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EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING FICTIONAL
LITERATURE TO TEACH BIBLICAL TRUTHS TO THE HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS AT GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
HIGH SCHOOL, KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

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Anthony Ryan Pointer
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Date _____

To my wife Julie, our son, Isaiah, and our daughter, Micah.

Thank you for your patience, kindness,
and steadfast love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vi
PREFACE	vii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose	1
Goals	1
Ministry Context	2
Rationale	5
Definitions, Limitations, and De-limitations	7
Research Methodology	9
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION	11
Introduction	11
Creativity and the Image of God	12
The Usage of Parabolic and Prophetic Fiction in the Bible	20
3. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES	32
Introduction	32
The Pedagogical Implications of Art, Music, and Literature	32
The Adolescent Developmental Stage and Emotional Learning Theory ...	35
Pedagogical Implications of Storytelling, Analogies, and Illustrations	38
Historical Testimony of the Usage of Fictional Stories, Analogies, and Illustrations	48

Chapter	Page
4. THE FIFTEEN-WEEK PROJECT	56
Introduction	56
Stage 1: Strategic Planning and Composition of Materials	58
Stage 2: Twelve-Week Curriculum	58
Stage 3: Post-Project Exam, Survey, and Writing Assignment	73
Stage 4: Data Analysis	74
Conclusion	74
5. PROJECT EVALUATION	76
Introduction	76
Evaluation of the Data	76
Pre-Project and Post-Project Exam Results	77
Post-Project Survey Results	84
Post-Project Writing Assignment	88
Evaluation of the Project Goals	89
Evaluation of the Project Process	92
Proposed Project Modifications	93
Theological Considerations and Reflection	94
Personal Evaluation and Reflection	96
Conclusion	97
 Appendix	
1. RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM	99
2. PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT EXAM (CONTROL AND NON-CONTROL GROUP)	100
3. WEEKLY LESSONS—NON-CONTROL GROUP	102
4. WEEKLY LESSONS—CONTROL GROUP	126
5. POST-PROJECT SURVEY (NON-CONTROL GROUP)	135
6. POST-PROJECT SURVEY (CONTROL GROUP)	136

7. WRITING ASSIGNMENT (NON-CONTROL GROUP)	137
8. POST-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS	138
BIBLIOGRAPHY	144

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Non-control group definitions	78
2. Control group definitions	79
3. Non-control group applications	81
4. Control group applications	82
A1. Non-control group survey (participants 1-3)	138
A2. Non-control group survey (participants 4-6)	139
A3. Non-control group survey (participants 7-9)	139
A4. Non-control group survey (participants 10-12)	140
A5. Control group survey (participants 1-3)	141
A6. Control group survey (participants 4-6)	141
A7. Control group survey (participants 7-9)	142
A8. Control group survey (participants 10-11)	142
A9. Non-control group writing assignment completion	143

PREFACE

The completion of this project is the culmination of the meticulous efforts of countless individuals whom have had a profound impact in my life. Dr. Hal Pettegrew, my faculty supervisor, graciously poured his wisdom, encouragement, and academic fervor into my life. As my professor, he challenged me to constantly re-evaluate and refine my preconceived notions about education and ministry. Dr. Pettegrew modeled humility, graciousness, and passion in every one of our shared experiences together. Likewise, Dr. Michael Wilder instructed and guided me through some of the most challenging aspects of preparing for educational ministry. His servant's heart and dedication to his family continually reminded me that ministry is about serving the Lord by loving others. I am also indebted to Dr. Timothy Paul Jones for his insight, counsel, and encouragement.

Many others have supported me throughout this process. I am grateful to the students, administration, and faculty of Grace Christian Academy. This project could not have been accomplished without the contributions of so many of my students. Their diligence and perseverance is a perpetual testimony of their willingness to sacrifice their time to help out a friend in need. Likewise, the prayers and encouragement from my colleagues and friends were a constant source of strength and renewal. Thank you is a woefully insufficient expression to relate my gratitude to Betsy Fredrick, who painstakingly helped me to refine the words I wanted to express throughout my project. I am also grateful for my church family for their love and support.

Of all the earthly treasures that I have received in this life, none has been more

enriching and fulfilling than my family. My wife, Julie, has unreservedly offered me her love, encouragement, wisdom, and support throughout our life and ministry together. In an entire lifetime, I would never be able to express how grateful I am for her. She believed in me when few others would, and she fearlessly followed me along the path that God had set before us. I am also grateful for our children, Isaiah and Micah, who not only have added depth and joy to my life, but have also taught me more about the heart of our Heavenly Father. I am also thankful for my entire family, who have loved and supported me through this project.

Finally, I will never be able to understand why my precious Lord and Savior allowed me to be a small part of his great work here on this earth but I am fearfully grateful. It is only by His grace and love that I stand here on this earth today. He alone, is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory. May his name be perpetually praised.

Anthony Ryan Pointer

Knoxville, Tennessee

May 2012

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to determine if fictional literature is a viable apparatus for teaching biblical truths to high school students at Grace Christian Academy.

Goals

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to determine if fictional literature could increase the ability of the high school students of Grace Christian Academy to comprehend and retain biblical truths. A pre-project exam and post-project exam was utilized to verify the effectiveness of fictional literature as a medium for conveying biblical truths. One of the proposals of this project was that fictional literature is a viable methodology for instruction because of its ability to transfer information in a memorable manner.

The second goal was to determine if fictional literature could increase the students' ability to apply biblical truths. As stated, a test was administered before and after the project. The test was also designed to evaluate the effectiveness of fictional literature as a tool for teaching application skills to high school students. Another thesis of this project was that the situational nature of fictional literature serves as a practical tool for communicating realistic applications of biblical truths.

Third, my desire was to see my students increase in their ability to utilize their God-given imaginations for the glory of Christ and the advancement of the His Kingdom. The assessment tool for this portion of the project was comprehensive in nature. At the conclusion of this project, students were required to create an original work of fiction that

illustrated two or three biblical truths. Another thesis of this project was that the imaginative nature of fictional writing would increase the students' aptitude to use their own imaginations.

Ministry Context

Grace Christian Academy High School is an educational ministry of Grace Baptist church in Knoxville, Tennessee. On its website, the school provides a brief overview of its history:

In 1994 God called Grace Baptist Church to begin a new ministry, a Christian school. Church members were called out to serve on the first school board, which was composed of some home school parents, teachers, and businessmen who had a heart for children. After almost two years of research and preparation, Grace Christian Academy opened its doors at the beginning of the 1997-1998 school year. God worked through sixty families and five staff members to make [Grace Christian Academy] more than a vision. . . . In 2004, Grace Christian Academy received full accreditation in grades K-12 and is classified as a category II school. The 2004-2005 school year brought the graduation of the first senior class and groundbreaking for phase one of the new high school building and athletic fields.¹

In 2006, there were 176 high school students. At the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, there were 286 students enrolled. With an increase of 110 students since 2006, the school ran out of classroom space. Fortunately, the school was able to complete an addition to the aforementioned high school building and students occupied the new building in the fall of 2010.² This addition has temporarily resolved the space issue. However, it is projected that the school's rate of growth will dramatically slow down over the next few years unless the school can continue to construct new classrooms.

As a ministry of Grace Baptist Church, the high school unashamedly functions out of a Christian worldview in its educational content and strategies. On its website, Grace states that the mission of the school is to "lead students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to build them up to their full potential in Him, and to equip them to serve

¹Grace Christian Academy, "About GCA" [on-line]; accessed 21 March 2011; available from <http://gracechristianrams.org>; Internet.

²Ibid.

Him.”³ The desire of the administration and faculty is that this mission would be infused into the curriculum, philosophy, and the overall day-to-day activities of the school. It is a conservative Southern Baptist School located in the growing community of Karns, a suburb of Knoxville, Tennessee. According to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Knox County has an estimated population of 423,655 people with the median age being 37 years old. Knox County could be considered a “family-friendly” community of East Tennessee with over 47,693 family units having at least one child under the age of 18.⁴ These families are the primary target for the school’s strategic outreach plan. Because of its affordability, most of the clientele of Grace Christian Academy high school are middle class, working families. The 2005-2009 American Community Survey indicated that there are 369,431 Caucasians, 37,586 African-Americans, 9,899 Hispanics, and 7,043 Asians in Knox County.⁵ The student body of Grace Christian Academy high school reflects these ethnic demographics as well.

Several strengths make the school effective in its desire to “lead students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, to build them up to their full potential in Him, and to equip them to serve Him.”⁶ First, Grace Christian Academy has the complete support of Grace Baptist Church. The school does not stand alone as an isolated entity. The ministers, staff, and congregation of the church have wholeheartedly embraced the school as a ministerial extension of themselves. The church’s pastors pray for the school on a weekly basis. They offer spiritual guidance and support to the faculty. The congregation is also quick to respond to the needs of the school. For instance, an elderly church

³Ibid.

⁴American Community Survey, “2005-2009 American Community Survey of Knoxville, Tennessee” [on-line]; accessed 21 March 2011; available from <http://census.gov>; Internet.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Grace Christian Academy, “AboutGCA.”

member volunteers to help serve lunch every week even though she does not have any kids or grandkids in the school. This same type of generosity and support is common among most of the members of the congregation. A large majority of the faculty members of the school are active members of the church. The school consistently receives prayer, financial support, and words of encouragement from the church.

Another strength of the school is its expanding culture of parental involvement. Most of the parents of Grace Christian Academy students want to take an active role in their child's education. This includes their willingness to work alongside teachers and adhere to the policy and procedures of the school. For the most part, there is a level of fluid communication between parents and teachers. The school has gone to great lengths to facilitate this process. The school uses a "real-time" communication network that allows parents to monitor the minute-by-minute academic progress of their students. The school also encourages parents to attend its semi-annual open houses. Parents are free to set up conferences with the faculty and administration at any time. The faculty and administration of the school work diligently to intentionally establish a relational environment with parents and students.

Although Grace has several strengths, it also has a number of areas in which it could improve. One of the weaknesses of the school is its facilities. The school has immaculate grounds, advanced technology, and large open classrooms. However, the school does not have enough classroom space to sustain its current growth rate. In addition to operating at almost maximum capacity in the new high school building, the school is also occupying a large part of the church facilities as well. The overutilization of the church facilities has led to two distinct problems. First, it has created tension between the Academy and the other ministries of the church. Most of this tension is about room availability and supply usage. The second problem has to do with future growth. At its current growth rate, Grace has the potential to run out of space within the next few years if it does not continue to add building expansions. The problems with building

expansions are finding the capital and land to support them.

Another weakness of the school is its financial situation. Grace Christian Academy is a private Christian school. Therefore, it does not receive any support from the state. It must be completely self-sufficient. Teachers' salaries, supplies, utilities, maintenance, and athletics all have to be generated from fundraising and tuition. The church has graciously agreed to help offset the cost of the utilities and there are several members of the congregation who help support the school financially. However, because the school wants to keep tuition affordable, it leaves little room for expansion capital. It is important to note that in spite of these deficiencies, God has richly blessed the ministerial efforts of Grace Christian Academy. There is a strong belief among the entire school that God will continue to do so in the future.

Rationale

In his review of J. R. R. Tolkien's epic series *Lord of the Rings*, C. S. Lewis stated,

'But why,' (some ask), 'why, if you have a serious comment to make on the real life of men, must you do it by talking about a phantasmagoric never-never land of your own?' Because, I take it, one of the main things the author wants to say is that the real life of men is of that mythical and heroic quality. One can see the principle at work in his characterization. Much that in a realistic work would be done by 'character delineation' is here done simply by making the character an elf, a dwarf, or a hobbit. The imagined beings have their insides on the outside; they are visible souls. And man as a whole, Man pitted against the universe, have we seen him at all till we see that he is like a hero in a fairy tale.⁷

Lewis understood that fictional literature was an influential tool that could be utilized to teach powerful truth. By stirring the imagination, the author has the ability to sear his message into the hearts of his readers. A person only has to spend a day in the average high school to discover that students are greatly affected by music, media, and various art forms. These mediums have the ability to capture the attention of a generation that is

⁷C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature* (San Diego: Harvest, 1982), 89.

attention deficit. The perplexing question of this phenomenon is, “How?” Has God given humanity creativity and imagination to aide in their educational endeavors?

As Lewis and others have alluded to, there is a deficiency in a lot of Sunday school curriculum and Christian education methodology. Most curricula are missing the element of imagination. In one of his essays from the collection *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, Lewis states,

I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralyzed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings. And reverence itself did harm. The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.⁸

Lewis explained that fictional literature could be used a tool to help solidify biblical themes in the hearts and minds of students. This genre could aid the Christian educator by stripping away the man-made attainableness and aloofness of scriptural truth.

It is important to note that this project was not advocating a system of changing the truth of God’s Word. That would be heretical and dangerous. Rather, this project was dealing solely with a methodological tool. It could be argued that this methodology is already utilized all throughout scripture and therefore has theological rigor and biblical precedence. The proposed strategy for integration of this concept was as such: several samples of fictional literature with specific biblical truths were created or acquired, the materials were integrated into the curriculum of a high school classroom, and then students were tested to evaluate the effectiveness of this methodology.

Ideally, there would be noticeable outcomes produced. First, there would be a difference in the retention of the specific biblical truths communicated in the stories.

⁸C. S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* (San Diego: Harvest, 1994), 37.

Second, students would be able to draw “real-world” applications from the biblical truths being communicated efficiently and comprehensively. For instance, a student reads a short story about a brave knight’s quest to retrieve a lost treasure. Along the way the knight is faced with several moral choices in which he proves himself to be a man of integrity. At the end of the story, students are asked to evaluate the knight’s choices in light of the Bible’s teachings on truth, honesty, and integrity. Then the student will be asked how these principles could be replicated in their own lives. The student sees a fictional example of biblical truth in action. This would help them to conceptualize the truth and draw real-life applications for their own lives.

Definitions, Limitations, and De-limitations

An important term used throughout this project was *fictional literature*. In *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays state,

The Oxford English Dictionary defines literature as ‘writing which has claim to consideration on the ground of beauty of form or emotional effect.’ The key elements in this definition may be writing—after all, the words literature and letters have roots in common—and beauty and emotion. But we sometimes use the word literature to refer to writing that has little to do with feelings or artful forms, as in ‘scientific literature’—the articles on a particular subject—or ‘campaign literature.’⁹

According to this definition there are different intended meanings behind the word “literature.” The type of literature that was utilized the most in this project was fictional literature. Fictional literature is best described in the first portion of the quotation above. It is non-literal and illusory literature in which the intended desire is to evoke some type of emotional response from the reader. It could also be used to convey a message in an artistic or creative form. C. S. Lewis states, “The value of myth is that it takes all the things you know and restores to them the rich significance which has been hidden by the veil of familiarity.”¹⁰ According to Lewis, fictional literature has the potential to provide

⁹Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays, *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, 9th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), 4.

¹⁰Lewis, *On Stories*, 90.

clarity and significance to subjects that have become obscured due to overuse.

Another term that was important throughout this project was *Christian education*. In their book *A Theology for Christian Education*, James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison state, “Christian education refers to the content of instruction (noun), but it should also be an approach toward education that is distinctively Christian (adjective), one that reflects out theological beliefs and convictions.”¹¹ As the authors explain, Christian education is not merely the assimilation of information from teacher to student. Instead, it is a ministry of perpetual motion that is constantly surging into the future and advancing the Kingdom of God. Through Christian education, others can learn about the nature and character of God, the function and reality of the Church, and the joys and responsibilities of the Christian life. The primary purpose of this project was to determine if fictional literature could be used to aid the Christian education process.

The limitations and de-limitations of this project are as follows. First, the length of the project was only fifteen weeks. One week was dedicated to material preparation. During the week-long preparation process, I gathered or created portions of fiction that were used to communicate biblical truths to high school students. This week-long period was also used to secure the proper parental permission forms for the project. Following preparation period, the administration and evaluation portion of the project began. Once a week for twelve weeks, the students participated in the project outlined in this proposal. Finally, there was a week-long interview and evaluation period at the conclusion of the project.

A delimitation of this project was the attrition and diversity of the participants. The project was carried out at Grace Christian Academy. Due to my employment conditions, the number and diversity of participants was limited to the 2012 graduating

¹¹James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville: B and H, 2008), 1.

class. Although the senior class of Grace Christian Academy is representative of the community, the project dealt with a limited number of participants.

Research Methodology

It is important to note that the results stemming from this project are unique to this study. The project was conducted on two separate Senior Bible classes at Grace Christian Academy. The students studied in the project were randomly placed into two separate groups by the administration of Grace Christian Academy prior to the beginning of school year in order to fulfill their normal academic requirements. It should also be noted that the data collected in the project was potentially influenced by the teacher's ability to communicate biblical truths through the medium of fictional short stories and the medium of lecture.

As stated above, three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to determine if fictional literature could increase the ability of the high school students of Grace Christian Academy to comprehend and retain biblical truths. In order to evaluate the project's ability to accomplish this goal, a pre-project and post-project exam was administered. The pre-project exam and post-project exam questions was designed to determine if fictional literature is an effective instructional tool for communicating information in a memorable manner. The process was conducted as follows. A pre-project exam was administered to test the student's conceptualization of a specific biblical truth. Then, once a week, the students departed from their normal curriculum in order to study a specific biblical truth using fictional literature. During this lesson, the students were given a selection of fiction that illustrated the specified biblical truth. At the conclusion of the project, the students were given an identical post-project exam to determine if there is any improvement in their comprehension of the aforementioned biblical truth.

The second goal of this project was to determine if fictional literature could increase the students' ability to apply biblical truths. The aforementioned pre-project exam

and post-project exam was also designed to determine the viability of fiction as an effective medium for teaching application skills to high school students. Utilizing the same format as above, students were tested to determine if the situational nature of the selected fictional story helps them replicate realistic applications of the predetermined biblical truth. In addition to a pre-project exam and post-project exam, student interviews were conducted. The interviews also helped to determine if fictional literature could increase the ability of the high school students of Grace Christian Academy to comprehend, retain, and apply biblical truths. The student interviews were conducted during the final week of the project.

The third goal of this project was to help students increase their ability to utilize their creativity for the glory of Christ and the advancement of the His Kingdom. As stated earlier, the assessment tool for this portion of the project was the creation of an original work of fiction by the students. The student produced works of fiction were evaluated to determine if the imaginative nature of fiction aided the students in using their imaginations. It was a hope that the students of this project would develop a love for the Bible, a love for fiction, and a desire to bring glory of God.

A control group was also studied during this project. The control group covered the same biblical truth as the non-control group. The control group also took the same pre-project exam and post-project exam as the non-control group. However, the control group was taught using standard lectures as opposed to fictional literature. A comparison of the pre-project exams and the post-project exams of both groups was conducted at the conclusion of the project.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Introduction

The Bible is composed of various types of literary genres. God's message is encapsulated and communicated through historical narrative, poetry, prophecy, parables, laws, idioms, hyperbole, epistles, proverbs, songs, and treaties. In his book *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*, Robert Stein states,

It is clear that there are various kinds of literary forms in the Bible. Each of them possesses its own rules of interpretation. The authors in using these literary forms consciously submitted themselves to the rules governing these forms in order to share their meaning with their readers. Each author assumed that his readers would interpret his words according to those rules governing that literary form.¹

According to Stein, each form of literature has its own distinctive traits, rules for proper interpretation, and ability to communicate idiosyncratically its message.

Stein goes on to explain that the language of these various forms of literature can be categorized into two main types:

Within the Bible, as within literature in general, there exist two main kinds of language: 'referential language' and 'commissive language.' When we use referential language, the main goal is to pass on information. This form of language seeks to describe. It seeks to be nonemotional in nature. It seeks to pass on facts. . . . Commissive language, on the other hand, has as its main goal evoking decisions, conveying emotions, eliciting feelings, and arousing the emotions. It is the language of poets, people in love, college football coaches, lieutenants leading men in battle, motivational speakers, and speakers at high school graduations. Whereas referential language appeals to the 'mind,' commissive language appeals to the 'heart.'²

Most works of fiction are largely composed of commissive language. The central

¹Robert Stein, *Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 75.

²*Ibid.*, 73.

message of nearly all parables, proverbs, poetry, prophecy, and short stories are shrouded within the creative, memorable, and artistic expressions of commissive language. As the reader is captivated by the emotional nature of these types of literature, he or she also receives a didactic lesson.

Fictional literature functions as such because mankind was created with the ability to create and enjoy the creativity of others. Inherent within the *imago dei* is mankind's mandate to reflect and emulate the imagination of God. In his book *The Christian, the Arts, and Truth*, Frank Gaebelien states,

So the image of God in us has its 'creative' or 'making' aspect. Obviously this image, which is one of the most profound subjects in theology, is much more than that. Yet this making or creative aspect of the image is a true part of it. For God is the Great Maker, the unique Creator. And all other creative activity derives from him.³

Mankind both desires to create and holistically responds to the artistic creations of others. Therefore, the power of imaginative expression can be harnessed into an effective form of instructional methodology.

The following chapter will examine the connection of the *imago dei*, as outlined in Genesis 1:26-27, to the usage of fictional literature for educational purposes. There will also be an examination of the usage of parabolic fiction in 2 Samuel 12:1-15, Mark 4:10-12, and Mark 4:30-34. Then, there will be an assessment of the utilization of prophetic fiction in Jeremiah 13:1-11. The purpose of this examination is to demonstrate that the use of fiction as a didactic tool is both biblically and theologically coherent.

Creativity and the Image of God

The book of Genesis begins with an overview of the entire creation process. The first twenty-five verses of the opening chapter explain the logical sequence in which God spoke the universe into existence. The sun, moon, stars, land, trees, and animals

³Frank Gaebelien, *The Christian, the Arts, and Truth: Regaining the Vision of Greatness* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1978), 72.

were all precisely and systematically brought into existence by the will of God. As the author of Genesis is describing the events of the creation act, he provides a meticulous annotation about God's creation of mankind:

Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created him. (Gen 1:26-27)

In his book *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith*, Bruce Ware states, "One learns within the very creation account of Genesis 1-2 that this God who speaks into existence all that exists created humankind uniquely in his own image."⁴ As Ware explains, God has placed within mankind a reflection of himself.

John H. Sailhamer expands upon this concept further when he states,

The creation of man is set apart from the previous acts of creation by a series of subtle contrasts with the earlier accounts of God's acts. For example, in v.26 the beginning of the creation of man is marked by the usual 'And God said.' However, God's command that follows is not an impersonal (third person) 'Let there be . . . ' but rather the more personal (first person) 'Let us make . . . ' Second, whereas throughout the previous account the making of each creature is described as 'according to its kind', in the account of the creation of man it is specified that the man and the woman were made 'in our [God's] image,' not merely 'according to his own kind.' Man's image is not simply of himself; he also shares a likeness to His creator.⁵

According to Sailhamer, the creation of man was a personal and intimate act of God. Not only does mankind reflect the image of God; but he is the only part of creation that bears this distinction.

For centuries, scholars have debated the connection between anthropology and the *imago dei*. Each generation has produced substantial observations on how to answer the question, "How does mankind reflect the image of God?" In spite of the substantial quantity and quality of research conducted on this issue the pursuit of a sufficient and

⁴Bruce Ware, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 52.

⁵John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Temper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 37.

cohesive answer to this complex question is still ongoing. Most scholars on the image of God adhere to one of two main viewpoints. It is important to note that each viewpoint contains several subcategories.

The first position states that the *imago dei* mentioned in Genesis 1:26-27 is only a reference to mankind's dominance over the earth. In his commentary on Genesis 1:26-27, Kenneth A. Matthews states,

Traditionally, commentators have said that the 'image' must consist of non-corporeal features (John 4:24), such as moral, intellectual, and personality characteristics that are shared with God. Genesis, however, says nothing about the 'Image of God' as to its ontological content, and therefore to develop anthropology rooted in this phrase is speculative. Genesis 1:26-28 concerns itself primarily with the consequence of this special creation, the rule of human life over the terrestrial order, rather than defining the identity of the 'image.' . . . "The language of 1:26 reflects this idea of a royal figure representing God as his appointed ruler. This appears to be the understanding of Psalm 8, which focuses on human dominion, though without explicit mention of the 'image' or 'likeness.' This is further indicated by the term 'rule' in 1:26, 28, which is used commonly of royal dominion. Human jurisdiction over animate life in the skies, waters, and land corresponds to the 'rule' of the sun and the moon over the inanimate sphere of creation.⁶

Arguing from a literalist's perspective, Matthews explains that man's reflection of God is limited to the exercising of dominion over the created order. God's sovereignty over creation is shared, in part, with finite man. However, Matthews argues that the image reflection ends at this point.

In a recent article entitled *Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image*, Peter J. Gentry argues that "the divine image entails a covenant relationship between God and humans on the one hand, and between humans and the world on the other."⁷ According to Gentry, Adam is the son of God and therefore the rightful ruler of the earth as God's representative.⁸ Thus, the *imago dei* is bestowed upon man within the

⁶Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1a (Nashville: B and H, 1996), 169.

⁷Peter Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2008): 29.

⁸Ibid.

context of a divine union between God and man. Therefore, mankind's duty within this covenant is to bring all things under the lordship of his Creator.

Similarly, Millard Erickson In his book *Christian Theology*, further explains the function and purpose of mankind's authority over the created order: "The exercise of dominion is a consequence of the image of God. Humanity is to gain an understanding and control over creation, developing it to its ultimate potential for its own good and for God."⁹ According to Erickson, the ultimate goal of mankind's authority over the earth is the exaltation of God. God is gloried when the created order works according to its proper function. According to Matthews, Gentry, and Erickson, the simplest reading of the text implies that the *imago dei* is only referring to the man's authority over creation.

The second position on this issue states that mankind's reflection of the image of God has broader implications than merely the exercising of dominion. This position argues that mankind was designed to reflect the image of God in a multitude of ways. In his book *The Holy Spirit*, Sinclair Ferguson writes, "Man was made as the image of God and bore his likeness. He was called to express it in every aspect of his being."¹⁰ According to Ferguson, man's reflection of God is far more comprehensive in nature. Genesis 1:26-27 is a divine command from God to humanity. Mankind is given the responsibility of making God known through all facets of life. John H. Walton affirms this idea in his commentary on Genesis 5:1-3:

Perhaps most significant, 5:1-3 likens the image of God in Adam to the image of Adam in Seth. This goes beyond the comment about plants and animals reproducing after their kind, though certainly children share physical characteristics and basic nature (genetically) with their parents. What draws the idol imagery and the child imagery together is the concept that the image of God in people provides them the capacity not only to serve as God's vice-regents (his representatives containing his essence), but also the capacity to be and act like him. Thus, 5:1-3 is perhaps the

⁹Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 535.

¹⁰Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, *Contours of Christian Theology*, vol. 6 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 139.

most significant for determining how we ought to interpret the image of God.¹¹ As Walton illustrates, the *imago dei* encompasses dominion over the earth and the ability to emulate various components of God's nature. Mankind is to love one another because God is love. Mankind is to walk in truth because God is truth. Mankind is to be holy because God is holy. Those who hold to this position believe that God is a multidimensional being. Therefore, mankind's reflection of God is multifaceted. In his book *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Wayne Grudem explains that the *imago dei* is referring to multiple components. Mankind is a spiritual being just as God is a spiritual being. Mankind is a relational being just as God is a relational being. Mankind is a moral being because God is a moral being. Mankind is an emotional being because God is an emotional being.¹² Therefore, man's primary purpose is to reflect the image of God in all facets of his life.

In this chapter, inferences from the second major viewpoint will be expanded upon. This section will explore the connection between the *imago dei* and human creativity. More specifically, it will address the connection between the image of God and the genre of fictional literature. Mankind was created with the aspiration to generate and respond to the imaginative inventions of others. Therefore, Christian educators can utilize a creative medium, such as fictional literature, to serve as a vehicle for communicating biblical truth.

Inherently within the *imago dei* is humanity's directive to mirror the creativeness of God. In reference to mankind's reflection of God's creativity, Wayne Grudem states,

It seems that God created the universe, then, to take delight in his creation, for as creation shows forth various aspects of God's character, to that extent he takes delight

¹¹John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 130-31.

¹²Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 445-48.

in it. This explains why we take spontaneous delight in all sorts of creative activities ourselves. People with artistic or musical or literary skills enjoy creating things and seeing, hearing, or pondering their creative work. God has made us to enjoy imitating, in a creaturely way, his creative activity. And one of the amazing aspects of humanity—in distinction from the rest of creation—is our ability to create new things. This also explains why we take delight in other kinds of ‘creative’ activity: many people enjoy cooking, or decorating their home, or working with wood or other materials, or producing scientific inventions, or devising new solutions to problems in industrial production. Even children enjoy coloring pictures or building houses out of blocks. In all of these activities we reflect in small measure the creative activity of God, and we should delight in it and thank him for it.¹³

According to Grudem, God’s image is replicated in the imaginative and artistic expressions of humanity. God is reflected both in the exercising and enjoyment of human creativity.

In reference to mankind’s ability to emulate the originality of God:

Our likeness to God can also be seen in our human creativity in areas such as art, music, literature, and in scientific and technological inventiveness. We should not think of creativity as restricted to world-famous musicians or artists—it is also reflected in a delightful way in play acting or skits put on by children, in the skill reflected in the cooking of a meal or the decorating of a home or the planting of a garden, and in the inventiveness shown by every human being who ‘fixes’ something that just wasn’t working correctly.¹⁴

In addition to the replication of God’s imagination, the *imago dei* also grants mankind the ability to take pleasure in the creations of others. Grudem goes on to state, “Moreover, God gives to us an ability to appreciate beauty in many areas of life. And in this area as well as in the physical and intellectual realm. . . .”¹⁵ Thus, Genesis 1:26-27 serves as the foundation and interpretive guide for all artistic and literary expression.

Unfortunately, the reflection of God’s image can be polluted and marred by the sinful decisions of man. In his book *The Doctrine of God*, John Frame emphasizes the difference between God’s creativity and man’s creativity:

As we have seen, between God and the creation there is no similarity without difference. God’s attributes differ from ours in that they are the source and the standard of ours. God loves, knows, and creates as Lord; we do these things as creatures, and therefore very differently.¹⁶

¹³Ibid., 271-72.

¹⁴Ibid., 447.

¹⁵Ibid., 661.

¹⁶John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R, 2002), 366.

As Frame demonstrates, a clear distinction exists between God's use of imagination and man's. Mankind is limited and God is omnipotent. Mankind is sinful and God is holy. Humanity's use of creativity is unoriginal; it must have a greater or higher source. God's creativity is comprehensively original and is the highest source.

In analyzing the connection between the *imago dei* and the creativity of humanity, the finiteness and depravity of mankind must be taken into account. However, Frame points out,

The fact that God's nature is the source and standard of ours does not prohibit, but rather makes possible, comparisons between God and ourselves. The creaturely effect resembles its divine cause, for everything in it comes from the cause. The qualities of creatures resemble their divine standard in various degrees and ways, for the standard is a perfect person rather than an abstract concept.¹⁷

The depravity of man may affect the clarity of God's reflection; but it does not negate it.

In his book *The Person of Christ*, Donald Macleod affirms this idea:

Man was made in the image of God. As such he possesses spirit and reason. As such, too, he possesses the capacity for fellowship with God. These considerations mean that, in becoming man, God is not identifying with something that is a contradiction of himself. Human nature has the capacity for sharing in the divine and this implies that there is in the incarnation an element of appropriateness which would not exist in the case of a union between God and any creature.¹⁸

It is by God's grace that mankind maintains a portion of the *imago dei*; even after the fall. It is also by God's grace that mankind maintains the ability to participate in and enjoy the artistic productions of others. As Wayne Grudem points out, the sinfulness of humanity does not squelch all human creativity because "the blessings of common grace are sometimes poured out on unbelievers even more abundantly than on believers. Yet in all cases it is a result of the grace of God."¹⁹

It is important to note that the restoration process of the *imago dei* through

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 202.

¹⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 661.

salvation opens the door for even greater and more accurate artistic expressions. In his book *Art and the Bible*, Francis Schaeffer claims, “The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars.”²⁰ According to Schaeffer, all aspects of redeemed humanity are to be brought under the lordship of Christ.²¹ The believer is to surrender his mind, body, and soul to the service and glorification of Christ:

The arts and sciences do have a place in the Christian life—they are not peripheral. For a Christian, redeemed by the work of Christ and living within the norms of scripture and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the lordship of Christ should include the arts. A Christian should use these arts to the glory of God, not just as tracts, mind you, but as things of beauty to the praise of God. An art work can be a doxology itself.²²

Like Grudem, Schaeffer is not saying that the lost are incapable of producing or enjoying beautiful works of art. Rather, it is only through a Christian worldview that humanity can come to a complete and greater understanding of what makes artistic expressions beautiful and enjoyable.

At the core of fictional literature is the conveyance of human imagination. When generating a work of fiction, the author is calling into existence things that did not previously exist. In essence, the author is creating new worlds, societies, objects, and people groups. A painter incorporates color and techniques to bring his creation to life. Similarly, an author utilizes grammar, sentence structure, and figurative language to create beautiful expressions of literary art. Mankind’s ability to produce fictional literature derives from the fact that he was made in the image of the great Creator. Likewise, humanity’s capacity to relish fictional literature is a derivative of the reality that he was constructed in the image of God.

Mankind’s connectivity to creative expression can therefore be exploited for

²⁰Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 1.

²¹*Ibid.*, 16.

²²*Ibid.*, 18.

the purpose of Christian education. In his aforementioned work, Francis Schaeffer explains that fiction can serve as an effective vehicle for communicating a central message:

Art forms [including fictional literature] can be used for any type of message from pure fantasy to detailed history. That a work of art is in form of fantasy or epic or painting does not mean that there is no propositional content. Just as one can have propositional statements in prose, there can be propositional statement in poetry, in painting, in virtually every art form.²³

The utilization of fiction is certainly not the only methodology of teaching biblical truths. However, it is a theologically viable apparatus that can be used for the transference of scriptural realities.

The Usage of Parabolic and Prophetic Fiction in the Bible

The methodology of using fiction to communicate truth is also supported by biblical precedence. An examination of the parabolic and prophetic literature of the Bible demonstrates that fictional literature can be utilized as a powerful tool in Christian education. In this section, an evaluation on the usage of parables in both the Old and New Testament will be conducted. Specifically, there will be an examination of 2 Samuel 12:1-15, Mark 4:10-12 and 4:30-34. Also, an assessment of the symbolic acts, oracles, and visions of the Old Testament Prophets will be conducted by examining Jeremiah 13:1-11. By studying the usage of fiction in the genres of prophecy and parables, Christian educators can gain a valuable tool for teaching God's truth.

The use of fiction is found throughout the biblical narrative. Parables of the Old and New Testament serve as examples of creatively expressed works of fiction designed to communicate a vital point. In his book *The Message and Ministry of Jesus: An Introductory Textbook*, David Fiensy states, "The word parable comes from the Greek *parabole* which means 'something put alongside', that is, for comparison. A parable is

²³Ibid., 71.

then an expanded narrative metaphor or simile.”²⁴ The original hearers of a biblical parable received a vivid word picture in order to solidify a central message in their hearts; a message that they might not have been able to process any other way. In their book *A Theology for Christian Education*, James Estep, Jr., Michael Anthony, and Gregg Allison further explain the function of biblical parables: “Parables teach important spiritual truths (with which people are unfamiliar) by means of analogy with something concrete (with which people are familiar.)”²⁵ In the Bible, parables commonly drew upon images found in the everyday lives of the hearers. Images of agriculture, family, shepherding, and money were often utilized because of their relational and simplistic qualities.

Consequently, the fictional nature of biblical parables has the potential to lead to severe misinterpretation by today’s readers. In their book *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr., explain, “As metaphorical discourse, parables create an impact through their choice of imagery and narrative form, which is largely lost when ones tries to communicate their meaning through one or more propositions.”²⁶ It is important to note that parables operated according to a set of interpretive principles known to both the original speakers and hearers. Therefore, current students of the Bible must be diligent in their application of hermeneutical principles when dealing with passages of Scripture containing parabolic language.

Robert Stein helpfully explains,

The real, life-like quality of the parables, especially the parables of Jesus, has frequently caused interpreters to forget that the parable is a fictional literary form. This literary form consists of two parts: a picture part, or the story proper, and a reality part, or the comparison to which it is likened. The picture itself does not

²⁴David A. Fiensy, *The Message and Ministry of Jesus: An Introductory Textbook* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 117.

²⁵James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville: B and H, 2008), 139.

²⁶William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 414.

describe an actual historical event. It is a fictional creation that came into being out of the mind of its author. Thus, we should not confuse it with biblical narrative, for in a biblical narrative the picture describes a historical event that really happened.²⁷

As Stein demonstrates, a parable is different from an allegory in that not every component of the “picture part” has a correlation to the “reality part.”²⁸ It is also different from historical narrative, which is a detailed account of real events. Rather, the parable is thematic in scope and is designed to illustrate one or two basic points.

Often, parables serve as a means of communicating a central message in a memorable and captivating manner. In his book *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ*, Robert Stein writes,

Parables tend to disarm the listeners, for the meaning of a parable is often driven home before they can resist the point being made. An excellent example is found in Nathan’s parable to David. Before David could defend himself against the point of the parable, the arrow had stuck in his heart—‘You are the man!’²⁹

As Stein alludes, King David’s encounter with the prophet Nathan clearly illustrates the communicative power of a parable. Second Samuel 12:1-15 states,

Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, ‘There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.’ Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, ‘As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.’ Nathan then said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘It is I who delivered you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these! Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to

²⁷Stein, *Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 137-38.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 125.

be your wife.’ Thus says the Lord, ‘Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.’ Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.’ So Nathan went to his house.

In this passage, the prophet Nathan was able to orchestrate a series of events in which King David would bring indictment upon himself. In his commentary on this passage, Robert Bergen explains,

Nathan conveyed divine judgment against the king with superlative communicative skill. He began with a parable, in this case a simple, immediately comprehensive narrative designed to convey a truth that far exceeded its surface meaning. Such stories, not unlike political cartoons today, permitted persons of lesser social power to render judgment against the most powerful members of society.³⁰

King David unsuspectingly allowed the main point of the parable to permeate his heart because the convicting truth was shrouded in a fictional story. In the process, Nathan was able to ensure that the Lord’s message was heard and accepted by the king.

Joyce G. Baldwin writes,

Nathan has skillfully presented his case and gained an opening which enables him to deliver all he must say without waste of time or words: *You are the man*. David has condemned himself and suddenly has come to terms with his own verdict, passed upon another but unerringly applied to himself.³¹

The end result was conviction. David was able to face the reality of his own sin because of the beguiling nature of Nathan’s parable. In his commentary on this passage, Bill Arnold asks and answers a provocative question:

How does a prophet correct a king who has absolute power? The best way to expose David’s hypocrisy is to have him condemn himself. Nathan’s parable about the rich man and the poor man arouses David’s indignation, and he quickly condemns himself by condemning the rich man. The parable’s image of the rich man cruelly slaughtering the poor man’s ‘one little ewe lamb’ speaks directly to the heart of this former shepherd. With decisiveness and passion (he ‘burned with anger’), the king

³⁰Robert D. Bergen, *1 and 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: B and H, 1996), 369-70.

³¹Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 8 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 237.

quickly declares that the rich man is guilty and deserving of death, though as king he will allow severe reparations as punishment.³²

Nathan's parable illustrates how a simplistically told fictional story has the potential to pierce the heart of a self-righteous sinner deeply entrenched in his own depravity.

Jesus incorporated parables in his teaching ministry as well. On the surface it appears that Jesus' use of parables was consistent with the function and purpose of parables in the Old Testament. However, Jesus' explanation to his disciples about why he speaks in parables seems to stand in direct contradiction to the usage of parables in the rest of Scripture:

As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. And He was saying to them, 'To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven.' (Mark 4:10-12)

This challenging passage appears to be teaching that Jesus used parables to hide his message from his hearers instead of making it easier for them to understand. Current scholarship on this subject has yielded a variety of interpretations of this passage.

The most consistent exposition on this passage among modern scholars is that Jesus used parables a means of instruction for those who had the ability to hear and understand. The byproduct of this methodology is that some, who did not have the ability to hear and understand, never got beyond the "picture part" of the fictional story. In his commentary on this passage, Robert Stein writes,

A parable is an illustrative metaphor or analogy that requires one to figure out its meaning. In a sense, parables often function as 'riddles' in being quite enigmatic. Because they do not 'know' the truthfulness of what the parable teaches, those on the outside understand little more than the analogy itself. Even when aware of the meaning of the parable, those outside judge what is being taught as foolishness.³³

Furthermore, Jesus used parables to teach those listeners who had a desire to discover his

³²Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 130-31.

³³Robert Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 209.

message. Those listeners on the outside of his teaching ministry were the ones who did not have a desire to understand his message. James Estep, Michael Anthony, and Greg Allison explain,

On most occasions the disciples needed Jesus to explain his parables in order for them to understand his meaning. When they posed the question ‘Why do you speak to the people in parable?’, Jesus offered two reasons for this teaching method. The first reason had to do with the favored position of the disciples in Jesus’ kingdom mission: ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the crowds] it has not been granted.’ This reason underscores why Jesus often explained his parables to his disciples: He wanted to ensure that they understood his meaning and grasped important truths about the kingdom he was building and which they would be leading. The second reason focused on God’s sovereign choice that the crowds around Jesus would not be permitted to comprehend his teaching: ‘Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.’ As difficult as this might be for us to grasp, the fact remains that God did not will for the crowds watching and listening to Jesus to ‘see’ and ‘hear’ (that is, ‘understand’) him. So Jesus taught the crowds in parables, partially hiding the truth he was communicating. This was both by divine design—God would not grant understanding to the crowds following Jesus—and due to dullness of those same followers—they had failed to carry out their human responsibility to pay attention to and learn from Jesus.³⁴

In Mark 4:11, Jesus describes his message as a “mystery.” This mystery was only revealed to those that the Lord chose to unveil it to. James Edwards further illustrates this concept in his commentary on this passage:

The secret of mystery, means a knowledge of God that cannot be attained by human means. Hence the mystery is ‘given,’ not attained. Here again is a great irony, for although Jesus is the fulfillment of the mystery, people do not see it; indeed, according to the gospel of John, it is precisely because Jesus tells the truth about himself that they do not believe. It is the secret that the kingdom of God has come in the person and words and works of Jesus. That is a secret because God has chosen to reveal himself indirectly and in a veiled way. The incarnate Word is not obvious.³⁵

Thus, in Jesus’ ministry, the parables served as a “two-edge sword”³⁶ by which Jesus could initiate a process of “spiritual sifting”³⁷ among the crowd. For those that had the

³⁴Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 139-40.

³⁵James Edwards, *The Gospel of Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2002), 131.

³⁶David Garland, *The Gospel of Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 158-59.

³⁷R. A. Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1999), 90-91.

ability to understand, Jesus' parables functioned in a manner consistent with the use of parables in the rest of the Bible. His fictional stories incorporated invented people, places, and events. He drew upon common images that would have resonated in the hearts of his hearers. They served as an effective methodology for communicating difficult concepts in a relatable and applicable manner.

More importantly, Jesus' use of parables forced his listeners to take some form of action. For Jesus' true followers, the parables led them to commit more of their lives to Christ. For those that were not Jesus' true followers, the parables led them further away from total surrender to Christ. In his commentary on Mark 4:10-12, James Brooks explains,

Jesus did not speak in parables for the purpose of withholding truth from anyone; but the result of his parables, the rest of his teaching, and even his miracles was that most did not understand and respond positively. He did speak in parables to provoke thought and invite commitment. Therefore parables are more than illustrations. They constitute spiritual tests that separate those who understand and believe from those who do not.³⁸

Consequently, a neutral response to Christ's message was not available. Jesus' original audience could have either accepted what he was teaching as truth or they could have rejected his message altogether. Those were the only two options. The same is still true today. The parables of Jesus were designed to force a decision. In their book *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart explain,

The story parables function as a means of calling forth a response on the part of the hearer. To paraphrase Marshall McLuhan's words, the parable itself is the message. It is told to address and capture the hearers, to bring them short about their own actions, or to cause them to respond in some way to Jesus and his ministry.³⁹

Through his parables, Jesus was "offering a new and alternative, Christ-centered

³⁸James A. Brooks, *Mark*, The New American Commentary, vol. 23 (Nashville: B and H, 1991), 83.

³⁹Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 138.

worldview and inviting people to embrace this as their own.”⁴⁰

The parable of the mustard seed is an example of a fictitious story that left Jesus’ followers with a choice to make:

And He said, ‘How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.’ With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples. (Mark 4:30-34)

In the parable, Jesus compares the advancement of the kingdom of God to the amazing growth rate and productivity of the mustard plant. All of Jesus’ listeners would have understood the “picture part” of the parable.⁴¹ Everyone in the crowd would have been able to easily visualize the growth of a mustard plant from a tiny seed to a full-grown plant. However, comprehension of the visual image was not enough. The crowd had to transition to a state of comprehension and acceptance of the “reality part” of the image.⁴² In his commentary on this passage, Walter Wessel observes, “The main point of the parable is that the kingdom of God is like what happens to the mustard seed. It has insignificant and weak beginnings, but a day will come when it will be great and powerful.”⁴³ After hearing this parable, Jesus’ listeners had to answer two questions—“Is Jesus of Nazareth the long awaited messiah, and will his kingdom advance as he said it would?” An affirmative answer led Jesus’ listeners to eternal salvation. A negative answer led to eternal condemnation.

⁴⁰Jonathan T. Pennington, “Matthew 13 and the Function of the Parables in the First Gospel,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 3 (2009): 12-20.

⁴¹Stein, *Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, 137-38.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Walter W. Wessel, *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 653.

The use of fiction is also found in the ministry of the Old Testament prophets. The prophets utilized symbolic acts, oracles, and visions in order to convey God's message to the people. These images and actions powerfully expressed both the intellectual and emotional components of God's message. Jonathan Pennington explains, "Stories were the means through which the Old Testament prophets usually communicated, and often with allegorical apocalyptic stories."⁴⁴ The prophets had the responsibility of speaking on behalf of God. Often, the prophetic message was one of impending judgment and destruction. In order to ensure that the message was clearly understood, the prophet was often led by God to use fictional stories, fictitious imagery, or symbolic actions. James Estep, Michael Anthony, and Greg Allison explain,

The prophets likewise employed a variety of teaching methods. In addition to the oral and written messages from the prophets, their methods included proverbs, parables, symbolic acts, and allegories-all designed to facilitate learning in a variety of ways.⁴⁵

The symbolic actions of the Old Testament prophets operated on the same principles as a parable or other works of fiction, even though they were not written or formally spoken. The prophet had a message to share with the people. The prophets would often employ fictional drama in order to share a message in a convicting and memorable way. In his book *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, Hobart Freeman states,

The symbolic acts of the prophets were quite numerous and each was intended by God as a vehicle for divine revelation. Jeremiah wore a yoke around his neck through the streets to depict the impending Babylonian bondage. Hosea was commanded to marry a wife of whoredom, thus symbolizing by her adulterous conduct the unfaithfulness of Israel. Isaiah walked naked and barefoot as a sign to Egypt and Ethiopia of their similar fate at the hands of Assyria. Ezekiel's symbolic acts are the most numerous. He was commanded to lay mock siege to Jerusalem by portraying it upon a tile; to lie for a stated period upon his side to depict the period appointed to Israel as punishment for her iniquity; to eat unclean food by measure as a sign of Israel's physical privations in exile; to burn a portion of his hair, thus foretelling the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. . . . Furthermore, the prophets were sometimes commanded to give symbolic names to their children, thus

⁴⁴Pennington, "Matthew 13," 13.

⁴⁵Estep, Anthony, and Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education*, 56.

prophetically symbolizing God's intentions toward Israel, as when Isaiah called one of his sons Shear-jashub, meaning prophetically 'a remnant shall return,' and calling another Maher-shalal-hash-baz, 'the spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth,' signifying judgment. . . . Thus, the symbolic act, like the prophetic Word, was by divine intention to be a vehicle for the proclamation of God's revelation through his prophets. The symbolic act was a graphic, prophetic method of arresting the attention of the recipient, thereby dramatically impressing upon Israel's consciousness the divine word itself.⁴⁶

As Freeman explains, the dramatic enactment served as a "vehicle" for the message of God.⁴⁷ Like Jesus' parables in the New Testament, the symbolic acts of the prophets drew upon familiar and sometimes shocking images found within the lives of the hearers. For instance, Jeremiah 13:1-11 states,

Thus the Lord said to me, 'Go and buy yourself a linen waistband and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water.' So I bought the waistband in accordance with the word of the Lord and put it around my waist. Then the word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, 'Take the waistband that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock.' So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the Lord had commanded me. After many days the Lord said to me, 'Arise, go to the Euphrates and take from there the waistband which I commanded you to hide there.' Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the waistband from the place where I had hidden it; and lo, the waistband was ruined, it was totally worthless. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, "Just so will I destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband which is totally worthless. For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me," declares the Lord, "that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen."'"

In this account, the prophet Jeremiah was called upon by the Lord to use a familiar item, a linen waistband, to act out a message of judgment before the inhabitants of Judah. In his commentary on this passage, R. K. Harrison explains,

The first warning, conveyed by the acted parable of the ruined linen loincloth, made clear that Idolatry, with its attendant moral corruptions, would be the ruin of the people. The nation had been attached closely to God in former days, but because of recent apostasy had become soiled and now discarded. The prophetic symbolism rests upon the utility of articles in everyday life. The waistcloth was one of the more intimate forms of clothing, clinging closely to the body of the wearer and serving as a

⁴⁶Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 123-25.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

thigh-length underskirt. Had it been immersed in water it would have been softer and more pliable. Symbolically, the nation had to be guarded against all deleterious influences. . . . The damaged waistcloth indicated that proud Judah would be humbled and punished for her idolatry.⁴⁸

The visual image was clear. Judah had been unfaithful to their God. Therefore, the Lord was about to send judgment upon them in the form of an invading army. Jeremiah's symbolic act served as a warning. Judah needed to repent and return to God. The message of Jeremiah was solidified in the hearts of his hearers because of the methodology he used to share it.

An examination of the parabolic and prophetic literature of the Bible demonstrates that fictional literature can be utilized as a powerful tool in Christian education. An evaluation of the usage of parables and prophecy in 2 Samuel 12:1-15, Mark 4:10-12; 4:30-34, and Jeremiah 13:1-11 demonstrates the communicative power of fictional stories. By studying the usage of fiction in the genres of prophecy and parables, Christian educators can gain a valuable tool for teaching God's truth. Thus, the utilization of fictional literature as an instructional methodology is biblically and theologically consistent.

Mankind was created with the innate ability to create. Music, films, novels, paintings, sculptures, drama, dance, and stories have the ability to resonate within the human soul at a deeper level than mere facts and statistical data. As Allan Bloom states in his book *The Closing of the American Mind*,

Scientists do not prove that there are no miracles, they assume it; without this assumption there is no science. It is easy to deny God's creativity as a thing benighted past, overcome by science, but man's creativity, a thing much more improbable and nothing but an imitation of God's, exercises a strange attraction. . . . Science may appear creative only because we forget what creativity really means and take cleverness at proposing hypotheses, finding proofs, or inventing experiments.⁴⁹

⁴⁸R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, vol. 19 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 99.

⁴⁹Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 182.

Man has been given the gift of being able to take pleasure from various forms of artistic expression. The usage of literary and dramatize art are infused in the pages of scripture. Through parables and prophecy, the Lord has piercingly and effectively revealed himself to mankind. Therefore, the methodology of using fiction for educative purposes is theologically and biblically substantiated and worthy of emulation.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

Introduction

Current scholarship in the fields of education and developmental psychology has yielded an abundance of information pertaining to the usage of various educational methodologies. The following chapter will examine the theoretical and practical issues of utilizing fictional literature as an apparatus for teaching biblical truths. First, an examination of the function and purpose of art, music, and literature will be conducted. Next, the connection between the adolescent developmental stage and emotional learning theory will be explored. An assessment of the pedagogical implications of fictional mediums such as storytelling, analogies, and illustrations will be conducted. Finally, a historical survey of the teachings of Moravian bishop John Comenius, C. H. Spurgeon, and Jesus of Nazareth will be executed.

**The Pedagogical Implications of Art,
Music, and Literature**

In his book *Discovering Art History*, Gerald F. Bromer proclaims, “Art is visual communication, with a language all its own. Artists and craftspersons communicate their ideas, concepts, and responses to subject matter through their artwork.”¹ For Bromer, visual art serves as a practicable mechanism through which the artist can explicate information in a meaningful and potent manner. He goes on to explain, “Art can be personal, art can call for social change, and art can portray human emotions as well as evoke them. It can express harmony and disharmony, show simple and every day in

¹Gerald F. Bromer, *Discovering Art History*, 3rd ed. (Worcester, MA: Davis, 1997), 18.

unfamiliar ways, or be monumental, mysterious, and fantastic.²” Visual art is not merely the fabrication of meaningless sculptures, paintings, or objects; assembled in a futile conglomeration. It is the vocal communiqué of the artiste. Due to its ability to communicate a central message effectively in a memorable and explanatory manner, visual art serves as a powerful educational methodology. It has the unique ability to simultaneously capture the mind, stir emotions, and evoke a response from its viewers.

Likewise, music can create the same effect. In his book *What to Listen for in Music*, Aaron Copland explains, “My own belief is that all music has an expressive power, some more and some less, but all music has a certain meaning behind the notes and the meaning behind the notes constitutes, after all, what the piece is saying, what a piece is about.”³ Although music is not necessarily visual, it is an auditory expression of a central message. Through music, the artist paints word pictures through pitch, harmony, tone, lyrics, and instrumentation. Music can comprehensively express propositional truth in an emotionally charged manner. It also has the unique ability to relate concepts that words cannot sufficiently communicate.⁴ Copland further explains, “Music expresses, at different moments, serenity or exuberance, regret or triumph, fury or delight. It expresses each of these moods, and many others, in a numberless variety of subtle shadings and differences.”⁵ Music’s ability to communicate a central message is evident by its usage in mainstream media. Television programming, movies, theatre, and commercials utilize music as a medium for relating a message to a broad audience. Like visual art, music’s expressive and explanatory properties make it a credible mechanism for teaching truth.

The literary arts possess a lot of the same properties as music and visual art.

²Ibid., 4.

³Aaron Copland, *What to Listen for in Music* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1999), 9.

⁴Ibid., 10.

⁵Ibid.

First and foremost, literature is the written expression of the author's thoughts. An author is able to accomplish through writing what the artist can through painting or the composer can through music. Likewise, literature also has the ability to teach. In her book *Learning in Living Color: Using Literature to Incorporate Multicultural Education into Primary Curriculum*, Alora Valdez explains that the primary goal of using literature for education purposes is not solely for the attainment of reading and writing skills. Rather, the main goal of utilizing literature in educational endeavors is "to comprehend/construct meaning. Comprehension/ construction of meaning is the process of relating ideas from the text to one's prior knowledge and background."⁶ One of the pedagogical implications of literature, specifically fictional literature, includes the ability to convey ideas and concepts.

Literature's ability to communicate ideas is coupled with its ability to provide proper motivation for learning as well. In their aforementioned book Alison Booth, Paul Hunter, and Kelly Mays explain, "Wonderfully, instruction and delight go hand in hand in our experience of literature: we learn from what delights us or what leads us to appreciate new kinds of delight."⁷ Booth, Hunter, and Mays go on to explain that it is impossible to separate the enjoyment of creativity and the gratification of learning new information.⁸ Congruent with visual art and music, literature's ability to stir emotions and stimulate imagination provides sufficient motivation for various educational endeavors.⁹

Literature's ability to evoke emotions, provide motivation, and convey ideas stems from its ability to create and explore clearer representations than provided in the reality around the reader. In her book *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*, Rebecca Luken explains,

⁶Alora Valdez, *Learning in Living Color: Using Literature to Incorporate Multicultural Education into Primary Curriculum* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 17.

⁷Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays, *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, 9th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), 1-2.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 2.

As long as the world itself is so remarkably complex and incomprehensible, one more fantastic experience in story form presents no impossible hurdle. Often, for example, the personified animals and toys of the child's world, behaving like human beings, may show what human beings are like.¹⁰

Luken also explains that children are more apt to try a greater variety of literary forms than their adult counterparts.¹¹ Fictional literature brings clarity and reinforcement to the central message that the author is intending to communicate. Through fictional settings, situations, and characters, the author is able to provide context, examples, and applications for the message he is trying to communicate.

The Adolescent Developmental Stage and Emotional Learning Theory

Recent and historic erudition in the fields of education and developmental psychology has provided valuable insights towards the validity of using literature as a teaching tool. Preeminently, the work of Swiss developmental theorist, Jean Piaget, has provided foundational data pertaining to the pedagogical abilities of adolescents. In her book *Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, Laura Berk summarizes Piaget's theories, "According to Piaget, the capacity for abstract thinking begins around age 11. At the formal operational stage, the adolescent reasons much like a scientist searching for solutions in a laboratory."¹² A typical high school student has a natural inclination to investigate the validity of the information that they have ascertained. They often times encounter, hypothesize, and test everyday experiences on a seemingly unconscious level.¹³

More importantly, teenagers are able to conceptualize and learn from abstract principles. Berk goes on to explain, "[An] important characteristic of the formal operational stage is propositional thought. Adolescents can evaluate the logic of

¹⁰Rebecca J. Luken, *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature* (New York: Longman, 1999), 9.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Laura E. Berk, *Infants, Children, and Adolescents* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 564.

¹³Ibid.

propositions (verbal statements) without referring to real-world circumstances.”¹⁴ A high school student is able to acquire information from fictional sources, understand the implications of that information, and make specific applications with the data garnered.

Susan Shaw further explains in her book *Storytelling in Religious Education*:

For adolescents, storytelling can move away from simply the story itself toward the realities the story suggests, and response to story can move from simple engagement with characters and actions to changes within the self that result from learner’s experiences with a story. For example, adolescents can understand Aslan the lion as a Christ figure in C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and they can connect the character and actions of Aslan with their own experiences with Christ. Thus their encounter with Aslan in the story can facilitate both an effective response to Christ as well as deeper understandings of Christ.¹⁵

Thus, the suggestion that fictional literature can be used to teach to high school students propositional truth demonstrates academic and psychological rigor.

In addition to being able to learn from the abstract concepts of fictional literature, high school students are also impacted by fiction’s ability to stimulate their emotions. Recent research in the area of emotional learning theory also lends credence to the validity of using fiction as a teaching methodology. Current studies have yielded important information pertaining to the instructional properties of human emotions. In his book *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the Twenty-first Century*, Howard Gardner states, “Emotions do accompany cognition, and they may well prove more salient under certain circumstances; they accompany our interactions with others, our listening to music, and our efforts to solve mathematical puzzles.”¹⁶ As Gardner explains, an exploitive connection exists between a student’s emotions and their cognitive ability.

One area of exploitation that is beneficial for educational purposes is the ability of human emotions to heighten a students’ motivation for learning. In their book *The*

¹⁴Ibid., 565.

¹⁵Susan M. Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education, 1999), 343.

¹⁶Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Basic, 1999), 206.

Brain, Education, and the Competitive Edge, Geoffry Caine and Renate Nummela Caine state, “Emotion lies at the heart of the motivation that children have for learning.”¹⁷

Emotions often serve as a powerful motivator in the field of education. For instance, a college student who is shocked by the bias comments of his professor may be spurred on to research the topic discussed in order to refute the outlandish comments of his teacher and solidify his own beliefs about the issue. A high school senior may be so emotionally impacted by her Spanish teacher’s explanation of the living conditions in most third world countries that she changes her major and decides to go to the mission field. As Howard Hendricks explains in his book *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive*, “The most effective communication always includes an emotional ingredient—the feeling factor, the excitement element.”¹⁸

Human emotions also demonstrate other substantial didactic potential. Specifically, emotional learning increases a student’s memory and recollection capabilities. Geoffry and Renate Caine explain, “Most teachers and most parents know every child is a complex weather system of emotions, yet it used to be thought, and most educators believed, that understanding and feeling were very separate.”¹⁹ Caine and Caine go on to explain that emotions consistently serve as the motivating force behind the entire learning process. They point to the usage of metaphors in literature. Metaphors often provide the contextual frame through which modern learners attain, process, and utilize new information in a meaningful manner.²⁰ Furthermore, “metaphors seem to underlie much of our understanding, and the way we interpret any situation or fact is colored by how it

¹⁷Geoffry Caine and Renate Nummela Caine, *The Brain, Education, and the Competitive Edge* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2001), 45.

¹⁸Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives: Seven Proven Ways to Make Your Teaching Come Alive* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1987), 72.

¹⁹Caine and Caine, *The Brain, Education, and the Competitive Edge*, 43-44.

²⁰*Ibid.*

affects us emotionally.”²¹ According to Geoffry and Renate Caine, fictional literature, such as metaphors and analogies, increases a student’s ability to conceptualize information, process the data received, and make realistic applications of the newly acquired facts. Students’ ability to remember all the words to their favorite music or lines from their favorite movie are confirmation of the influence of emotional learning.

In summary, fictional literature, like music and the visual arts, has the capacity to evoke human emotions, and inspire creativity. Fiction’s ability to stimulate students’ passion and evoke imagination provides ample impetus for a variety of teaching techniques. In addition, the feasibility of adolescents being able to learn from the abstract concepts of fictional literature, coupled with fiction’s ability to stimulate emotions demonstrates that fictional literature is a powerful teaching tool. Therefore, research from the fields of developmental psychology, emotional learning theory, art, and education demonstrate that the usage of fictional literature as a teaching methodology is credible and advantageous.

Pedagogical Implications of Storytelling, Analogies, and Illustrations

The following section will contain an assessment of the pedagogical implications of fictional mediums such as storytelling, analogies, and illustrations. From the outset, it is important to reiterate that adolescents and adults have the ability to think and process abstractly. Geoffry and Renate Caine explain,

Human beings have added capacities to organize information: we can represent things symbolically where a sign stands for something else, a capacity that is at the heart of writing and math and art. And we can organize things in terms of how they relate to each other, which we do through concepts and ideas. Those ideas and concepts that shape the way we actually respond to events in life are sometimes called mental models.²²

As previously discussed, the work of Jean Piaget demonstrates that adolescents and adults

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 42.

have the ability to connect objects together through imagery for educational purposes.²³ For instance, a high school student could read a fictional account about a greedy businessman and learn the principles of kindness and charity from the account. Representational substitution, such as that found in the fictional mediums of storytelling, analogies, and illustrations, allows the reader to acquire information about a difficult subject by studying a more familiar and simplistic subject.

Storytelling for educational purposes provides vast opportunities for transformational teaching. First, stories provide multiple points of connectivity. As a fictional account is told or read, students are affected by propositional truth on manifold levels. In her book *Beyond the Beanstalk: Interdisciplinary Learning through Storytelling*, Lynn Rubright writes, “When a story is well told, we listen in a special way, enter the story ourselves. Our imaginations are fired up. We connect psychologically, emotionally, intellectually. We are there. . . .”²⁴ Rubright goes on to explain that a teacher’s utilization of stories in the classroom provides significant modeling and motivation for her students. The students are inspired to read and study more about a subject. Also, stories can lead to students to synthesize new perspectives on the subject through their own creative writing and storytelling.²⁵ The diverse connectivity of stories increases a student’s probability of processing and retaining key concepts. The duplicitous points of stimulation allow the readers to wrestle with the underlying facts of the fictional piece on multiple levels of their persona. In her book *Seven Ways of Teaching the Bible to Adults: Using Our Multiple Intelligences to Build Faith*, Barbara Bruce states, “Personal storytelling makes connections between past and current information. This connection helps imprint learning.”²⁶ Therefore, the usage of fictional literature is a viable methodology for

²³Berk, *Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 564.

²⁴Lynn Rubright, *Beyond the Beanstalk: Interdisciplinary Learning through Storytelling* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996), 18.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Barbara Bruce, *Seven Ways of Teaching the Bible to Adults: Using Our*

instruction because of its ability to transfer information in a memorable manner. Augustine confirms this idea in his book *On Christian Teaching*: “Whenever one thing is said in order that something else may be understood, we have metaphorical expression, even if the name of the actual trope is not found in textbooks. When this takes familiar form, understanding follows without effort.”²⁷ Rubright, in her aforementioned book, goes on to explain that the methodology of teaching through fictional stories also increases a student’s desire to synthesize their own imaginative and creative material. Thus, allowing a deeper level of educational cognition to occur.²⁸ The imaginative nature of fictional writing increases student’s aptitude to use their own imaginations.

Second, stories also have the ability to capitalize on the emotions of their listeners. Susan Shaw explains,

Emotions play a large role in adolescent experience. Jean Piaget suggests that with the advent of formal operational thought, adolescents develop emotional responses to ideas along with a concomitant desire to reform institutions and ideologies. He labels these responses ‘idealistic feelings’ and claims that these feelings define the adolescent personality. Other researchers concur, finding that for adolescents emotions become the basis for identity and ideas. Thus, when adolescents feel strongly about something, they care about it.²⁹

According to Shaw, emotions have a direct impact on the amount of intrinsic motivation a student has towards a particular subject.³⁰ For instance, a sixth grader may find a discussion on the proper rules of driving a car boring and non-applicable. However, to a fifteen year old that is on the verge of getting their driver’s license, the lecture is both stimulating and important. The fifteen year old has a greater amount of intrinsic motivation to listen because the lecture is addressing a topic that they care about. They

Multiple Intelligences to Build Faith (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 22.

²⁷ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 99.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education*, 350-51.

³⁰ Ibid.

are connected emotionally to the information being shared. In her book *Teaching as Story Telling*, Kieran Egan explains, “Clearly stories are concerned with affective responses. A good story-teller plays our emotions, as a good violinist plays a violin. We resonate with the rhythm of the binary conflict, the events that carry it forward, and its resolution.”³¹ She goes on to explain that stories provide an instructional balance between intellectual and affective learning.³² According to Egan, mediums through which emotions can be stimulated increase the quantity and quality of meaning a piece of information may have for a student.³³ Intrinsic motivation is a major component of the educational process. Successful educators find ways to capitalize on the internal motivators in the lives of their students.

Subsequently, fiction is a medium through which the author can captivate and educate his readers by invigorating their sentiments. In his book *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership*, Gary Bredfeldt states,

Leaders-teachers need to learn the skill of storytelling because stories are the universal means of teaching. Stories cause listeners to shift into what I call story-mode. Story-mode is seen when listeners move forward in their seats and even lean into the speaker to focus their concentration.³⁴

Bredfeldt goes on to explain that humans are enthralled by stories. He explains that the basic function of a story is to create a fictional or realistic platform through which a main concept can be communicated to the listeners.³⁵ Readers can connect with the hardships and triumphs of the main characters of a particular story. Positive and negative motifs of a story can resonate for decades as they shape a reader’s values and worldview. Like an

³¹Kieran Egan, *Teaching as Story Telling* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1986), 29-30.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 2006), 119-20.

³⁵Ibid.

excellent teacher, an author has the ability to exploit the emotional component of fiction to communicate his message to his readers.

It is important to note that Christian educators need to be mindful of the manipulative powers of emotional learning. Emotions can be powerful and persuasive. Therefore, great caution and calculation needs to be taken by educators and authors when utilizing fictional literature for educational purposes. In his book *Rethinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World*, Mark Bertrand warns, “The ‘danger’ of fiction is that an author creates an entire world, complete with its own moral framework, and within that structure the morality works.”³⁶ From a Christian perspective, the use of fiction to teach biblical truths needs to flow from a heart of evangelism and discipleship. The process should be void of hidden agendas and personal biases of the author and educator.

Third, stories convey ideas in a disarming fashion. As a student takes in the details of a fictional account, their subjectivity and close-mindedness is replaced with objectivity and openness to new ideas. In his book *Developing Critical Thinkers*, Stephen Brookfield explains this concept further:

Immersion in an esthetic experience or artistic enterprise, particularly when we are unused to such activities, can be a powerful stimulus to imagining alternatives. In particular, esthetic and artistic experiences can help us break through habitual, supposedly rational structures of reasoning. After being involved in an act of artistic creation, we view the world differently. At a very basic level, our sense of ourselves as active creators is enhanced, and we are more likely to view the world as malleable and open to our inventions. We are also more likely to acknowledge the importance of intuitive insight to our mental processes. Since artistic creation and appreciation both depend on and value intuitive and insightful capacities, we come to a clearer appreciation of their significance.³⁷

As Brookfield demonstrates, the utilization of creativity and imagination leads to disequilibrium of a student’s norm of learning. Following this process of “break[ing]

³⁶J. Mark Bertrand, *Rethinking Worldview: Learning to Think, Live, and Speak in This World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 172.

³⁷Stephen D. Brookfield, *Developing Critical Thinkers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 125.

through habitual, supposedly rational structures of reasoning,” the student is positioned to examine new learning paradigms.³⁸ The vacuum created by the imaginative nature of fiction allows students to be more receptive to the new information being supplied. Therefore, the shifts in perspective and alternative realities found within fictional literature conditions the mind of the student to consider new ideas and concepts.

Fourth, stories allow the reader to process challenging material by examining more recognizable and common material. A work of fiction is cognitively accessible, whereas new information may not always be. A student’s immersion in the fictional account opens the door for the attainment of previously unattainable information. Shaw explains,

Jungian psychology suggests a significant role for storytelling in religious education. As participants in the task of soul making, religious educators need to know the great myths and archetypal patterns embodied in them. They, in turn, may make learners aware of these archetypes at work in their own psyches. Furthermore, religious educators may use their understandings of archetype and myth to examine archetypal patterns present in biblical stories.³⁹

The recognition of previously conceptualized information serves as the foundation for the procurement of new data. A student reviewing for a semester exam draws upon the ideas and concepts already obtained through a semester’s worth of study. His previous exposure to the material allows him to properly prepare for the test he is about to take. Shaw explains this concept within the context of Christian education. She explains that theology starts with an examination of the religious experiences of the characters of the biblical narrative. The modern observer extrapolates spiritual truths from the sequence of events that occur in the life of another individual who is separated from the reader by time, space, and culture. This is not to say that the events of the Bible did not occur. Rather, it is because these events occurred in the distant past that the modern reader has an accessible account of the spiritual experiences of a “story-like” character. Therefore, these procured

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education*, 96-97.

spiritual truths form the theological framework of the present age.⁴⁰ She goes on to state, “Because God is more than the scope of human senses, language, and knowledge, the most appropriate ways of talking about God are analogical.”⁴¹ According to Shaw, humanity needs stories and analogies in order to understand the indescribable nature of God.⁴² Therefore, fiction can aid in the process of theological instruction through its ability to create pictorial representations of the complex concepts.

Fifth, the artistic and creative nature of fiction makes new information tolerable and digestible for the student. Stories make learning enjoyable. In their book *Teaching Through Stories: Yours, Mine, and Theirs*, Betty Roe, Suellen Alfred, and Sandy Smith explain that stories have the ability to magnify and clarify abstract concepts in a more accessible manner. They add personality and a human element to seemingly lifeless information and facts. Stories can be utilized to energize a variety of subjects such as math, history, geography, and science. They go on to explain that the benefits of storytelling are also advantageous in the home environment as well.⁴³ The abstract concepts found within fictional stories break down a student’s barriers to learning new concepts by cloaking a central message in the shroud of artistic expression. As Shaw further explains, “In Freudian theory, stories were integrally related to the psyche through the unconscious structure of mythology which provided a means by which the conscious mind could begin to deal with unconscious material.”⁴⁴ According to Freud, stories are an integral part of the human development process. They help individuals conceptualize ideas that lay deep within their subconscious that had not surfaced or taken form yet.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Ibid., 79.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid

⁴³Betty D. Roe, Suellen Alfred, and Sandy Smith, *Teaching Through Stories: Yours, Mine, and Theirs* (Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 1998), 10.

⁴⁴Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education*, 92.

⁴⁵Ibid.

From a Christian perspective, Freud's analysis is lacking a glaring component. Freud neglects to attribute the placement of the unconscious material in mankind's subconscious to an omnipotent and omniscience God. In his book *Orthodoxy*, G. K. Chesterton explains, "The elementary wonder, however, is not mere fancy derived from fairy tales; on the contrary, all the fire of the fairy tales is derived from this . . . we all like astonishing tales because they touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment."⁴⁶ He explains that this sense of awe and wonder is progressively lost throughout the maturation process. Children, for instance, do not need "fairy tales" to stir their imaginations. The excitement of life is inspirational enough.⁴⁷ Chesterton goes on to explain that God places a sense of wonder and awe within humanity because man was created to be in a relationship with God. The yearning for astonishment creates a void within humanity that only God can fill. Therefore, through stories, God stimulates mankind's desire to seek God out.⁴⁸ It is only through human imagination and creativity that mankind can partially comprehend the inconceivable nature of God. Without his imagination, man would not be able to think abstractly enough to break free from his preconceived paradigms and begin to approach the overwhelming reality of God. Mankind needs creativity. Otherwise, he could not know anything beyond what his senses told him. His imagination fills in the sensory voids. C. S. Lewis explains, "In the enjoyment of a great myth we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction."⁴⁹ According to Lewis, myth has such a profound impact because through it the clearest reflection of truth that can be experienced. Myth, or fictional stories, can present reality as it was intended to be.⁵⁰ For instance, a high school

⁴⁶G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 82.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1970), 66.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

freshman may have a hard time finding an example of humility in the individuals around them. Through myth, however, a fictitious character can clearly portray the elements of proper humility as the story unfolds. Therefore, communicating truth through fictional accounts is effective because it unleashes the student's underlying imaginative potential and leads them to a greater understanding of God.

Finally, fictional accounts stimulate the student's ability to make practical application of the newly acquired material. The setting and conflict resolution of a fictional account models how to apply the underlying principles of the story. Shaw explains,

Stories provide the grammatical setting for religious convictions. Christian convictions do not exist as entities separable from the story of which they are apart. Rather, the story gives rise to convictions, and the story context provides the setting for the exploration of the validity of any religious conviction. Christian convictions develop partly from person's interactions with the Christian story, and Christian convictions are tested out in the lived stories of those who participate in the Christian community. Christian convictions are not ideas to be held in an intellectual vacuum but are lifestyle implications to be lived out in the world. As the normative story of Christian faith, the biblical story is not an illustration to explain a point but a way to involve persons actively in a particular style of life.⁵¹

Stories are equipped with a realistic, or semi-realistic, context. The context of a story, even myth or fantasy, is grounded in themes common to the human experience. Students use the common themes acquired in the story to draw correlation to their own experiences. Therefore, the situational nature of fictional literature serves as a practical tool for communicating realistic applications of biblical truths.

Like stories, analogies and illustrations also allows the reader to acquire information about a difficult subject by studying a more familiar and simplistic subject. In his book *The Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning*, Keith Holyoak explains,

Analogy is a special kind of similarity. Two situations are analogous if they share a common pattern of relationships among their constituent elements even though the elements themselves differ across the two situations. Typically, one analog, termed the source or base, is more familiar or better understood than the second analog, termed the target. This asymmetry in initial knowledge provides the basis for analogical transfer, using the source to generate inferences about the target. . . . Analogical reasoning goes beyond the information initially given, using systematic

⁵¹Shaw, *Storytelling in Religious Education*, 83.

connections between the sources and target to generate plausible, although fallible, inference about the target. Analogy is thus a form of inductive reasoning.⁵²

Holyoak stresses that “analogical reasoning” allows the reader to learn an expansive amount of information about a particular subject because of the images and nuances conjured up by its reflective counterpart.⁵³ As with stories, this connectivity is the gateway through which educational ventures can occur. Holyoak further explains that as a student engages in analogical analysis, he or she draws upon information stored in their long term memory to make comparative connections between the new data being introduced and older information that the student has already learned. Furthermore, the students also uses images and information stored up in their long term memory to fill in any missing voids in the new information being received.⁵⁴ According to Holyoak, analogies are powerful teaching devices because they build upon the established cognitive framework locked within the long-term memory of the reader or listener.⁵⁵ The student has a previously established familiarity with the new material because of his exposure to the analogical counterpart. In his book *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, Haddon Robinson explains, “Illustrations can present the truth still another time without wearying the listeners. Understanding too may be gained through analogies and anecdotes. An illustration, like the picture on the television, makes clear what the speaker explains.”⁵⁶ Analogies and illustrations provide clarity and accessibility to previously complex material.

When a reader encounters a fictional analogy he brings with him an entire network of emotions, experiences, and information. In his book *Preaching Christ in All*

⁵²Keith J. Holyoak and Robert G. Morrison, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 117.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., 136.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 149.

of *Scripture*, Edmund P. Clowney states, “The Lord made us in His image, and the principle of analogy is fundamental in God’s creation and revelation. Analogy always combines identity with difference.”⁵⁷ Therefore, analogies and illustrations share similar educational qualities as those of stories.

Historical Testimony of the Usage of Fictional Stories, Analogies, and Illustrations

History has provided examples of individuals who have utilized the previously discussed methodologies for educational purposes. Three of special note are Moravian bishop John Comenius, C. H. Spurgeon, and Jesus of Nazareth. Comenius, Spurgeon, and Jesus incorporated various mediums into their teaching ministries in an effort to educate the hearts and minds of masses. The following section will be an assessment of the various teaching styles of all three men. These three individuals were selected for study because of their revolutionary approach in incorporating the use of fiction in their respective arenas of education. First, an examination of John Comenius’ efforts to utilize multisensory methodologies across a broad field of subject matter will be conducted. Next, the unrelenting zeal of Charles Spurgeon to effectively communicate biblical truth will be explored. Finally, Jesus’ use of powerful and compelling teaching techniques will be investigated.

Moravian Bishop John Amos Comenius was, in many ways, an educational revolutionary. In their book *Exploring the Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the Twenty-first Century*, Michael Anthony and Warren Benson explain,

The last reformer who warrants our investigation is the eminent Moravian bishop John Amos Comenius (1592-1670). Perhaps in his day the most outstanding writer and thinker in the field of educational theory. . . . Starting when the child was six, he would train the senses of the child and bring about moral, religious, ethical, and social development through the use of play, games, storytelling, rhymes, and music. In his vernacular school for ages six to twelve, he would offer reading, writing, and arithmetic. In addition, he would offer studies in music, morals, economics, politics,

⁵⁷Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 21.

history, and mechanical arts . . . to Comenius, a well educated child was one that contributed to the betterment of the nation as a whole.⁵⁸

During a time when the standard practice of education was built largely upon the repetitious recitation of factual information; Comenius understood that teaching methodologies could expand far beyond lecture and rote memory exercises. He intentionally layered his diverse teaching methods and sought to educate the whole student. He believed that non-traditional means of education could often produce far greater results than standard methods alone.⁵⁹

Comenius' revolutionary teaching tactics included the usage of pictures and object lessons. His dedication to the implementation of visual elements in education led him to produce the book *The Visual World in Pictures* in 1658.⁶⁰ He was also philosophical rebel in regards to the end goal of education. He was passionate about helping his students comprehensively understand the material he was presenting. He wanted them to be able to completely conceptualize the information, not memorize it.⁶¹ He counter-culturally sought to provide his students with a thorough grasp of their own language before they ventured into the classical languages.⁶²

It was his love for God that first turned Comenius towards the field of education. He saw education as a means to an end. He believed that the church would continue to grow and mature if it was given all the intellectual tools necessary for the proper study of scripture.⁶³ Comenius desired to see an educated church in which all believers were equipped to understand correct doctrine and rightly handle the Word of God. He sought

⁵⁸Michael J. Anthony and Warren S. Benson, *Exploring the Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), 216-17.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³D. Bruce Lockerbie, *A Passion for Learning* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 203-04.

to establish a harmonious link between the school, the church, and the home.⁶⁴ In his book *The School of Infancy*, he explained that the educational institution cannot stand alone in its efforts to educate children. He believed that the home and the church also play an instrumental role in the process.⁶⁵ Comenius fought against the accepted belief that a child's education was the sole responsibility of the institutions of learning. He petitioned parents to take charge of the child's moral instruction and to be involved in the educational process.⁶⁶ His culturally unorthodox teaching style and passion for the Word of God has provided modern education with important foundational principles.

Similarly, the historic preacher and master orator Charles Haddon Spurgeon established revolutionary preaching and teaching techniques. In a time when many thought that a preacher should not add any man-made adornments to his message, Spurgeon taught that stories, illustrations, and analogies helped shed light on the content being delivered. In his book *Lectures to My Students*, he explains,

The chief reason for the construction of windows in a house is, as Fuller says, to let light in. Parables, similes, and metaphors have that effect; and hence we use them to illustrate our subject, or, in other words, to 'brighten it with light,' for that is Dr. Johnson's literal rendering of the word illustrate. Often when didactic speech fails to enlighten our hearers we may make them see our meaning by opening a window and letting in the pleasant light of analogy.⁶⁷

Spurgeon goes on to explain that illustrations "make a sermon pleasurable and interesting . . . enliven an audience and quicken attention."⁶⁸ He explains that fictional accounts provide depth, validity, and clarity to the message being communicated. They help illuminate the content being shared and help retain the attention of the hearers.⁶⁹ His

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2008), 433.

⁶⁸Ibid., 434-36.

⁶⁹Ibid.

passion for effective communication of the gospel led him to fight against the accepted norms of his day and utilize a variety of techniques in his sermons.

According to Spurgeon, a preacher ought to be able to skillfully incorporate various illustrations and techniques into their preaching for the sake of the gospel. Spurgeon argues that the “Prudes of the Pulpit” of his day refuse to make the gospel accessible to the masses because of their stubbornness and intellectual pride.⁷⁰ In his aforementioned book, Spurgeon revolutionarily instructed his students to use illustrations from the newspaper, ancient history, modern history, religious history, nature, and the field of science.⁷¹ He believed that Jesus’ use of anecdotes established precedence for the generations of pastors and educators that would follow.⁷² He instructed his students that illustrations were suppose to aid in the communication of the message. They were not to be the message. He emphasized that great caution and care were to be taken in the attainment, construction, and utilization of preaching anecdotes. Ultimately, he instructed his students to devote themselves to the Study of God’s Word, prayer, and reliance upon the Holy Spirit.⁷³ Spurgeon’s inexorable fervor to effectively communicate biblical truth provides an inspirational model for modern-day preachers and teachers.

Jesus of Nazareth was arguably the most profound communicator and educator in history. A survey of his life and teachings serves as a model of the aforementioned principles in action. The Bible teaches that Jesus utilized the previously discussed methodologies on a frequent basis. James Estep Jr., Michael Anthony, and Gregg Allison state, “Jesus was a master communicator by anyone’s definition. He held large crowds captive with his storytelling techniques. Audiences were mesmerized by his revelation of

⁷⁰Ibid., 362.

⁷¹Ibid., 434-43.

⁷²Ibid., 363.

⁷³Ibid., 363-64.

truth and the manner in which he communicated it.”⁷⁴ Estep, Anthony, and Allison explain that Jesus had the ability to communicate important spiritual truths in an imaginative, germane, and memorable manner. His sermons were intoxicating because of his varied and diverse teaching methodologies.⁷⁵ Today’s educator would benefit greatly from a careful examination of the way Jesus conducted himself and taught his followers.

Interestingly, several of the principles detailed by modern developmental theorists and psychologists find commonality with the teaching ministry of Jesus. A comparative analysis of Jesus’ teachings and modern developmental theory reveals that Jesus was practicing the principles that would later be recognized and developed by Jean Piaget, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung. In their contribution to Norman De Jong’s book *Christian Approaches to Learning Theory*, authors James Foster and Glen Moran explain, “Using the Piagetian paradigm, it can be seen that an effective teaching technique must begin by activating the proper schemes of the listener.”⁷⁶ They go on to explain that Jesus’ use of parables made his transference of information accessible for those in his audience that were willing to listen. He conducted his lesson by drawing upon images that were familiar in both setting and content. Furthermore, his parables had broad appeal across a variety of social and economic class.⁷⁷

Foster and Moran go on to explain, “The second phase in Piaget’s paradigm states that disequilibration of the learner is essential for enhanced understanding. It is only when a new experience interacts with the previously existing cognitive structure, that structure is altered making it more adequate.”⁷⁸ They elucidate that Jesus’ parables

⁷⁴James R. Estep, Jr., Michael J. Anthony, and Gregg R. Allison, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Nashville: B and H, 2008), 170.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Norman De Jong, ed., *Christian Approaches to Learning Theory* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 2: 76-77.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

often times contained scandalous and raucous events and characters. The intentional inclusion of such details assailed the preconceived ideas and misinformation that had been solidified in the hearts and minds of his listeners. Jesus' deliberate usage of contextually despised Samaritan as the epitome of love and kindness was a volatile attack on the prejudices and phobias of his Jewish audience. The disequilibrating nature of Jesus' parables provided the necessary backdrop for the radical message he was intending to communicate.⁷⁹

Foster and Moran also state, "The third phase, *guidance*, is also accomplished through Jesus' teachings. Jesus did not seek to disrupt his listener's existing moral standard without providing something to replace it."⁸⁰ They go on to explain that Jesus eroded the dysfunctional ideological foundation of his listeners and he replaced it with a kingdom foundation. Jesus' parables were used to reinforce his message; they were not a message unto themselves. The Sermon on the Mount provides an example of how Jesus interwove lecture with analogies, parables, and figurative language. Although he would speak to the crowd in parables; he would often provide a detailed explanation to his followers. Therefore, his parables were not for entertainment. Nor were they for cynicism or ridicule of the religious establishment. Rather, they were used as a mechanism to convey important spiritual truths. They were meant to deconstruct a deficient ideology and replace it with a perfected one.⁸¹

Jesus took ordinary objects and conveyed advanced concepts through them. Although shepherding, wheat fields, Jewish wedding customs, and first century hiring practices may be foreign to the reader of today, in Jesus' time they would have served as accessible and attainable concepts through which he could relate complex concepts. In their book *Creative Bible Teaching*, Lawrence Richards and Gary Bredfeldt explain, "Jesus

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

was the master of the story method. It is estimated that 30 percent of Jesus' recorded teaching ministry is in the form of parables, a kind of story with a teaching theme. Jesus knew people and he knew people are interested in people."⁸² The seemingly scandalous nature of his parables often times created an effective environment for deconstructing his audiences' previously held inaccuracies. Jesus' advancement of correct doctrine ensured that listeners would not remain in bewilderment due to the ensuing void.⁸³

Jesus' teachings may have involved mundane, common, everyday articles, but the message they relayed was far from passive. His listeners were drawn in by the artistry and esthetics of the words he used. Then for those that were willing to hear, they were pierced by the message he delivered. Jesus' teachings fostered an entirely new perspective for his listeners. They were able to see and imagine, through plain objects, glimpses of eternity. In her book *Creative Bible Teaching Methods*, Marlene Lefever states, "Jesus used lecture and storytelling. People listened as he told simple stories filled with eternal truths. He used object lessons. . . . The Creator is our model. We must be creative teachers."⁸⁴ Jesus' use of fiction created multidimensional learning opportunities for those that were prepared to receive his message. Like Jesus, Christian educators need to be intentional about the methodologies they use to communicate the message.

In conclusion, research in the fields of education and developmental psychology has provided a wealth of data concerning to the utilization of various teaching methods and resources. An examination of the function and purpose of art, music, and literature reveals that the literary arts can be used to convey meaningful messages. An exploration of the connection between the adolescent developmental stage and emotional learning theory demonstrates that students are capable of processing and learning from the abstract

⁸²Lawrence O. Richards and Gary Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1998), 189.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Marlene Lefever, *Creative Teaching Methods* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1985), 12-13.

concepts found in the genre of literary art. An assessment of the pedagogical implications of fictional mediums such as storytelling, analogies, and illustrations shows that readers can obtain information about complex subject matter by examining more familiar and basic subject matter. Finally, a historical analysis of the teachings of Moravian bishop John Comenius, C. H. Spurgeon, and Jesus of Nazareth serves as examples of individuals who have utilized the previously discussed methodologies for educational purposes. Therefore, an examination of the theoretical and practical issues of utilizing fictional literature for educational purposes reveals that fiction is an effective apparatus for teaching biblical truths.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIFTEEN-WEEK PROJECT

Introduction

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of using fictional literature to teach biblical truths to the high school students of Grace Christian Academy High School in Knoxville, Tennessee, a fifteen-week project was constructed. The project began in September of 2011 with the distribution of parental consent forms to all students who would be involved in the project (see Appendix 1). The project concluded in December of 2011. Two groups were studied during the project. A non-control group, consisting of approximately fifteen students, was given weekly lessons covering a range of biblical themes expressed through fictional short stories. A control group, consisting of approximately fifteen students as well, was given weekly lessons covering the same biblical themes expressed through lecture. At the conclusion of the project, a comparative analysis of the data acquired from both groups was conducted. The results obtained from the analysis are expressed in chapter 5.

The fifteen-week project was segmented into four crucial stages. Stage 1 consisted of the strategic planning and composition of the materials needed to conduct the project. Stage 1 included the fabrication of a pre-project exam (see Appendix 2), a post-project exam(see Appendix 3), a twelve-week curriculum for the non-control group (see Appendix 4), a twelve-week curriculum for the control group (see Appendix 4), a post-project survey for the non-control group (see Appendix 5), a post-project survey for the control group (see Appendix 6), and a post-project writing assignment for the non-control group (see Appendix 7). Stage 2 of the project involved the simultaneous execution of the pre-project exam and the implementation of the twelve-week curriculum for both

the control and non-control groups. Data was collected from both groups at the conclusion of each weekly lesson through the implementation of post-lesson discussion questions. Stage 3 consisted of the execution of the post-project exam and post-project survey for both the control and non-control groups. The stage also involved the completion of the post-project writing assignment by the non-control group. Stage 4 was the analysis of the data collected during the project.

Three goals were used to measure the effectiveness of the project. The first goal was to determine if the utilization of fictional short stories could increase the ability of the high school students of Grace Christian Academy to comprehend and retain biblical truths. A comparative analysis of the data garnered from the pre-project exam and post-project exam for both the control and non-control groups were utilized to verify the effectiveness of fictional literature as a medium for conveying biblical truths. The exams were used to demonstrate that fictional literature is a viable methodology for instruction because of its ability to transfer information in a memorable manner. In addition to the exams, post-project surveys were conducted on both the control and non-control groups. During the survey process, participants provided feedback on their predetermined teaching methodology and its ability to transfer biblical truth in a retainable manner.

The second goal was to determine if fictional literature could increase students' ability to apply biblical truths. Again, the pre-project exam, post-project exam, and post-project survey were implemented in order to determine the effectiveness of fictional literature as a tool for teaching application skills to high school students. As before, a comparative analysis of the information acquired from the pre-project exam and post-project exam from both the control and non-control groups were utilized to evaluate whether the situational nature of fictional literature serves as a practical tool for communicating realistic applications of biblical truths or not. Likewise, post-project surveys were conducted on both the control and non-control groups to allow participants

to provide feedback on their predetermined teaching methodology and its ability to model application skills.

The third goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of fictional literature's ability to increase in the ability of high school students to utilize their God-given imaginations for the glory of Christ and the advancement of the His Kingdom. At the conclusion of the project, the students were required to create an original work of fiction. Students were allowed to write on any subject matter of their choosing. The individual participants determined the length and details. An analysis of the original work of fiction was used to demonstrate that the imaginative nature of fictional writing increased the students' aptitude to use their own imaginations.

Stage 1: Strategic Planning and Composition of Materials

Stage 1 of the project was approximately one week in duration. As previously stated, stage 1 included the fabrication of a pre-project exam, a post-project exam, a twelve-week curriculum for the control group, a twelve-week curriculum for the non-control group, a post-project survey for the control group, a post-project survey for the non-control group, and a post-project writing assignment for the non-control group. Also, the proper consent forms were dispersed and collected during the first week of the project as well. The participants of the project were eighteen years old or younger. Therefore, a parental permission form and a brief explanation of the scope and nature of the project were sent home for parental review and consent. Upon receipt of the aforementioned forms, the students were allowed to participate in the project.

Stage 2: Twelve-Week Curriculum

Stage 2 of the project was approximately twelve weeks in duration. Following a brief overview of the scope and sequence of the fifteen-week project, the pre-project exam was distributed. The pre-project exam consisted of twenty-four questions designed to test the students' knowledge of basic biblical concepts such justification, grace, love,

generosity, peace, and more. It was administered to both the control and non-control groups. For each group, the students were instructed to answer all questions to the best of their abilities. Students were instructed not to talk during the exam process. They were also informed that they could not receive any help during the examination. Students were given as much time as necessary to complete the test. All exams were collected by the teacher at the conclusion of the examination period.

The remainder of stage 2 involved the execution of the twelve-week curriculum for both groups. Once a week for twelve weeks, a lesson over a specific biblical truth was delivered to both groups. The non-control group's lesson utilized fictional literature as the primary teaching tool. Each lesson for the non-control group consisted of a definition of the biblical truth being taught, a transferable concept explaining how to apply the biblical truth, a synopsis of the fictional story the students were about to read, a fictional story designed to illustrate the biblical concept being discussed, and post-story discussion questions. Every week, the teacher would distribute the materials and explain the procedure for the week's lesson. Students were instructed not to talk during the lesson. They were also informed that they could not receive any help during the lesson. They were instructed to read the definition, transferable concept, story synopsis, and the short story before answering the discussion questions. Students were given as much time as necessary to complete the lesson. At the conclusion, the teacher collected the materials.

Every week, the control group covered the same biblical truth as the non-control group. However, the twelve-week curriculum for the control group was modified from the curriculum of the non-control group. It consisted of a lecture explaining the definition of the biblical truth being taught. The lecture also addressed the transferable concept and provided a thorough explanation of how to apply the biblical truth being taught. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to complete the post-lecture discussion questions. Like their counterparts, the control group students were instructed not to talk

during the lesson. They were also informed that they could not receive any help during the lesson. A synopsis of each weekly lesson is as follows:

Lesson 1: Grace

The first week's lesson was on the biblical concept of grace. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of grace expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.¹ The lesson explained that God has richly blessed mankind with what they do not deserve. Instead of hell, mankind is extended salvation. In turn, believers are to imitate the grace of God in their relationships with others. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a starving boy who, while trying to steal bread, is caught and taken in by a widower who feeds, clothes, shelters, and befriends him. The widower teaches the young man a trade and about God. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define grace in your own words, (2) how was grace demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about grace, and (4) how can believers exercise grace towards others (provide two examples)? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Likewise, the control group received a similar lesson with some significant alterations. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1)

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1243.

define grace in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about grace, and (3) how can believers exercise grace towards others (provide two examples)? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 2: Mercy

The second week's lesson was on mercy. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of mercy expressed in his book *Systematic Theology*.² The lesson explained that the depravity of man has yielded a defiled and eternally condemned state for all of mankind. In his mercy, God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ. Believers are to reflect God's mercy by reaching out and ministering to those in need. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a missionary to China devotes her life to taking in orphans. Through her ministry to these orphans, the young missionary comes to understand the mercy she has received from God. At the conclusion of the short story the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define mercy in your own words, (2) how was mercy demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about mercy, and (4) how can believers exercise mercy towards others (provide two examples)? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Again, the control group followed a similar format and timeline with a few important modifications. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a

²Ibid., 1247.

lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define mercy in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about mercy, and (3) how can believers exercise mercy towards others (provide two examples)? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 3: Love

The third week's lesson was on love. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of love expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.³ The lesson explained that God's love for mankind is unconditional. His love is not based upon man's performance, influence, or worth. Therefore, believers are to imitate God's love by unconditionally valuing and ministering to others. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a how a father's unconditional love for his son is truly tested as his son squanders all of his talent and resources. Ultimately, the son comes to his senses and is drawn back due to his father's unrelenting love and compassion. At the conclusion of the short story the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define love in your own words, (2) how was love demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about love, and (4) how can believers exercise love towards others (provide two examples)? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

As before, the control group received an analogous arrangement with a few crucial adaptations. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a

³Ibid., 198-99.

clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define love in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about love, and (3) how can believers exercise love towards others (provide two examples)? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 4: Sin

The fourth week's lesson was on sin. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of sin expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.⁴ The lesson explained that mankind's sin stems from a desire to reject God's authority and replace it with his own authority. In essence, sin is when a man says to God, "I can and will do things my way." Unfortunately, a rejection of God is a rejection God's love, mercy, grace, and salvation. Therefore, when a man rejects God, he is choosing eternal condemnation. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a rich young businessman who is entrapped in drugs, alcohol, and pornography, and refuses to acknowledge the gravity of his decisions and his need for help. In spite of the fact that many have tried to reach out to him, this seemingly "successful" entrepreneur dies alone in a dark alley on the streets of New York. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define sin in your own words and provide an example, (2) what effect can sin have on a person (please provide at least one example), (3) what does the Bible teach about sin,

⁴Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1254.

and (4) how can a person overcome sin? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Again, the control group followed a similar format and timeline with a few important modifications. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define sin in your own words and provide an example, (2) what effect can sin have on a person (please provide at least one example), (3) what does the Bible teach about sin, and (4) how can a person overcome sin? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 5: Greed and Giving

The fifth week's lesson was on greed and giving. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of greed and giving expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.⁵ The lesson explained that greed is sin. It is the deification of a material object. Like all sin, it has the power to ensnare and enslave. Therefore, total devotion to the Lord and the practice of charity frees believers from the entrapment of greed. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a poor farmer that finds a magic box in his field. The magic box provides him with an abundant supply of gold. Shortly, the farmer becomes consumed by his greed. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define greed in your own words and provide an example, (2) what

⁵Ibid., 957.

effect can greed have on a person (please provide at least one example), (3) what does the Bible teach about greed, and (4) how can a person avoid greed? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

The control group received an identical lesson with some necessary changes. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define greed in your own words and provide an example, (2) what effect can greed have on a person (please provide at least one example), (3) what does the Bible teach about greed, and (4) how can a person avoid greed? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 6: Atonement

The sixth week's lesson was on substitutionary atonement. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of atonement expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.⁶ The lesson explained that Christ, who was innocent, died in place of mankind, who was guilty. Therefore, mankind can be reconciled to God because of the sacrifice of Jesus. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a young man who voluntarily served a 30-year jail sentence for a crime that his brother committed. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define substitutionary

⁶Ibid., 1250.

atonement in your own words, (2) how was substitutionary atonement demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about substitutionary atonement, and (4) what impact should Substitutionary Atonement have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Again, the control group followed a similar format and timeline with a few important modifications. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define substitutionary atonement in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about substitutionary atonement, and (3) what impact should Substitutionary Atonement have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 7: Justification

The seventh week's lesson was on justification. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of justification expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.⁷ The lesson explained that because of the sacrifice of Jesus, a believer is declared "not guilty" in the eyes of God. Furthermore, he is viewed as innocent of all sins. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about how a notoriously strict judge shocked his courtroom by declaring the suspect of a seemingly open and shut case "not guilty." When interviewed

⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1246.

after the verdict, the judge revealed that the suspect was guilty but that the plaintiff's son came forward and agreed to make restitution. Since both the plaintiff and the plaintiff's son agreed this was fair, the suspect was declared innocent. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define justification in your own words, (2) how was justification demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about justification, and (4) what impact should the concept of justification have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

As before, the control group followed a similar format and timeline with a few important alterations. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define justification in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about justification, and (3) what impact should the concept of justification have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 8: Peace

The eighth week's lesson was on peace. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of peace expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.⁸ The lesson explained that the peace of God is derived from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a

⁸Ibid., 1250.

believer. A believer can be truly at peace because he is no longer under the guilt of his sins. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a veteran who struggled with his previous actions during the Vietnam War. A compassionate coworker leads the older gentleman to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the veteran learns to embrace the peace of God. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define peace in your own words, (2) how was peace demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about peace, and (4) what impact should peace have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Again, the control group's lesson was similar in arrangement and pace with a few vital adjustments. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define peace in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about peace, and (3) what impact should peace have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 9: Sanctification

The ninth week's lesson was on sanctification. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of sanctification expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.⁹ The lesson

⁹Ibid., 1253.

explained that salvation is a lifelong journey instead of singular. After being justified by God because of the death of Christ, the believer begins the process of conforming himself to the image of his Savior. Ultimately, this process ends at death when the believer is glorified. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a world renowned sculptor who finally divulges the secret to his artistry. He explains, “As I sit staring at the large uncut stone, I develop a mental picture of what the sculptor is going to be. After this, it is simply a matter of chipping away that which does not reflect the image in my mind.” At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define sanctification in your own words, (2) how was sanctification demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about sanctification, and (4) what impact should the process of sanctification have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants’ answers to the discussion questions.

As previously stated, the control group followed an identical lesson with a few vital alterations. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define peace in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about sanctification, and (3) what impact should the process of sanctification have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants’ answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 10: Adoption

The tenth week’s lesson was on adoption. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem’s

definition of adoption expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.¹⁰ The lesson explained that when an individual is saved, they enter into a spiritual community. God becomes their heavenly father. Other believers become their brothers and sister. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a young man who is shipwrecked on a seemingly deserted island. After struggling for survival, he finally encounters an unknown people group. He is taken captive by this seemingly hostile tribe. Once the tribe discovers that the young man is of no threat, a family in the tribe adopts him. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define adoption in your own words, (2) how was adoption demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about adoption, and (4) what impact should the concept of adoption have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

The control group followed a similar format and timeline with a few important modifications. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define adoption in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about adoption, and (3) what impact should the concept of adoption have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Lesson 11: Faith

The eleventh week's lesson was on faith. At the beginning of the lesson, the

¹⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1235.

teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of faith expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.¹¹ The lesson explained that faith is not when a believer takes a proverbial blind leap into the unknown and hoping that they land on their feet. It is a conscious, willful, and intentional decision of a believer to trust God. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a young college student follows the seemingly unintelligible instructions of his aged grandfather. In the process, the young man discovers that his granddad's unorthodox teaching style is the most effective form of instruction that he has ever received. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define faith in your own words, (2) how was faith demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about faith, and (4) what impact should faith have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

Again, the control group received a similar lesson with some important changes. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define faith in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about faith, and (3) what impact should faith have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

¹¹Ibid., 1241, 1253.

Lesson 12: Worship

The twelfth week's lesson was on worship. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher passed out the materials and instructed the students to read the lesson in its entirety before answering the discussion questions. The lesson provided Wayne Grudem's definition of worship expressed in his book, *Systematic Theology*.¹² The lesson explained that worship is the expression of believer's adoration of God through various methodologies. Then, the non-control group was asked to read a story about a group of teenagers who form a young, Christian artist's guild. The purpose of the guild is to create works of art that represent various components of the Bible. When asked why they wanted to spend hours working on their art projects instead of doing normal "teenage activities," the group explain that they seek to worship God through the creation of their art. At the conclusion of the short story, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define worship in your own words, (2) how was worship demonstrated in the story above, (3) what does the Bible teach about worship, and (4) what impact should worship have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

The control group followed a similar format and timeline with a few important modifications. Like its non-control group counterpart, the control group received a clear definition of the key biblical truth, a brief explanation on how to apply the biblical truth, and some concluding discussion questions. However, the control group received a lecture explaining the biblical truth discussed for the week instead of a fictional story. At the conclusion of the lecture, the students were asked to answer the following questions: (1) define worship in your own words, (2) what does the Bible teach about worship, and (3) what impact should worship have in the lives of believers? Finally, the teacher collected all the materials for the lesson, including the participants' answers to the discussion questions.

¹²Ibid., 1257.

Stage 3: Post-Project Exam, Survey, and Writing Assignment

Stage 3 of the project was approximately one week in duration. During this stage the post-project exam was administered to both the non-control and control groups. The post-project exam was an identical copy of the pre-project exam. The exam consisted of twenty-four questions that were constructed to evaluate the project participants' comprehension of fundamental biblical truths. As previously explained, students were instructed to answer the exam questions to the best of their abilities. They were not allowed to talk nor receive any help during the exam process. Students were given as much time as necessary to complete the exam. All materials were collected by the teacher at the conclusion. The comparative data collected from the identical post-project exam was used to determine if fictional literature had accomplished the first and second aforementioned goals of the project.

The post-project survey for the non-control group was composed of six questions constructed to measure the efficiency of using fictional literature to teach biblical concepts to the high school students. Likewise, the post-project survey for the control group consisted of four questions designed to evaluate the effectiveness of using lecture to teach biblical truths to the high school students. Students were instructed to provide open and honest feedback about the instruction they had received over the previous twelve weeks. As with all the other components of the project, students were not allowed to talk to other students nor receive any help during the survey process. Students were given as much time as necessary to complete the survey. The information obtained from both the non-control group and control group was used to determine if fictional literature had accomplished the second aforementioned goal of the project.

A post-project writing assignment was also assigned to the non-control group. The assignment was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of fictional literatures' ability to increase the students' aptitude in using their own imaginations. After passing out the materials, the teacher instructed the students to write a fictional short story about a topic

of their choosing. The teacher did not set any limitations on length of the piece or subject matter. Students were instructed not to talk during the process. Students were informed that they would not be allowed to receive any help on the assignment. They were given as much time as necessary to complete the piece. The information acquired from the task was used to determine if fictional literature had accomplished the third aforementioned goal of the project.

Stage 4: Data Analysis

The final stage of the project was approximately one week in duration. During this stage of the project, all of the data from the pre-project exams, post-project exams, post-project surveys, and writing assignments were collected and analyzed. The data was examined by the project leader. The information was used to determine if the utilization of fictional literature as a teaching methodology accomplished the preciously established goals of the project. The results stemming from the data produced during the fifteen-week project is thoroughly explained in chapter 5 of the project.

Conclusion

The execution of the fifteen-week project had a number of challenges and obstacles. The logistics of simultaneously leading two separate groups of high school students through a voluntary project lasting approximately fifteen weeks proved to be difficult. In order to preserve the integrity of the project, no incentive or compensation was offered for their voluntary participation. Driven only by a desire to help out a friend, each student tirelessly worked to provide clear and comprehensive answers to the assignments set before them. The end of the project was met with joy and adulation on behalf of both the students and the teacher. Nevertheless, several important observations were made as a result of the difficult task. As stated, the bulk of the information is shared in chapter 5; however, before the conclusion of the current chapter some important points need to be made.

First, the use of fiction as a medium for conveying biblical truth because of its ability to transfer information in a memorable and applicable manner is substantive. The attestation of this claim is not only verified in previous academic research on the subject, but was also clearly demonstrated week after week during the project at hand. It should be noted, however, that the fictional short stories utilized in the project revealed some considerable shortcomings to the medium as well. The depth and specifics of these shortcomings will be further explained in the subsequent chapter.

Second, a large majority of the participants enjoyed the creative writing exercise attached to the stage 3 of the project. The momentary chance for creativity afforded several students an abnormal opportunity to express themselves in an alternative and personal manner. The educational implications of this observation have been well researched in many academic circles. A further exploration and extrapolation of these findings is conducted later on in the project.

Finally, the project created an opportunity for further dialogue and study into other alternative means of education and communication. Conversations with students, colleagues, and inquisitive on-lookers revealed a deep need in the educational community of Grace Christian Academy to explore and evaluate other teaching methodologies besides standard lecture. As with most secondary educational institutions, Grace Christian academy has predominately relied upon lecture as its primary teaching methodology in the classroom. This is not to say that the hard working men and women of the school have not integrated non-traditional teaching methodologies into its curriculum. However, the amalgamation of these alternative means of teaching are only utilized in a secondary sense rather than the primary means of instruction. A further exploration into the methodological potential for Grace Christian Academy will be conducted in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of using fictional literature to teach biblical truths to the high school students at Grace Christian Academy in Knoxville, Tennessee. The current chapter serves as the evaluative component of the project. The first section contains an assessment of all the data collected during the fifteen-week project. The second section is a comparative analysis of the original goals for the project with the acquired data. In the third section an evaluation of the fifteen-week project process is conducted. In the fourth section several project modifications are proposed. The fifth section is dedicated to theological considerations and reflections. The sixth section contains a compilation of personal points of evaluation and reflection about the entire project. The final section is the conclusion of the project.

Evaluation of the Data

The following section is an appraisal of all the data collected during the fifteen-week project. As previously stated, two separate groups of students were taught the same biblical truths on a weekly basis using two different teaching methodologies. Group 1, the non-control group, was taught using fictional literature as the primary instructional tool. Group 2, the control group, was taught the same biblical truths using lecture as the primary instructional tool. Before the project began, each group was given an identical pre-project exam. During this exam, each participant was asked to provide the definition and make an application for each of the biblical truths addressed in the twelve-week curriculum. For the following twelve weeks, each group was taught the same material using two different

teaching methodologies. At the conclusion of the twelve weeks, each group was given an identical copy of the post-project exam. The post-project exam was an exact representation of the pre-project exam administered thirteen weeks prior. Each group was also given a post-project survey to complete about their specific teaching methodology. Finally, the non-control group completed a post-project writing assignment. The data collected from the process above provided valuable insight into the effectiveness of using fictional literature as a teaching tool.

Pre-Project and Post-Project Exam Results

For the pre-project and post-project exam, each participant was asked to correctly define and apply twelve biblical concepts. Each exam was graded according to its ability to express and apply the concept of each term provided. The definition for each term provided in Wayne Grudem's book, *Systematic Theology*, was used as the grading rubric. A correct answer was not based upon a word for word recitation of Grudem's work but rather a capturing of the general essence of his definition. The maximum number of correct responses possible for the definition section of each exam was 12 out of 12 definitions or 100 percent. The maximum number of correct responses possible for the application section of each exam was 12 out of 12 applications or 100 percent.

Non-Control Group Results—Definitions

An examination of Table 1 reveals that the group that received a weekly short story as the central component of its curriculum demonstrated improvement in their ability to define the predetermined biblical truths over the course of the project. Nine out of the 12 participants in the non-control group were able to define at least one or more terms in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Participant NC-12 showed the greatest amount of improvement by increasing her ability to define the key terms by 33.33 percent. Participants NC-7 and NC-8 also showed substantial improvement in defining the pre-selected terms by 25 percent. Three participants in this group showed no improvement.

It should be noted that out of this group one member, participant NC-5, was unable to improve upon their score because of attaining a 100 percent on both their pre-project and post-project exam. Participant NC-3 performed 8.34 percent poorer on their post-project exam than their pre-project exam.

Table 1 reflects the number of correct definitions provided by the non-control group, the group taught using fictional literature. The far left hand column of each table provides the percentage difference from the participant's pre-project exam and their post-project exam.

Table 1. Non-control group definitions

Student	Pre-project exam	Post-project exam	% Difference
NC-1	7/12 (58.33 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	+8.34 %
NC-2	9/12 (75 %)	9/12 (75 %)	0 %
NC-3	11/12 (91.67 %)	10/12 (83.33 %)	-8.34 %
NC-4	7/12 (58.33 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	+8.34 %
NC-5	12/12 (100 %)	12/12 (100 %)	0 %
NC-6	10/12 (83.33 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	+8.34 %
NC-7	8/12 (66.67 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	+25 %
NC-8	8/12 (66.67 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	+25 %
NC-9	10/12 (83.33 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	+8.34 %
NC-10	8/12 (66.67 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	0 %
NC-11	8/12 (66.67 %)	9/12 (75 %)	+8.33 %
NC-12	5/12 (41.67 %)	9/12 (75 %)	33.33 %

Control Group Results – Definitions

Table 2 reflects the number of correct definitions provided by the control group, the group taught using lecture. Again, the far left hand column of each table provides the percentage difference from the participant's pre-project exam and their post-project exam.

Table 2. Control group definitions

Student	Pre-project exam	Post-project exam	% Difference
C-1	12/12 (100 %)	12/12 (100 %)	0 %
C-2	8/12 (66.67 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	0 %
C-3	9/12 (75 %)	9/12 (75 %)	0 %
C-4	11/12 (91.67 %)	12/12 (100 %)	+8.33 %
C-5	11/12 (91.67 %)	12/12 (100 %)	+8.33 %
C-6	11/12 (91.67 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	0 %
C-7	10/ 12 (83.33 %)	9/12 (75 %)	-8.33 %
C-8	12/12 (100 %)	12/12 (100 %)	0 %
C-9	7/12 (58.33 %)	9/12 (75 %)	+16.67 %
C-10	10/12 (83.33 %)	9/12 (75 %)	-8.33 %
C-11	8/12 (66.67 %)	12/12 (100 %)	+33.33 %

Comparatively, an assessment of table 2 reveals that the group which received a weekly lecture as the central component of its curriculum also demonstrated some improvement in their ability to define the predetermined biblical truths over the course of the project. In this group, 4 out of the 11 participants were able to define at least one or more terms in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Participant C-11 showed the greatest amount of improvement by increasing their ability to define the key terms by 33.33 percent. Participant C-9 also showed substantial improvement in defining the pre-selected terms by 16.67 percent. Seven out of the 11 participants in the control set demonstrated no improvement during the course of project. Among this grouping, participants C-7 and C-10 performed 8.34 percent poorer on their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Participants C-1 and C-8 were unable to improve upon their score because of attaining a 100 percent on both their pre-project and post-project exam.

Comparative Analysis of Learning Outcomes—Definitions

On the pre-project exam, the non-control group produced an average mean of 71.53 percent in their ability to define the pre-specified key terms. The group also scored a pre-project mode of 66.67 percent and a median of 75 percent. The group recorded a standard deviation of 15.35. In comparison, the same group produced an average mean of 81.25 percent in their ability to define the pre-specified key terms on their post-project exams. The group recorded a post-project mode of 91.67 percent and a median of 83.33 percent. The standard deviation was 11.30.

On the pre-project exam, the control group scored an average mean of 82.58 percent in their ability to define the pre-selected terms. The group also scored a pre-project mode of 91.67 percent and a median of 79.17 percent. The standard deviation of this group was 13.47. In their post-project exam, the control group produced an average mean of 87.12 percent on their ability to define the key terms. They also produced a project mode of 100 percent and a median of 83.34 percent. The standard deviation was 12.95.

The data demonstrates that both groups showed improvement from their pre-project exam to their post-project exam. However, the data also indicates that the non-control group showed greater improvement in their ability to define the pre-selected terms. The project mean for the non-control group improved by 9.72 percent; the control group only increased by 4.54 percent. The non-control group's project mode increased 25 percent in comparison to the control group's 8.33 percent. Finally, the non-control group's project median improved 8.33 percent; the control group's improvement was only 4.17 percent. It should be noted, that the results stemming from all the data collected in the project was potentially influenced by the teacher's ability to communicate biblical truths through the medium of fictional short stories and the medium of lecture.

Non-Control Group Results—Applications

Table 3 reflects the number of correct applications provided by the non-control group. As before, the far left hand column of each table provides the percentage difference from the participant's pre-project exam and their post-project exam.

Table 3. Non-control group applications

Student	Pre-project exam	Post-project exam	% Difference
NC-1	7/12 (58.33 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	+8.34 %
NC-2	10/12 (83.33 %)	9/12 (75 %)	-8.33 %
NC-3	9/12 (75 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	-8.33 %
NC-4	8/12 (66.67 %)	9/12 (75 %)	+8.33 %
NC-5	12/12 (100 %)	12/12 (100 %)	0 %
NC-6	10/12 (83.33 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	+8.34 %
NC-7	8/12 (66.67 %)	10/12 (83.33 %)	+16.66 %
NC-8	7/12 (58.33 %)	12/12 (100 %)	+41.67 %
NC-9	7/12 (58.33 %)	5/12 (41.67 %)	-16.66 %
NC-10	7/12 (58.33 %)	7/12 (58.33 %)	0 %
NC-11	8/12 (66.67 %)	9/12 (75 %)	+ 8.33 %
NC-12	5/12 (41.67 %)	9/12 (75 %)	+ 33.33 %

An examination of table 3 reveals that the group which received a weekly short story as the central component of its curriculum demonstrated improvement in its ability to apply the predetermined biblical truths over the course of the project. Seven out of the 12 participants in the non-control group were able to apply at least one or more concepts in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Participant NC-8 showed the greatest amount of improvement by increasing his ability to apply the biblical truths by 41.67 percent. Participant NC-12 also showed substantial improvement in applying the pre-selected terms by 33.33 percent. Participant NC-7 also improved by 16.66 percent. Five participants in this group showed no improvement. Again, it should be noted that out of this group one member, participant NC-5, was unable to improve upon their score because of attaining a 100 percent on both their pre-project and post-project exam. Participant NC-2 and NC-3 scored 8.34 percent lower on their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Participant NC-9 scored 16.66 percent lower.

Control Group Results – Applications

Table 4 reflects the number of correct applications provided by the control group. Again, the far left hand column of each table provides the percentage difference from the participant's pre-project exam and their post-project exam.

Table 4. Control group applications

Student	Pre-project exam	Post-project exam	% Difference
C-1	11/12 (91.67 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	0 %
C-2	7/12 (58.33 %)	6/12 (50 %)	-8.33 %
C-3	9/12 (75 %)	9/12 (75 %)	0 %
C-4	11/12 (91.67 %)	12/12 (100 %)	+8.33 %
C-5	10/12 (83.33 %)	10/12 (83.33 %)	0 %
C-6	4/12 (33.33 %)	6/12 (50 %)	+16.67 %
C-7	10/12 (83.33 %)	9/12 (75 %)	-8.33 %
C-8	11/12 (91.67 %)	11/12 (91.67 %)	0 %
C-9	7/12 (58.33 %)	7/12 (58.33 %)	0 %
C-10	7/12 (58.33 %)	8/12 (66.67 %)	+8.34 %
C-11	7/12 (58.33 %)	10/12 (83.33 %)	+30 %

Comparatively, an assessment of table 4 reveals that the group which received a weekly lecture as the central component of its curriculum also demonstrated some improvement in its ability to apply the predetermined biblical truths over the course of the project. In this group, 4 out of the 11 participants were able to apply at least one or more concept in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Participant C-11 showed the greatest amount of improvement by increasing his ability to apply the key terms by 30 percent. Participant C-6 also showed substantial improvement in his application of the pre-selected truths by 16.67 percent. Again, 7 out of the 11 participants in the control set demonstrated no improvement during the course of project. Among this grouping,

participants C-2 and C-7 scored 8.33 percent lower on their post-project exam than their pre-project exam.

Comparative Analysis of Learning Outcomes—Application

On the pre-project exam, the non-control group produced an average mean of 68.06 percent in their ability to apply the pre-specified key terms. The group also scored a pre-project mode of 58.3 percent and a median of 70.84 percent. The group recorded a standard deviation of 14.73. In comparison, the same group produced an average mean of 75.70 percent in their ability to apply the pre-specified key terms on their post-project exams. The group recorded a post-project mode of 75 percent and a median of 75 percent. The standard deviation was 16.09.

On the pre-project exam, the control group scored an average mean of 71.21 percent in their ability to apply the pre-selected terms. The group also scored a pre-project mode of 58.33 percent and a median of 75 percent. The standard deviation of this group was 18.22. In their post-project exam, the control group produced an average mean of 75 percent on their ability to apply the key terms. The group produced a post-project median of 70.84 percent; but no unique mode. The standard deviation was 12.95.

Again, the data demonstrates that both groups showed improvement from their pre-project exam to their post-project exam. However, the data also indicates that the non-control group showed greater improvement in their ability to apply the pre-selected terms. The project mean for the non-control group improved by 7.64 percent; the control group only increased by 3.79 percent. The non-control group's project mode increased 16.67 percent; the control group was unable to establish a unique mode. Finally, the non-control group's project median improved 4.16 percent. The control group's median actually decreased by 4.17 percent. As before, it should be noted, that the results stemming from all the data collected in the project was potentially influenced by the teacher's ability

to communicate biblical truths through the medium of fictional short stories and the medium of lecture.

Post-Project Survey Results

For the post-project survey, each group of participants was asked a series of questions pertaining to the specific teaching methodology they received. The non-control group, the group taught using fictional literature as the primary instructional tool, was asked six questions. The control group, the group that taught using lecture as the primary instructional tool, was asked four questions. The two extra questions asked of the non-control group related to the post-project writing assignment in which the control group did not attempt. Appendix 8, Tables A1 through A4 reflect the responses provided by the non-control group. Appendix 8, Tables A5 through A9 reflect the responses provided by the control group.

Results for the Non-Control Group

As Tables A1 through A4 in appendix 8 illuminate, 12 out of the 12 participants of the non-control group felt that the weekly short stories helped them comprehend and retain the biblical truths they were studying that particular week. When asked, “Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?” participant NC-1 responded, “Yes; it helped me break down and understand a lot better.” In response to the same question, participant NC-4 responded, “Yes; they gave examples and painted a picture.” Likewise, participant NC-7 stated, “Yes; they [were] a creative learning twist.” According to the post-project survey, none of the non-control participants indicated that the short stories were unhelpful or detrimental to their learning experience throughout the project.

Tables A1 through A4 of appendix 8 also demonstrate that several members of the non-control group were able to articulate at least one of the biblical truths they learned during the course of the project. When asked, “If so, explain at least one biblical truth

you learned during the project,” participants NC-2, NC-9, and NC-12 indicated that the project helped them to understand substitutionary atonement better. Participants NC-7 and NC-8 indicated that the project helped them comprehend and retain the concept of being adopted into God’s family. Participant NC-5 stated that the project aided them in the process of understanding “the difference between grace and mercy.” It should be noted that 3 out of the 12 members of this group provided no information or only generalized information in response to this question instead of providing a specific example as inferred by the original question. In response to the question, participant NC-10 stated, “[I am] not a good explainer.”

The non-control participants’ responses to the application portion of the project were consistent with the data revealed about the definition portion of the project. Tables A1 through A4 in appendix 8 show that 11 out of the 12 participants of the non-control group felt that the weekly short stories helped them apply the biblical truth they studied that particular week. When asked, “Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you apply the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?” participant NC-3 responded, “Yes; it related them to things I knew about.” In response to the same question, participant NC-7 responded, “Yes; they related to everyday life.” Likewise, participant NC-11 stated, “Yes; I now desire to worship more, even in my spare time.” According to the post-project survey, only one of the non-control participants indicated that the short stories were unhelpful or detrimental to their learning experience throughout the project. In response to the aforementioned question, participant NC-8 indicated, “No” and offered no explanation as to why they felt the weekly short stories were unhelpful.

Tables A1 through A4 in appendix 8 demonstrate that several members of the non-control group were able to articulate how to apply at least one of the biblical truths they learned during the course of the project. When asked, “If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?” participants NC-10 and NC-12 indicated that the project helped them to apply the concept of biblical peace in their lives better.

Participant NC-6 indicated that the project helped them to apply the concept of being adopted into God's family. Participant NC-5 stated that the project inspired them to "take the time to thank God for all that he has done." It should be noted that 3 out of the 12 members of this group provided no information or answered "no" in response to this question.

When asked, "Do you feel that the weekly short stories increased your ability to use your imagination? Why or why not?" 7 out of the 12 non-control group participants answered affirmatively. Four out of the 12 group members indicated that the project did not help them use their imaginations. Participant NC-10 answered, "Kind of" to the questions. When asked "If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?" participant NC-6 stated, "Imagining stories in my head when I read [them]." Participant NC-1 stated, "Knowing the true meaning of life." It should be noted that 2 out of the 7 participants that indicated that the weekly short stories helped them use their imaginations could provide any semblance of answer to the question, "If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?"

Results for the Control Group

As previously indicated, the control group was asked the same four questions that were asked of the non-control group. The two extra questions asked of the non-control group related to the post-project writing assignment that the control group did not attempt. In appendix 8, Tables A5 through A9 reflect the responses provided by the control group. When asked, "Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?" participants C-1, C-4, C-6, C-7, and C-9 all indicated that the weekly lectures helped them comprehend and retain the biblical truth they studied that particular week. Participant C-1 stated, "Yes; they furthered my understanding of each concept." Likewise, participant C-4 explained, "Yes; they were clear and concise lessons." It should be noted that not all the participants in this group responded favorably to the weekly lectures. Participants C-2 and C-11 indicated that the lectures were not

helpful. Participants C-3, C-5, C-8, and C-10 indicated that the lectures only minimally helped them in their understanding of each biblical truth.

When asked, “If so, explain at least one biblical truth you learned during the project” participants C-1 and C-3 indicated that the project helped them to understand the concepts of grace and mercy better. Participants C-7 and C-8 indicated that the project helped them comprehend and retain the idea of justification. Participant C-5 stated that the project aided them in the process of understanding that “substitutionary atonement as Christ taking our place.” It should be noted that 3 out of the 11 members of this group provided no information in response to this question.

The control participants’ responses to the application portion of the project were consistent with the data revealed about the definition portion of the project. As Tables A5 through A9 in appendix 8 explain, 5 out of the 11 participants of the control group conclusively felt that the weekly lectures helped them apply the biblical truth that they studied that particular week. When asked, “Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you apply the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?” participant C-1 responded, “Yes; I was focused on the given concept and its application.” In response to the same question, participant C-6 responded, “Yes; because I was given new light on the subject.” Likewise, participant C-7 stated, “Yes; they were being reinforced.” According to the post-project survey, 4 of the control participants indicated that the lectures were unhelpful or detrimental to their learning experience throughout the project. In response to the aforementioned question, participant C-5 stated, “No; the method was somewhat boring.”

When asked, “If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?” participant C-3 indicated that the project helped them to apply the concept of grace and mercy in their lives better. Participant NC-4 indicated that the project challenged them to “pursue Christ’s holiness in our lives. We should try our hardest to glorify him in every word and deed.” Participant C-9 stated that the project inspired them to “be

happy and thankful for what I have rather than wanting more.” It should be noted that 5 out of the 11 members of this group provided no information.

Post-Project Writing Assignment

At the conclusion of the project, the non-control group was asked to create an original work of fiction. As previously stated, the purpose of this portion of the project was to determine if the consistent exposure to fictional literature over a twelve-week period inspired or enhanced the students’ ability to utilize their own imaginations in the creation of an original work of fiction. After passing out the appropriate materials needed for the assignments, the teacher gave the students specific instructions on how to execute the assignment. The students were told to write on any subject matter of their choosing. The individual participants were also instructed that the piece could be of any length and cover any subject matter that they desired.

The assignment yielded some very creative and interesting fictional short stories. Participant NC-7 wrote an imaginative piece about a young man named Hanson who discovered a mermaid while fishing one day. Realizing that the beautiful sea creature was in desperate need of help, Hanson heroically dove into the water to free the mermaid from her entrapment. In the end, the mermaid expressed her gratitude for the selfless act by promising Hanson a valuable reward.

Likewise, participant NC-5 crafted an imaginative tale about an inventive man who brings peace to tragic situation through some creative use of technology. One of the subjects of a just and powerful king died at the hands of another. Even though it was an act of self-defense, the gentleman was still facing life in prison. If thrown in jail, the man would be leaving a small child fatherless and a young woman husbandless. Out of desperation, the man built a robotic replica of himself. Heroically, the robot begged the wise and just king to allow him to be thrown in jail instead of the man who created him. Knowing that the man was really innocent of the murder, the king agreed and the robot was sent to jail instead of the man.

Participant NC-2 also provided an imaginative fictional story about the adventures of an undersea dweller named Duncan. Duncan was a shrimp that lived at the bottom of the sea. One of his favorite past times was collecting the lost hats of sailors that were blown overboard while traveling across the sea. On one remarkable day, Duncan collected a magical hat that gave him the ability to speak Spanish. At the end of the story, Duncan was hired as a professional translator for a sales company on the surface.

Finally, participant NC-1 created a fictional short story about a young girl who had the amazing ability of being able to communicate with the dead. Everyone in her small town doubted her special powers until one day a horrific tornado blew through and totally destroyed the town. There was great mourning because many of the town's people lost many of their family and friends in the storm. The young girl was able to bring peace by helping the remaining people to say goodbye to their loves ones before they crossed over into the afterlife.

In the end, 7 out of the 12 participants were able to successfully complete the exercise by offering an original work of fiction. Many of these pieces showed great imagination on the behalf of their authors. Interestingly, many of the stories also demonstrated an ability to communicate some type of moral truth; even though this was never mentioned as a specific criterion for the assignment. As indicated in the examples above, many of the main characters of the fictional short stories committed some type of heroic or selfless deed. It should also be noted that 5 out of the 12 participants in this group would not or could not complete the exercise. Reasons for the lack of completion are uncertain. The 5 participants who did not complete this portion of the project turned the writing assignment in blank with no explanation as to why they would not or could not participate. As previously stated, the control group did not participate in this exercise.

Evaluation of the Project Goals

The data collected from this project indicates that the utilization of fictional short stories as a viable teaching methodology among the students' studied during the course of

this project was substantiated. Learning did improve among the non-control group from their pre-project exams to their post-project exams. However, as indicated in the project methodology section of chapter 1, the results stemming from this project are unique to this study. The data collected in the project was potentially influenced by the teacher's ability to communicate biblical truths through the medium of fictional short stories and the medium of lecture. The data acquired in the study could have also been influenced by the novelty of the project and the introduction of a new teaching methodology. Nonetheless, the non-control group students were able to define and apply more of the key terms at the end of the project than they could at the beginning. Also, a majority of the students were able to create an original work of fiction at the conclusion of the project. The data from the post-project surveys also verifies that the students in the non-control group felt that the usage of fictional literature helped them in their comprehension and application of the pre-selected terms and their ability to use their imaginations.

Three goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to determine if fictional literature could increase the ability of the high school students of Grace Christian Academy to comprehend and retain biblical truths. The assessment apparatus for this particular goal was the pre-project exams, post-project exams, and post-project surveys conducted on both the non-control and control groups. Nine out of the 12 participants in the non-control group were able to define at least one or more terms in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Comparatively, 4 out of the 11 participants of the control group were able to define at least one or more terms in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. The noticeable improvement from the pre-project exam results to the post-project exam results for this particular study indicates that using fictional literature as a primary teaching methodology for comprehension and retention is comparable, and in some instances more effective, than using lecture as a primary teaching methodology. The post-project survey verifies this conclusion as well. Therefore, the first goal of the project was successfully completed.

The second goal of this project was to determine if fictional literature could increase the students' ability to apply biblical truths. Again, the assessment tool for this particular goal was the pre-project exams, post-project exams, and post-project surveys conducted on both the non-control and control groups. Seven out of the 12 participants in the non-control group were able to apply at least one or more terms in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Comparatively, 4 out of the 11 participants of the control group were able to apply at least one or more terms in their post-project exam than their pre-project exam. Again, the noticeable improvement from the pre-project exam results to the post-project exam results indicates that using fictional literature as a primary methodology for teaching application skills is comparable, and in some instances more effective, than using lecture as a primary teaching methodology. The post-project survey seems to verify this conclusion as well. Therefore, the second goal of the project was successfully completed.

The third goal of this project was to help students increase their ability to utilize their creativity for the glory of Christ and the advancement of the His Kingdom. The appraisal apparatus for this particular goal was the post-project surveys and the post-project writing assignment conducted on the non-control group. According to the post-project surveys, 7 out of the 12 non-control group participants affirmatively answered that the project had helped them increase their ability to use their imaginations. It should be noted that only 2 of the 7 participants that indicated an affirmative answer could articulate how the project helped increase their ability to use their imaginations.

Nonetheless, in spite of the group's inability to describe how the project helped them to utilize their imaginations more, 7 out of the 12 participants were able to successfully complete the post-project writing exercise. As indicated above, several of the participants were able to generate some creative and educational pieces of fictional literature. It should be noted that 5 out of the 12 participants in this group would not or could not complete the exercise. As previously stated, the inability of these five to

complete the assignment is uncertain. Therefore, the successful completion of the writing assignment by the majority of the non-control group demonstrates that the third goal of this project was completed.

Evaluation of the Project Process

The research methodology for the fifteen-week project contained a variety of strengths. First, the identical nature of the pre-project exam and post-project exam for both the non-control group and control group afforded the valuable data needed to produce a conclusive assessment of the project's original goals. The consistency for one exam to another ensured that the testing instruments cohesively worked together. The information garnered from the participants was not influenced by persuasive or faulty testing instrumentation.

Second, the addition of a post-project survey for both the non-control and control group also helped to gauge the personal experience of each of the participant in both groups pertaining to their specific teaching methodology. The survey was intentionally designed to be opinioned-based. The survey allowed for some subjectivity. However, it also afforded the participants an open and unrestrained mechanism for expressing their viewpoints about their assigned methodology.

Finally, the addition of a control group, which was taught through lecture the same biblical truths as the non-control group, was immensely helpful. The addition of this group offered much needed comparative data to validate the proposed claims of the project. The goal of the project was not to demonstrate that using fictional literature as the primary teaching tool was a better teaching methodology than lecture. Rather, the goal of the project was to assess whether or not the use of fiction was a viable apparatus for communicating biblical truths to high school students. The information from the control group helped to produce conclusive results this area.

The research methodology for the project also contained several weaknesses. First, the testing instruments for determining whether or not the fifteen-week project

helped to increase the participants' ability to use their imaginations needs alteration in order to more effectively gauge the participants imaginative capabilities. For instance, without having a pre-project assignment focused exclusively upon the students' ability to use their imaginations for comparison, improvement in this area was subjectively based upon student surveys. Perhaps the addition of a pre-project writing assignment for the non-control group would supply valuable data for this portion of the project.

Second, the length of the project was only fifteen weeks. Given the time constraints, a definitive conclusion on whether or not the results established in the fifteen-week project could be sustained for a longer period of time was not reached. Perhaps using fictional literature as the primary teaching methodology could not produce the same results if carried forth for an entire year of instruction. Perhaps the results would be more substantial if more time was allocated.

Third, another weakness of the project was the attrition and diversity of the participants. As previously mentioned, the project was carried out at Grace Christian Academy. Due to the employment conditions of the writer, the number and diversity of participants was limited to the 2012 graduating class. Although the senior class of Grace Christian Academy is representative of the community, the fifteen-week project dealt with a limited number of participants. Also, the voluntary nature of the fifteen-week project drastically reduced the potential data set as many students opted out for a variety of reasons.

Proposed Project Modifications

Although the project accomplished all its original goals, several modifications could have made the process more efficient and effective. First, a larger and more diverse data set would be more advantageous. Within the confines of the project, it would have been helpful to expand the size of the non-control group and the control group to include several more students. As stated, the voluntary nature of the project was a limiting factor in this area. Understandably, this factor should not change. However, expanding the

study to include juniors, sophomores, and freshman students of Grace Christian Academy would be helpful. A larger body of participants would increase the likelihood that more students would opt to remain in the study during the entire fifteen-week project. Perhaps future studies on the subject will include the aforementioned suggestion.

Second, an expansion and redistribution of the time allocated for the project needs to increase. A year-long study could potentially yield more definitive results on the subject. It is proposed that a more substantial length of time would reveal more definitive patterns in the project results. Also, it may be helpful to break the post-project exam up into smaller sections and administer them on a more frequent basis. For instance, in week 1 the students learned about the concept of biblical grace. However, it was not until twelve weeks later that the students were asked to recall that information again. Perhaps offering the corresponding sections of the post-project exam every four weeks would reveal a more accurate picture of the students' retention abilities and application skills.

Third, a more rigorous testing instrument for the third goal of the project needs to be constructed. Instead of waiting until the very end of the project to have the students create an original work of fiction, perhaps more frequent and structure assignments should be utilized. The students should be allocated time every week to create a short fiction story highlighting the specific biblical truth taught that week. Then at the end of the fifteen-week project the participants should construct a more substantial body of fictional literature. This final body of work should integrate the predetermined biblical truths discussed during the course of the fifteen-week project. It may also be helpful to have the control group participate in the exercise as well in order to acquire comparative data about the results of the assignment.

Theological Considerations and Reflection

Near the end of his book *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, C. S. Lewis describes a conversation between the Aslan, a Christ-like figure, and two of the central characters of

the book, Edmund and Lucy. In the discussion with Edmund and Lucy, Aslan explains that they will not be allowed to return to Narnia again because they are too old. In order to comfort their obvious grief, Aslan goes on to tell them that in their world “I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little while, you may know me better there.”¹ As evident from his writing, Lewis believed that fiction was a viable methodology for transferring biblical truth. It was a gateway from exposing the world to the incomprehensible nature of God. Lewis used fiction as a vehicle for evangelism and discipleship. By creating an attainable fantasy world called Narnia in which a heroic and noble Lion named Aslan lived, Lewis was able to draw his readers closer to the indescribable essence of Christ.

The tactic of employing fiction to communicate truth is also supported by biblical precedent. An assessment of the parabolic and prophetic literature of the Bible reveals that fictional literature can be exploited as an instructional tool in Christian education. In 2 Samuel 12:1-15, the prophet Nathan used a fictional short story to lead King David down the pathway of self-indictment. Also, the symbolic acts, oracles, and visions of the Old Testament prophets illustrate that God’s people have always upheld fiction as valuable tool for teaching God’s truth. In Jeremiah 13:1-11, the prophet Jeremiah was called upon by the Lord to use an ordinary item, such as a linen waistband, to act out a message of judgment before the inhabitants of Judah. Thus, fiction has the biblical precedence and theological rigor to serve as a vessel for teaching the truths of Scripture.

It is important to note that use of fiction could potentially have some negative theological implications as well. When divorced from the concrete truths of the Bible, fiction can turn into a mechanism for subjectivity, personal interpretation, and an

¹C. S. Lewis, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (New York: Scholastic, 1995), 247.

undermining of scriptural integrity. In his book, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church*, D. A. Carson quotes and then responds to an argument made by author Neil Oliver Edwards. Carson quotes Edwards as saying, “According to the Bible, humans shall not live by systems and abstractions alone but by stories and poetry and proverbs and mystery.”² To which Carson replies,

One never stumbles across passages that say, in effect, that human beings shall not live by stories and poetry and proverbs and mystery alone, but also by revealed truths that are to be believed, trusted, understood, and obeyed-yet Scripture insists on this point countless times. One might start by meditating on Psalm 119.³

As Carson explains, the usage of fiction as a means of communicating biblical truth always has to be coupled the objective, moral truths outlined in scripture. Fiction was meant to aide in the facilitation of truth; not replace it.

Personal Evaluation and Reflection

My time throughout the project and my entire educational experience during the Doctorate of Educational Ministry program at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been immensely beneficial and insightful. I learned a lot about my God, ministry, others, and myself. First, my knowledge of God’s grace and fervent love for his people was substantially reinforced. In addition to revealing the gospel through Jesus Christ, God also reveals his gospel through a variety of literary mediums such as narrative, poetry, parables, prophecy, and song. The gospel purposefully connects with the heart, mind, and soul of the individual. God created mankind with the ability to enjoy and learn from the beauty and artistry of literature, art, and dance. Therefore, I, as a minister of the gospel, need to utilize all the tools that God has given in order to expand his kingdom and make his name great.

Second, I learned that God has created mankind with a variety of learning styles.

²D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 64-65.

³Ibid.

As a Christian educator, I am reminded that my students do not all learn in the same manner. The diversity in learning styles does not imply that one learning style is better than the other; however, it does imply that mastery of a variety of teaching methods is necessary in the field of education. Therefore, my teaching methodologies need to be varied and intentional in order to maximize my students' ability to comprehend, retain, and apply the biblical truths being taught.

Finally, I have learned that God has gifted mankind with an imagination. Stories and imaginary worlds were never meant to be discarded once an individual reached adulthood. Rather, the imagination can be a valuable tool in Christian education and the advancement of the gospel. Through fiction, an individual who may not know what substitutionary atonement is can be immersed in a story in which a majestic Lion sacrificially gives his life as a ransom for another.⁴ By seeing the destructive effects of greed being played out in the economy of a farmyard another individual could learn more about the impact greed can have in their lives. Another can learn what true biblical peace looks like by peering into a time and reality that is not their own. The imagination of mankind is a powerful gift from God. Used properly, it can serve as a powerful tool in education, evangelism, and discipleship.

Conclusion

As previously stated, the intention of the project was to determine if fictional literature is a feasible mechanism for teaching biblical truths to high school students at Grace Christian Academy. According to the criteria previously outlined at the beginning of the project, the three intended goals were successfully accomplished. First, it was demonstrated that fiction is a viable methodology for instruction because of its ability to transfer information in a memorable manner. Second, it was proved that the situational

⁴C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: Scholastic, 1995), 155.

nature of fictional literature serves as a practical tool for communicating realistic applications of biblical truths. Finally, it was demonstrated that the imaginative nature of fictional writing could increase students' ability to use their own imaginations.

It is important to note that the project is by no means exhaustive or comprehensive in nature. There are many areas of exploration and refinement that could be applied to the findings of the project and the project itself. Certainly, the project has several weaknesses that could be further improved upon. This project was merely a reflection of years of earnest work and sacrificial dedication given by so many Christian educators. It is the hope of the author that the process and the project have been beneficial to all those involved. Finally, it is the wish of the writer that the project has been honoring to Christ and beneficial to the advancement of his Kingdom.

APPENDIX 1

RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

Consent form for minors or members of a vulnerable population.

Agreement to Participate

You are being requested to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to measure your student's ability to comprehend, apply, and retain biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, a person will be asked to answer questions before the project and then answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. They will also be asked to read a short fictional story or listen to a lecture every week and discuss questions pertaining to the story or lecture. They will also be interviewed at the conclusion of the project and asked to create a work of fiction. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name identified with his or her responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX 2

PRE-PROJECT AND POST-PROJECT EXAM (CONTROL AND NON-CONTROL GROUP)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer the series of questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

1. Define grace in your own words.
2. How can believers exercise grace towards others (provide two examples)?
3. Define mercy in your own words.
4. How can believers exercise mercy towards others (provide two examples)?
5. Define love in your own words.
6. How can believers exercise love towards others (provide two examples)?
7. Define sin in your own words.
8. What effect can sin have on a person (please provide at least one example)?
9. Define greed in your own words.
10. What effect can greed have on a person (please provide at least one example)?

11. Define Substitutionary Atonement in your own words.
12. What impact should Substitutionary Atonement have in the lives of believers?
13. Define Justification in your own words.
14. What impact should the concept of Justification have in the lives of believers?
15. Define peace in your own words.
16. What impact should peace have in the lives of believers?
17. Define sanctification in your own words.
18. What impact should the process of sanctification have in the lives of believers?
19. Define adoption in your own words.
20. What impact should the concept of adoption have in the lives of believers?
21. Define faith in your own words.
22. What impact should faith have in the lives of believers?
23. Define worship in your own words.
24. What impact should worship have in the lives of believers?

APPENDIX 3

WEEKLY LESSONS—NON-CONTROL GROUP

Week 1—Lesson on Grace (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God’s goodness towards those who only deserve punishment.”¹
- Transferable concept - God has richly blessed mankind with what they do not deserve. Instead of hell, mankind is extended salvation. In turn, believers are to imitate the grace of God in their relationships with others (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Story Synopsis – A starving boy who is trying steal bread is caught and taken in by a widower who feeds, clothes, shelters and befriends him. The widower teaches the young man a trade and about God.
- Story – Jesop’s stomach would not stop aching as he stared through the dust tainted window of Mr. Mulford’s grocery store. A bit of bread, a piece of fruit, a taste of chocolate would be enough to temporarily subside the gnawing pain. Again, Jesop thrusts his hands in his pockets to find nothing but lint. It is in this moment that he begins to contemplate the long list of previous decisions that had led him to this point. Perhaps the rigidity of his parent’s rules weren’t as harsh as they appeared. Perhaps the excitement and freedom found in the “big” city wasn’t as satisfying as he had hoped. Perhaps his brother was right when he tearfully pleaded with him to look to Jesus for peace and contentment in life. Unfortunately, none of those regrets were going to fill his empty stomach. In another tragic split second decision, Jesop gave into his desires, walked into Mr. Mulford’s store, grabbed two apples, shoved them in his pocket and bolted for the open door. He was almost to the door when he felt a sharp jab in his side. Unable to breath, he collapsed to the floor. When he opened his eyes, he saw the blurry outline of the white-haired shop owner standing over him with a broomstick in his hand. “sorry for the shot to the ribs, son, but I couldn’t let you break the law” Mr. Mulford said. He slowly reached down, grabbed Jesop by the arm, and raised him

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1243.

to his feet. “I was watching you stare at those apples for a good ten minutes. The moment I saw you walked into the store, I knew exactly what you were going to do” he explained. At this moment, Jesop’s eyes began filling with tears and his body began to shake uncontrollably. The reality of his decision and the consequences he was now facing had overwhelmed him. Sobbing uncontrollably he fell back to the floor in a huddle mass. Amidst his crying, he was surprised to feel the warm arms of the old shopkeeper wrap around him. “it’s alright, son” Mr. Mulford said. “It’s alright, I know why you did it. I saw it in your eyes before you even walked in the door. There’s the look of a young man with a desperate need, I said to myself.” In one swift motion, the shop owner helped the boy back off his feet and sat him down in a seat next to the counter. “Now, tell me your story” he said. Staring into the kind eyes of the old man, Jesop began to unveil the serious of events that led him to the deplorable state that he was in. For over an hour he explained his rebellion against his parents, his abandonment of his family, and his pursuit of a new life in a new place. In the end, Jesop admitted that he had been wrong about everything. He apologized for stealing. “Well, thieves normally deserve to go to jail” Mr. Mulford explained. “But I have a better idea” he explained. “I am a little short on help this summer. Why don’t you work for me for a few weeks? I will pay you a fair wage, help you save up some money to get back home, and you can sleep on the couch of my apartment upstairs.” “Why?” Jesop blurted. “Why would you trust and help me? I just tried to rob you?” “Four reasons son.” Mr. Mulford explained. “Number 1, I am a retired Marine and could whoop you with one eye closed. Two, I am short staffed this summer. Three, I know what it is like to be in need and four; I serve a God who shows grace and compassion on those who do not deserve it. I love him more than anything and I want to be like him for a little while.” For the next few weeks, Jesop worked hard in Mr. Mulford’s grocery store. Through Mr. Mulford’s integrity and character, Jesop learned a lot about kindness, compassion, and the grace of God. At the end of the summer. He stared through the dust tainted glass of a bus window and waved goodbye to one of the greatest men he had ever met.

- Discussion Questions
 - Define grace in your own words.
 - How was grace demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about grace?
 - How can believers exercise grace towards others (provide two examples)?

Week 2 – Lesson on Mercy (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

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and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God’s goodness towards those in misery and distress.”²
- Transferable concept - The depravity of man has yielded a defiled and eternally condemned state for all of mankind. In his mercy, God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ. Believers are to reflect God’s mercy by reaching out and ministering to those in need (Matthew 18:23-35).
- Story Synopsis – A missionary to China devotes her life to taking in orphans. Through her ministry to these orphans, the young missionary comes to better understand the mercy she has received from God.
- Story – The clock in Anna’s room read 1:37 am. This was the third night in a row that she had trouble falling asleep. She could not get the images she had seen at church out of her mind. The missionary who spoke to her youth group on Wednesday night displayed pictures of dirty, destitute, and emaciated children in the southeast region of China. Every time she closed her eyes she could still see the faces of those children. The next morning, Anna called the church and set up an appointment to talk to her youth pastor. Her heart throbbed as she sat in Michael’s office and explained what she was experiencing. “I think God wants me to help the orphans!” she cried. “I think God wants me to go to China and minister to these poor little children.” For the next hour and a half, Michael talked through this decision with Anna. He cautioned her to make this a matter of consistent and fervent prayer, seek out the council of others, and talk to her parents about this. For the next two years, Anna wrestled with the biggest decision of her. She talked to her family, went on short term mission trips, and researched the missionary endeavors being conducted in China. Finally, during the summer between high school and her freshman year of college she came to the peaceful realization that God was in fact calling her to Southeast Asia. Her family was fearful but support. Sixteen months later, Anna was boarding a plane for Beijing. She had received a commission to serve two years in a southern province of China. Her first few weeks on the field were challenging. She had a difficult time adjusting to everything. She had to overcome language barriers, differences in customs, and the fear of the unknown. Because China is “closed” to the gospel of Jesus Christ, she felt restricted in what she could say and do. Her first real task was to set up a food and clothing distribution center in a rural village close to her home. Every day she would coordinate with other missionaries and village elders. Although some progress was made, Anna felt as if she pushing a heavy boulder uphill to get this project off the ground. There was infighting among the village elders. Poor communication among the missionaries. Several of the families in the village were skeptical of Anna and what she was trying to do. All her fears and frustration culminated one spring afternoon when she was assaulted on her way to the village. Two teenagers that she had never seen before cracked her over the head with a stick, shoved her into a ditch, and ran away with the satchel that she was carrying. “From the look of them, they couldn’t have been older than thirteen” Anna told one of the other missionaries. “It makes me so angry, here I am trying to help these people and this is the thanks I get” she shouted. As soon as the words left her mouth she

²Ibid., 1247.

knew she was wrong. She knew that she was in China to serve the Lord and love his people. The other missionary assured her that things were going to get better. After much struggle and turmoil, Anna finally got the relief center up and running. She had coordinated with American companies to send monthly contributions to the center. The village elders coordinated volunteers to oversee the day to day distribution of food and clothing. One year, seven months, and 4 days after stepping onto Chinese soil, Anna was beginning to see the big picture. Every day she would see the face of those children that had been seared into her mind so many years ago. Only this time, the look of hunger and desperation was replaced with smiles and laughter. The mercy she had been shown by her heavenly Father was the driving force behind the mercy she extended to these orphans.

- Discussion Questions
 - Define mercy in your own words.
 - How was mercy demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about mercy?
 - How can believers exercise mercy towards others (provide two examples)?

Week 3 – Lesson on Love (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God eternally give of himself to others... We imitate this communicable attribute, first by loving God in return, and second by loving others in imitation of the way God loves them.”³
- Transferable concept - God love for mankind is unconditional. His love is not based upon man's performance, influence, or worth. Therefore, believers are to imitate God's love by unconditionally valuing and ministering to others (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10).

³Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 198-99.

- Story Synopsis – A father’s unconditional love for his son is truly tested as his son squanders all of his talent and resources. Ultimately, the son comes to his senses and is drawn back due to his father’s unrelenting love and compassion.
- Story – The entire gym was silent as Lee approached the three point line. There was a lot resting on his next two shots. His team had never advanced to the finals of the state championship before. The college scouts in the audience were scrutinizing his every move to determine if he had what it took to play at the next level. His beloved coach has been under fire the last couple of seasons for failing to produce a championship. It was up to Lee to nail both free-throws and put his team ahead by one. “As soon as Lee makes these baskets everybody gets back on defense” Coach Labash yelled from the sideline. The first shot struck nothing but net. The crowd erupted with screams of adulation. Sweat was pouring off Lee face as he gave the ball a couple of dribbles to steady his nerves. As soon as he put up his second shot it seemed as if time stood still. Lee suddenly became consciously aware of everything. He smelled popcorn and sweaty gym socks, he heard the hum of the rickety old air conditioning unit, and he saw the faded paint behind the goal. The second shot struck nothing but net. Coach Labash began screaming his head off “Defense, Defense, Defense!” Everybody rushed to the other end of the floor. The clock ticked down - Five, four, three, two. The opposing team lobbed out one last desperation shot but completely missed the rim as the clock struck zero. The entire gym exploded with screams and laughter, joy and sorrow. Lee had done it. He had ensured that his team was going to the state championship. The months following this pivotal moment in Lee’s life seemed like a blur. His team got manhandled in the state championship game, He received three solid offers from schools to play ball at the college level. He went to prom with his on-again, off-again girlfriend. And somewhere in this midst of all this he graduated. The summer between high school and his freshman year of college was both stressful and exciting all at the same time. It was the first time he had ever lived away from home. The first time he had ever moved out of state. New friends, new environment, new responsibilities, and new freedom. “As soon as you get settled, start looking for a solid church to attend” his dad instructed him as he and Lee drove to college. “College has a lot to offer a young man. Some things are good, some things are bad. Don’t waste this opportunity, not everybody gets a chance like this” his dad said. Lee stared out the window and thought about what his future held. He had always dreamed that he would play four years in college, a few years in the pros, invest his money wisely, and then work as a sports analyst for ESPN. As they finished unloading the last box into Lee’s dorm, he hugged his dad, walked him to his car, and waved goodbye as his dad drove away. Lee smiled as he walked back to his room. He felt like he was invincible and that the whole world was laid at his feet. A year and a half later, Lee smile was replaced with tears. He nervously picked up the phone and dialed a number that he had not dialed in months. “Hey dad, this is going to be hard to hear but could you come pick me up? I am jail.” There was nothing but silence on the other end of the phone. “I was out with some friends last night and I had a little too much to drink. The officer who brought me in has agreed to let me go if a parent will come pick me up.” The car ride back to his parent’s house was painfully quiet. Finally, Lee’s dad broke the silence when he uttered “Son, do you remember the last thing I told you before I dropped you off for your first semester of college? I said, don’t waste this opportunity, not everybody gets a chance like this. Now I am picking up my hung-over son from jail.” Lee broke down as he confessed to his dad that things were worse than they he knew. “Father, I have messed everything up. I have disobeyed everything you have taught me. I have sinned against God and you. I was put on academic probation last semester because of my grades. Coach called me into his office yesterday

and told me he was kicking me off the team for violating team rules. I spent all my money on partying. Everything is falling apart” he explained. Lee’s dad was silent for a little while and then finally said, “Lee, I know about everything. I have been periodically checking in with your coach, professors, and roommate. I know about the decisions you have been making.” Lee was stunned to hear the words coming out of his dad’s mouth. “You knew I was lying to you the whole time” Lee blurted out. Lee’s dad nodded. “You knew about my grades, my decisions, my mistakes? And you still came to pick me up? Why” Lee cried. “Son, my love for you is not based upon your performance or your decisions. My love for you is based upon the love of God and the fact that you are made in his image. It was difficult for your mother and I to sit back and watch you destroy your future. But we never stopped praying that God would bring you to your knees and bring you back to him” his dad explained. For the next three hours, Lee and his dad talked through all of the mistakes Lee had made over the past few months and what they were going to do about them. As Lee and his dad walked up the sidewalk to his parent’s house, Lee’s dad put his arm around him and explained “Lee, I love you. I always have. I always will. The next few years are going to rough. I am not going to get you out of any of this, but I am going to walk with you through this every step of the way.”

- Discussion Questions
 - Define love in your own words.
 - How was love demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about love?
 - How can believers exercise love towards others (provide two examples)?

Week 4 – Lesson on Sin (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.”⁴

⁴Ibid., 1254.

- Transferable concept - Mankind's sin stems from a desire to reject God's authority and replace it with his own authority. In essence, sin is when a man says to God, "I can and will do things my way." Unfortunately, a rejection of God is a rejection God's love, mercy, grace, and salvation. Therefore, when a man rejects God, he is choosing eternal condemnation (Romans 6:20-23; Psalm 51).
- Story Synopsis – A rich young business man who is entrapped in drugs, alcohol, and pornography refuses to acknowledge the gravity of his decisions and his need for help. In spite of the fact that many have tried to reach out to him; this seemingly "successful" entrepreneur dies alone in a dark alley on the streets of New York.
- Story – Steve was jarred out of a restless sleep by the ringing of the phone. He glanced at the clock which read 3:22 am. "Hello" Steve answered in a drowsy voice. The stern voice on the other end of the line explained "Mr. Pardue, this is officer Carter of the New York Police Department. Mr. Pardue, this may be difficult to hear but we have reason to believe that we have found your son's body. Could you please come down and make a positive identification?" "His body? My son is dead? How? Why?" Steve trembled as the words came out of his mouth. Officer Carter explained "Sir, I think it best if we discuss the details after we have made a positive identification." Steve briefly explained the situation to his traumatized wife as he feverishly pulled his clothes on. The forty-five minute drive from their home in upstate New York to the police station in New York City was the longest of his life. Hundreds of questions flooded his mind: "Was Jason robbed? Was he helping someone else? What was he doing on the streets that late of night? Maybe they got the wrong guy? Maybe, it not even Jason at all? Unfortunately, all of Steve's fears were realized as the mortician pulled the white cloth off the body of his dead son. "That's, that's my son, that's Jason" Steve cried. The officer nodded to the mortician who gently covered the body back up and wheeled the body back into the cooler. "Mr. Pardue, perhaps we should sit down and discuss what happened" officer Carte explained. The policeman led Steve down a long hall and up a flight of steps into a busy office complex full of ringing phones, rustling papers, and the smell of burnt coffee. Officer Carter and Steve sat down at a small wooden desk and for the next three hours the officer explained all they knew about the circumstances surrounding Jason's death. Steve cried as the officer explained that the found a large amount of cash on Jason's body and that he was found in an alley notoriously known for the place to go to obtain heroine. The policeman explained that their suspicion of Steve's drug usage was corroborated by the testimony of several of Steve's friends and associates. "Mr. Pardue, we believe that your son's death was related to a drug deal gone bad" the officer explained. Steve's head was spinning as he was trying to process through the unbelievable accusations coming from the officer's mouth. "Jason wouldn't do drugs; would he? He was so successful. He seemed to have it all together. His whole future was ahead of him. Why didn't he come to me? Why didn't he call?" Steve thought to himself. Steve was awakened from his deep thoughts by the voice of Officer Carter "Mr. Pardue, we are sorry for your loss, thank you for coming down and making a positive identification. The body is available for pick up at your discretion. As Steve walked out of the police station he came to the painful realization that he was going to have to drive and work through the painful details of his son's death with his loving wife. Jason's funeral was difficult for everyone. Lots of friends and family showed up to provide support and to pay their last respects. As the flood of people came through the receiving line to offer their condolences to Jason's grieving family, there was one phrase repeated over and over "We are sorry for

your loss, we can't believe this happened to someone so young and full of promise!"

- Discussion Questions:
 - Define sin in your own words and provide an example.
 - What effect can sin have on a person (please provide at least one example)?
 - What does the Bible teach about sin?
 - How can a person overcome sin?

Week 5 – Lesson on Greed/ Giving (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – Giving is an act that is “done in faith, out of commitment to Christ and love for his people...a rich means of grace within the church.”⁵
- Transferable concept - Greed is sin. It is the deification of a material object. Like all sin, it has the power to ensnare and enslave. Therefore, total devotion to the Lord and the practice of charity frees believers from the entrapment of greed (1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5).
- Story Synopsis – A poor farmer find a magic box in his field. The magic box provides him with an abundant supply of gold. Shortly, the farmer becomes consumed by his greed.
- Story - Isaac's life was repetitious and predictable. Every morning at sunrise, he would crawl out of bed, pull on his overalls, and head out to feed the cows. Monday through Sunday, the cycle was the same: bed, overalls, cows, bed, overalls, cows. To Isaac, it seemed as if his life would never change. Then it happened. One Sunday morning, as he was walking from his house to feed the cows, Isaac spotted something that he had never seen before. A glint of light was peering out of the cornfield. As Isaac approached the light he grew more and more nervous. The smell of rich soil filled his nose as he walked timidly through

⁵Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 957.

the head-high corn stalks. Then without realizing it, he almost stepped on the most peculiar object he had ever seen. It appeared to be a box made of solid gold. With trembling fingers he dug it out of the ground. The light that was once imitating seemed to fade as he drew it closer and closer to his face. As he rubbed the dirt off, he could see strange patterns and symbols. Then suddenly he heard a soft an indistinguishable whisper. It was like the faint sound of a woman singing. Straining to hear the voice, Isaac held the box up to his ear. He heard the voice singing. "The box you hold is precious to some, it contains a secret of a wish to come. Shake the box and you will receive whatever it is that you can conceive. Be careful of your wish or you'll end up in a bind; for true happiness is hard to find." An eternity seemed to pass as Isaac stood their staring at the box. He frantically looked around to see if anyone was watching. Then in seemingly utter disbelief, Isaac grabbed the box with both hands and gave it a firm shake. Suddenly the singing faded and a small lid on the box popped open. A speck of light slowly rose out of the box and starred Isaac in the eyes. A faint voiced whispered, "What is your one and only one wish?" Like the breaking of a dam, a thousand thoughts flooded Isaac's mind. Was this a joke? Was he being tricked? What did the song mean? What should he wish for? Isaac was jarred out of his thought by the voice, "What is your one and only wish?" After thinking about every possible scenario, Isaac finally muttered "I want lots of money" he shouted. Suddenly the lid snapped closed. The strange markings on the outside of the box began rearranging themselves. They formed the phrase "Money is his heart's desire. It is the one and only thing he wants." Then the box began to violently shake. It began getting hotter and hotter until it burned the palms of Isaac hands. In pain, he dropped the box. As it hit the ground there was a tumultuous explosion sending Isaac flying backwards. When Isaac finally came to, he felt something cold and a hard on his face. It was a gold coin. As Isaac sat up, he saw more gold coins at his feet. Frantically, Isaac began picking them up and shoving them in his pocket. But to his amazement, every time he put one in his pocket another would appear. Eventually, he had so many coins in his pockets that his overalls were starting to rip. He ran back to the house and grabbed his wheel-barrel. For the rest of the day, he did nothing but run back and forth from his house with wheel-barrels full of gold coins. He would pick up the coins and put them in the wheel-barrel. Then he would take the wheel barrel to the house. Then he would return for more coins. Hour after hour it was the same. Run to the field, pick up the coins, put the coins in the wheel-barrel, and take the wheel barrel to the house. Over and over again: field, coin, wheel-barrel, house, field, coin, wheel-barrel, house. Consumed by greed, this is how Isaac spent his life. It was repetitious and predictable. He got what he wanted, but it wasn't enough. In the end, his life was the same. Stuck in a cycle of repetition and consumed by his greed.

- Discussion Questions:

- Define greed in your own words and provide an example.
- What effect can greed have on a person (please provide at least one example)?
- What does the Bible teach about greed?
- How can a person avoid greed?

Week 6 – Lesson on (Penal) Substitutionary Atonement (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

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- Definition – “The view that Christ in his death bore the just penalty of God for our sins as a substitute for us.”⁶
- Transferable concept - Christ, who was innocent, died in place of mankind, who was guilty. Therefore, mankind can be reconciled to God because of the sacrifice of Jesus (Romans 5:6-14).
- Story Synopsis – Out of love for his twin brother, a young man voluntarily served a thirty year jail sentence for a crime that his brother committed.
- Story – There was a loud echo throughout the stone cellblock as the door to Mike's new residence slammed and locked into place. As the sound reverberation began to silence, Mike came to the realization that he was going to have to endure that sound for a very long time. He knew that he was going to be confined to this 6ft by 6ft domicile for the next thirty years. As he sat down and stared at his new roommate he was faced with the proverbial question that seemed so cliché that it belonged in a bad “made for TV” movie. “So, what are you in for?” his cellmate asked. “Well, you are probably not going to believe me, but I didn't do anything – I am innocent” Mike explained. “Yeah, you and everybody else on this block” his roommate said. “No, seriously I didn't do a thing” Mike reiterated. Mike went on to tell his new roommate, Carl, the series of events that led to his imprisonment. Mike went on to explain “I have an identical twin brother named, Rob. He has a retired air force pilot. He and his family live in Odesta, Florida. His wife, Sharon, is a schoolteacher and his two kids, Leah and Jimmy, go to the same school that Sharon teaches us. Rob recently returned from his third stint in Iraq. The two previous times Rob returned from active duty; he easily readjusted back to civilian life. But this last time; things were different. Rob battled bouts of depression, anger, and fear. The doctors said that it was most likely post-traumatic stress syndrome” Mike paused for a moment as a guard walked by the cell. “You guys getting cozy?” the guard asked. “Yes sir” Mike responded. The moment the guard walked on Mike continued his story. “Rob was not the same guy. Sharon would catch him sitting alone in a room crying uncontrollably. Sometimes Rob would leave the house at night and just wander the streets. Sharon would find him the next day sitting in a park near their home. Bottom line is; something happened to Mike and he needed help.” “Why didn't you guys get him some help?” Carl blurted out. Mike explained “Well we did. That kind of

⁶Ibid., 1250.

why I am here. Rob's doctor prescribed some medication and some counseling to deal with the post-traumatic stress and it was really helping. As long as Rob stayed on his meds he was like the Rob we all knew. The problem is that his insurance company was giving them fits about paying for his medication. They questioned the validity of the doctor's diagnosis. Until the insurance company and the doctor's office could get things straightened out; Rob had to pay for his medication on his own." "That's why I hate insurance companies" Carl said. "Me too" said Mike. "Unfortunately, Rob couldn't afford the meds on his own so he stopped taking them. One evening, Rob left the house again and went wandering the streets. Two teenagers tried to mug him and take his wallet. Because of his extensive training Rob easily subdued his assailants but in the process he messed them up pretty good. In fact, one of them was paralyzed from the waist down. When the cops got on the scene, Rob was taken into custody along with the two teenagers. Through some shady judicial proceedings, the judge ruled that even though Rob was the one being mugged; his military training and the age of his assailants warranted that Rob should have demonstrated more discretionary restraint. He charged Rob with two counts of assault of a minor. The teenagers were charged with attempted robbery. They served two months in a juvenile detention center and Rob got thirty years" Mike explained. "So what has that got to do with you being in here?" Carl asked. "Don't you get it" Mike stated. "I said he was my identical twin brother. When the cops came to take Rob into custody I took his place. I pretended to be him. That's why I am here. I knew that he could never survive confinement in his condition. His family needs him. So, I took his place." Carl jaw dropped and he blurted out "You're kidding me? You did what? How? Why?" Mike explained "He's my brother and I love him. That's why I took his place. I may be innocent but I am going to pay for his crime." Mike went silent again as the guard walked by. Mike could hear the rhythmic clank of the guard's steel toe boots. He knew he was going to have to get used to that sound; at least for the next thirty years.

- Discussion Questions
 - Define Substitutionary Atonement in your own words.
 - How was Substitutionary Atonement demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about Substitutionary Atonement?
 - What impact should Substitutionary Atonement have in the lives of believers?

Week 7 – Lesson on Justification (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

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your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “An instantaneous legal act whereby of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.”⁷
- Transferable concept – Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, a believer is declared “not guilty” in the eyes of God. Furthermore, he is viewed as innocent of all sins (Ephesians 4:32).
- Story Synopsis – A notoriously strict judge shocks his courtroom by declaring the suspect of a seemingly open and shut case “not guilty.” When interviewed after the verdict, the judge revealed that the suspect was guilty but that the plaintiff’s son came forward and agreed to make restitution. Since both the plaintiff and the plaintiff’s son agreed this was fair, the suspect was declared innocent.
- Story - An ocean of flashes covered the members of the courtroom as they were rushed from the courthouse into the holding area across the street. The reporters were told that no interviews would be given by anyone until the Judge Rembole made an official statement concerning the shocking outcome of this seemingly mundane court case. As the Judge, still dressed in his judicial robe, approached the microphones he was bombarded by a barrage of questions and camera flashes. “Quiet please! Quiet please! Quiet!” the Judge loudly proclaimed. The sea of noise came to a sudden halt following the Judge’s boisterous bellow. “I will not be answering any question concerning the outcome of today’s case. I want to make a statement which will hopefully shed light on today’s unprecedented decision. Following this statement, you are free to interview the members of the courtroom at their discretion. The facts of the case were simple. The defendant, Mr. Jones, was apprehended in the process of destroying the personal property of the plaintiff, Mr. O’Connell. The destruction of the property was severe. In addition to vandalism and arson, the defendant was also charged with theft. The evidence against Mr. Jones was overwhelming. The act was caught on video by an outside surveillance camera. There were also eyewitnesses to the events as they unfolded. Finally, Mr. Jones was apprehended by the police in the act of setting fire to Mr. O’Connell’s property. The normal penalty for such offense is full reimbursement for damages accrued and incarceration for three to five years. As many of you know, I take cases of this type very seriously. I believe that the maximum penalty for crimes of this type should be applied. However, during my deliberation process an agreement was reached between the legal counsel of the plaintiff, the defendant, and an outside party. I suspect the controversial nature of this agreement is the reason that many of you are here today. Needless to say, this type of arrangement is not common and peculiar. It is because of this arrangement, in spite of the overwhelming evidence, that the defendant was declared not guilty. That’s all I am at liberty to say. You are free to interview the members of the courtroom if they so desire. Thank You!” In one swift motion, Judge Rembole turned and went back into the courthouse. Spurred on by the Judge’s statement, the reporters rushed across the street where the members of the courtroom were being released from the holding area. The crowd arrived on the scene as the plaintiff, the plaintiff’s son, and the defendant were embraced in a hug.

⁷Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1246.

Mr. Jones was shouting “Thank you sir! Thank you!” The reporter’s began shouting a barrage of questions at the trio “Could you please explain the arrangement that was made? Why were you declared not guilty? Why did you make this decision?” The crowd fell to a hush as the plaintiff, Mr. O’Connell began to speak “Ladies and gentleman, I will make a brief statement before my son and I head home.” He cleared his throat and then said “Corey Jones was a former employee of mine. Unfortunately, I had to let him go last month for financial reason. Unbeknownst to me, Corey and his family were barely surviving in this current economic crisis. His son is chronically sick, his wife could not get a job in spite of her repeated efforts, and his job with me was their only source of income. When I let him go, something in him snapped. In his anger and frustration he retaliated. I have to be honest; up until about four hours ago I wanted to see him behind bars for a long time. Then my son...” Mr. O’Connell began fighting back tears. He continued “My son pulled me out of the courtroom and said ‘I do it. I’ll pay for his mistake. Don’t take it out on Corey. Take it out on me.’ I asked him what he was talking about and then he went on to explain Corey’s circumstances. He just kept repeating ‘Dad, I’ll pay for his mistake. I will be guilty. Let him be innocent.’ I couldn’t handle it. The compassion of my son moved me. I know Corey was guilty but I upheld my son’s wishes. I transferred my son’s innocence to Corey.” The crowd was silent. They couldn’t believe what they were hearing. Finally, one reported spoke up “Then who is going to pay for the destruction?” Mr. O’Connell cleared his throat again “My son is going to pay for the damages. From this moment forward, Corey Jones is justified in my.” The crowd roared with a series of follow-up questions. Mr. O’Connell turned, placed his arm around his son and Corey and walked with them back to the car. As they drove off you could over hear one reporter on his cell phone “That’s right...he said that he thought of Corey as justified in his eyes...he’s said Corey is not guilty...the son going to pay for all the damages...yeah, this is going to make for one amazing story.”

- Discussion Questions
 - Define Justification in your own words.
 - How was Justification demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about Justification?
 - What impact should the concept of Justification have in the lives of believers?

Week 8 – Lesson on Peace (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By

your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God is separate from all confusion and disorder in his being and in his actions, yet he is continually active in innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions.”⁸
- Transferable concept – The peace of God is derived from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. A believer can be truly at peace because he is no longer under the guilt of his sins (Philippians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 14:33).
- Story Synopsis – A veteran struggles with his previous actions during the Vietnam. A compassionate coworker leads the older gentleman to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the veteran learns to embrace the peace of God.
- Story - Mary was jarred awake in the middle of the night by her husband’s screaming. “Robert, Robert; it is ok. You’re safe. You’re in our bedroom. It is okay honey” she cried. She wrapped her arms around her sweaty chest and back and held him until he stopped trembling. Unfortunately, this was a common occurrence for Robert and Mary. “I still see them Mary. I still see their faces. I can still see the life leaving their bodies. I hear the screams. I smell the filth, sweat, and gunpowder. I can’t get it out of my head” Robert confessed. “I know honey. But I told you before, God has forgiven you. You were fighting to protect the innocent. You were serving your country” Mary lovingly reassured him. “Honey, you have to let God help you through this” she said. Finally, Robert and Mary were able to get some sleep. The next morning it was business as usual. Mary was busy watching her grandkids while Robert was about to leave for work. Even though they he was long past retirement age; Robert loved work at the church he and Mary were member of. He was known as “Mr. Fix It.” If it needed to be fixed; Robert could fix it. Robert had a busy week ahead of him. The church had hired another maintenance man and Robert was charged with teaching him the ropes. When Robert walked into the office he went straight over to the new guy, stuck his hand and said “Hi, I’m Robert.” The young man stood up promptly, grabbed Robert’s hand and said “Hi Robert, I’m Jim. Nice to meet you.” For the remainder of the day, Robert meticulously outlined and demonstrated all of the duties and responsibilities of the job. Jim was a quick study. In a matter of a couple days he had the basics of the job down. The two men instantly clicked together. They both had an attention to detail and a passion to do the job right. Later conversations revealed that they both had served in the military. Jim served had served in the Navy for eight years and Robert had served in the Army for close to twelve years. For the next few months, the two men became close friends. Although there was a sizable age difference between the two, they always seemed to find common ground with one another on a lot of issues. One day, while they were working on a project, Jim nervously said “Robert, we have known each other for quite a few months; do you mind if I ask you something personal?” Robert nodded. “Well, in all the months I have known you we have talked about a lot of things. But how come you never mentioned what you did in the Army” Jim asked. “Well, that is a part of my life I have never made peace with” Robert explained. “To tell you the truth it’s a part of my life

⁸Ibid., 1250.

that I would like to forget. It's not that I am ashamed of my military career. But you know that when you serve, sometimes you have to do things that are hard to live with" He said. "Do you mind sharing with me? I think I might know a little about where you are coming from" Jim asked. Robert reluctantly agreed "Well, like I said, it is difficult for me to talk about. I served as a linguist and light weapons specialist in Vietnam during the height of the Vietnam War. Those were some rough days." Robert went on to explain the specifics of his assignments. The people he met. The friends he made. Over the years, he really fell in love with the people of Vietnam. Then Robert face grew grim as he said "I love my country. I am proud of my time in the service. I would serve again if I could. It's just; when you have to take a man's life, even if he is trying to take yours, it's not easy to get those images out of your head." "Robert, I know what you are talking about. I have had similar experiences. Can I tell you how I have dealt with the images, the guilt, and the pain" Jim lovingly asked. For the hour, Jim talked with Robert about the peace of God that comes through dependency upon God. Then he prayed with Robert. At the end of the day, Robert walked through front door, gave Mary a big hug and explained the events of the day. A few days later, he woke up again in a cold sweat. This time he got out of bed, got down on his knees and prayed until God filled him with the peace and assurance that he needed. Within a few minutes, Robert was back in bed peacefully sleeping like he hadn't slept in years.

- Discussion Questions
 - Define peace in your own words.
 - How was peace demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about peace?
 - What impact should peace have in the lives of believers?

Week 9 – Lesson on Sanctification (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – "A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives."⁹

⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1253.

- Transferable concept – Salvation is a lifelong journey instead of singular. After being justified by God because of the death of Christ, the believers begins the process of conforming himself to the image of his savior. Ultimately, this process ends at death when the believer is glorified (Romans 6:22).
- Story Synopsis – During a conversation with his young apprentice, a world renowned sculptor finally divulges the secret to his artistry. He explains, “As I sit staring at the large uncut stone, I develop a mental picture of what the sculptor is going to be. After this, it is simply a matter of chipping away that which does not reflect the image in my mind.”
- Story – “Another masterpiece, Vacenni, a true master piece” A deep voice echoed through the halls of the empty museum. Out of the shadows walked a sophisticatedly dressed museum curator named Charles Pierce. Charles went on to say “How do you do it? How do you generate such exquisite sculptors?” Standing motionless with his young apprentice by his side, Vacenni explained “That, Mr. Pierce is a secret that I am afraid I cannot divulge. I am glad you are impressed with the piece. It has consumed my thoughts for quite some time. I am elated to see it displayed so prominently in your beautiful museum. “But of course” Mr. Pierce interrupted. He went on to say “It is always an honor to display the work of a true artistic genius.” For an hour, the three men continued to exchange pleasantries and discuss the details of tomorrow’s grand unveiling. At the conclusion of the conversation. Vacenni explained “Well, I am afraid it is getting late and I am not as young as I use to be.” Motioning to his young apprentice he exclaimed “Come on John; help an old man find his way back home.” The car-ride back to Vacenni’s apartment was not anything out of the ordinary until he initiated an intense conversation with his long time friend and understudy. He asked “John, have you ever wanted to know the secret to my success?” John was stunned. He had been carefully studying the artistry of his mentor for the past 10 years. “I didn’t know you had a secret” John stated. “I had always figured your brilliance came from hard work, diligence, and a lot of imagination” John explained. The older gentleman shifted his weight so that he could face his friend. Then he went on to explain “Well those things are important; but there is a technique that I have always used. Creating masterpiece is actually closely connected to salvation. First and foremost God is the initiator in both art and redemption. Just as God is the one who draws man into a loving relationship; it is God who supplies the inspiration for my art. Secondly, in that salvation process God justifies man because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. But this is not the end. Man then moves into the process of sanctification. The Holy Spirit works in coordination with mankind to transform the recent convert into the image of Christ.” John sat there with a puzzled look on his face. He stated “I understand the process of salvation; but what does this have to do with sculpting. “Don’t you see” Vacenni excitedly stated. He went on to explain “When a man except Jesus to be his Lord and Savior, God no longer sees the new believer as a sinner. God sees him as perfect because he has already been justified. He is forgiven because of Christ death on the cross. He is guiltless. When God looks at him he only sees Jesus. Sanctification is the process of developing that new believer into what God already sees him as. God starts with the vision; then he shapes the man into his vision. That is the secret to my sculpting!” John pulls the car into Vacenni apartment complex. He pulls into a spot, shuts the engine off, and turn to face his mentor in the face. Vacenni goes on to explain “John, before I ever pick up a chisel or hammer I sit and stare out the unformed piece of rock. I pray that God would show me what this sculptor is supposed to be. I do not do anything until I can visual every detail. The curves, the lines, the shadows, and form are all conceptualized in my mind before I ever

begin to work. Once I have completed this arduous task, it is simply a matter of removing all the material that does not look like the vision in my head. Like God, He removes all the aspects of the new believer that does not look like Jesus. That is my secret.” “Why are you telling me this” John asked. Vacenni cleared his throat and softly said “The sculptor that we will unveil tomorrow is the last one I will ever create. I am retiring. Before I called it quits, I wanted to make sure that you understood how and why I do what I do. I do not sculpt because of the fame or fortune. I sculpt because I want to be like my heavenly Father. He is the Great Sculptor. He tasks the broken and makes it beautiful. He takes the marred and disfigured and make sit perfect.” John helped his old friend out of the car and up the flight of steps to the apartment. The two men exchanged goodbye and reflected about the last decade. Before leaving John thanked his friend for all that he had done for him and said “Well, if tomorrow is your last unveiling let us make it a good one.” As John was walking away Vacenni explained “I have one more unveiling left. The day I transition from this life into the next I will finally be unveiled before my heavenly Father and he will see that I am what he has been shaping me to be.”

- Discussion Questions
 - Define sanctification in your own words.
 - How was sanctification explained in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about the process of sanctification?
 - What impact should the process of sanctification have in the lives of believers?

Week 10 – Lesson on Adoption (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “An act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.”¹⁰
- Transferable concept – When an individual is saved, they enter into a spiritual community. God becomes their heavenly father. Other believers become their brothers and sister (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5).

¹⁰Ibid., 1235.

- Story Synopsis – A young man is shipwrecked on a seemingly deserted island. After struggling for survival, he finally encounters an unknown people group. He is taken captive by this seemingly hostile tribe. Once the tribe discovers that the young man is of no threat, he is adopted by a family in the tribe.
- Story – As Stephen opened his eyes and saw nothing but blue sky. He heard the sound of crashing waves. He was soaked to the bone. Suddenly a wave splashed over his body. He sat up shivering and bewildered. His mind was suddenly flooded with an array of questions “Where was he? How did he get here? Where were his parents? What happened to the ship? Where was everybody else?” Another wave crashed over him. He quickly got up and made his way towards a dry part of the beach. As he sat down, the cobwebs in his mind began to clear. He remembered being awoken last night by the sound of screaming. People were running around. There was a crash. The boat was taking on water. A fire broke out. He and family were plunged into the icy water. Suddenly Stephen blurted out loud “My parents!” He hopped up and began frantically searching for his parents. For hours he ran up and down the beach. Unfortunately, after several hours he had only found various bits of wreckage from the ship. He began gathering everything he could get his hand on. A wooden barrel, crates, and piece planks were scattered across the beach. He dragged all he could find to the tree line. He began assessing what he had. The one small barrel he had was full of corn meal. The two crates contained wax candles. He also had amassed a pile of wood from the planks of the ship. Darkness was setting in and he had no way to make a fire. For most of the night he sat there shivering replaying the day’s events in his head and thinking about what he was going to do. The next morning, Stephen was awoken by the gnawing hunger pains coming from his belly. He began scavenging the beach for something to eat but a couple hours later he came to the stark conclusion that his search was in vein. To make matters worse, he got the eerie feeling that he was being watch. On occasion he would pause and look into the jungle. On several occasion he thought he saw eyes looking back. By the time that the sun was high in the sky he was absolutely famished. “Perhaps I should go into the jungle to look for food” he said to himself. This proved to be a task that was more difficult than he had envisioned. The brush was thick. The bugs were vicious. Finally, he saw a clearing in the jungle up ahead. He frantically made his way into the clearing and was surprised to see a cluster of bananas lying next to a large tree trunk. He scurried over to them but right as he was about to reach out his hand to grab them; he heard a snap and felt his body being flung into the air. The next thing he knew, he was hanging upside down by one leg. He heard the rushing of bushes below. Suddenly two dozen men came rushing out of the bushes. They were shouting and holding long poles that were sharpened on the end. Stephen had never seen anyone dressed the way they were. They had ornamental head coverings, long skirts, and an array of woven jewelry. They had black tattoo-like markings over their hands, faces, and chests. They all wore necklaces and armbands that were made out of woven material. They began shouting to one another in a language that Stephen could not understand. Suddenly he heard another snap. He began plummeting towards the ground. Then everything went black. Stephen woke up to the smell of a burning fire. Neck and body ached all over. His hands and feet were bound with a rope-like material. His assailants were walking around talking with one another. There was laughter in the distance. As he eyes came into focus, he could see that he was in the middle of a village. There ornately dressed women and children running around. Occasionally, a villager would stop, stare at him for a moment, and then go about their business. After what seemed like an eternity, a large man came over to where Stephen was tied up. He squatted down and looked Stephen right in the eyes. He made a motion with his hands like he

was grabbing something and putting it into his mouth. “I think he wants to know if I am hungry” Stephan thought to himself. Stephan shook his head and opened his mouth. The man left for a moment and came back to Stephan with a piece of cooked fish. The man pulled out a sharp rock out of the bag that he carried on his side and cut the rope that was binding Stephan’s hands. Stephan consumed the fish as if he had never eaten before. Then he sat there staring and watching. He was unsure what was going to happen next but was pleasantly surprised by the food offer. A group of men began to gather in a circle in front of Stephan. They were talking loudly, making gestures with their hands, and pointing at Stephan. Then all was quiet. They all turned and faced him. The man that had given him fish earlier walked over to him, took out the same rock from earlier, and cut the rope that was binding his feet. He helped Stephan up to his feet and motioned him to come. They walked through the cluster of huts until they came to a larger hut on the edge of the camp. As Stephen duck his head to enter the doorway, he saw a woman inside cooking fish. She looked up from her cooking and gave Stephan a smile. The man motioned for Stephan to sit down. He was given another piece of fish and a hot liquid to drink. The drink reminded him of weak tea. He feverishly consumed both. At the end of the meal he smiled at his host and said “Thank You!” The man and woman just stared at him. Then the man tried to repeat what Stephan had just said but it came out “Han chew!” For the next few hours, the man showed Stephan the entire village. For the most part it was a more primitive form of the farming community that Stephan grew up in. There were thirty to forty huts set up in a large clearing. A nearby stream and what appeared to be crops growing on the hillside. The villagers seemed to be in family units. There were children playing, people laughing, and work being done. As night began to fall. The man led Stephan back to the hut. The woman had made a place for him to lie down. Due to the exhaustion of the day, Stephan fell right to sleep. For the next few months, Stephan learned a lot about the villager’s way of life. He was taught how to hunt, fish, and trap. He began learning a little of their language and he began teaching them English. Within a year he was able to speak a very broken form of their language. He learned about the history and culture of the village. He learned about what the villagers saw almost a year ago as the ship he and his family were on hit a large rock, caught on fire, and then sunk into the ocean. One night as he and the couple he was staying with were eating. Stephan began telling them about where he came from. He explained that he was a Farmer. He told them that he and his family were sailing to a new land to start over again. As he was speaking, he began to cry. He told them that he missed his family and wanted to know what happened to them. Suddenly in very broken English, the man began to speak “Sorry...for family...gone...you live here....you be....our son.” Stephan didn’t know what to say. He got up and wrapped his arms around the surprised man and said “Thank you for taking care of me. Thank you for adopting me as your son.” Stephan lived with the tribe for the remainder of his days. He eventually built his own hut, took a wife, and had a family of his own. Although he would always mourn the loss of his parents, he celebrated the fact that he was adopted into a new family.

- Discussion Questions

- Define adoption in your own words.
- How was adoption explained in the story above?
- What does the Bible teach about adoption?
- What impact should the concept of adoption have in the lives of believers?

Week 11 – Lesson on Faith (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

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- Definition – “Trust or dependence on God based on the fact that we take him at his word and believe what he has said.”¹¹ Saving faith is “Trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.”¹²
- Transferable concept – Faith is not when a believer takes a proverbial blind leap into the unknown and hoping that they land on their feet. It is a conscious, willful, and intentional decision of a believer to trust God (Hebrews 11:1; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Story Synopsis – Over summer break, a young college student follows the seemingly unintelligible instructions of his aged grandfather. In the process, the young man discovers that his granddad's unorthodox teaching style is the most effective form of instruction that he has ever received.
- Story – The Texas sun was glaring down on the 1984 Toyota Corolla as it traveled down the long, seemingly deserted, dirt road. Rick glared out the window as his father drove. From his perspective it seemed as if they were driving on the surface of the sun. It had been a long time since he had experience heat of this magnitude. Finally, the silence in the car was broken as Rick dad stated “Well, we are almost there. Now listen, your grandpa is getting up there in years. Some think his mental faculties have been slipping of late. Do not let him fool you. He knows what is going on and he has taught me a thing or two about life.” The car came to a sudden stop. As the dust began to settle, Rick got a clear view of the aged farm house that he was going to be calling home for the next three months. As the two men were getting out of the car, they heard a raspy voice shout “That better be my grandson or I am going to start shooting.” “It's us dad, don't shoot” Rick's dad shouted. An older gentleman emerged from the front porch. He was wearing a faded pair of overalls, a short-sleeve plaid shirt, and a straw hat. As he approached the two men he was taking two shells out of the barrel of his shotgun. He walked up to Rick “Well, well, it has been a few years but you have turned into a right, good looking young man.” “Hi grandpa” Rick stated. The old man gave the two men a hug. He helped them inside with all the bags and invited them to sit down. After two hours of polite conversation, Rick's dad said he needed to start heading back. Rick walked him out to the car and stated “Bye dad, be careful driving back.” Rick stood in the driveway as his

¹¹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1241.

¹²Ibid., 1253.

dad drove off on the same dirt road that traveled in on. That night, Rick's grandpa helped him get settled in and told him that he would wake him up for breakfast in the morning. The next day Rick's grandpa showed him the ins and outs of farm life. They started the morning off by milking cows. Then they feed the pigs and chickens. There were also several repairs that had to be made. By the end of the day, Rick's muscles were aching and his head was throbbing. "Grandpa" he spoke up "Do you do this every day?" "Gnaw" his grandpa said. "Most days are harder than this. I wanted to take it easy on you on your first day" he said with a grin. Rick admitted "I don't know if I am going to be able to keep this pace up all summer. I spend most of my days sitting in class or studying in the library. I am trying to get through Med. School as soon as possible." His grandpa said "Well that's hard work too; just of another kind. I don't know if your dad told you but it was my idea for you to spend the summer out here. Your dad told me about some of the difficulties you were having and I thought a change of scenery would do you some good. Rick, I need to ask you an important question before we go any further." Surprised by his grandpa's statement, Rick went on to say "Ok grandpa, what is it?" His grandpa turned and looked at him right in the eyes "Rick, do you trust me?" Rick gave a slightly confused look and grandpa went on to say "I may not be as smart as one of your professors and I will never have the title Doctor before my name; but if you're willing to listen I may be able to teach you a thing or two that you won't learn in school." Rick pondered the gravity of his grandpa's words for a moment and then hesitantly said "Ok grandpa, I trust you." "Good" his grandpa said. He went on to explain "Tomorrow we will really get started. You better get some rest. You are going to need it." Rick slept like a brick that night. He woke up to the sound of his grandpa walking through the old farm house. He could hear the squeak of the floor as his grandpa's heavy boots hit the floor. "Get dressed. We have a lot to do today" his grandpa shouted. After the normal morning chores the two men went down to the garden and picked several bushels of tomatoes. They climbed into grandpa's old beat up truck and headed down the road. After driving for about forty-five minutes they came upon a small farmers market. As they got out of the car, several of the vendors came over to say hello. Rick's grandpa introduced him to everyone. Afterwards they began to set up their stand. Throughout the day a steady stream of customers came through. Immediately Rick noticed something strange about his grandpa's business strategy. Unlike the rest of the vendors who had a fixed price; Rick's grandpa had Rick change the price of his tomatoes sporadically. For some customers he would charge more and some he would charge less. He also noticed that his grandpa had trouble counting. For instance, one customer asked for seven tomatoes and as his grandpa was counting them out he would skip over some tomatoes giving the customer ten tomatoes instead. Finally, at the end of the day, Rick's grandpa had Rick close up shop before the other vendors; even though they had plenty of tomatoes left. On the way home Rick nervously asked his grandpa about his oversights throughout the day. "Trust me son. I may look incompetent but I know what I am doing." Suddenly he pulled the truck over to the side of the road. They were in the middle of nowhere on the long dirt road on the way back to the farmhouse. He turned off the headlights and sat there waiting. "What's wrong" Rick asked. "Wait just a minute" his grandpa said. After a few moments, he turned to Rick and said "I want you to get out of the truck. Take that basket of leftover tomatoes and set them on the side of the road over there. Rick hesitantly got out of the truck. He began scanning the terrain but saw nothing but hayfields all around. He cautiously walked to the side of the road and set the basket down. When climbed back into the truck he whispered "What we we doing out here in the middle of nowhere?" His grandpa said "Just wait and watch." After about 10 minutes, Rick thought he saw movement in the hay field next to where he had set

down the tomatoes basket. “Right on time” his grandpa said. Rick noticed a small boy emerge from the hay. He was wearing a pair of tattered overalls. He had no shirt or shoes on. He picked up the basket and gave a wave to the two men and then disappeared into the hay again. “Who was that” Rick asked. “That my son is why we had to leave early” his grandpa. He started the truck and they started down the road. After a few moments of silence, Rick grandpa said “Rick, I know my ways may seem strange to you; but I asked you put some faith in me and you did. Contrary to popular belief, I am not crazy. I come to this market every week to sell produce and I never make any money. I can’t make money off these people. They are hurting and hungry. They are scared and fearful about where their next meal is coming from. For those who cannot afford much, I charge them less and give them more. For those who have nothing, I give them everything for free. Do you know why?” Rick thought for a moment and then asked “Why?” “Because life is about more than money” his grandpa said. “Do you know why I wanted you to come spend the summer with me? Your dad told me about your obsession with becoming a famous doctor and making lots of money. I wanted you to come and see what life was really about. Everything I have had you do was training for not only being a great doctor but being a great person. It starts with trusting the right people. You put your faith in me even though you may have thought I was crazy. You did what I asked even though it didn’t make sense. You passed your first test.” The rest of the ride home Rick sat in deep contemplation. For the next two months he faithfully followed the instructions of his grandpa even though they did not always make sense. He followed his grandpa’s instruction because he trusted him and knew that his grandpa had a purpose in everything he did. At the end of the summer, Rick had learned a lot about being a successful person; not just a successful doctor.

- Discussion Questions
 - Define faith in your own words.
 - How was faith demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about faith?
 - What impact should faith have in the lives of believers?

Week 12 – Lesson on Worship (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will read the following short story and answer the questions below. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “The activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts.”¹³
- Transferable concept - Worship is the expression of believer’s adoration of God through various methodologies (Matthew 4:10; John 4:20-24).
- Story Synopsis – A group of teenagers form a young, Christian artists guild. The purpose of the guild is to create works of art that represent various components of the Bible. When asked why they wanted to spend hours working on their art projects instead of doing normal “teenage activities”, the group explains that they seek to worship God through the creation of their art.
- Story – “We want to do more, Mr. Morrison” a senior named Chris loudly proclaimed. The group of teenager circled around him approvingly nodded their heads. “Well Chris, what did you guys have in mind” Mr. Morrison inquired. “We want our friends to see God in a more real and compelling manner” a sophomore named Angie explained. Mr. Morrison thought for a moment about the conversation that he was engaged in. He was excited to see his students so passionate about wanting to see their classmates grow in their relationship with the Lord. As he looked into their eyes he saw real conviction and determination. Mr. Morrison broke the silence “I’ve got it. Everybody in this room has some type of artistic ability. Some of you are gifted singers and musicians. Some of you can draw and paint. Some of you are computer graphic geniuses. Why don’t you create a Christian Artist guild here at the school? You can meet in my room after school and think of ways to creatively share the gospel and communicate biblical truths to your classmates and the community.” The group was elated. Christ said “That’s perfect. Let meet every Tuesday after school.” The group was in favor of the proposal. The next Tuesday after school, a larger group of students gathered in Mr. Morrison’s room after school. Being the oldest and the most outspoken, Chris sort of facilitated the group. He group students together according to abilities. Those with musical talent were in one corner of the room. Those with drawing and painting abilities were in another. Those with computer and editing skills were in another. Their mission was simple: come up with creative was to teach biblical truth to the student body this year. Tuesday after Tuesday the group worked tirelessly on their project. Of course, their passion spilled into all aspects of their lives. Soon, they were meeting together in the lunchroom and on the weekends to work. During the middle of the first semester the group hosted an art exhibition. The entire school was invited. The night of the exhibited, hundreds of students, family, and friends turned out. The group displayed original works of art throughout the school cafeteria. Each artist was on hand to talk about their inspiration for their work. Since there were scripture verses undergirding each work of art; the students passed out the verses associated with each piece. The event was a huge success. One local new station caught wind of the exhibit and showed up to film the event. The reporter asked Chris “So what lead to the production of this exhibit tonight?” After giving a brief synopsis of how and why they had formed the Christian artist guild he stated “We just want to use the talents God has given us to bring honor and glory to him. We want people to know and worship God better.” That night on the evening news the reporter started her story with the line “Instead of meeting afterschool to compete in athletics, hang out, or play video games, a local group of high school

¹³Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1257.

students have decided to dedicate their time using art to teach about their faith.” The report went on to explain about the formation of the group and future projects the group would be undertaking. Following the art show, the group was more committed than ever. Next, they play a concert showcasing original piece of instrumental and vocal music. Like the art show, the concert was a huge success. Finally, the year ended with a film festival. The student body and local community were invited to view several original short films created by the students. At the end of the year, the Christian artist guild had quadrupled its original membership. They created a club charter in which the opening line read “The Christian artist guild exists to worship God through artistic and creative expression. To God be the glory!”

- Discussion Questions
 - Define worship in your own words.
 - How was worship demonstrated in the story above?
 - What does the Bible teach about worship?
 - What impact should worship have in the lives of believers?

APPENDIX 4

WEEKLY LESSONS—CONTROL GROUP

Week 1 – Lesson on Grace (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God’s goodness towards those who only deserve punishment.”¹
- Transferable concept - God has richly blessed mankind with what they do not deserve. Instead of hell, mankind is extended salvation. In turn, believers are to imitate the grace of God in their relationships with others (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define grace in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about grace?
 - How can believers exercise grace towards others (provide two examples)?

¹Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1243.

Week 2 – Lesson on Mercy (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God’s goodness towards those in misery and distress.”²
- Transferable concept - The depravity of man has yielded a defiled and eternally condemned state for all of mankind. In his mercy, God has provided salvation through Jesus Christ. Believers are to reflect God’s mercy by reaching out and ministering to those in need (Matthew 18:23-35).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define mercy in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about mercy?
 - How can believers exercise mercy towards others (provide two examples)?

Week 3 – Lesson on Love (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

²Ibid., 1247.

- Definition – “God eternally give of himself to others... We imitate this communicable attribute, first by loving God in return, and second by loving others in imitation of the way God loves them.”³
- Transferable concept - God love for mankind is unconditional. His love is not based upon man’s performance, influence, or worth. Therefore, believers are to imitate God’s love by unconditionally valuing and ministering to others (Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define love in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about love?
 - How can believers exercise love towards others (provide two examples)?

Week 4 – Lesson on Sin (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.”⁴
- Transferable concept - Mankind’s sin stems from a desire to reject God’s authority and replace it with his own authority. In essence, sin is when a man says to God, “I can and will do things my way.” Unfortunately, a rejection of God is a rejection God’s love, mercy, grace, and salvation. Therefore, when a man rejects God, he is choosing eternal condemnation (Romans 6:20-23; Psalm 51).
- Discussion Questions:
 - Define sin in your own words and provide an example.

³Ibid., 198-99.

⁴Ibid., 1254.

- What effect can sin have on a person (please provide at least one example)?
- What does the Bible teach about sin?
- How can a person overcome sin?

Week 5 – Lesson on Greed/ Giving (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – Giving is an act that is “done in faith, out of commitment to Christ and love for his people...a rich means of grace within the church.”⁵
- Transferable concept - Greed is sin. It is the deification of a material object. Like all sin, it has the power to ensnare and enslave. Therefore, total devotion to the Lord and the practice of charity frees believers from the entrapment of greed (1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5).
- Discussion Questions:
 - Define greed in your own words and provide an example.
 - What effect can greed have on a person (please provide at least one example)?
 - What does the Bible teach about greed?
 - How can a person avoid greed?

Week 6 – Lesson on (Penal) Substitutionary Atonement (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature's ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by

⁵Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 957.

Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “The view that Christ in his death bore the just penalty of God for our sins as a substitute for us.”⁶
- Transferable concept - Christ, who was innocent, died in place of mankind, who was guilty. Therefore, mankind can be reconciled to God because of the sacrifice of Jesus (Romans 5:6-14).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define Substitutionary Atonement in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about Substitutionary Atonement?
 - What impact should Substitutionary Atonement have in the lives of believers?

Week 7 – Lesson on Justification (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “An instantaneous legal act whereby of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ’s righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight.”⁷
- Transferable concept – Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, a believer is declared “not guilty” in the eyes of God. Furthermore, he is viewed as innocent of all sins (Ephesians 4:32).

⁶Ibid., 1250.

⁷Ibid., 1246.

- Discussion Questions
 - Define Justification in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about Justification?
 - What impact should the concept of Justification have in the lives of believers?

Week 8 – Lesson on Peace (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “God is separate from all confusion and disorder in his being and in his actions, yet he is continually active in innumerable well-ordered, fully controlled, simultaneous actions.”⁸
- Transferable concept – The peace of God is derived from the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. A believer can be truly at peace because he is no longer under the guilt of his sins (Philippians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 14:33).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define peace in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about peace?
 - What impact should peace have in the lives of believers?

Week 9 – Lesson on Sanctification (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research,

⁸Ibid., 1250.

you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.”⁹
- Transferable concept – Salvation is a lifelong journey instead of singular. After being justified by God because of the death of Christ, the believers begins the process of conforming himself to the image of his savior. Ultimately, this process ends at death when the believer is glorified (Romans 6:22).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define sanctification in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about the process of sanctification?
 - What impact should the process of sanctification have in the lives of believers?

Week 10 – Lesson on Adoption (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “An act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.”¹⁰
- Transferable concept – When an individual is saved, they enter into a spiritual community. God becomes their heavenly father. Other believers become their brothers and sister (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5).
- Discussion Questions

⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1253.

¹⁰Ibid., 1235.

- Define adoption in your own words.
- What does the Bible teach about adoption?
- What impact should the concept of adoption have in the lives of believers?

Week 11 – Lesson on Faith (Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “Trust or dependence on God based on the fact that we take him at his word and believe what he has said.”¹¹ Saving faith is “Trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.”¹²
- Transferable concept – Faith is not when a believer takes a proverbial blind leap into the unknown and hoping that they land on their feet. It is a conscious, willful, and intentional decision of a believer to trust God (Hebrews 11:1; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define faith in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about faith?
 - What impact should faith have in the lives of believers?

Week 12 – Lesson on Worship (Non Control Group)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure fictional literature’s ability to communicate biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research,

¹¹Ibid., 1241.

¹²Ibid., 1253.

you will listen to a lecture on the material below and answer the questions that follow. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this activity, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- Definition – “The activity of glorifying God in his presence with our voices and hearts.”¹³
- Transferable concept - Worship is the expression of believer’s adoration of God through various methodologies (Matthew 4:10; John 4:20-24).
- Discussion Questions
 - Define worship in your own words.
 - What does the Bible teach about worship?
 - What impact should worship have in the lives of believers?

¹³Ibid., 1257.

APPENDIX 5

POST-PROJECT SURVEY (NON-CONTROL GROUP)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your passion towards biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Interview question 1 - Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?

Interview question 2 - If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.

Interview question 3 - Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you apply the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?

Interview question 4 - If so, how would apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?

Interview question 5 - Do you feel that the weekly short stories increased your ability to use your imagination? Why or why not?

Interview question 6 – If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?

APPENDIX 6

POST-PROJECT SURVEY (CONTROL GROUP)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your passion towards biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Interview question 1 - Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?

Interview question 2 - If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.

Interview question 3 - Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you apply the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?

Interview question 4 - "If so, how would you apply to your life the biblical truth listed above?"

APPENDIX 7

WRITING ASSIGNMENT (NON-CONTROL GROUP)

Students will create a fictional work at the conclusion of the twelve week project. The student produced works of fiction will be evaluated to determine if the imaginative nature of fiction aided the students in using their imaginations.

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to measure your passion towards biblical truth. This research is being conducted by Tony Pointer for purposes of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will be asked to create a work of fiction. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Please create a fictional short story based upon any subject matter you would like. Each story must be at least a page long and should not exceed two pages. Each story should be doubled spaced and written on college rule paper. Please write legibly.

APPENDIX 8

POST-PROJECT SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Non-control group survey (participants 1-3)

Student	NC-1	NC-2	NC-3
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“Yes; it helped me break down and understand a lot better.”	“Of course; they were good.”	“Yes; they explained the concept through examples, much like Jesus did.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“The one about the grandpa and grandson and how the boy learns the actual importance of life.”	“Atonement.”	“I learned the true meaning of terms that I’ve heard my whole life.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly short stories helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes; I could relate and apply some situations to real life.”	“Yes.”	“Yes; it related them to things that I knew about.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“Helping others [to] get straightened out.”	Participant did not answer the question.	“I learned concepts that apply to my walk with God.”
Question 5 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories increased your ability to use your imagination? Why or why not?	“Yes; it helped me think of what I could become and how to live a better life.”	“Yes.”	“No; but it helped me to understand the subject better
Question 6 – If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?	“Knowing the true meaning of life.”	Participant did not answer the question.	Not Applicable.

Table A2. Non-control group survey (participants 4-6)

Student	NC-4	NC-5	NC-6
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“Yes; they gave examples and painted a picture.”	“Yes; it showed how the truths were going to look in life.”	“Yes; it helped me understand.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“God never gives up on us.”	“The difference between grace and mercy.”	“All of them.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly short stories helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes.”	“Yes.”	“Yes; it helped me understand.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“By being a better Christian.”	“To not judge people who have made mistakes.”	“Adoption; since I am God’s child, I should act like it.”
Question 5 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories increased your ability to use your imagination? Why or why not?	“Yes; I day-dream a lot.”	“No; I didn’t need to use my imagination.”	“Yes; [it] made me want to learn.”
Question 6 – If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?	Participant did not answer.	Not Applicable.	“Imagining stories in my head when I read [them].”

Table A3. Non-control group survey (participants 7-9)

Student	NC-7	NC-8	NC-9
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“Yes; they are a creative learning twist.”	“Yes; good stories.”	“Yes.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“God adopts us as his own.”	“Adoption.”	“I learned about substitutionary atonement.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly short stories helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes; they relate to everyday life.”	“No.”	“Yes.”

Table A3—Continued. Non-control group survey (participants 7-9)

Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“[I] know he loves [us] as much as his son.”	Not applicable.	Participant did not answer the question.
Question 5 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories increased your ability to use your imagination? Why or why not?	“No. I didn’t think that far.”	“Yes; it definitely made me want to teach in various ways.”	“Yes.”
Question 6 – If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?	Not applicable.	“I don’t remember.”	Participant did not answer the question.”

Table A4. Non-control group survey (participants 10-12)

Student	NC-10	NC-11	NC-12
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“Yes; but I am not good at explaining.”	“Yes; they provided accurate examples of biblical truths.”	“Yes; It gave me a better understanding.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“[I am] not a good explainer.”	“We should worship God and give our all to him.”	“Substitutionary atonement.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly short stories helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes.”	“Yes; I now desire to worship more, even in my spare time.”	“Yes; I actually knew the definition of the words.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“[I learned] about [the] peace God gives me; peace through hard times.”	“Take the time to thank God for all that he has done me.”	“Having peace about situations.”
Question 5 – Do you feel that the weekly short stories increased your ability to use your imagination? Why or why not?	“Kind of.”	“No; I don’t use my imagination for biblical things often.”	“Yes; [the teacher] inspired me!”
Question 6 – If so, what is one thing you used your imagination for during this project?	Participant did not answer the question.	Not applicable.	“I do not know.”

Table A5. Control group survey (participants 1-3)

Student	C-1	C-2	C-3
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“Yes; they furthered my understanding of each concept.”	“Maybe if I paid more attention.”	“Yes; but I was just kind of told what to say.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“I learned that mercy is more like relief from pain.”	Participant did not answer.	“Grace and mercy were cleared up. Grace [is a] gift and Mercy [is given] because something happened.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly lectures helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes; I was focused on the given concept and its application.”	“Maybe if I paid more attention.”	“I didn’t have to think a lot on my own; but I learned some.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“I will find joy in every moment of my life.”	Participant did not answer.	“Show grace all the time; always be ready for mercy, because God gives it to us.”

Table A6. Control group survey (participants 4-6)

Student	C-4	C-5	C-6
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“Yes; they were clear and concise lessons.”	“Yes; but not well because they all seemed very similar.”	“Yes; because [the teacher taught] them in the lecture.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“Sanctification; God’s continuous work in us as sinners to make us more like Christ.”	“Substitutionary atonement as Christ taking our place.”	“I can’t remember.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly lectures helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes; again, they were clear and concise.”	“No; the method was somewhat boring.”	“Yes; because I was given new light on the subject.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“We must pursue Christ’s holiness in our lives. We should try our hardest to glorify him in every word and deed.”	Not applicable.	“I can’t remember a specific example.”

Table A7. Control group survey (participants 7-9)

Student	C-7	C-8	C-9
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“[The teacher] always helps me learn more about the bible.”	“Minimally, we were only given brief definitions.”	“Yes; it went into detail and provided biblical evidence that I hadn’t seen before.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	“Jesus dying on the cross justified us so we can go to heaven.”	“My knowledge of the eternal nature of justification was reinforced.”	“I learned about how God truly adopts us as his own and makes us his children.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly lectures helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“Yes; they were being reinforced.”	“No; we were only given a definition. More knowledge helps; but it does not create tangible exhortation.”	“Yes; I learned to not have greed.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	“When applying these, I hope to become less selfish.”	Not applicable.	“I will be happy and thankful for what I have rather than wanting more.”

Table A8. Control group survey (participants 10 and 11)

Student	C-10	C-11
Question 1 – Do you feel that the weekly lectures helped you learn the biblical truths being taught? Why or why not?	“A bit; I think a more in depth lecture would have been better.”	No; because it wasn’t in depth.”
Question 2 – If so, explain one biblical truth you learned during this project.	Participant did not answer the question.	“Faith is not a blind leap.”
Question 3 – Do you feel the weekly lectures helped you apply the biblical truths being taught?	“No; they were just brief overviews.”	“Sort of.”
Question 4 – If so, how would you apply the biblical truth you listed above to your life?	Not applicable.	“Knowing that trusting in God is different from Blind faith.”

Table A9. Non-control group writing assignment completion

Student	Assignment completion
NC-1	Yes
NC-2	Yes
NC-3	No
NC-4	Yes
NC-5	Yes
NC-6	No
NC-7	Yes
NC-8	No
NC-9	No
NC-10	Yes
NC-11	No
NC-12	Yes

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ABSTRACT

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING FICTIONAL LITERATURE TO TEACH BIBLICAL TRUTHS TO THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL, KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE

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The purpose of the project was to determine if fictional literature is a viable apparatus for teaching biblical truths to high school students. Three goals were used to determine the effectiveness of the project. The first goal was to determine if the memorable nature of fictional literature could increase the ability of students' to comprehend and retain biblical truths. The second goal was to verify if the applicable temperament of fiction could increase the students' ability to apply biblical truths. The third goal of the project was to determine if creative examples of fictional literature could increase the students' ability to utilize their God-given imaginations.

A study of the parabolic and prophetic literature of the Bible demonstrated that the three goals of the project were achievable. The examination of the use of parables in 2 Samuel 12:1-15, Mark 4:10-12 and 4:30-34 conducted in the project confirmed that fiction can communicate biblical truths in a memorable and applicable manner. Likewise, an assessment of the symbolic acts, oracles, and visions of the Old Testament prophets, like those found in Jeremiah 13:1-11, also proved that the project's goals had theological rigor.

The examination of the current scholarship in the fields of education and developmental psychology conducted in the study yielded an abundance of information pertaining to the usage of various educational methodologies. First, an exploration of the function and purpose of art, music, and literature illustrated that propositional truth could

be communicated through abstract mediums. Next, the investigation of the connection between the adolescent developmental stage and emotional learning theory performed in the project provided solid educational credence for the study's three main goals. Also, an assessment of the pedagogical implications of fictional mediums such as storytelling, analogies, and illustrations was conducted in order to provide a practical framework for the principles argued in the project. Finally, a historical survey of the teachings of Moravian bishop John Comenius, C. H. Spurgeon, and Jesus of Nazareth provided a historical outworking of the proposed concepts.

In order to evaluate the project's ability to accomplish the aforementioned proposals, a pre-project and post-project exam was administered. At the start of the project, a pre-project exam was administered to two separate groups of students to test their conceptualization of a specific biblical truth. Then, once a week, one group of students departed from their normal curriculum in order to study a specific biblical truth using fictional literature; the other group was taught using lecture. At the conclusion of the project, both groups of students were given an identical post-project exam to determine if there was any improvement in their comprehension and application of the aforementioned biblical truth. Overall, the group that received a weekly lesson utilizing fictional literature as its primary teaching methodology demonstrated greater improvement from their pre-project exam to their post project exam.

Key Words: Fiction, Christian Education, Storytelling, Analogy, Parable and Teaching Methodology

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