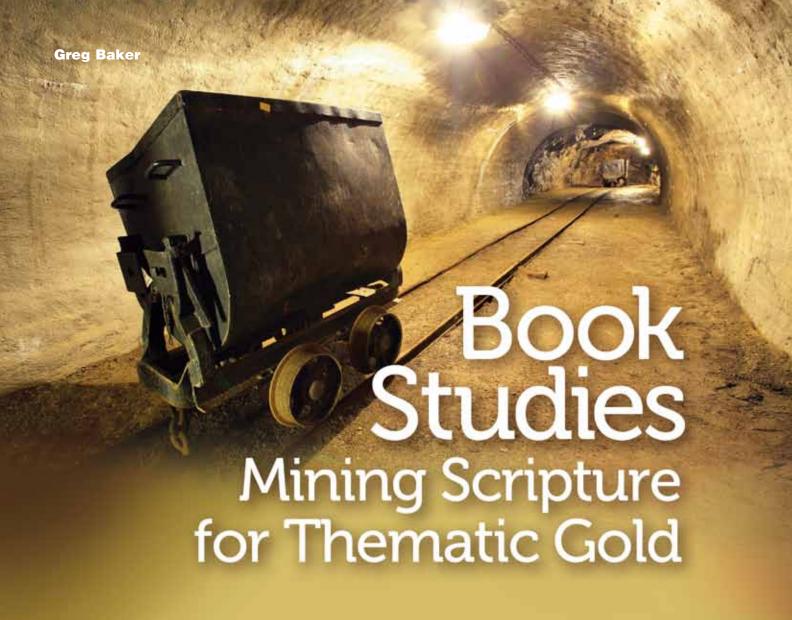
Go and Do

I'm afraid this article didn't prove much of anything; the best thing it did was offer suggestions for further homework. And today more than ever there are good books that can help you do that. If you love God's words as I do, I encourage you to do some careful reading and preparing before you do your next word study.

Mark L. Ward Jr., PhD, is secondary Bible curriculum author and Biblical Worldview Team member at BJU Press. He is a weekly evangelist in a Sunday outreach service at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

¹ For example, Jesus used the *agape* root twice in Luke 11:42, 43: "Woe to you Pharisees! For you . . . neglect justice and the **love** of God. . . . Woe to you Pharisees! For you **love** the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces!" Presumably, the Pharisees did not love prominence with a self-sacrificial regard for its best interests regardless of its deservingness. See also Luke 16:13; 1 John 2:15; John 3:19; 12:43; 2 Timothy 4:10; 2 Peter 2:15; and 2 Samuel 13:15 (LXX).

² William D. Mounce, Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).



It's been almost twenty years, but I still remember the first time I was awed by the Bible's depth—a word-for-

word presentation of Psalm 23 fascinated me. So I tried to emulate that study method but found it impractical for much of Scripture. Then, during seminary I was introduced to a different type of Bible study—a thematic approach—that was just as detailed but gave much-needed perspective.

This particular study method, called Book Study or Book Theology, is my favorite study form because anybody can master it. From seminary-trained pastors conversant in ancient languages to laymen armed with a study Bible and a set of colored pencils, any disciple can present an excellent book study.

Several articles describe the benefits of a thematic approach but very few provide step-by-step details.¹ That's the goal for this article—to explain for a student at

any level of expertise how to prepare and present a book study.

Book studies can initially seem foreign because they're neither a section-by-section commentary nor an overlaying of systematic theology's categories. For example, a study entitled *A Christology of Hebrews* is probably Biblical and theological, but it might not be a book theology per se. Dr. Robert Bell says that book studies answer the question, "What theological truth or truths was the Holy Spirit communicating in this portion of Scripture?" By reading, identifying, and categorizing themes occurring throughout a book, any student of Scripture can answer that question with surprising specificity.

Before getting started, however, a warning. Prematurely running to study helps, and thereby short-circuiting the process, is a major temptation to avoid. When crunched for time, remember that theology, like barbecue, is best slow-cooked. And when insecurities prevail, trust that the Holy Spirit is the best study Companion possible (1 Cor. 2:10–13).

Step 1: Survey

Read the book in a single setting or with minimal breaks. Try to absorb the breadth—read as if the book is being encountered for the very first time. I've heard it suggested to read the book aloud, which makes sense, considering the fact that many books were written for public hearing.

Step 2: Plotting

A limited use of resources is necessary at this stage. Whereas laymen may want to stick with a study Bible or single-volume Bible dictionary, those with formal training should consult the standard Bible encyclopedias. Regardless of the resource, the research is straightforward: Who wrote the book? When? Why? Because Scripture was written in specific religious and historical contexts, students should have a general understanding of the situation surrounding that particular book. Likewise, some books have important literary elements that, though obvious to the original audience, may not be quite so obvious to the modern English reader.

Step 3: Digging Deeper

Now that you're acquainted with the text and the historical context, it's time for a treasure hunt. The method is easy: read—observe—repeat. I recommend at least five readings for longer books and ten for shorter ones. The true key, however, is observation. It's extremely important to jot down repeated words, divine titles used in certain situations, or specific themes that continually surface. For example, Moses uses the Hebrew word *serve* seventy-four times in the book of Exodus.³ Isaiah employs the divine title *Yahweh*, translated Lord by the KJV, over four hundred times. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, habitually reinforces his arguments with Old Testament allusions. Thematic outlines emerge from observations just like these. Simple method; profound results.

Step 4: Extraction

Now that you're on the gold, it's time to dig it up. Here is the one place where technology is helpful but not absolutely necessary. I recommend copying the book into a computer document that can be printed or highlighted electronically. I prefer the shamefully low-tech method of colored pencils, as I gain something from the hands-on experience. Students have been known to create personalized spreadsheets, employ sophisticated Bible software, or, at the other end of the technological extreme, color the pages of an inexpensive gift Bible. Regardless of the method, find a way to isolate the individual themes and significant words discovered in Step 3.

If using the color-coding method, assign each theme or key word its own color. Then simply read the text slowly while highlighting sentences, paragraphs, or even entire chapters with the corresponding color. Feel no pressure to assign every sentence a particular category. Remember, a book study is a thematic approach, not a commentary.

As extraction progresses, two very important observations become obvious. First, one colored pencil inevitably becomes duller and shorter than all the rest, which is a strong indication that the central theme has

been found. Second, patterns emerge. Yellow might always follow green or vice versa. As in the case of Judges, the sequential themes of judgment, repentance, and restoration play out so frequently that the pattern is as apparent as it is instructive. Whatever the method, carefully working through this step is not only rewarding but critical to a well-studied book theology.

Step 5: Refinement

Although the treasure hunt is the most exciting step, refinement is necessary for presentation. First, consult some resources to confirm the findings, as it's easy to miss a key theme in the light of exciting discoveries. I recommend the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, the *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, commentaries with book theologies in the introductory pages (like the *New American Commentary*), or, for those with seminary training, standard reference works like *NIDOTTE*, *TWOT*, and *TDNT*.

Second, organize the material. Although options vary, the most effective book studies demonstrate how the major themes contribute to the central thematic point. For example, the varied material in 1 Samuel can be categorized under the central theme *God Keeps His Covenant Promises*. Zechariah's confounding web of eschatological predictions can be organized under the statement *Redemption: Zechariah's Mission and Message*. It's extremely satisfying to know a book's central message, to display how each theme contributes to it, and to present those findings to God's people.⁴

For presentation, list the three to five most salient examples of each theme. The goal of a book study presentation is not to overwhelm the audience with the abundant amounts of material painstakingly mined, but to teach it memorably. The most successful presentations cause the listener to remember a book's central theological message months, if not years, later.

In my experience, God's people appreciate book studies for a simple reason—previously obscure books become satisfyingly clear. May God bless as you mine His Word for its life-changing themes.

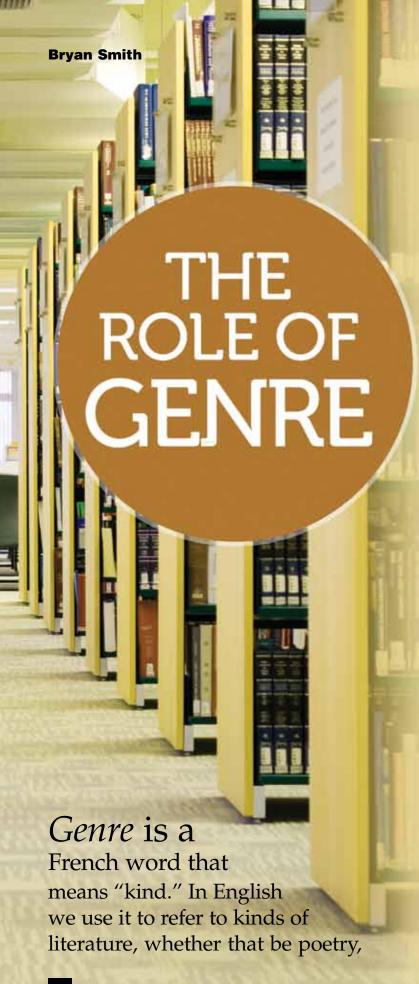
Dr. Greg Baker serves as pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Liberty, Utah.

Graeme Goldsworthy presents a how-to for seminary-level students in *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 221–25. Goldsworthy makes other helpful observations in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 280–86.

² The Theological Messages of the Old Testament (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 2010), 8.

³ For a how-to on word studies, see Mark Ward's article in this same *FrontLine* issue.

⁴ Elmer Martens proposes a helpful method for taking research observations to presentable theological statements in "Tackling Old Testament Theology," *JETS* 20 (1977), 123–32. Present-day Biblical theologians use Martens's article as something of a guide; see *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 15–16.



narrative, epistle, or sermon. The genre of a passage is very important to a Bible reader because it will determine how he approaches that passage. If he knows a text is a story, he will expect something different from it than if he knows it is a sermon. These different expectations will lead him to ask different questions of the text and therefore develop a different understanding.

Given the importance of genre, let's examine the characteristics of the two most common genres in Scripture.

Poetry

Two key features distinguish poetry. The first of these is parallelism. Unlike other genres poetry repeats certain elements at regular intervals. We English speakers are familiar with parallelism of sound. To most of us, poetry is poetry because it rhymes. Biblical poets, however, focused on developing parallelism of thought. Instead of rhyming the sound of the words, they tended to rhyme the meaning of one line in the next.

There are several different kinds of poetic parallelism, but the most important for exegesis is synonymous parallelism. As the name suggests, this kind of parallelism repeats an idea from the previous line in the following line. One of the clearest examples is Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof; / The world, and they that dwell therein." If you want to get a feel for reading synonymous parallelism, look at Psalm 114. It poetically reviews God's deliverance of Israel, and every verse is a textbook example of synonymous parallelism.

The second key feature of poetry is figurative expression. This is the intentionally irregular and artistic use of language. We employ figurative expression when we say something like, "The army pounced on its prey." While it is true that every genre occasionally evidences this kind of imagery, poetry is dominated by such language.

Of the many different kinds of figurative expression, the most significant is probably metaphor. A metaphor draws a comparison between two things without using the words "like" or "as." A clear example is Psalm 22:12: "Many bulls have compassed me: / strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round." As this example demonstrates, metaphors have to be interpreted. And that means getting familiar with the terms tenor, vehicle, and point of similarity. The tenor is the subject that the poet is talking about (in the above example, Messiah's enemies). The vehicle is the image he employs (bulls). The point of similarity is the overlapping characteristic that the poet wants his readers to focus on (cruel strength). Only when we attempt to figure out the point of similarity do we understand what Messiah is saying in Psalm 22:12.

Knowing about these characteristics proves useful when reading Psalm 46. The most intriguing line is in the fourth verse: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." What does it mean

for Zion to be the city of God? The following lines make that clear: it is the place where God dwells. And this point helps us answer a very important question: what is this river? Jerusalem was not built by a river, so this must be a metaphor. But a metaphor for what? Since verses 4 and 5 emphasize that God is in the midst of Zion, it seems that the tenor for this vehicle is God Himself. Just as a river sustains life and gives pleasure to the thirsty, so God meets the needs of His people and gives them joy. If we step back and view the psalm as a whole, we discover that water seems to be an extended metaphor in the psalm. The psalm opens with a picture of the sea swelling and toppling mountains, but then it turns to speak of a river that gladdens Zion. To unbelievers, God is a tsunami of anger and judgment, but to those who know and love Him, God is a life-giving stream.

Narrative

The dominant genre in Scripture is historical narrative. But it's important to note that while these narratives are historical, they are also quite literary. They are carefully crafted as artistic stories. And it is that careful crafting that we must pay close attention to. In particular we must pay attention to plot.

Every story unfolds a conflict, and the plot is the arrangement of that conflict into a coherent order. Plots can be ordered in many ways. The following analysis presents a common plot structure and uses the narrative of John 9 (the healing of the man born blind) to illustrate each element.

John 9 begins with several verses of *exposition* (vv. 1–7). These verses lay the foundation of the story by introducing us to the characters. They also set the stage for the conflict with some statements from Christ about His mission in this world. The exposition concludes with an *inciting moment*

(vv. 6, 7), which sets the conflict in motion. When Jesus heals the man, He triggers a clash that will press the characters—and the reader—to face a decision.

Once the conflict has begun, the narrative records several scenes (the man's conversation with his neighbors, his interrogation before the Pharisees, etc.) in which the conflict becomes more complex and grows in intensity (vv. 8–34). This series of events is often called the *rising action*. The rising action then culminates in a *crisis moment* (v. 34), the turning point in the plot where the conflict's resolution begins to become clear. When the Pharisees cast the man out of the synagogue, it seems clear that he will become a follower of Jesus.

After the crisis moment, a series of scenes follow that record the events resulting from the crisis. These events, called the *falling action*, often end in a *final moment of suspense*, a scene in which the results of the crisis seem threatened or overturned. The concluding events of John 9 occur so rapidly that it is not possible to distinguish the falling action from the final moment of suspense (vv. 35–38). Both elements come together when Jesus approaches the man and

asks if he believes in the Son of God. The man has already decided not to side with the Pharisees, but will he decide to cast his lot with Jesus? The suspense is relieved with the man's simple reply: "Lord, I believe." Typically, the last element in a plot is the *resolution*, the part of the story that unravels any remaining conflicts and brings a sense of closure. In this story the resolution (vv. 39–41) signals the ending by repeating a significant element found in the exposition. The story began with Jesus making statements about the nature of His mission (v. 5), and it ends in the same way (v. 39).

It is important to become sensitive to plot structure because such sensitivity helps us see the narrative as a whole. Instead of viewing a Biblical story as a collection of verses, we come to see the narrative as a single conflict moving toward resolution. Only when we see the story in that way will we be prepared to discern the theme of the story, the primary point the author is trying to make. What is the main point of John 9? If we do not pay attention to the plot, we may be tempted to point to verse 4, perhaps because many of us grew up singing a song based on that verse. But if we attempt to account for the plot, we will likely be drawn to the parallel statements in the exposition and the resolution (vv. 5, 39). The story begins and ends on the same note, and this note seems to be the whole point. John 9 exists to demonstrate what it means for Jesus to be the Light of the World—to the blind (those who repent and believe) He gives sight, but to the seeing (those who stubbornly oppose Him) He gives blindness.

Bryan Smith is Bible Integration Coordinator at BJU Press in Greenville, South Carolina.



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The Thunder of His Power WHO CAN UNDERSTAND?

"It isn't logical! It doesn't add up!" The man confronting me in front of the mosque on the last Friday of Ramadan had just finished his prayers. He was passionate, argumentative, and gestured vehemently to reinforce his point. "How can you say God is one but He is also three? It's a contradiction! It makes no sense!"

As anyone who witnesses to Muslims quickly discovers, defending God in three persons and one essence is never easy. The Biblical evidence is perfectly clear in its support but offers little explanation for how the Trinity actually works. Given the perfect unity of the Godhead, how could the Father turn His back on the Son? How could the Son give up His life? How can three persons exist distinctly and yet remain as one essence?

Of course, the Trinity is only one of the challenging doctrines we encounter in Scripture. How could Christ be omnipotent while also experiencing human weakness or omniscient without knowing something?

How can God be the maker and ground of all creation and sovereign over everything without being the cause or source of evil in any sense? Or what of Scripture's clear teaching that God is the unquestioned sovereign over all, but man is fully responsible for his choices?

Nor are these problems purely theoretical. Any attentive reader of Mark has to wonder how the same person can become weary enough to fall asleep on a pillow and only moments later display supernatural power over a powerful storm (Mark 4:35–41). How can Peter denounce lawless men for crucifying and killing Jesus when this was done "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23)? If these are interpretational challenges, Scripture itself has led us to them.

Discovering Questions We Cannot Answer

Each of these tensions is an example of theological paradox. While a Biblical paradox is not a full or explicit contradiction, Scripture does leave conceptual gaps in our understanding. In the history of the church, paradoxes have been the cause of many theological wrong turns and dead ends. Martin Luther abused the concept of mystery, using it to defend his faulty understanding of the Eucharist. On the opposite extreme, Gordon Clark confidently asserted that he could logically resolve the Trinity, the incarnation, and the problem of evil. More than one theologian in church history has inadvertently discovered that attempting to remove all tensions from the Biblical information leads to serious doctrinal error, while just as many have championed theological nonsense under the banner of "mystery."1

But while it is tempting to minimize theological paradoxes, we should remember that they are not an accident. In Revelation 10, the apostle John hears seven thunders and prepares to write them down when a voice from Heaven stops him—"Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." John had already recorded seven seals (ch. 6) and seven trumpets (ch. 8)—why not the seven thunders as well? Or if those details were to be withheld, why record that the incident ever happened? For reasons known only to God, it is best that we never know the meaning of the seven thunders. Yet He wanted us to know that this information had been withheld and to know that He withheld it intentionally.

Like well-written music, intricately designed both in what it includes and what it leaves out, Scripture tells us precisely what we ought to know and nothing more. While the text never contradicts itself, it sometimes shocks us with complexity, refusing to fit into tidy categories. What self-conscious interpreter hasn't found himself stymied by texts that stubbornly resist simple explanation? As Charles Simeon wrote,

There is not a decided Calvinist or Arminian in the world, who equally approves of the whole of Scripture . . . who, if he had been in the company of St. Paul whilst he was writing his different Epistles, would not have recommended him to alter one or other of his expressions.2

Grappling with Truths We Cannot Explain

What then is the path forward with paradoxical tensions in Scripture? First, we must be absolutely confident in the accuracy and the sufficiency of the Biblical text. No matter the conceptual difficulties that faithful exegesis raises, the text of Scripture stands. Allow the Bible to speak for itself and be willing for it to push beyond your capacity to understand.

But *second*, there are times when comparing Scripture with Scripture drives us back to reevaluate how we understand specific passages. Therefore, we should also try wherever possible to integrate Biblical propositions with one another. Scripture itself requires us to reason and draw logical conclusions based on a proper understanding of the text. There is only one truth, and Scripture unequivocally points to it. Where our understanding of one passage contradicts another, the fault is not with Scripture but with our interpretation.

But finally, after all exegetical efforts have been made and exhausted, some tensions will stubbornly remain. Only exegetical distortion or theological error can resolve every paradox. These are the times that test our confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture, our commitment to faithful exegesis, and our humility before a God we cannot fully comprehend.

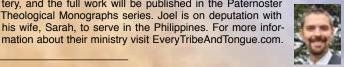
Marveling Before a God We Cannot Comprehend

Our understanding of God is only a tiny beginning, and even our minuscule apprehension of Him is too much for our weak minds. Layton Talbert likens our knowledge to the early settlers landing in North America. Their experience of the first few miles of coastline was accurate as they experienced it. But they knew nothing of the thousands of acres beyond—"massive and multiple mountain ranges, trackless prairies, impenetrable forests, mammoth lakes and mighty rivers with deafening waterfalls, swamps and deserts, flora and fauna yet unknown."3

Likewise, we can rejoice in the overwhelming and unfathomable truths about our God found in the pages of Scripture. But as Job 26:14 testifies, these are only "parts of his ways." Only little portions are heard of him, "but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

May we confidently and accurately uphold the truths of Scripture, rejoicing in the marvelous truths He has revealed, but may we also be content to trust Him for what He wisely placed beyond our understanding.

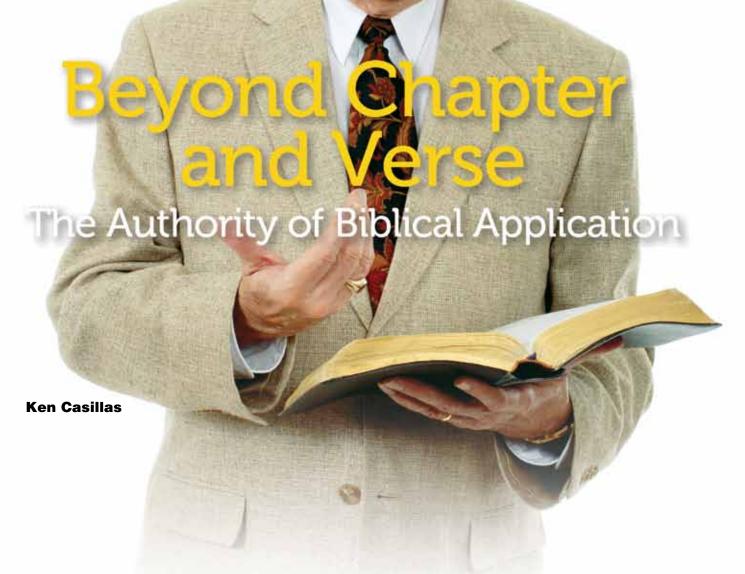
Joel Arnold wrote his doctoral dissertation at BJU on theological mystery, and the full work will be published in the Paternoster Theological Monographs series. Joel is on deputation with his wife, Sarah, to serve in the Philippines. For more infor-



The most recent example is open theism, which tries to eliminate the conceptual tensions between divine sovereignty and human responsibility or solve the problem of evil.

² Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1:xxiii.

Beyond Suffering (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007), 146.



In recent years conservative Christians have wrestled much over the authority of applications of

Scripture. A growing sentiment is that in order to be compelling, a lifestyle standard must be explicitly taught in Scripture. Conversely, to expect other believers to abide by one's extrabiblical applications necessarily undermines their liberty or even threatens the gospel of God's grace.

It may be tempting to dismiss such a viewpoint as a tactic of immature believers trying to defend a favorite practice. Yet who can deny that Christian leaders have sometimes abused their positions, confusing personal opinion with "thus saith the Lord"? The challenge is to articulate a coherent methodology for moving from "chapter and verse" to the specifics of contemporary life. And the starting point for this effort is the conviction that properly deduced Biblical application is authoritative in some significant sense.

Initial Considerations

From one standpoint, it seems obvious that applications of Scripture can be authoritative. Any use of the Bible today is an exercise in "reading someone else's mail." The books of Scripture were first given to peoples of the ancient world, not to us. If we cannot with some degree of certainty extrapolate a divine message for our lives, then the Bible serves merely as a historical record.

Furthermore, Christians today face a host of issues that it would be unreasonable to expect an ancient text to address. No passage explicitly addresses recreational drugs, Internet pornography, or abortion, for example. Yet believers intuitively and even dogmatically relate Biblical teaching to such contemporary matters.

This practice of application is what the Bible itself expects. Scripture assumes that its doctrinal, spiritual, and ethical truths have authority beyond the original recipients of those truths and beyond the original circumstances of those recipients. We may trace this dynamic through each section of Scripture.

Application in the Old Testament

In various ways the Old Testament reflects the authority of Biblical application. This is implicit in the Mosaic Covenant legislation, which as a national arrangement had built-in relevance for future generations of Israelites (Deut. 6:7). A millennium after Moses, the prophets continued urging Israel to follow her historic code of law (Mal. 4:4). Furthermore, that law was designed to be suggestive, not exhaustive, detailing enough specifics to establish a paradigm that provided guidance for additional cases.¹

As one considers the historical books, the need for application becomes even more pronounced. Nearly half of the Old Testament is historical narrative, and this genre especially requires that the reader—original or later—infer a theological message and apply it to his particular situation. Nehemiah had learned to "connect the dots" between past and present: he urged his generation of men to learn from Solomon's bad example not to marry godless women (Neh. 13:26, 27).

Application is vital in the poetical books as well. While some psalms have an overtly universal message (e.g., Ps. 49), many are highly personal. Why should a reader care that Yahweh was the psalmist's "rock" and "fortress" (Ps. 31:3) if that reader is not being assured that Yahweh will be the same for him? Likewise, why should a twenty-first-century Christian—especially a female—heed Solomon's counsel to his son (e.g., Prov. 1:10) unless that counsel has broader relevance?

important sense in which application is the very reason God gave us the Bible to begin with.

Beyond the already-mentioned use of the Mosaic Law, in the prophetic books we find another sort of application at Jeremiah 26:17–19. Here some of the Jewish elders recalled an earlier prophecy of Micah as an argument for heeding the warnings of Jeremiah.

Application in the New Testament

The New Testament contains multiple examples of authoritative Biblical application. For instance, it regularly relates Old Testament passages to individuals and issues beyond the explicit scope of those passages. An arresting illustration in the Gospels comes from Jesus Himself. In proving the resurrection to the Sadducees, He cites Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and He concludes, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32 and parallels).

The argument here is best analyzed as follows. (1) Centuries after the deaths of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Yahweh sustains a personal covenantal relationship with these patriarchs. (2) This implies that the spirits of the patriarchs were still alive at that time. (3) In Jewish theology—unlike Greek dualism—the afterlife was physical, not immaterial, so that the existence of an immortal spirit automatically established the resurrection. (4) Jesus may also be inferring that since God's covenant promises included physical blessings, the physical resurrection of the patriarchs is assured.² Strikingly, Jesus views ignorance of these implications as tantamount to ignorance of the Scriptures themselves—and as blameworthy (Matt. 22:29).

In Acts, the "Jerusalem Council" provides another example of Biblical application. However one may understand James's use of Amos 9,3 that passage is not directly concerned with the question of Gentile circumcision. Yet James views Amos's prophecy as a conclusive argument for his viewpoint on the matter (Acts 15:15–21).

Moving to the Epistles, instances of application abound. From the timing of Abraham's circumcision Paul argues that justification is not conditioned on circumcision (Rom. 4:9–12). Paul urges self-restraint on the basis of the Messiah's selfless spirit as anticipated in Psalm 69:9, arguing that the Old Testament Scriptures were written "for our learning" (Rom. 15:3, 4).

Also significant is Paul's use of Deuteronomy 25:4 in 1 Corinthians 9:8–11. Here he quotes the command not to muzzle a working ox to argue for a seemingly unrelated point—financial remuneration of ministers. In the next chapter the apostle makes various correlations between Israel's wilderness wanderings and the situation of the Corinthian church. These connections are binding because the Old Testament writings are "for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11).

Galatians 5 introduces yet another kind of application. Verses 19–21 enumerate more than a dozen "works of the flesh," but verse 21 concludes the list with the expression "and such like." Paul's anticipation is that based on the specifics he gives, the reader will be able to identify additional sinful attitudes and actions.

Beyond Paul's writings, examples of epistolary application include the "hall of faith" in Hebrews 11 and Peter's use of Leviticus's holiness motto (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). Likewise, the opening letters of Revelation are addressed to particular local churches, yet each letter ends with this broader appeal: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (2:7; cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Qualifications

Of course, we don't enjoy the unique ministry of the Spirit that guided the Scripture writers in making applications. So we can't claim infallibility in our applications. But the same is true regarding our basic interpretation of Scripture, yet that doesn't deter us from seeking and proclaiming the

meaning of Scripture. It should just keep us humble and open to correction in the process.

The passages cited above certainly don't answer all our questions about application. They need to be integrated with nuanced definitions of the sufficiency of Scripture⁴ as well as Christian liberty.⁵ We must also acknowledge the difficulties involved in interpreting general revelation and in evaluating individual cultures.⁶ Finally, we need to take heed to Jesus' warnings about the Pharisees' ill-founded and hypocritical tradition.⁷

Nevertheless, once we have made all our qualifications, the point remains: the Bible's own example needs to shape our overall thinking about application. Specifically, application does not necessarily "add" to the Bible. Instead, there's an important sense in which application is the very reason God gave us the Bible to begin with. Ultimately, to minimize the role of application is to minimize the authority of Scripture itself.⁸

Conclusion

Ironically, while some Fundamentalists seem to be questioning application altogether, a number of Evangelicals are working hard to develop a methodology for arriving at correct application. Their efforts to relate Scripture to contemporary life ought to spur us on to do our own homework in this area. We should begin by recognizing that a discussion doesn't come to a close simply because someone declares, "That's just your application!"

Ken Casillas, PhD, is professor of Old Testament at Bob Jones University Seminary and senior pastor of Cleveland Park Bible Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina.



¹ See Ken Casillas, *The Law and the Christian: God's Light within God's Limits* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2007).

²See D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 9:520.

³ See, for example, I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, and Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007), 589–93.

⁴ See especially John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, vol. 4 of *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2010), 220–38.

⁵ For a helpful corrective, see Mark A. Snoeberger, "Weakness or Wisdom? Fundamentalists and Romans 14.1–15.13," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 12 (2007): 29–49.

⁶ A promising tool here is the perspectival model of John M. Frame, distinguishing between normative, situational, and existential perspectives. See *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, vol. 1 of *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987).

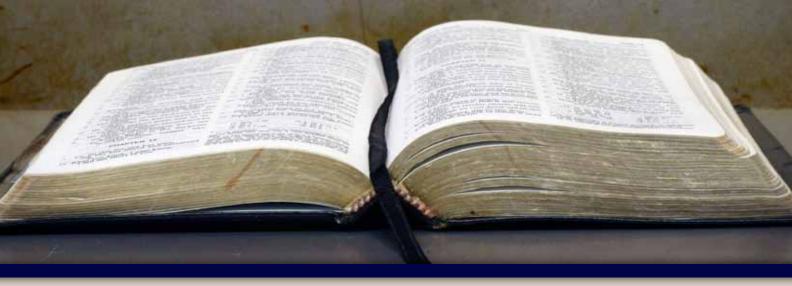
⁷ A careful study of the Gospels will confirm the conclusion of Darrell L. Bock: "Jesus did not engage in a wholesale rejection of what the law taught or even what the leadership claimed to teach about following the law." Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait from the Gospels (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 334. For instance, to defend His disciples' eating of grain on the Sabbath Jesus appealed to David's eating of consecrated bread (Mark 2:23–28; cf. 1 Sam. 21:1–6). This is Rabbinic logic at its best!

⁸See further, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 81–85.

⁹ See, for example, Tim Challies, *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007); Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001); Michael R. Emlet, *CrossTalk: Where Life & Scripture Meet* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2009); Gary T. Meadors, ed., *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).



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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Man-Pleasing

What conscientious Minister is not painfully reminded of the truth of the inspired aphorism, The fear of man bringeth a snare. Perhaps no temptation is more specious in its character, or more subtle and diversified in its operation" (Charles Bridges, *The Christian Ministry*).

The fear of man. An insidious and stubborn temptation indeed. Bridges quotes Thomas Scott, the English commentator and friend of John Newton, as expressing the opinion, "This kind of spirit goeth not out, but by a very spiritual and devout course of life. Indeed its expulsion is the gift of God, and is especially to be sought for from Him."

The seventeenth-century English Puritan Richard Baxter wrote what is perhaps the fullest treatment of this subject. "Directions against Inordinate Man-Pleasing" consists of the better part of ten double-column pages in his monumental *Christian Directory*. Although Baxter is writing for all Christians, there's much that is particularly applicable to preachers. My copy is heavily marked.

Baxter's directions run to eleven points, and the subpoint developments under these run to as many as twenty-one. But in order to focus upon what is most helpful to preachers, I've eliminated many of his points and then renumbered those that remain. In addition, I've pretty freely edited what is included, in order to condense the content still further, as well as to modernize the English. But anyone who wishes to read the entire original and does not possess *The Christian Directory* can find it easily on Google Books. May these excerpts prove to be just what some anxious minister needs to fill him with fresh courage.



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beying man before God and against Him, and valuing the favor and approval of man before or against the approval of God, and fearing man's censure or displeasure more than God's, is to idolize "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6)

man, or to set him up in the place of God. See what the Scripture says of this sin.

- Isaiah 2:22: Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?
- Matt. 23:9: And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven
- Jer. 20:15: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.
- Psalm 118:6, 8, 9: The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man, yea, in princes.
- Gal. 1:10: Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ.
- 1 Cor. 4:3: But with me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment.
- Matt. 5:11—12: Blessed are ye when man shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.
- Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22: Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers.
- 1 Thess. 2:4: So we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who trieth our hearts.
- Jude 16: Having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

This is enough to show you what Scripture says about this inordinate man-pleasing. Now I shall proceed to direct you about escaping it.

Ways in Which We Must Please Men

Understand well the nature of this sin so that you do not run to the opposite extreme. I shall therefore first show you how far we may and must please men, and then how far we must not.

- Our parents, rulers, and superiors must be honored, obeyed, and pleased in all things which they require of us. This must not be merely as to man, but as to the officers of God, from whom, and for whom they have all their power.
- 2. We must in love and condescension and meekness of behavior, seek to please all men in order to bring them to salvation. We must forbear and forgive, and part with our right, and deny ourselves the use of our Christian liberty if it is necessary to the saving of our brethren's souls.
- 3. We must not be self-conceited and prefer a weak, unfurnished judgment of our own before the greater wisdom of another.
- 4. We must especially reverence the judgment of our faithful teachers. We must not proudly set up our weaker judgments against them, and resist the truth which they deliver to us from God.
- 5. If sober, godly persons, that are well acquainted with us, do strongly suspect us to be faulty where we discern it not ourselves, it should make us the more suspicious and fearful.
- 6. A good name among men, which is the reputation of our integrity, is not be neglected as though it were worth nothing.

Ways in Which We Must Not Please Men

But on the other hand:

- 1. We must suppose that men will mistake us, and wrong us and slander us through ignorance, passion, prejudice, or self-interest. When this befalls us, we must not consider it to be strange and unexpected.
- 2. We must not sin in order to please men, nor must their favor be preferred before that of pleasing God. If doing our duty will displease them, let them be displeased. We can but pity them.
- 3. We must place none of our happiness in the favor of approval of men. We must count men's favor and approval as we do other transitory things: estimating them as a means to some higher end—either the service of God or our own or other men's greater good. Further than that, it must be almost indifferent to us what men think or say of us.
- 4. Our hearts are so selfish and deceitful that when we are very careful about our reputation, we

- must carefully watch lest self be intended, while God is pretended.
- Man's nature is so prone to go too far in valuing our esteem with men, that we should more fear lest we err on that hand, than on the other, in undervaluing it.
- 6. God must be enough for the gracious soul. We must know that in His favor is life and His lovingkindness is better than life itself. Therefore, having faithfully done our duty, we must leave the matter of our reputation with God. If our ways please Him, He can make our enemies be at peace with us, or be harmless to us as if they were not our enemies. We must also quietly leave it with him as to what measure of wealth we shall have. So also what measure of honor we shall have. It is our duty to love and honor, but not to be loved and honored.
- 7. The prophecy of our Savior must still be believed, that the world will hate us. His example must be before our eyes, who submitted to be spit upon, and scorned and buffeted and slandered as a traitor or usurper of the crown. This is the usage that must be the Christian's expectation, rather than to be well spoken of by all.
- 8. It is not only the approval of the ignorant and ungodly that we must thus think little of, but even of the most learned and godly. We must bear their censures as an easy burden when God is pleased this way to try us. We must be satisfied with God alone and with the expectation of His final judgment.

Considerations to Turn Us from Fearing Men

Direction 1: Remember how silly a creature man is, and that his favor can be no better than he is himself. The thoughts or words of a mortal worm are matters of no considerable value to us.

Direction 2: Remember that the judgment of ungodly men is corrupted and directed by the Devil. To be overruled by their censures, or to fear them too much, is to be overruled by the Devil and to be afraid of his censures. Will you honor him so much? Alas, it is he that puts those thoughts into the minds of the ungodly and those reproachful words into their mouths.

Direction 3: Consider what a slavery you choose when you thus make yourselves the servants of every man whose censures you fear, or whose approval you are ambitious for. What a task have men-pleasers! They have as many masters as beholders. You know men will condemn you if you are true to God. A man-pleaser cannot be true to God because he is a servant to the enemies of God's service. The wind of a man's mouth will drive him about as the chaff, from any duty and to any sin. How servile a person is a man-pleaser. How many masters he has, and how little and insignificant they are!

Direction 4: Remember what a pitiful reward you seek. *Verily*, saith our Lord, concerning hypocrites and menpleasers, *they have their reward*. The thought and breath of mortal men instead of God—this is their reward! If this be enough to spend your time for, and to neglect your God for, and to lose your soul for, rejoice then in the hypocrite's reward.

Direction 5: Remember that honor is such a thing that it is found sooner by an honest contempt of it than by an inordinate affection for it. Even in the eyes of rational men, it is a far greater honor to live to God, above worldly honor, than to seek it. And to the degree that a man is perceived to seek it, so much he loses of it, for he is thought to need it, and men perceive that he plays a low and pitiful game when he is so desirous of their applause.

Direction 6: If nothing else will cure this disease, at least let the impossibility of pleasing men and attaining your ends persuade you against so fruitless an attempt. [He develops this direction with the following ten thoughts.]

- 1. Remember what a multitude you have to please. When you have pleased some, how many more will be still unpleased. You are like one that has but twelve pennies in his wallet, but a thousand beggars all about you wanting what you have. Every one of them will be displeased if he does not have your all.
- 2. Remember that all men are so selfish that their expectations will be higher than you are able to satisfy. They will not take into consideration your hindrances, or avocations, or what you do for others. Most of them look to have as much to themselves as if you had nobody else to mind but them. Many and many a time, when I have had an hour or a day to spend, every one of a multitude have expected that I would spend it with them. How many have censured me because I have not allowed them the time which God and conscience commanded me to spend upon greater and more necessary work!
- 3. You have many to please who are so ignorant, unreasonable and weak, that they take your greatest virtues for your faults. None are more bold to censure you than those who least understand the things they fault. Many and many a time my own and others' sermons have been criticized for things that were never in them, simply because of their ignorance or heedlessness.
- 4. You will have many factious zealots to please who are strangers to the love of holiness and Christianity and unity. They are ruled by the interest of an opinion or sect. These will never be pleased by you unless you will be one of their side or party and conform yourself to their opinions.
- 5. Most of the world are haters of holiness. They have an enmity against the image of God. They will not be pleased with you unless you will sin

- against your Lord and do as they do. You will be called narrow and hypocritical (or much worse) if you will not be as bad as they are. Among madmen you must play the madman if you would escape the fangs of their revilings.
- 6. You will find that though few are competent, judges are judges. They are not acquainted with all the facts about you. Few are at your elbow. None are in your heart. Therefore they do not know the circumstances and reasons of all that you do. Nor do they hear what you have to say for yourself. Yet they will presume to censure you, when they would have absolved you if they had but heard you speak.
- 7. You have men of great changeableness to please. One hour they may be ready to worship you as a god, and the next to stone you. What a weathercock is the mind of man! When you have spent all your days in building your reputation on this sand, one blast of wind or storm at last will tumble it down and all your cost and labor will be lost. Serve men as submissively and carefully as you can, and after it all, some accident of your failing to satisfy their unrighteous expectations will turn you out.
- 8. Every man living shall unavoidably be entangled by God Himself in some duties which are liable to misconstruction. They will an appearance of evil to those who do not know all the circumstances. It pleases God to try his servants in this way. Many of the circumstances of their actions shall remain unknown to men. So was Abraham's attempt to sacrifice His son. So was David's eating the shew-bread, and dancing almost naked before the ark. So was Christ's eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. So was Paul's circumcising Timothy and his purifying himself in the Temple. Joseph thought of putting Mary away until he knew the evidence of her miraculous conception. And how liable to criticism was she by those who did not know her! Oh, therefore, how vain is the judgment of man! And how contrary to truth it frequently is!
- 9. There is among men such many contrary opinions and dispositions and judgments, that they will never agree among themselves. So if you please one, the rest will be displeased. It is evident then, that if you will please everyone, you must at the same time both speak and be silent, verify contradictions, be in many places at once, and be of all men's minds and for all men's ways. For my part, I need to see the world a little better agreed among themselves before I will make it my ambition to please them.
- 10. Remember that the holiest saints or apostles could never please the world, nor escape their criticisms, slanders, and cruelties. Jesus Christ

Himself could not. And do you think that by honest means you can please them better than Christ and all His saints have done? You do not have the wisdom Christ had to please men and to avoid offense. You do not have the perfect innocence and unblameableness that Christ had. You cannot heal their sicknesses. You cannot convince and constraint them to reverence you by various miracles as He did. So what are you that you can better please them than He did?

Direction 7: Remember what a life of disquiet and continual vexation you choose if you place your peace or happiness in the good will or word of man. The pursuit of it will be a life of torment. Are you pastors and teachers? You will seem too rough to one and too smooth to another. In fact, too rough to the same man, when by reproof you correct his faults, who will censure you as too smooth when you deal with others. No sermon that you preach is likely to be pleasing to all your hearers.

Direction 8: Remember that pleasing God is your business in the world, and that in pleasing Him your soul may have safety, rest, and full content even though all the world should be displeased with you. God is enough for you. His approval and favor are your portion and reward. How sweet and safe is the life of the sincere and upright who study more to be good than to seem to be good. Oh what a mercy is an upright heart, which renounces the world, and all therein that stands in competition with his God, and takes God for his God indeed, even for his Lord, his Judge, his Portion and his All.

If God's approval and His favor do not quiet you, nothing can rationally quiet you. If pleasing Him does not satisfy you, even though men, though good men, though all men should be displeased with you, I know not how or when you will be satisfied.

Advantages of Pleasing God Rather than Men

- 1. If you seek first to please God, and are satisfied therein, you have only one to please instead of a multitude. A multitude of masters are harder to please than one.
- 2. And it is one [God] who puts nothing upon you that is unreasonable.
- 3. And one who is perfectly wise and good.
- 4. And one who is most holy, and not pleased with iniquity or dishonesty.
- And He is one who is a competent judge and is acquainted with your heart and every circumstance and reason for your actions.
- 6. And He is one who perfectly agrees with Himself. He does not assign you contradictions.

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- 7. And He is one that is constant and unchangeable. He is not pleased with one thing today and a contrary thing tomorrow.
- 8. He is gentle, though just, in His censures. He judges truly, but not with unjust rigor. He does not make your actions worse than they are.

Signs of Living to Please God

See therefore that you live upon God's approval as that which you chiefly seek, and which will satisfy you. You may test yourself by these signs.

- 1. You will be most careful to understand the Scripture, to know what doth please and displease God.
- 2. You will be more careful in the doing of every duty, to fit it to the pleasing of God than men.
- 3. You will look to your hearts, and not only to your actions; to your ends, and thoughts, and the inward manner and degree.
- 4. You will look to secret duties as well as public and to that which men see not, as well as unto that which they see.
- 5. You will reverence your consciences, and have much to do with them, and will not slight them: when they tell you of God's displeasure, it will disquiet you; when they tell you of His approval, it will comfort you.
- 6. Your pleasing men will be charitable for their good, and pious in order to the pleasing of God, and not proud and ambitious for your honor with them, nor impious against the pleasing of God.
- 7. Whether men be pleased or displeased, or how they judge of you, or what they call you, will seem a small matter to you, as their own interest, in comparison to God's judgment. You live not on them. You can bear their displeasure, censures, and reproaches, if God be but pleased. These will be your evidences.



Conclusion

Charles Bridges wrote that we don't need any further proof of the baneful influence of this temptation to be men-pleasers than the remembrance of both Peter and Barnabas being "beguiled for a short moment to deny the faith of the Gospel" (Gal. 2:11–14). The only overcoming spirit is that of another apostle, "whose determined resistance to the weakness of his brethren was the honored means of their restoration." With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self (1 Cor. 4:3).

Bring . . . the Books

Meaningful, helpful books facilitate some of a pastor's most beneficial friendships. Through the distance of time and place, one pastor reaches to another and offers a Scriptural insight, an encouraging word of counsel, or even a needed rebuke—such a fellowship of burning hearts may often rekindle the cooling embers of a minister's passion.

Books are masters who instruct us without rods, or rules, or wrath. If you go to consult them they are never asleep; if you ask them questions they don't run off; if you make blunders they don't scold you; if you are ignorant they don't taunt you (W. G. Blaikie, *Autobiography*, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, 161).

Thankfully, the Lord used the author of those very words as a prolific penman himself—a writer to whom I have turned often for ministry encouragement and counsel. William Garden Blaikie (1820-99) may have been one of the most unlikely prospects to be a blessing to even his own generation. When he was ordained on September 22, 1842, he had been publicly admonished to do three things: to pray for guidance in selecting sermon subjects, to pray for help in making the sermon, and to pray for a blessing on the sermon when made and delivered. Blaikie remembers, "No doubt I must have been at a low spiritual level, for I remember having the feeling that this was surely too much" (Autobiography, 82). Yet he became an eminent pastor in the Free Church of Scotland for twenty-six years, then an esteemed Professor of Apologetics and Pastoral Theology at New College in Edinburgh for nearly three decades, and he continues to minister through his books to the people of God.

The versatility of his pen is intriguing. He wrote biographies of missionary David Livingstone (1880) and pastor/professor Thomas Chalmers (1896), two Scotsmen whose immense impact on Scotland and the world is difficult to measure. He edited the Memorials of the Late Reverend Andrew Crichton of Edinburgh and Dundee (1868). He loved the historical books of the Old Testament, contributing commentaries in the Expositor's Bible Series on Joshua, 1 Samuel, and 2 Samuel; an excellent Manual of Bible History: In Connection with the General History of the World (1899); and also the rich, insightful Bible biographies Heroes of Israel (1894) and David, King of Israel (1861). His Autobiography (published in 1901, two years after his death) and After Fifty Years, 1893, An Account of the Disruption demonstrate that he was a careful, humble student of his own times as well. He kept an ever watchful eye on the times, including the material and spiritual needs of the burdened, working-class population of Scotland (Better Days for Working People, 1865). He took heed to himself, becoming an increasingly faithful student of Scripture and a mentor to younger men in ministry, compiling his counsel to fellow ministers in The Work of the Ministry: A Manual of Homiletic and Pastoral Theology (1873). More than anything, however, Blaikie resolved to keep his eye on Christ as a model for public ministry (The Public Ministry of Jesus, 1883) and as a model for his own private devotion to God (Glimpses of the Inner Life of Our Lord, 1876).

"... when thou comest, bring with thee ... the books" (2 Tim. 4:13)

In Inner Life, Blaikie ransacks the Scripture, compiling from the Old and New Testaments vivifying insights into the spiritual growth of the incarnate Christ, wisely handling the delicate balance of Jesus' Divine and human natures. Of young Jesus he writes, "Even at the age of twelve, the purpose to devote His life to the work of His Father had banished all rivals from his heart." The unbroken devotion to the Father's will persevered to the end: "So when for the moment the human soul of Christ recoiled from His sufferings, it was only that deeper thoughts might be called up to remove the shivering of His flesh—only that towards the Father's will He might place Himself in a profounder attitude of submission, and by anticipation refresh His soul with the joy that was set before Him, when at length His elect should be gathered to Him from the four winds of heaven."

In twelve powerful chapters Blaikie captures elements of Jesus' spiritual life manifested throughout His life and ministry in which the inner devotional workings of the mind of Christ that governed His words and conduct are on display. He explicates Jesus' devotion to His Father's work, His delight in the Father's will, His purposeful harmony with the Father, His handling of temptation, His sympathy with man, His handling of sorrows, and His peace, joy, prayerfulness, and enduring faith. Here is one choice meditation from the chapter on Jesus' prayerfulness:

Of the effects of His humiliation, there is none more touching or more beautiful: that He, who in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and of whose hands the heavens were the work, should have accepted a relation of dependence that brought Him daily to His knees, impelling Him to pray that His human weakness might be strengthened, and all high qualities of soul fostered and ripened for the work given Him to do.

Klock & Klock reprinted *Inner Life* in tandem with Robert Law's *The Emotions of Jesus* in 1982, and copies of the original edition are available for free download at www.googlebooks.com.

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Straight Cuts

An Orderly, Respectable Life: Kosmion in 1 Timothy 3:2

Going outside on a clear night and looking up into the sky, one can see a portion of what we sometimes refer to as the *cosmos*—stars, planets, and other heavenly bodies *beautifully arranged* into very *orderly* constellations, solar systems, and galaxies. Gazing at that beautiful sight with any degree of meditation ought to elicit an exclamation of wonder or amazement. The distances are mind boggling. The sizes are hard to imagine. The temperatures hardly even register on our meters. Yet one of the most amazing things about the cosmos is that it is so well-ordered. There the stars are century after century, doing what God made them to do . . . without running into one another!

The universe is an apt illustration of one of the qualifications of ministers found in 1 Timothy 3:2. The word *kosmios* (found just before "given to hospitality") may be translated in a variety of ways, such as "of good behavior," "orderly," or "respectable." In the previous chapter (1 Tim. 2:9) this same word is used in regard to women's attire and may be rendered "modest," "modestly," "proper," or "respectable." Other renderings of the same word include "dignified," "honorable," and "mannerly." Why such variety?

The basic meaning of *kosmos* is "an orderly arrangement." It therefore was used of decorations, which have a beautifying effect when done appropriately. Native Greek speakers and writers used this word often to refer to a man who quietly minds his business and performs his responsibilities faithfully. They also used it as a title of respect for certain dignitaries. Bible scholars have described this kind of orderly person as a "gentleman," "not chaotic," or "not slovenly."

The contextual evidence only confirms these uses of the word. The other characteristics of the overseer listed nearby seem to complement the idea of holding one in high regard who maintains balance and restraint in personal, family, and public life. In addition, the ideas of orderly behavior and performance of duty surface repeatedly in 1 Timothy along with their intended results (1 Tim. 1:18–20; 4:6, 11–16; 5:1–10, 17, 21; 6:3–6, 11–14, 20, 21).

What is apparent is that God wants us to be orderly not just in our outward actions but on the inside as well. The expansion of this concept into every area of life naturally leads to the variety of translations listed above. If we try to blend all these ideas into a succinct definition, we might call this quality a beautifying, orderly life, inside and out, which inspires respect.

To illustrate this, consider God Himself, for we are to be like Him (Matt. 5:48). God's character and His works both testify to His orderliness. He is gracious, but not to the point of ignoring sin and letting it go unpunished. He is longsuffering, yet He will not be mocked.

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He is all powerful, yet He is not a despot, for He is love. In creation God put things in their proper places with specific functions and thereby made a truly beautiful world. Our response to such wonderful order in the Lord is heightened respect, is it not? We

"Rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15)

have cause to exclaim as Paul did at the end of Romans 11 or as the saints around the throne do in Revelation!

Another apt illustration is the proper dress of Christian women. They are told in 1 Timothy 2:9 to "put themselves in order" (kosmeo) with "orderly" (kosmios) apparel. The combination of these words emphasizes the point that a godly woman's appropriate dress "decorates" her more than jewelry or fashion. That kind of attire is truly beautifying because it evokes the right kind of response—respect.

A man who is respectable is one who is "decorated" with his well-ordered life. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel—what makes them so respectable? God commends Abraham for his well-ordered household. Joseph's life was in order such that wherever he went people respected him and benefited from his "good behavior." Moses very aptly organized and led millions of people through a desert. Daniel's life was so completely well arranged that from youth to old age he consistently gained kings' favor and outlasted those who were less than scrupulous. What men do you hold in high regard? They are most likely not eccentric, out of balance, wasteful, rude, or chaotic. Their lives are well-ordered so that each part has its place in proper proportions.

Specific applications could be made in every area of life. Are our minds in order, thinking in right proportions and about right things (Phil. 4:2–8)? Do we spend too much time meditating on how to solve mundane cares (e.g., leaky faucets, ugly lawns) and shortchange the best planning (e.g., the upcoming wedding anniversary, ministry opportunities)? Are our words in order such that they minister grace to others (Eph. 4:29) and shine like a beautiful piece of artwork (Prov. 25:11)? Do we faithfully accomplish the tasks that our Lord has wisely assigned to each one? Such character is a requirement for those who are called to serve as undershepherds.

In what areas are you disorderly? For some it may be time. For others it may be money or speech or thoughts or manners. Whatever our individual degrees of conformity to this standard, we all have the same powerful God who supplies everything we need for living godly lives (2 Pet. 1:3). The next time you have a chance to see the Milky Way, the Big Dipper, or Orion, see it as a picture of what your life can and ought to be by God's grace—a beautifying, orderly life, inside and out, which inspires respect.

Windows

The Power of a Godly Mother

Admittedly, most of the characters in the Bible and in church history are men, meaning the majority of our examples and illustrations are male. However, what a mistake it would be to conclude that women are unimportant or less important to the work of God. Paul in 2 Timothy 1:5 and 3:14–17 gives an excellent example of women to be emulated when he mentions Timothy's grandmother and mother. In the ranks of Lois and Eunice there are many other women whose faith and faithfulness are worthy to be followed. God has worked in many marvelous ways through the talents and service of devoted women, but this article is about the godly influence of mothers.

Monica, the saintly mother of Augustine, has often been written about. Her prayers for and her ministry to her son prior to his conversion were a powerful influence in his eventual salvation. Augustine rebelled against the faith and morality of his mother and lived a prodigal and impure life, but her intercession for him was steadfast. In his *Confessions* Augustine tells of his mother and how God used her in his coming to faith in Christ. He became the Bishop of Hippo and his contributions to theology remain important to the church to this day.

John Newton had a godly mother who taught him the Scriptures and showed him the Savior, though she died before Newton reached his seventh birthday. Her influence in the early years of his life left an indelible mark upon his heart. When he turned to unbelief and wickedness in his adolescence and early manhood, he could never escape his mother's testimony. When his conversion finally came, it was a return to the faith impressed upon his heart by his mother in those brief early years.

Susanna Wesley is called the "mother of Methodism" for her influence in the lives and ideology of her famous sons, John and Charles Wesley. Susanna gave birth to nineteen children, ten of which survived infancy. She managed her home and children with a strict routine and discipline. Everything was in order including manners, study, chores, meal times, bedtime, worship, and interaction between the children. Though Susanna may have not come to genuine saving faith until late in life, she exerted a strong spiritual emphasis in her home that became the pattern for the "Methodism" that was a key element in the ministries of her sons.

Adoniram Judson's family lived in Plymouth, Massachusetts, where his father was the pastor of the Third Congregational Church. Young Judson came home hiding his intellectual rejection of Christianity after graduating from Brown College. Provoked by his discontentment in his parents' home and reli-

gion, Judson finally blurted out his unbelief to his shocked mother and father. Judson's keen intelligence and debating skill thwarted his father's arguments against his abandonment of the faith, but his brilliance had no answer for the prayers and tears of his mother. She would turn to prayer at every encounter with her son, leaving him without defense for

"To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

Charles Spurgeon

his unbelief. God answered her prayers and brought circumstances to bear upon Judson that soon completely undermined his intellectual tower of Deism. Judson had left home to seek his independence but soon returned in a state of complete confusion. God worked through this confusion combined with his parents' loving care to direct Judson to saving faith.

The persons mentioned above are well known, but Samuel Mills, the major subject of this article, may not be familiar to you. Samuel Mills is the man God used to initiate the "Haystack Prayer Meeting" on the Williams College campus in Williamstown, Massachusetts, in 1806. That prayer meeting was the fountainhead of the modern foreign missions movement in America. Most of what has been done in the way of foreign missions from our shores has some connection to the movement led by Mills, but behind him was the important influence of a godly mother.

Samuel John Mills Jr. was born April 21, 1783, the third child of Samuel and Esther Mills. His father was the pastor of the Congregational Church at Torringford, Connecticut, where he ministered for a remarkable sixtyfour years. Samuel's ancestry on both sides included a lineage of ministers of the gospel. His parents were godly people. His father earned an honorable reputation as a faithful pastor and a strong preacher in his lifelong ministry at Torringford. His mother was a fine Christian woman who was described as "the great angel of comfort, strength, support, guide, and help to her husband and family.' She it was who once said in the hearing of this son, 'I have consecrated this child to the service of God as a missionary." Mills had the great privilege of growing up under the instruction and influence of these righteous parents, vet at fifteen he was still unsaved.

In the year 1798 God visited New England with a revival that affected nearly 150 churches. Torringford was one of the places where the Spirit of God was working powerfully. Young Mills, aged fifteen years, experienced strong conviction but would not yield to the Lord. His resistance was so strong that he would at times "break out in expressions of unyielding rebellion." He saw others around him turning to the Lord, but he

continued resenting his own inability to surrender his stubborn heart. About two years passed before Mills found relief for his sin-burdened heart. Gardiner Spring tells the story in his Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills.

On the morning of his departure for Litchfield, ever anxious for her son, and never more than now, his mother took an opportunity of enquiring into the state of his mind, and begged him to make an ingenuous disclosure of his feelings. For a moment he was silent and wept; but his heart was too full, long to suppress the emotions produced by so affecting a request. He raised his head, and with eyes streaming with tears, exclaimed "O that I had never been born! O that I had never been born! For two years I have been sorry that God ever made me." What reply could such a mother make to such a disclosure? It was given her in that same hour what she should speak:—"My son," said she, "you are born, and you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct." This heavy thought was like a dagger to his soul. His mother expressed her fears that he had never thoroughly seen the evil of his own heart, and that he had much to learn before he was acquainted with himself;—to which he ventured to say, "I have seen to the very bottom of hell!" With this frame of mind, he took a melancholy leave of his parents for the winter....

The farewell to his mother drove her to her knees. There is such a thing as special faith in prayer. It was such to this eminent saint, when she went to plead for her son. She felt his sorrows and her own; and God was pleased not only to show her that all her help was in him, but to enable her to feel that to him could her heart turn as her only God in covenant, and from him could it find unutterable relief. She did not leave her closet, till she found the full relief she sought, and till her mind was confidently assured that God would remember mercy for her child! It ought to be recorded, that on that very morning, it pleased the Holy Ghost, as she afterwards ascertained, to knock off the chains from this unhappy prisoner, and introduce him into the liberty of the sons of God. He had not gone far, before he had such a view of the perfections of God, that he wondered he had never seen their beauty and glory before. There was nothing in God now which distressed him. He had lost all his opposition to the divine sovereignty; and, such were his views of this adorable perfection, that he could not refrain from exclaiming, "O glorious sovereignty!" He retired a small distance into the woods, that he might be the more at liberty to contemplate the character of God, and adore and extol his holy and amiable sovereignty. . . . There was a wonderful change either in God, or in him. Everything was

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gilded with light and glory."2

Soon after his awakening, God was working in young Mills toward the work of the gospel. His father recalled his saying "that he could not conceive of any course of life in which to pass the rest of his days, that would prove so pleasant, as to go and communicate the Gospel salvation to the poor Heathen."³

In the spring of 1806 Mills enrolled in Williams College to further his education in preparation for the ministry. He immediately began to evangelize his worldly fellow students. God began to stir an awakening on the campus with multiple students turning to Christ. During the summer of that year Mills led prayer meetings in a nearby meadow to entreat God for the cause of foreign missions. During one afternoon prayer meeting Mills was joined by four other men. As they prayed, a thunderstorm drove them to seek shelter under the edge of a large haystack. Mills exhorted his companions regarding the cause of foreign missions. He coined the phrase "We can do it if we will" which became the motto of the movement. Mills and the others prayed that day for the gospel to be taken to Asia and the Muslim nations. The incident in the meadow came to be known as the Haystack Prayer Meeting. Out of that meeting, Mills formed the Society of Brethren for persons who would commit themselves to the cause of foreign missions. Luther Rice and Gordon Hall were among those who joined with Mills in the society. When these men moved on to Andover Seminary. the Society of Brethren went with them. At Andover Adoniram Judson, Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, and James Richards joined the society. In conjunction with Mills these men were the driving force that led to the formation of the American Board which is the first foreign missionary board in America. It is this board that sent Judson and others to India.

Samuel Mills was not able to go to the foreign field. His life came to an early end before he could realize his intention of being a missionary to the Hawaiian Islands. However, in his brief years of ministry he was a powerful initiator of missionary and evangelistic causes. He was influential in the formation of a foreign missions board among the Presbyterians. He helped form the American Bible Society, and his work led to others going as missionaries to Hawaii. These are but a few of his accomplishments.

Mills' mother, Esther, died during his first year at Andover Seminary. He was unable to get home in time to see her before her death. Her passing was a deep sorrow for Mills because of the powerful ministry she had in his life and preparation for the service of God. We can well conclude that the continuing influence of Samuel Mills in the work of missions is Esther Mills' legacy too.

¹ John Hewitt, Williams College and Foreign Missions (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1914), 67 (a free Google ebook).

² Gardiner Spring, *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills* (1820), 6–7 (a free Google ebook).







Is Israel the Church? Your Hermeneutic Determines Your Answer

While teaching a class entitled "The Bible as Literature,"

my son's professor rather cavalierly read a passage from the Old Testament and commented, "Of course, the church is Israel." The confident professor's interpretation was neither new nor novel—it was both ancient and quite mainstream—but it does not represent a literal hermeneutic. The fact is, the vast majority of Christendom fails to follow a literal interpretation and has accepted a theory called "Replacement Theology," which teaches that the promises and prophecies that God gave to the nation of Israel are now being fulfilled spiritually by the church. But is the church Israel? Covenant theologians say yes. Dispensational theologians say no. How do they come to such contradictory conclusions? It's a matter of hermeneutics.

Dr. David L. Cooper published a concise path to a literal hermeneutic in his magazine *Biblical Research Monthly*.

He called his memorable guideline the "Golden Rule of Interpretation," which says, "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages, and axiomatic, and fundamental truths indicate clearly otherwise." The professor who introduced me to Cooper's rule of Biblical interpretation often said, "If the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense lest it be nonsense!" Dispensationalists follow a normal hermeneutic which leads to a consistent distinction between Israel and the church.

Covenant theologians interpret part of the Bible literally but are inconsistent in their interpretation of prophecy, often spiritualizing its fulfillment. They seem to change the "Golden Rule of Interpretation" to say, "If the plain sense does not fit my theological system, then I will seek some other sense." When covenant theologians say, "Of course, the church is Israel," they fail to interpret the Bible



literally with the unintended consequence of "promoting nonsense." Because covenant theologians readily recognize the superiority of a Biblical literalism, they often declare their allegiance to a normal (grammatical-historical) hermeneutic while skillfully applying nonliteral interpretations of Biblical prophecy if literalism fails to match their theology. Such a nonliteral inconsistency may be illustrated by Matthew Henry's commentary on Luke 1.

In Luke 1:26–37, Gabriel informs Mary of the Virgin Birth. Gabriel's prophecy moves beyond the Virgin Birth in verses 32 and 33 as he speaks of the kingdom and the future of Israel, saying, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Matthew Henry, representing a covenant-replace-

Covenant

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fulfillment.

ment interpretation, suggests that Gabriel's assurance of Christ's kingdom "shall be spiritual: he shall reign over the house of Jacob, not Israel according to the flesh, for they neither came into his interests nor did they continue long a people; it must therefore be a spiritual kingdom."2 Is this how Mary would have understood Gabriel's message? Henry simply assumes, as do most covenant theologians, that Israel's rejection of Christ and subsequent national scattering in AD 70 removed any possibility of a literal fulfillment of Gabriel's prophecy.

A normal (literal) interpretation of the Bible will affirm that Israel is a national people sharing a common lineage (Gen. 13:16) and land (Gen. 12:7; 13:14, 15; 15:18–21, 17:8). When spiritualizing of a passage is dismissed, it becomes clear that God promised to make of Abraham a great "nation" (Gen. 12:2). As Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage, he spoke on behalf of God to his biological relatives, saying, "Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6). God made Israel a nation "because he would keep the oath which he had sworn" (Deut. 7:8) to Abraham (Gen. 12:1, 2), Isaac (Gen. 26:24; 28:1–4), and Jacob (Gen. 28:13, 14). Israel's national status is proof positive that God literally fulfills His promises and shows that even prophecies of the Bible are to be interpreted literally.

The pages of the Old Testament are filled with specific promises and prophecies to the nation of Israel that have been literally fulfilled. God promised to scatter Israel from its homeland as a punishment for disobedience and literally fulfilled this punitive promise through the Babylonians and the Romans (Deut. 28:64, 65). God promised to restore the captives to their homeland when they repented and literally fulfilled this promise in the times of Ezra and others (Jer. 30:3). God promised to bless Israel with a Messiah who

would be born of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). All of these prophecies were fulfilled literally. Most importantly, God promised that the nation of Israel would never be obliterated, saying, "Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob. . . . For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee" (Jer. 30:10, 11; cf. Jer. 31:35–37). Should we not assume that God's promise to preserve Israel forever is to be fulfilled literally? Those who interpret the Bible literally believe Israel is a national entity with a real place in Bible prophecy.

In contrast to the nation of Israel, which is made up of the biological seed of Israel whether of faith or not of faith, the church is a blending of ethnicities bound together by

> faith alone through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). When Jesus said that He would build His church, He predicted a new work that Peter concludes began on the day of Pentecost (Matt. 16:18; Acts 11:15). The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that the making of the church was something new—a mystery unknown in Old Testament times (Eph. 3:3). For the Jew it was unimaginable "that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body" (Eph. 3:6). As Israel left Egypt, God divided the world into two parts: Israel and the nations. With the advent of the church, the world was divided again. Today, God recognizes two ethnic divisions (Israel and the nations) and

one spiritual division, the church. That is why 1 Corinthians 10:32 divides the world into three parts, saying, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." Unlike national Israel, which was made up of a mixed-faith multitude, the church is comprised only of those who are truly "in Christ," by faith (Gal. 3:28).

A normal, literal interpretation of the Bible will conclude that Israel is a national, sovereignly preserved entity that continues to have a place in Biblical prophecy (Rom. 11:26). The church, on the other hand, is a spiritual body that began at Pentecost and will be called away before the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7). Is the church Israel? Your answer depends on your hermeneutic!

Dr. Chuck Phelps pastors the Colonial Hills Baptist Church of Indianapolis, Indiana, serves on the Executive Board of the FBFI, and is an adjunct professor and regular Bible conference speaker.



Recommended reading on Replacement Theology: see Dr. Renald E. Showers, *The Coming Apocalypse: A Study of Replacement Theology vs. God's Faithfulness in the End-Times* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel, 2009).

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McClean, VA: MacDonald, n.d.), 5:585.

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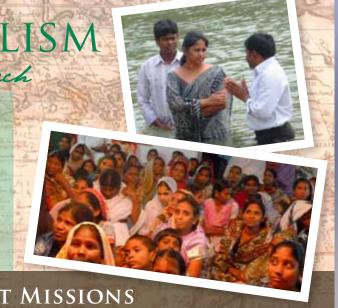
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Hermeneutical principles . . . are not restricted to any "elite" but are available to all who have the interest and energy to learn them.

—Grant R. Osborne

The primary purpose of the Bible is to change our lives, not increase our knowledge. —Walter Henrichsen

The safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

—C. S. Lewis

The [Holy Ghost's] . . . words can have no more than one simplest sense, which we call the Scriptural or literal meaning.

—Martin Luther

Such a system of polyvalence [multiple meanings] . . . would have us understand a text not in terms of its syntactical or semantic structures, but in the variety of ways in which that text is "actualized" in our minds.

-Walter C. Kaiser Jr.

We may have a clearer understanding of Isaiah 53 than Isaiah had. What we do not have is a new meaning of Isaiah 53.

—David M. Atkinson

Since it is almost his [the interpreter's] only task to unfold the mind of the writer whom he has undertaken to expound, he misses his mark, or at least strays outside his limits, by the extent to which he leads his readers away from the meaning of his author. —John Calvin

A modern metaphor can never be used to define but only to illustrate.

—Grant R. Osborne

Church history is important but not decisive in the interpretation of Scripture. —Walter Henrichsen

The father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), made a ringing protest against this preoccupation with the history of words. He compared linguistics to chess: The issue is not the history of the game, but the state of the board.

-Anthony C. Thiselton

The Bible will become dearer to you every day . . . only if you go deep into it! If you keep to the surface, you will weary of it.

—James Stalker

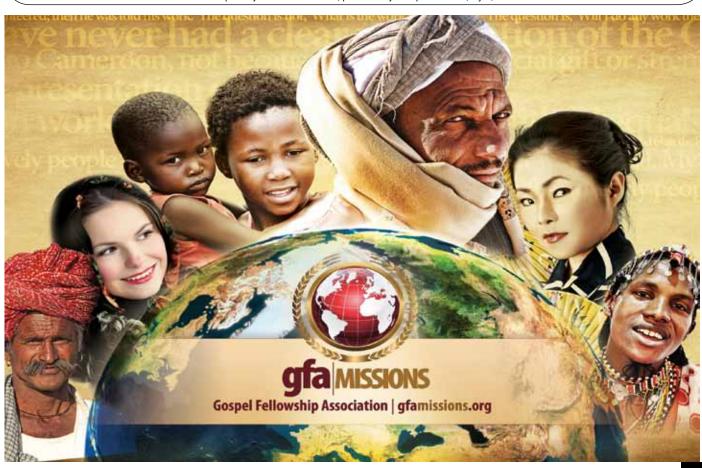
The earnest Bible student will diligently apply himself not only to the study of isolated parts but will search for those relationships between the parts as clues to what God intended to reveal.

—Irving L. Jensen

When two or more unrelated texts are treated as if they belong together, we have the fallacy of collapsing contexts.

—James W. Sire

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.



Regional Fellowships

New York Regional Meeting

The New York City Regional FBFI meeting (September 17–18, 2012) was a great blessing. Dr. Steve Hankins, dean of Bob Jones Seminary, was our speaker along with Retired Navy Chaplain Wayne Bley. It was a blessing to have Dr. Michael Privett and missionary Bob Rutledge come all the way from Greenville, South Carolina, to attend our meeting as well. Pastor Doug Sexton came from the Buffalo area, and we also had pastors, church planters, and missionaries from New Jersey as well as New York City.



Dr. Hankins preached three Christ-centered messages that challenged us to minister with the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5–13), by the grace of God (2 Cor. 9:8), and in the love of God (1 Cor. 13:4–7). His messages were rich in Scripture and



gospel centered, reminding us that our enablement of ministry, from beginning to end, is by Christ and for Christ. One of the powerful moments was when Dr. Hankins highlighted that every one of Paul's epistles begins and ends with grace, and so our ministries must have grace as the starting and ending point as well.

Bro. Wayne Bley had a timely emphasis on the global threat of Islam. He highlighted the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and also shared how Islam relates to the end time, as it is a religion completely dedicated to an anti-Christ point of view.

Our Heritage Church family did great work in providing meals and snacks both Monday evening, Tuesday morning for breakfast, Tuesday afternoon for lunch, and Tuesday night for after-service refreshments. It is moments like that which make a pastor very grateful for his faithful church brothers and sisters who serve so unselfishly and with much love for Christ.

Central Regional Meeting

The Central Regional FBFI was held in the brand new building of Midland Baptist Church in Wichita, Kansas. Dr. Dale Heffernan (pictured here in the massive lobby of Midland Baptist, holding his grand-daughter, an obvious football fan), and his congregation hosted a wonderful time of great food and fellowship on October 22 and 23.





Caribbean Regional Meeting

Dr. Johnny Daniels and Calvary Baptist Tabernacle hosted the Caribbean Regional FBFI October 29–November 2, in Carolina, Puerto Rico. The week-long meeting is a high-

light for the church and pastors from over forty countries who gather for many hours of preaching. For most, this annual event is the only meeting they attend apart from their own church services. Accompanying her father, Becky Vaughn spoke to over 150



teens in Sunday School at Calvary, and in the Sunday evening service at the Biblical Baptist Church in Caguas.



Southern California Regional Meeting

Victory Baptist Church, California City, California, was the site of the Southern California Regional FBFI fellowship on November 12 and 13. Pastor Ron Smith worked hard to promote the meeting and to contact the men



who enjoy good fellowship in that region, in spite of the great distances men in California must travel.





AT A GLANCE

Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

WHY INTERPRETATIONAL

Besides the Fundamentals, is there anything that all Fundamentalists agree on? The question is facetious . . . sort of. But somewhere in the tagline of most of our churches are three words: Baptist, Fundamental, and Independent. It's the ramifications of that last one that this column addresses, especially the *hermeneutical* ramifications—that is, our differences in interpretation of everything from isolated passages to major theological concepts.

In Exegetical Fallacies D. A. Carson identifies a number of flaws that are, unfortunately, common in Bible interpretation even among practiced and informed scholars. One of Carson's driving concerns is what he describes as "hermeneutical disarray." For example, the broader spectrum of Bible-believing Evangelicals is characterized by differences of opinion and interpretation over issues such as Calvinism vs. Arminianism vs. Amyraldianism, classic dispensational theology vs. progressive dispensational theology vs. covenant theology, the significance of the Lord's Table, church polity, and various eschatological views. The fact is that, even as Bible-believing Fundamentalist Baptists, there is a wide variety of issues and passages and theological concepts we would disagree on among ourselves (including most of those listed above). These are not insignificant interpretational

Often when we come to differing conclusions, it is because one (or both) of us has employed bad hermeneutical reasoning. But it does not follow that *whenever* we come to differing conclusions, one of us must be using bad reasoning.

Reasons We Disagree

Several factors contribute to such hermeneutical differences among us.*

Theological predisposition—Everyone has a basic theological system, which furnishes the lens through which we tend to read the Biblical text. We are inclined to see texts in ways that make them fit with the preconceived notions of our system or even with our own personal, paratextual opinions. If I am persuaded that this age will get progressively worse prior to the rapture, I may be inclined to read Jesus' reference to "the days of Noah" as an "obvious" reference to the evil of those days—overlooking the fact that the text is not stressing that at all but, rather, the routine activities of life (eating, drinking, and marrying) that will be abruptly interrupted by the suddenness of eschatological intervention. Likewise, one is inclined to

read references to "the world" in keeping with previous theological predisposition regarding the intent of the atonement and how it works.

Differing degrees of giftedness—Some interpreters are, quite frankly, more (or less) gifted than others. This is not necessarily a matter of raw intelligence but may involve one's level of training, breadth of familiarity with the whole range of Scriptural revelation, and experience with handling the text. That's not to say that a higher level of giftedness in such areas guarantees rightness of interpretation. But it is, nonetheless, one of the factors that explains the differences among us.

Differing perceptions of literary issues—Some are more attuned to the impact of genre, figures of speech, literary devices, and other issues that impinge (sometimes significantly) on the interpretation of any literary document, including Scripture.

Presence of genuine ambiguity—The preceding factors all focus on the human element in interpretation. But there is actually a textual element that contributes to such differences as well. Not all Scripture is equally clear. Take the epistles, for example. Whenever you are reading an epistle you are, in effect, reading someone else's mail—and only one side of the correspondence at that. The original recipient, no doubt, understood the apostle's meaning clearly enough because he knew the situation from his side as well, such as the precise questions and issues that the Corinthians had raised in their letter to Paul, to which he was responding in 1 Corinthians (see 7:1). But we're not always sure of everything that was behind everything the apostle wrote. That example doesn't even take into account that there are many passages where, for translational or lexical reasons, the meaning of the text is simply susceptible to two or more equally legitimate interpretations.

Why Are There Ambiguities?

That last factor raises another question altogether. Why does God build ambiguity into the Bible? Couldn't God have made the Bible utterly unambiguous at every point? The answer to that has to be yes; but He chose not to. Even if He had, that still would not remove the impact of the human elements above; man is wonderfully adept at injecting uncertainty and fabricating ambiguity where none legitimately exists. But we have to acknowledge that not everything in the Bible is as clear to us as it could possibly be. The question is, why did God do that? Again, there are a number of potential answers to that.

DISAGREEMENTS?

Ambiguities force us to search His Word more diligently. That's a good thing. The prophets did this even in connection with their own prophecies (1 Pet. 1:10).

Ambiguities prompt our meditation on Scripture. It is as if God constructed a revelation that forces us—if we are really serious about understanding it—to be preoccupied with His words (Ps. 49:3).

Ambiguities help us personalize truth searched out. Nothing gives you a more intimate love and personal conviction about certain truths than when that understanding comes at the expense of much labor and spiritual sweat and seeking God; such searching out makes a unique impact on us (cf. Dan. 9:1ff.).

Ambiguities measure our interest in God's mind and will. Ambiguities test us, the level of our interest in understanding God, the seriousness of our commitment to discovering and following His ways, the priority we place (or not) on knowing what He has said. If we care little about knowing and understanding exactly what someone has said to us, we care little about the one who said it.

Ambiguities cultivate and exercise our maturity, charity, and unity when we disagree on what it says. God knows us so well, even in our fallenness. He knows our differences and our proclivities. Perhaps one of the major reasons He gave us a revelation that He knew was susceptible of misunderstanding in places was to give us the opportunity to grow in the grace of charity and unity with those with whom we disagree. The NT includes an extended passage that makes this very point. Read Romans 14, and give special attention to Paul's conclusion to the whole discussion in 15:1–6.

That last point leads to a final question that needs to be investigated: *Is it a bad thing that we have so many disagreements?*

Is It Bad to Disagree?

Amid the disturbing "hermeneutical disarray" that bedevils God's people, one of Carson's express goals in *Exegetical Fallacies* is to contribute to a greater hermeneutical uniformity.

The importance of this sort of study cannot be overestimated if we are to move toward unanimity on those matters of interpretation that still divide us. I speak to those with a high view of Scripture: it is very distressing to contemplate how many differences there are among us as to what Scripture actually says. . . . [T] here is a disturbing array of mutually incompatible theological opinions (*Exegetical Fallacies*, 18).

Granted. But is such unanimity necessary? Indeed, given all the tendencies and vagaries of our fallenness, is hermeneutical unanimity even possible? Or desirable? It is practically heresy these days even to raise such a question; the call to unity often trumps all else. But we're not even talking about unity here; we're talking *unanimity*. There is a difference. Unanimity would be nice; but it is not a Biblical obligation. Unity is, and unity is possible without unanimity. Biblically speaking, lack of unanimity is one of the best tests of unity.

It is ironic that the very chapter that describes a remarkable unity of mind over the church's first major debate should conclude with a falling out between the two men who are, at the beginning of the chapter, inseparable! After the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 Paul and Barnabas had a heated disagreement (Acts 15:36-41). The word translated "contention" (Acts 15:39) is the root from which we get "paroxysm." A strong word that denotes a serious quarrel, it graphically portrays Paul and Barnabas as being provoked with one another and arguing heatedly over (don't miss this) a very spiritual subject—who should or should not accompany them on their next missionary journey! Paul was unwilling to entrust the shared responsibilities of such a journey to John Mark, who had just deserted them on their previous journey (Acts 13:13). Barnabas (John Mark's cousin, Col. 4:10) felt it important to give the young man a second chance.

This "paroxysm" between Paul and Barnabas was sharp, valid, and apparently unresolved. Whether Paul and Barnabas ever traveled or ministered together again, we do not know. But we do know that Paul continued to hold Barnabas in high esteem (1 Cor. 9:6) and, ironically, even ended up working closely with Mark as well (Col. 4:10).

The point is not whether Paul or Barnabas was right. Luke discreetly avoids taking sides. Rather than speculating where the text does not inform us, and assuming that Paul (or even Barnabas) was actually in the right, why should we not assume that *both* were actively seeking God's guidance, and that God was directing each *differently*? This incident illustrates that the godliest of men act humanly, that such men may disagree on equally valid points of principle or opinion, and that God may even *use* such disagreement to further His purposes. This account can function as a paradigm for procedural or doctrinal disagreements that may

Continued on next page

The Relevance of Scripture: A Hermeneutical History

(Continued from page 7)

meaning of texts (rather than the author communicating his intention through the words of the text). But the Bible everywhere teaches that God intends readers to grasp his intentions. Throughout Scripture readers encounter the phrases "Thus says the LORD," "declaration of Yahweh," or some similar phrase. Often these words are connected to commands and judgments for failing to obey commands. The implication is that the reader can and ought to follow the author's intention. The claim that meaning is regulated by community socialization also fails to account for Jesus' commission to carry His commands beyond the Christian community to the entire world. When the apostles carry out this commission, they are able to reason with people in other "faith communities" from the Scripture (Acts 2:22-36; 8:30-35; 17:2, 3; 18:4, 19).

³ The Oxford English Dictionary notes multiple senses for the word "literal." "Literal" may be meant a non-allegorical interpretation according to the normal rules of language (OED sense 3.a.). But "literal" can also mean interpretation that does not take metaphorical language into account (OED sense 3.b.). It is important to keep these two senses distinct in hermeneutical discussions. The patristic writers failed to do this and thus appealed to clear metaphors in Scripture to justify allegorical hermeneutics. Some conflate the two senses when they are argue that interpretation should be as literal as possible. Being literal in sense 3.a. is necessary but being literal in sense 3.b. will lead to misunderstanding the text.

John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, trans. John King (1847; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1:114. Calvin did spiritualize kingdom promises given to Israel and apply them to the church. But Calvin did not view this as allegorizing Scripture. According to Calvin, the physical language of the promises was an accommodation to "the capacities of a rude and weak people." Calvin determined which prophecies were intended to be understood spiritually by looking at what had been fulfilled and what had not been fulfilled in Christ's first coming. The difference between Calvin and the patristic and medieval interpreters is the difference

between recognizing when an author is using allegory and when the interpreter is using an allegorical method. This means that the critic of Calvin (and those who interpret similarly) must critique his understanding of what the Old Testament authors are doing. It is not sufficient to exhort these interpreters to interpret literally. In their minds, they are. I would critique Calvin along two lines. First, by claiming that the physical promises are accommodations that actually point to greater spiritual realities, Calvin minimized the fact that God's plan of redemption includes the physical world. The Bible encourages saints to look forward to living on a regenerated earth (Matt. 19:28). (See Michael J. Vlach, Has the Church Replaced Israel? [Nashville: B&H, 2010], 96, 116.) Once the physical is re-admitted as a key part of God's plan of redemption, the possibility that these as-yet-unfulfilled prophecies will be fulfilled in the future becomes clear, and Calvin's criteria for discovering which of the prophecies are to be understood spiritually falls away.

At A Glance Continued from page 29

end up reaching a greater variety of mentalities and temperaments, backgrounds, and experiences than if we all agreed on everything. What Satan sought to incite and inflame for the purpose of division, God turned to multiplication. The result of the unresolved argument was a doubled mission with many more reached and much more accomplished than if Paul and Barnabas had agreed.

Philip Henry, father of Matthew Henry, once remarked that "it is not so much our differences of opinion that doth us the mischief, but the mismanagement of that difference."

It is not *disagreement* (lack of unanimity) that hinders God's use of us, but *ill will* (lack of unity).

May God help us to ground our views in the most informed and careful study of His Word that we can render and then help us to learn how to manage our differences with each other well, with charity and unity.

*I cannot tell to what degree the content in this section has been further developed over years of teaching it, but the basic points originated, for me, with my pastor, Dr. Mark Minnick.

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Tennessee and Widening Sharia Influence

Tennessee, under the guidance of Governor Bill Haslam, has made three obvious moves to increase the influence of Sharia law here in the US. First, he has enlisted a partnership with the Tennessee American Muslim Advisory Council (AMAC) to help Tennessee Homeland Security train law enforcement and safety personnel. Second, he has appointed Samar Ali as International Director of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development. Ali specializes in Shariacompliant finance. Third, AMAC was invited to provide training for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

This article may be referenced at http://bradleycountynews.word-press.com/2012/07/16/governor-haslam-prepares-us-for-sharia-law-compliance-in-tennessee/.

They Are Not All Leaving

The following is not so much a news article, but it does deserve your consideration. According to many statistical studies, young adults are leaving their childhood churches in droves. Some attend other churches, but many leave the faith altogether. According to a Lifeway 2007 study, two out of every three young adults will leave the faith (though maybe temporarily) between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two.

Joe McKeever, writing for Crosswalk.com, lists five reasons that not all young adults are leaving:

- (1) They do have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by faith in His grace.
- (2) Many have been given a strong foundation in their homes and churches.
- (3) Many are encouraged by the faithfulness of their friends.
- (4) Many churches and families have provided Christ-honoring role models. And
- (5) the world has no viable alternative.

Take heart, friends. They are not all leaving!

This article can be referenced http://m.crosswalk.com/church/youth-ministry/5-reasons-why-not-all-young-adults-leave-church.html.

Marriage Redefined?

On Tuesday, November 6, 2012, voters in Maryland and Maine approved measures to allow the redefinition of marriage in their states. According to nbcnews.com, "The measures came as Americans appear to be growing more comfortable with the idea of gay marriage. A Pew Research Center poll this summer found that 48 percent of Americans favor same-sex marriage, up from 31 percent in 2004."

God has already made His will on this issue clearly known. I doubt the readers of *FrontLine* need any help understanding what God wants and why He wants it. Yet as we converse with our fellow citizens, we will need the help of those who devote themselves to this cause.

The Maryland Marriage Alliance has published a helpful synopsis that I recommend you use in your education process. On the Maryland Marriage Alliance website under the Threats to Marriage tab, you can reference an article on the Consequences of Redefining Marriage.

Information for this article may be referenced at http://nbcpolitics.nbcnews.com/news/2012/11/07/14978747-for-first-time-voters-back-gay-marriage-instatewide-votes?lite and http://www.marylandmarriagealliance.org/consequences-of-redefining-marriage/.

Persecution in Indonesia

In April of 2010 members of the GKI Yasmin Church in Indonesia received orders to close their church because they did not possess the appropriate permits for their building and meeting practices. Bogor City Mayor Diani Budiarto led the opposition against the church as a result of meeting with jihadist factions of his city.

The church continued to meet outside the presidential palace in protest. Their complaint was that they did, in fact, have the permits required. In 2011 the Indonesian Supreme Court issued a ruling in favor of the church, but the city did not back down. The city offered ground within five miles of the existing building and a budget to rebuild, but the church has refused the compromise.

All that is being offered to the church is not coming with the permits to build or occupy. Such a variance would require ninety Christian signatures and sixty Muslim signatures. Mayor Budiarto has begun the process of closing nine other churches and has sent a letter to another twenty churches indicating that they are to begin the demolition of their own worship facilities. In spite of federal acknowledgment of the churches' right to occupy and worship, local authorities will not budge. The federal government is doing no more to intervene.

This article may be referenced at http://www.wnd.com/2012/11/city-to-christian-church-go-away/.

Toto, We Aren't in Egypt Anymore

Islamic organizations are forming in the US that have ties, directly or indirectly, to the Muslim Brotherhood. As an example, there now exists the Midland Islamic Council. Midland refers to Kansas. Missouri, and their neighboring states. Islamic councils, groups, and organizations are all subordinate to the major Muslim-American Societies, including ISNA, ICNA, MSA, and CAIR. A Google review of their advisers will confirm their interlocking nature. How else would there occur immediate press releases from fifty-plus organizations, cosigned by hundreds of imams and supporters, condemning the Patriot Act, FBI investigations, the NYPD probe, and supporting blasphemy laws in the US? This is no sleeping giant. It has erupted, and it is expanding multifold.

This report was generated by Wayne Bley, Chairman of the FBFI Commission of Chaplains and founder of Be STILL Ministries.

You may reference the Midland Islamic Council information at http://midlandcouncil.com/.

For the Public Good

A Plymouth Brethren congregation in Devon, England, received notification from the nation's Charity Commission that has caught the attention of all of England's churches. In order to be considered a charity, under England charity laws, an organization must prove they exist for some public benefit. Apparently the Charity Commission has come to believe that churches do not fit the criteria.

Kenneth Dribble, who is head of the legal services for the Charity Commission, has stated, "This decision makes it clear that there was no presumption that religion generally, or at any more specific level, is for the public benefit, even in the case of Christianity or the Church of England."

Many believe that the action against this one congregation is a test case to press this form of political correctness on all churches in England.

This article can be referenced at http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue17883.html.

Blasphemy Laws

Pastor Karma Patras was arrested in Pakistan on October 13 in the central Punjab Province. He was holding a prayer meeting in the home of a believer when he was asked a question regarding the Muslim feast Eid al-Adha. This festival is held annually as Muslims commemorate, according to their traditions, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael as a sacrifice to God.

Appealing to 1 Corinthians

NOTABLE QUOTES

t is very easy to trust in God when there is no difficulty, but that is not trust at all. It is simply letting the mind rest in a complacent mood. But when there is sickness in the house, when there is trouble, when there is death, where is our trust in God? The clearest evidence that God's grace is at work in our hearts is that we do not get into panics.—Oswald Chambers

The word of God is His perfect message to men. If that be spurned, He has nothing more to say to them until they meet Him in judgment. Wherever that word is proclaimed, it puts those who hear it in the place of responsibility such as they never knew before. The light shines from the word. If they refuse its testimony, they prove that they love darkness rather than light. That word contains all that is necessary to show the way of life. Moses and the prophets all spake of Him. But in the New Testament we have the full-orbed revelation of Him who has come in grace to seek and to save the lost. He who believes finds deliverance. He who turns away will perish in his sins.—H. A. Ironside

t is easier to belong to a coterie (small exclusive group) which tells what Jesus Christ has done for me, easier to become a devotee to divine healing, or to a special type of sanctification or to the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Paul did not say, "Woe is me if I do not preach what Christ has done for me," but "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" This is the gospel—"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"—Oswald Chambers

t can be summed up in a phrase—watch your strength. Not so much your weaknesses: it is your strengths you have to watch, the things at which you excel, your natural gifts and aptitudes. They are the ones that are most likely to trip you because they are the ones that will tempt you to make a display and pander to self.—D. Martin Lloyd-Jones

of I am a child of God, distress will lead me to Him for direction. The distress comes not because I have done wrong, it is part of the inevitable result of not being at home in the world, of being in contact with those who reason and live from a different standpoint.—Oswald Chambers

10, Pastor Patras said that the festival was a Muslim festival and was forbidden to Christians. Muslims who were present spoke to the local imam, and a riot followed. Police first came to protect the pastor, but later arrested him under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. The punishment, if he is convicted, would be life imprisonment or even death.

This article can be referenced at http://www.christianpost.com/news/pakistani-christian-pastor-jailed-for-blaspheming-against-islamic-feast-84511/.

Radio Control

Students at John Jay High School and Anson Jones Middle School in Texas received new student IDs this year. Each badge contains radio frequency identification tracker chip that is battery powered, constantly emitting a signal of the bearer's whereabouts. Students are now required to wear the chip at all times—or face potential expulsion.

The stated rationale is that the district had a high rate of student truancy and the state would increase the school's funding if they were able to improve the truancy rate.

The ACLU, whose stated objective is to help protect personal liberties, has already indicated they would not be willing to help students who are objecting to the new school policy.

This article can be referenced at http://www.wnd.com/2012/10/wear-radio-chip-or-leave-school-tells-students/.

Compiled by Robert Condict, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the FBFI.



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What Kind of Friends Do You Have? (Part One)

A friend can be either a hindrance or a help to your life. It is paramount that you weigh the significance of the friendships you have built into your life. Proverbs 13:20 states, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." The Scriptures declare that the wrong kind of friend is considered a fool and will be the downfall of a person's life.

We find this truth revealed in the life of a young man in the Old Testament named Amnon. Second Samuel 13:1–3 records the following tragic event:

And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.

Jonadab was the wrong kind of friend. He gave counsel to Amnon to seduce his sister and even gave him a plan. In verse 5 Jonadab told Amnon to pretend to be sick and to call for Tamar to come and prepare a meal for him. In verses 10 and 11 Amnon did what Jonadab suggested, and when Tamar brought him food, "he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister." Tamar responded in verse 12 by saying, "Do not thou this folly." But in verse 14 Jonadab "would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her." When Absalom heard what Amnon had done to Tamar, he planned to kill him. Verses 28 and 29 say, "Now Absalom had commanded his servants. . . . Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? . . . And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded." Just as Amnon lost his life because of the ungodly counsel of Jonadab, many people have suffered untold pain and grief because of counsel from the wrong kind of friend.

Another example of the wrong kind of friend took place in the life of Rehoboam in 2 Chronicles 10. When his father Solomon died, Rehoboam was to assume the kingship, and he had to make a decision as to how to lead the people. In verses 6–8 he first of all asked counsel of the older men that had worked with Solomon, and these wise, mature men gave the right kind of counsel to Rehoboam: "If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants forever." But did Rehoboam listen to these men? No. Verse 8 says, "But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him." These young men told Rehoboam to be hard on the people. Rule with an iron fist! Beat them into submission! So Rehoboam took the counsel of both the older men and the young men and seemingly pondered it for three days. Then we find his decision in verses 13 and 14: "And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." The awful result of his listening to the young men is revealed in verse 19: "And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day." Rehoboam's listening to the wrong friends cost him the throne! We'd better be careful with whom we seek counsel. The counsel of the ungodly will always lead to devastating results.

In the next issue, we will examine the right kind of friends we should have in our lives.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.

Mail Bag & News from All Over (Continued from page 5)

together not only as a couple but also as missionaries. This year their oldest son got married and their youngest son entered college. Pray for the Meltons' church in Nagoya, Calvary Baptist Church, as they are seeking a national pastor. Read about the ministry at www.timmelton.japanforchrist.com.



Earl and Joan Barnett recently stepped into a new role in King Cove, Alaska. Earl Barnett now serves as the missionary pastor at King Cove Bible Chapel. They had the privilege of being the recipients of a special surprise

recommissioning service at Joan's home church in Iowa, Calvary Baptist Church.

Phil and Gloria Kissinger serve with Military Ministries. Chaplain Kissinger ministers as the chaplain of the local chapter of Veterans of Foreign Wars in Idaho. Souls have been saved as a result of his ministry as a volunteer chaplain at the local hospital in Twin Falls. Pray for the development of a ministry that will help local pastors reach military personnel for Christ. Read about the Kissingers' ministry at www.wotbm.org.

Ben and Katie Shore serve with Baptist World Mission in Edinburgh, Scotland. They have five children ranging in age from ten to two years old. This year promises to be busy for Katie as she homeschools four of the kids.



John and Karen McPherson serve the Lord as missionaries in Cropada. A young woman

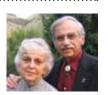
in Grenada. A young woman from a Hindu background recently accepted Christ and is growing through a Bible study with another missionary. The McPhersons were able to travel to the United States

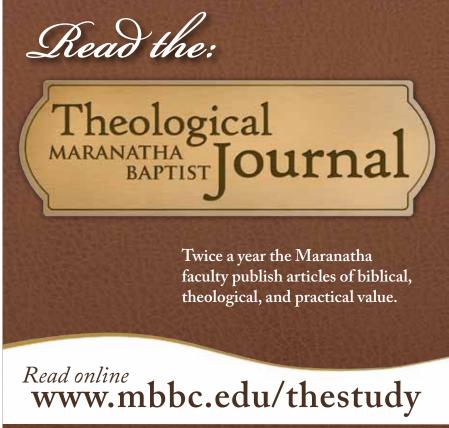


to attend their youngest daughter's wedding. They also attended John's mother's ninety-fifth birthday celebration.

Vic and Joyce LaBelle have been serving the Lord in Mexico for thirty-one years. They are rejoicing over the good fruit from the annual youth camp. Joyce taught a class to the young ladies. Vic praises the Lord for the men in the ministry who dedicated their lives to serve the Lord at the camps that were under his direction.

Jonathan Rehfeldt is on deputation to Uruguay, serving under Baptist World Mission. His burden for the spiritual needs in Uruguay grew after recently completing a survey trip. He is thankful for the godly missionaries, national pastors, and laymen who have helped to pave the way spiritually in many areas.





Soldier Readiness Processing *by Josh Cox*

Religion and politics are the two topics you avoid bringing up if you want to keep your friends as friends.... Right; unless you are an SRP chaplain! As an SRP (Soldier Readiness Processing) chaplain, I have the remarkable opportunity to speak with our soldiers about their religion and personal spiritual fitness. Politics is not really my forte, but spiritual fitness is the key to life. This ministry supports Army Reserve units across nineteen Midwestern states and allows me to assess our soldiers' spiritual lives before they deploy and then respectively provide them with the counseling they need. I try to ensure that America's finest men and women in uniform and their families have the spiritual resources necessary to overcome the harsh rigors of deployment.

So maybe you are asking, "How do you counsel these



soldiers?" Theologically speaking, it is through God's grace and the working of the Holy Spirit. Relationally, I usually have a short list of introductory questions I like to ask, and then the spiritually loaded questions commence! I will ask them about their religious preference, which every soldier states on his or her ID tags. If the soldier is a Christian, a loaded question that really tells me about their faith would be, "If you were to stand before God, why would He let you into Heaven?" A great passage I like to share is Matthew 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" These soldiers can be physically fit, financially diversified, or even legally squared away with everything going perfectly fine, but I will try to encourage them according to the Scriptures that if their soul is not spiritually fit then all else in life is in vain! I have

the greatest MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) in the Army! It is a priceless ministry being able to share the Scriptures with America's finest and show them how to be spiritually fit for battle, for life.

So, do we part ways as friends or foes? Usually, because of the pistachios or chocolate I offer, we part ways as friends!



FBFI Army Reserve Chaplain (CPT) Joshua Cox is currently stationed at Fort Snelling, MN, with the 88th Regional Support Command (RSC) Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP) Detachment.

Other Opportunities

It is always a blessing to hear from our FBFI chaplains. They send in quarterly reports about their ministries and travels. Recently, we received a report from Chaplain (MAJ) Gary Fisher, serving as the Group Chaplain, and Senior OCT (Observer-Coach-Trainer) at the Joint Readiness Training Center in Fort Polk, Louisiana, Chaplain Fisher is pictured here with FBFI Chaplain (CPT) Bret Perkuchin, during a training exercise.



Those who attend our regional fellowships enjoy the good company of FBFI chaplains who are able to attend.



Chaplains (LT) Chris Wyrick, (CPT) Jeff Campa, and (CPT) Matt Sanders join Dr. Vaughn at the Central Regional meeting in Wichita, Kansas.



Occasionally, FBFI chaplains are invited to participate in other ministry events, such as the one shown here where Chaplain (CPT) Doug Nab, of Special Forces Group A, held a service for the Louisiana National Guard Youth Challenge at Camp Minden, Louisiana, to encourage the young men and women in the six-month residential program. Designed to help at-risk youth to achieve their education goals and to learn about teamwork, discipline, and personal growth, the program is held in a military academy setting. Chaplain Nab conducted a voluntary service which was attended by 223 cadets and six cadre, who heard about the importance of faith and Christian character. Over sixty Bibles and hundreds of pieces of Christian literature were given to the cadets. Fourteen young people made decisions for Christ in the service.



Seven Years, Four Duty Stations, and Three Children Later

by Mrs. Kendal L. Long

Recently our family had the privilege of hosting Bob and Sylvia Ellis for lunch. Through the course of our conversation, we discussed my husband Tavis's upcoming promotion and what I had learned seven years, four duty stations, and three children later, about life as a military wife.



First and foremost, you cannot fully prepare someone for all of the blessings and trials that she will face upon becoming a military wife. Tavis told me there would be deployments, but he could not prepare me for the loneliness I would feel during those long months of being a single mom. He told me that we would move every two to three years, but he could not prepare me for the wonderful friends we would meet along the way.

Nothing could prepare me for the look in my daughter's eyes as she cried, "I don't want to move. I will miss my very best friend." I am saddened, because I know Continued on next page

that I too will miss the dear friends who have become like family. My heart aches because I know the moves and separations from "very best friends" will only get more difficult as our children get older. I want to answer her, "I don't want to move either. I will miss my very best friend, too."

Secondly, my job as a military wife is to love my Lord, love my husband, and love my children. It is important to make sure that my children think their daddy is the greatest man on earth. I convey to them that his job not only provides our source of income but holds the opportunity for new adventures and, most importantly, is the ministry that God has graciously given to us. So, to my daughter I answer, "It's okay to be sad. We will still be able to talk to your very best friend; but we will also make new friends. It's a great adventure, and we're so

blessed that we get to do this together as a family for the glory of God."

Finally, seven years ago, in a small Marine Corps Chapel in Barstow, California, I pinned on Tavis's rank of Lieutenant. The then-Chaplain of the Marine Corps, Rear Admiral Robert Burt, was there to administer the oath of office. In September of this year, in the Pentagon Memorial

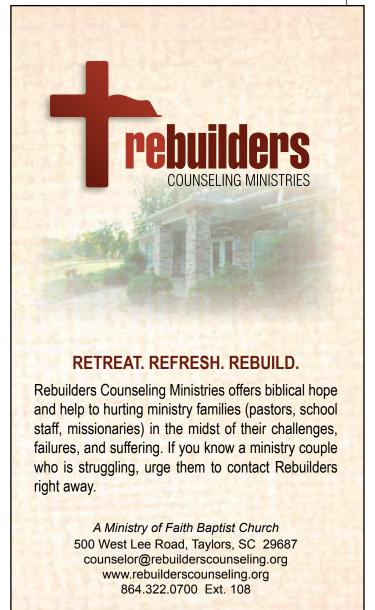
Chapel, two of our three children pinned on his new rank of Lieutenant Commander. This time, the current

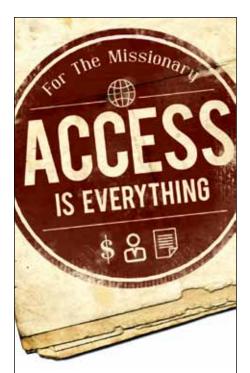


Chaplain of the Marine Corps, Rear Admiral Margaret Kibben, administered the oath of office. In attendance for the ceremony were dear friends such as Bob and Sylvia Ellis; Tavis's first Commanding Officer; Tavis's parents; his brother, Chaplain (LT) Trenten Long and his family; as well as other dear family friends and colleagues.

Over the past seven years I have learned that through all of the ups and downs, this military life is an incredible journey. Each new duty station provides unique opportunities for our family. The Lord has been with us each step of the way, and we are truly blessed. There is still much to learn. But, the experiences that I have already had are priceless. To God be the glory . . . great things He has done!

Kendal Long is married to FBFI CH (LCDR) Tavis Long, who is currently working a staff position at the Pentagon.





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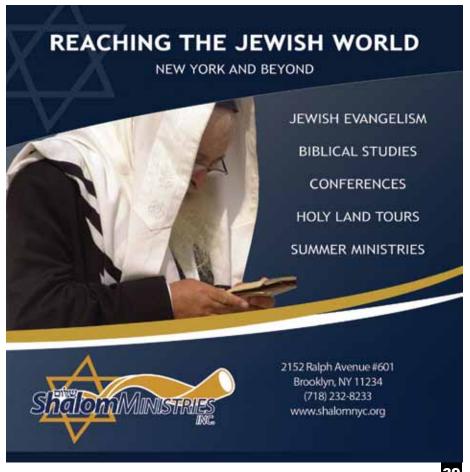
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