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EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF FOX HILL ROAD BAPTIST  
CHURCH IN HAMPTON, VIRGINIA, FOR  
PERSONAL BIBLE INTAKE

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Nathan David Cecil  
December 2018

**APPROVAL SHEET**

EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF FOX HILL ROAD BAPTIST  
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PERSONAL BIBLE INTAKE

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I dedicate this project to my grandparents, John and Glenda Holland. I cannot remember a time when an open Bible was not sitting on a table, counter, or chair somewhere in their home. I love you both very much and thank God for you!

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## PREFACE

This project could not have been completed without the care, encouragement, and support of several groups of people: First, I have had the privilege to serve two local churches. To those at Bacon's Castle Baptist Church: I could not have asked for a better place to begin my life as a vocational pastor. Your constant love and patience will never be forgotten. To those at Fox Hill Road Baptist Church: thank you for calling me and trusting me to be your senior pastor. I am humbled by God's kindness to me in allowing me help shepherd these two congregations.

Second, I have greatly benefitted from the leadership and care of the faculty and staff of Southern Seminary. Every time I step on campus I realize the great privilege that is mine to have spent so much time here over the past decade. More specifically, Dr. Plummer invested considerable time and energy in this project and was nothing but encouraging every step of the way. This project would not be complete without his leadership and care.

Finally, and most importantly, my family. My wife, Jancy, has been a constant source of encouragement throughout this whole process. She is steadfast in her love for me, the Lord, His church, and others. I am continually learning from her and her example. Our children, Calvin, Susanna, and Bennett, are a constant source of joy and laughter. They have provided much needed relief and perspective throughout this process. I am humbled by God's grace to me. In the words of King David, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?"

Nathan Cecil

Hampton, Virginia

December 2018

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“No Spiritual Discipline is more important than the intake of God’s Word. Nothing can substitute for it. There simply is no healthy Christian life apart from a diet of the milk and meat of Scripture.”<sup>1</sup> These words from Donald Whitney capture the essential function of Bible intake in the daily life of every Christian. It could further be said that God’s self-revelation through Scripture is not only the source of Christian growth, but is also the primary means by which the Holy Spirit initially saves sinners. The Word of God is indispensable in the life of the Christian from beginning to end.

The entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is filled with verses, passages, and entire chapters that highlight the significance of the Word of God. Prior to his death, Moses warns the people of Israel to take heart to the Word that he has spoken to them for “it is no empty word for you, but your very life” (Deut 32:47). Psalm 119 is a 176-verse chapter that highlights and rejoices in the greatness of God’s Word to his people. In Matthew 4, Jesus confronts the temptations of the devil with the truth that “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (v. 4). And finally, in 2 Timothy 3:16, the apostle Paul claims that all Scripture is God-breathed and very practically useful for Christian living. Throughout Scripture, there is no small premium placed on the value of the Word of God in the life of the people of God. For this reason, this project sought to equip members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia, for personal Bible intake. This would enable them to read Scripture for their own personal spiritual growth and to contribute to the overall health of the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 28.

## **Context**

This ministry project took place in the context of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church (FHRBC) in Hampton, Virginia. FHRBC began as a mission of Phoebus Baptist Church in 1959, and was constituted as a church in 1964. Since its inception, the church has been committed to historic Baptist beliefs concerning the Bible. The church has been led by pastors who faithfully taught and upheld the authority of Scripture. Under their leadership, the church has been exposed to continual biblical preaching and teaching and has, by God's grace, traditionally held to a high view of Scripture. Since the church was constituted, it has been a member of the Southern Baptist Convention. For over 50 years, Scripture-based programs and ministries have characterized the life of the church. The Sunday morning corporate worship services have consisted of Bible-based sermons. The Sunday School program curriculum has focused on working through books of the Bible. For the last decade, there has been a consistent Bible-focused children's program. The regular youth ministry gatherings are focused on Bible teaching. Wednesday night services, women's Bible studies, and other events are centered upon Scripture. Scripture has always played a major role in the life of FHRBC.

However, while this high view of Scripture has always been affirmed in the ministries and programs, there was an apparent disconnect between the role of Scripture in the life of the church and the role of Scripture in the life of the individual believer. Even though all of the ministries were built upon Scripture, Scripture did not seem to play an active role in the lives of individual believers. In other words, even though the church believed the right things about Scripture and structured itself around Scripture, it did not always translate into individual lives being transformed by Scripture.

This disconnect revealed itself in several ways. First, I had multiple conversations with church members who complained about their inability to read and understand Scripture on their own. These individuals did not have confidence in their own ability to understand Scripture, but instead viewed the pastors as the experts who had to bring the message down to them. Even more disconcerting was that these

conversations have taken place with men and women who have been Christians and part of the church for decades. A second way that this disconnect was revealed was in the lack of qualified individuals to teach Sunday school classes or lead Bible studies. In a church of over 100 members, it should not have been difficult to identify a dozen men and women to teach a class or lead a Bible study. However, that was the case. A final way that the disconnect between the role of Scripture in the life of the church and the life of the individual believers within the church was revealed was in the poor state of personal discipleship within the church. Discipleship relationships should be a normal part of life within a church like FHRBC. Instead, church members were scared, ill prepared, and unable to disciple others.

These specific examples pointed to the need for the members of FHRBC to be equipped for personal Bible intake. Addressing this need not only affected the personal lives of church members, but also promoted the health of the church at large. As essential as the preaching, teaching, and discipleship ministries of a local church are, if Christians are unable to feed themselves from the Word of God, there is little hope for individual or corporate growth. A failure for Christians to be able to benefit from their own personal reading of Scripture presented a grave problem that had to be addressed.

### **Rationale**

The essential role of Scripture in the Christian life combined with the lack of personal Bible reading among the members at FHRBC made this project necessary. The benefits of equipping the members of FHRBC to read the Bible on their own for spiritual growth were numerous. First, reading Scripture would expand their knowledge and love for God, which would promote personal holiness and contribute to the overall health of the church. Second, reading Scripture would increase their love for their neighbor, which would promote unity within the church and also increase the outreach ministry of the church. Third, reading Scripture would enable more members to engage in discipleship relationships and ministry leadership with confidence. This project was based on two

assumptions. First, no human effort or church ministry is primarily responsible for spiritual growth—only God gives growth (1 Cor 3:7). Second, the idea of western individualism is often a detriment to Christian living. The overemphasis on the “personal relationship with Jesus” within American Christianity often harms the efforts of churches to equip their members to live godly lives. Notions of the personal and private nature of Western Christianity detract from the primary understanding of the church as a corporate gathering of believers. Although this project focused on personal Bible intake, all spiritual growth of Christians requires a diet of both personal and corporate Bible intake.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia, for personal Bible intake.

### **Goals**

The following four goals were established to aid in the successful completion of this project.

1. The first goal was to develop a five-week sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture.
2. The second goal was to develop a five-week teaching series on issues related to personal Bible intake.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and the confidence of ministry leaders as it relates to issues of personal Bible intake through the sermon series and teaching series.
4. The fourth goal was to develop an eight-week discipleship plan centered on Bible intake in order to equip church members to train others in personal Bible intake.

The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal are detailed in the following section.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

## Research Methodology

Four goals determined the effectiveness of this project. The first goal was to develop a five-week sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture. The sermon series covered six different attributes of Scripture. The attributes of Scripture that were covered in this sermon series were inspiration, inerrancy, sufficiency, clarity, authority, and necessity. This goal was measured by five other local Baptist pastors<sup>3</sup> who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series.<sup>4</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. Since the initial feedback did not yield less than 90 percent, necessary revisions were not needed.

The second goal was to develop a five-week teaching series on practical issues related to personal Bible intake. The issues covered in this teaching series were how to read the Bible in light of the gospel, how to read the Bible in light of its big picture, and how to read the Bible in light of its genre, historical background, and its author's intent. This goal was measured by five other local Baptist pastors<sup>5</sup> who used a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the teaching series.<sup>6</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level. Since the initial feedback did not yield less than 90 percent, necessary revisions were not needed.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and

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<sup>3</sup> Jimmy Acree, Ryan Davidson, Kevin Jones, Joey Tomlinson, Hopson Boutot.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1.

<sup>5</sup> Jimmy Acree, Ryan Davidson, Kevin Jones, Joey Tomlinson, Hopson Boutot.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 2.

to increase the confidence among members<sup>7</sup> in issues related to personal Bible intake. This goal was accomplished through the sermon series and teaching series. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey to at least ten members at FHRBC who would listen to the six sermons and attend all teaching sessions.<sup>8</sup> Results from the pre- and post-survey were used to measure the change in the knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and the change in the confidence of FHRBC members in personal Bible intake.<sup>9</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre and post scores. Neil Salkind explains that a *t*-test for dependent samples “involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores.”<sup>10</sup> This comparison of means using the *t*-test ensures learning has taken place and not by mere chance.<sup>11</sup>

The fourth goal was to develop an eight-week discipleship plan centered on Bible intake in order to equip church members to train others in personal Bible intake. The discipleship plan was an eight-week study through the Gospel of Mark that helped participants lead others in personal Bible intake. This goal was measured by five other local Baptist pastors<sup>12</sup> who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching

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<sup>7</sup> A minimum of ten members participated in this project.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 3. Participating members were chosen in order to accurately represent the larger membership of FHRBC.

<sup>9</sup> When completing the pre- and post-surveys, each participating member created an identification number to ensure matching surveys.

<sup>10</sup> Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>12</sup> Jimmy Acree, Ryan Davidson, Joey Tomlinson, Wes Taylor, Hopson Boutot.

methodology, scope, and applicability of the discipleship plan.<sup>13</sup> This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. Since the initial feedback did not yield less than 90 percent, necessary revisions were not needed.

### **Definitions and Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

*Authority of Scripture.* To affirm the *authority of Scripture* is to affirm that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to believe and obey the Bible is to believe and obey God himself.<sup>14</sup>

*Bible intake.* *Bible intake* refers to the spiritual discipline of Scripture reading. According to Donald S. Whitney, no spiritual discipline is more important than the intake of God's Word.<sup>15</sup>

*Clarity of Scripture.* The *clarity of Scripture* is that quality of the biblical text that, as God's communicative act, ensures its meaning is accessible to all who come to it in faith.<sup>16</sup>

*Hermeneutics.* *Hermeneutics* is derived from the Greek word meaning "to interpret." Grant Osborne explains that, traditionally, it has meant "that science which delineates principles or methods for interpreting an individual author's meaning."<sup>17</sup>

*Inerrancy of Scripture.* *Inerrancy* means that when all facts are known, the

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<sup>13</sup> See appendix 4.

<sup>14</sup> Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 79.

<sup>15</sup> Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Mark D. Thomson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 169.

<sup>17</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 5.



Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with social, physical, or life sciences.<sup>18</sup>

*Inspiration of Scripture.* *Inspiration* refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers that rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or that resulted in what they actually wrote being the Word of God.<sup>19</sup>

*Necessity of Scripture.* The *necessity of Scripture* means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, maintaining spiritual life, and knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws.<sup>20</sup>

*Sufficiency of Scripture.* The *sufficiency of Scripture* means that Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.<sup>21</sup>

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, although the sermon series was preached to the entire congregation, the teaching series and administration of the pre- and post-surveys was limited to a minimum of ten members of FHRBC. Second, the project was confined to a thirty-week timeframe. This schedule allowed adequate time to prepare, revise, and preach the six-week sermon series; prepare, revise, and teach the six-week teaching series; conduct the pre and post-series survey; and develop the eight-week discipleship plan.

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<sup>18</sup> Paul D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 294.

<sup>19</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 169.

<sup>20</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 116.

<sup>21</sup> John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 618.

## **Conclusion**

God's people have always been dependent upon God's Word. Scripture provides the complete self-revelation of God. Personal Bible intake plays an essential role in the life of every individual Christian because it is through this spiritual discipline that God's people know God and grow as God's people. The intention of this project was to equip Christians for personal Bible intake, because apart from this spiritual discipline there is little hope for spiritual growth or health. Personal Bible intake is built upon two necessary foundations, and the next two chapters will address these foundations. Chapter 2 focuses on the nature of Scripture itself by examining six essential attributes. Chapter 3 then focuses on practical issues related to personal Bible intake.

## CHAPTER 2

### DID GOD ACTUALLY SAY?

“Did God actually say,” with these words, the crafty serpent in Genesis 3:1 began what would become an age-old practice of twisting, questioning, and doubting the words from God. The serpent continues by asking Eve whether God had actually said, “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?” In this scene, directly on the heels of the creation account, the serpent attempts to twist, misrepresent, and directly contradict the clear command that God. This clear command was given to the first man and woman by the One who had created everything that had come into existence (including the serpent). As the scene in Genesis 3 continued to unfold, Adam and Eve ended up giving in to the temptation of the serpent and rejecting to command that they had received from God. They joined the serpent in his questioning of God’s Word. The disobedience of Adam and Eve was in no way due to a failure on the part of God who had made very clear exactly what was at stake. God clearly communicated with the first couple what was required of them and made clear what the results of their obedience or disobedience would be. Had Eve been able to rightly answer the serpent’s question about what God had really said, the entire trajectory of human history may have been altered.

The ability to correctly answer this question found in Genesis 3:1 makes all the difference in the world. Since the goal of this project was to equip Christians of local churches in their personal Bible intake, understanding the nature and attributes of the Bible is of utmost importance. This chapter argues that that a basic understanding of the doctrine of Scripture is a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. In other words, a failure to understand the nature of Scripture hinders Christians from reading it effectively. The specific attributes of Scripture explored in this chapter are inspiration,

inerrancy, authority, necessity, sufficiency, and clarity. Although the most commonly cited attributes of Scripture in evangelical writing on the doctrine of Scripture are necessity, sufficiency, clarity, and authority,<sup>1</sup> I have included inerrancy and inspiration because, although they are both closely related to authority, they both make distinct contributions to an understanding of the doctrine of Scripture. As this chapter works through each of the attributes, special attention is given to the practical implications of these attributes on personal Bible intake.

### **God Has Actually Spoken**

The starting point for developing an understanding of the doctrine of Scripture is developing a clear understanding of its origin. In the same way that Adam and Eve's knowledge of the source of the command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil should have dictated how they heard the words, so also does understanding the source of Scripture dictate how its words are heard. The reality is that both the command to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2 and the entire Scriptures themselves have the same source: God himself.

To develop an understanding of the doctrine of Scripture, the first thing to understand is that God has actually spoken. Therefore, this section begins with a discussion on the inspiration of Scripture, followed by discussions on the inerrancy and authority of Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

Inspiration is more than just one of the attributes of Scripture—inspiration is the foremost and most important attribute of Scripture. Inspiration refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers that rendered their writings an accurate

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Ward, *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 96.

<sup>2</sup> This order was chosen because it is my conviction that the inerrancy and authority of Scripture flows from the fact that it is inspired.

record of the revelation or that resulted in what they actually wrote being the Word of God.<sup>3</sup> In my estimation, every other attribute of Scripture is derived from its inspiration, which is the first attribute to be discussed.

In his book on the doctrine of Scripture, Edward J. Young understands the doctrine of inspiration to be of the utmost significance and importance for the church.<sup>4</sup> In the preface, he argues that the doctrine of inspiration forms the only solid foundation for the Christian. If the Bible is not infallible, Young says, then Christians can be sure of nothing.<sup>5</sup> His point is that if the Scriptures themselves are not trustworthy and reliable, incapable of being wrong, then the Christian has no solid foundation on which to stand. The fortunes of Christianity stand or fall with an infallible Bible.<sup>6</sup> To take Young's argument one step further, an infallible Bible stands or falls with a right understanding of inspiration.

Edward Young argues that if Christians are to know what the Bible really is, then they must go to the Bible itself and heed its teaching concerning itself.<sup>7</sup> A right understanding of the nature of Scripture should be built on what Scripture says about itself. A proper understanding of the unique nature of Scripture should begin with the testimony of the apostles themselves. Two specific places in the New Testament directly address the idea of inspiration and make clear the apostle's understanding of the nature of Scripture.

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<sup>3</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 169.

<sup>4</sup> Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

## The God-Breathed Scriptures

The first verse to look at is 2 Timothy 3:16. This verse will be considered first because, through the centuries, this verse has played a central role in the church's doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture.<sup>8</sup> In the larger context of 2 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul is writing to Timothy to explain the greatness of the advantages that Timothy had enjoyed for learning the saving truth of God.<sup>9</sup> In verses 14 and 15, Paul specifically mentions personal influences and the sacred writings as those things which Timothy has always had before him in order to teach and guide him in the truth. Then, in verse 16, Paul makes his "energetic assertion of the Divine origin of Scripture."<sup>10</sup> In verse 16 Paul declares that all Scripture is literally "God-breathed." The adjective that Paul uses to describe Scripture has generally been translated "inspired," but the NIV translation "God-breathed" accurately reflects the etymology of the compound word and its meaning as asserting the divine origin of Scripture. It denotes not the manner of the inspiration of Scripture but rather its source.<sup>11</sup> Understanding the divine origin of Scripture is important because the way that one understands what Paul is saying about Scripture has dramatic effects on how one understands the nature of Scripture. If the idea is that God inspired Scripture, then one can infer that God acted upon the Scripture from the outside. For example, to blow hot air into a balloon, there must first be a balloon before one can blow hot air into it. If Paul is saying that God simply inspired Scripture, it is like saying Scripture was written by various human authors and God inspired it (or blew hot air into it) so that the balloon is now profitable and useful. However, if Paul means that Scripture

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<sup>8</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 565.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 133.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 566.

is breathed out by God, then the idea is that God is the very source and origin of all Scripture. B. B. Warfield argues that the Greek term has nothing to say of inspiring or inspiration. Instead, it speaks only of a “spiring” or a “spiration.” What it says of Scripture is, not that it is “breathed into by God” or is the product of the Divine “inbreathing” into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, “God breathed,” the product of the creative breath of God.<sup>12</sup> What Paul says in 2 Timothy 3 reaches all the way to the very source and origin of Scripture. And in commenting on its source, Paul has no qualms about attributing the very creative breath of God as the source of all Scripture. In doing so, he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically Divine operation.<sup>13</sup>

Understanding Paul’s main point concerning Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16 is central to understanding the biblical doctrine of inspiration. Paul wishes to assure Timothy that the Bible is the product of the Divine breath, and this fact of being breathed out by God constitutes the very heart and core of the biblical doctrine of inspiration.<sup>14</sup> An important implication of this understanding of inspiration is the inseparable relationship between God’s breath and all Scripture. If all Scripture is the result of God’s very breath, then there is not one book, section, or verse of Scripture that does not qualify as God-breathed. This understanding of inspiration should influence the way the Christian views all Scripture and it should also affect the way the Christian reads all Scripture.

### **Men Spoke from God**

Having established a first foundation of the doctrine of inspiration from 2 Timothy 3:16, the apostle Peter helps develop a second important foundation. The second passage that plays a foundational role in developing the doctrine of inspiration is 2 Peter

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<sup>12</sup> Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, 133.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Young, *Thy Word is Truth*, 23.

1:16-21. Peter's aim in the context of this passage is to assure his readers of the confidence they can have in the eyewitness accounts of the apostles and in the written words of the prophets. He makes that point in both cases by saying that God himself was behind the process. In the case of the apostles, God attested to or affirmed the majesty of Christ in the Transfiguration. In the case of the prophets and their prophecies, he was their driving source. Much like Paul in 2 Timothy, Peter in 1 Peter 1:19-21 traces the origins of the written prophecies of the Old Testament back to God himself. Peter says that no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but each man spoke from God as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit. This statement concerns source. Peter's point is that no Old Testament prophet could ever ultimately say, regarding his prophecy: "Thus says Elijah or Jeremiah." Verse 20 prohibits the prophets from laying claim to their prophecies. Instead, they could only say, "Thus says the Lord." This truth was intended to give Peter's readers confidence. In the immediate context, Peter is encouraging his readers about the Second Coming of Christ, and Peter wants them to know that even though the apostles and the prophets both predicted that event, it was not in fact their idea or even their words. These men were agents of God in recording and writing His word. Lucas Green explains, "The prophets were gripped by God as he spoke to them and gave them a message to communicate."<sup>15</sup> To put it another way, Warfield writes, "Speaking thus under the determining influence of the Holy Spirit, the things they spoke were not from themselves, but from God."<sup>16</sup>

It is important to recognize the similarities between Peter's point in 2 Peter 1 and Paul's point in 2 Timothy 3. In both instances, the written forms of God's communication are traced back to find their origins in God himself. Understanding God himself as the source is significant because it means the divine-human relationship in the

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<sup>15</sup> Dick Lucas and Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 83.

<sup>16</sup> Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, 136.



writing of Scripture does not alter the fact that the written human words of Scripture are still attributed to God. In other words, although the prophets and apostles wrote prophecies and letters, Peter informs that the ultimate author of Scripture is God. Kevin DeYoung explains, “The divine authorship of the Scriptures does not preclude the use of active human instrumentation, just as human participation does not render the Scriptures any less perfect and divine.”<sup>17</sup>

It is also helpful to recognize the valuable role that historical theology can play in the discussion of inspiration. Gregg Allison affirms that the church has historically acknowledged that “all Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16) and that in the writing of Scripture the biblical authors “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).<sup>18</sup> From the inception of the church, it has been believed that what is contained in Scripture is nothing less than God’s words. The New Testament writers and most of the writers throughout the history of the church have understood there to be a direct connection between the God as the author of Scripture and Scripture as the word from God. Accordingly, to understand Scripture as anything less than divine is to demean its Author. Any definition of inspiration that elevates the human author’s role to a level that enables doubt to be cast on the inspired text falls short of the historical understanding of inspiration. Considering the many current challenges produced by the modern period, it is necessary to recognize that historical theology provides a firm foundation for understanding how the church has always understood inspiration. Reading excerpts from the early church fathers confirms this truth. For instance, Origen declares, “The Scriptures

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<sup>17</sup> Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 38.

<sup>18</sup> Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 59.

themselves are divine, i.e., were inspired by the Spirit of God.”<sup>19</sup> Gregory of Nyssa explains that every Scripture is “the teaching of the divine breath.”<sup>20</sup> This understanding was equally applied to the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The early church had no concept of separating the Old Testament from the New, nor did it have any concept of partial inspiration. The unanimous consensus of the early church was that all of Scripture—even its very words—were inspired.<sup>21</sup>

This understanding of the inspiration of Scripture was sustained in the church throughout the Middle Ages into the Reformation and Post-Reformation period. According to Allison, “the inspiration of Scripture was not one of the doctrinal clashes between Protestants and Catholics . . . for both groups believed the historic position of the church.”<sup>22</sup>

In conclusion, it may be said with complete confidence that the written Scriptures are the creative work of the Triune God. Both Paul and Peter are clear in their most basic beliefs regarding the Scriptures. All Scripture is to be understood as a direct product of divine creativity. Warfield summarizes, “The Scriptures owe their origin to an activity of God the Holy Ghost and are in the highest and truest sense His creation. It is on this foundation of Divine origin that all the high attributes of Scripture are built.”<sup>23</sup> It is to these other high attributes that attention will be given.

### **Inspiration and Inerrancy**

Having established an apostolic understanding of the doctrine of inspiration, discussion now moves on to cover two attributes of Scripture that naturally flow from

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<sup>19</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>22</sup> Allison, *Historical Theology*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, 296.

inspiration. The first attribute that follows from inspiration is inerrancy. These attributes are closely tied. In fact, Paul Feinberg says that the importance of the doctrine of inspiration to inerrancy cannot be overstated.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Article XV of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy affirms that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.<sup>25</sup> These two attributes rise and fall together. Therefore, if the Scriptures are inspired (in the sense that was just discussed) they also must be inerrant. To affirm an inspired, God-breathed Bible that is not inerrant is a contradiction. Simply put, because Scripture is inspired, Scripture is also inerrant.

What is meant by the term *inerrancy*? A simple definition is that the Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings<sup>26</sup> or that it is wholly true.<sup>27</sup> For a more complex definition, inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.<sup>28</sup> In each definition, the fundamental affirmation of inerrancy is the truthfulness of Scripture. To put it negatively, inerrancy denies the possibility that Scripture can ever err or be wrong. The reason it is necessary to insist upon the truthfulness of Scripture has everything to do with the character of God who breathed out Scripture. The God who has revealed himself in Scripture is a God whose character prohibits him from falsehood, deception, and error. Part of what is at stake in the inerrancy discussion is how the God of the Bible presents himself. Does he come across as a God who would reveal untruth or falsehood to his prophets or apostles? In Scripture, God states with great clarity

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<sup>24</sup> Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 277.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 497.

<sup>26</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 189.

<sup>27</sup> Geisler, *Inerrancy*, 294.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

that his character is such that he cannot lie, and he alone is utterly truthful and trustworthy. The conclusion that the Bible is inerrant is essentially derived from linking those two related truths closely together.<sup>29</sup> Because of the intimate relationship between God and His Word, there are attributes that necessarily overlap. It might be helpful to think of the converse. If Scripture is in fact inspired and if Scripture is the result of the very breath of God, what would it say about the character of God if those words were untrue or wrong? It will not suffice to say, as some do, that the words or the message was corrupted by the human authors. This understanding is prohibited because of what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16. There, Paul affirms the inspiration of all Scripture, which means he is affirming the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, which had already passed through human authorship. According to Paul's understanding, inspiration was not negated by human authors. This is the very process Peter mentions in 2 Peter 1:21 when he says God the Holy Spirit was the source of all written prophecy. Paul and Peter affirm the inspiration of Scripture that had already passed through human agency. In other words, their view of inspiration was not altered by human instrumentation. The most fundamental question to answer when it comes to the inerrancy of Scripture is whether God is truthful. In answering that question affirmatively, Christians find themselves in good company. According to Mark Noll, the conviction that God communicates in Scripture a revelation of himself and of his deeds, and that this revelation is entirely truthful, has always been the common belief of most Catholics, most protestants, most Orthodox, and even most of the sects of the fringe of Christianity.<sup>30</sup> Or in the words of J. I. Packer, "No Christian will question that God speaks truth and truth only. But if all Scripture comes from God in such a sense that what it says, He says, then Scripture as such must be inerrant, because it is God's

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<sup>29</sup> Ward, *Words of Life*, 133.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Noll, quoted in Ward, *Words of Life*, 132.

utterance.”<sup>31</sup> Having covered inspiration and inerrancy, a third attribute will be covered, which like inerrancy, is closely connected to inspiration.

### **Inspiration and Authority**

In describing the age in which he lived in 1976, Leon Morris not only described his own age, but also accurately described this present age. Morris describes living in an age that calls into question authority in all its forms. The young are questioning the authority of the old, and especially that of their parents. The authority of the State is doubted, as is that of the traditional authority figures whether in church or community.<sup>32</sup> The same could also be said for those living in the current age whose default is to question everything, especially authority. This specific cultural landscape makes the authority of Scripture difficult for the modern ear to hear. In addition to the tendency to question authority, there is another related cultural tendency of humans to view themselves as fundamentally autonomous. Living in a culture that deliberately and pervasively exalts human autonomy and dismisses God is a profound cultural, theological, and spiritual problem.<sup>33</sup> It is into this cultural setting that the authority of Scripture must be carefully and clearly explained.

Understanding of the authority of Scripture necessarily begins with one’s understanding of inspiration. If the Scriptures are God’s words to fallen humanity, then there must be some level of authority that accompanies them. As J. I. Packer notes, the right to rule belongs ultimately to God the Creator, and Christianity is ultimately a matter

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<sup>31</sup> J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 104.

<sup>32</sup> Leon Morris, *I Believe in Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 141.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Jensen, *The Revelation of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 147.

of bowing to His authority by obedient response to His revelation.<sup>34</sup> This same logic lies behind the *Westminster Confession's* article on the Holy Scripture:

The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.<sup>35</sup>

Recognizing and submitting to the authority of Scripture has more to do with God than it has to do with Scripture. Timothy Ward explains,

The phrase “the authority of Scripture” must be understood to be shorthand for “the authority of God as he speaks through Scripture.’ To speak about the authority of Scripture is really to say more about God, and about the ways he chooses to act and speak in the world, than it is to say something directly about Scripture itself. The authority of Scripture is dependent entirely on the authority of God.<sup>36</sup>

Likewise, John Frame contends, “Divine authorship is the ultimate reason why Scripture is authoritative. Its authority is absolute because God’s authority is absolute, and Scripture is his personal word to us.”<sup>37</sup> It becomes clear that the intimate relationship between God and his Word requires a specific understanding of the authority of Scripture. Because God has spoken to fallen humanity in his Word, it is necessary for fallen humanity to respond to that Word with humility and submission. The authority of Scripture requires that Christians labor to put themselves under God’s Word.

It is important to recognize that since the authority of Scripture is directly tied to the authority of God, that every other source of authority is subject to Scripture. Herman Bavinck explains,

As the word of God it stands on a level high above all human authority in state and society, science and art. Before it, all else must yield. All other [human] authority is

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<sup>34</sup> Packer, *God Has Spoken*, 95.

<sup>35</sup> Westminster Assembly, *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 1985), 1:4.

<sup>36</sup> Ward, *Words of Life*, 128.

<sup>37</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 165.

restricted to its own circle and applies only to its own area. But the authority of Scripture extends to the whole person and over all humankind.<sup>38</sup>

Because Scripture derives its authority from the God who spoke it, no other authority in all of creation can rival or challenge it. This drastically affects the way Scripture should be approached. Having established the inspiration of Scripture and discussing the inerrancy and authority of Scripture that follow from the idea of inspiration, the necessity of Scripture will be discussed next.

### **The Necessity of Scripture**

To say that Scripture is necessary is simply to say that one needs it.<sup>39</sup>

Systematic theologian Wayne Grudem offers the following definition: “The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will.”<sup>40</sup> Apart from the specific revelation of God found in the Scriptures, fallen humanity would remain lost. Following his definition of necessity, Grudem lists three main reasons that Scripture is necessary. First, Scripture is necessary because it tells the one story of God reconciling sinners to himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. The gospel message has come to fallen humanity through the Scriptures. It is no stretch to say that the entire purpose of the Bible is to convey the gospel story.<sup>41</sup> A second basic fact, related to the first, is that only through the Scriptures do Christians learn how to maintain a spiritual life. In other words, the revelation of God in the Scriptures instructs Christians in how to live godly lives.<sup>42</sup> Closely related is the third reason that Grudem mentions, which is that God’s will for Christians is found only

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<sup>38</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:465.

<sup>39</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 211.

<sup>40</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 116.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

in the Bible.<sup>43</sup> So, according to Grudem, apart from the specific revelation given in the Scriptures no one would be unable to know the gospel, to live a spiritual life, or to know God's will for their life. Considering these three basic reasons leaves no doubt as to the necessity of the Bible in the life of the Christian.

### **Insufficient Revelation**

To fully appreciate what God has specifically revealed in the Bible, it will be helpful to discuss God's revelation more generally. Traditionally, Christians have divided revelation into two categories: general and special revelation. General revelation is in the first place revelation made generally. It is not restricted to any one nation or group.<sup>44</sup> General revelation has often been defined as what all men, in all places, can know about God. This is the category of revelation that Psalm 19 describes when it says that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. The idea of general revelation is also found in Romans 1, where Paul says that God's invisible attributes have been on display since the creation of the world. His point is that all men and women who live in this world are living in a world that speaks to them. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas tell the crowds at Lystra that rains from heaven and fruitful seasons that satisfy them with food and gladness are witnesses to the goodness of God. In other words, the rain and the earth's produce tell people something about God so that he has not left himself without witness. Leon Morris puts it this way:

Creation gives evidence of its Creator. A reverent contemplation of the physical universe with its order and design and beauty tell us not only that God is but also that God is a certain kind of God. God has left his imprint on his creation so that his universe reveals something about him to men.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 119.

<sup>44</sup> Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, 32.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.



One additional way that God's general revelation is seen is through the human conscience. In a similar way that creation itself is evidence of God's existence, the human conscience that is given to every human being is also evidence of God's existence. As Andrew Naselli and J. D. Crowley point out, having a conscience is part what it means to be made in the image of God.<sup>46</sup> This means that every person has a God-given conscience, or as Naselli and Crowley put it, "Conscience is inherent in personhood."<sup>47</sup> Like the testimony of creation, the testimony of the human conscience also finds support in the early chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans. In Romans 2:14-15, Paul argues that the Gentiles, who did not have the law, were sometimes able to do what the law required. Paul locates this moral ability in the law written on their hearts and in their conscience. Naselli and Crowley explain, "Romans 2:14-15 goes on to teach that everyone also has a conscience, an imperfect-but-accurate-enough version of God's will, as standard equipment in their hearts."<sup>48</sup>

While it is clear from Scripture that God has created the world in such a way that creation proclaims his glory and his attributes and that all humans are given a conscience, it must also be said that fallen human beings cannot accurately perceive this general revelation. John Calvin compares the whole scope of general revelation to burning lamps that "shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author."<sup>49</sup> However, Calvin continues by saying that these burning lamps are all burning in vain: "Although they bathe us wholly in their radiance, they can of themselves in no

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<sup>46</sup> Andrew David Naselli and J. D. Crowley, *Conscience: What It Is, How to Train It, and Loving Those Who Differ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 22.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>49</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 1:68.

way lead us into the right path.”<sup>50</sup> The inability of fallen humanity to rightly interpret general revelation has been the problem facing humanity since Genesis 3. Since the fall, all of humanity collectively suppresses and distorts the message of general revelation and cannot rightly know God through his general revelation. Morris notes,

The critical point is that this knowledge does not bring man salvation. Man does not come to know God as he is. When we reflect that general revelation gives us no information and can give us none about any of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, we can appreciate the limits of its usefulness.<sup>51</sup>

### **No Scripture, No Lord**

The limited usefulness of general revelation reveals the importance of special or specific revelation. The inability of fallen humanity to rightly interpret general revelation is the foundation for understanding the necessity of Scripture. Kevin DeYoung argues that the doctrine of the necessity of Scripture reminds fallen humanity of their predicament: the One they need to know most cannot be discovered on their own.<sup>52</sup> It is into this predicament that God further reveals himself. God stoops down and speaks in a way that fallen humans can understand. And he does this in the Scriptures. There is nowhere else in all the world for humanity today to find further revelation from God—it only comes through the Scriptures. This is especially true when it comes to knowing the gospel. If God does not make known the person and work of Christ through the Scriptures, there is no way for any man, woman, boy, or girl to know God. Although some attempt to separate Christ from the Scriptures by saying that their relationship with Christ is not dependent upon the Scriptures, the reality is that the relationship between Christ and the Bible is inseparable. As Frame so clearly explains, “Jesus’ words, today, are found only in Scripture. So, if we are to have a covenant relationship with Jesus, we

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<sup>50</sup> Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:68.

<sup>51</sup> Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, 41.

<sup>52</sup> DeYoung, *Taking God at His Word*, 86.

must acknowledge Scripture as his Word. No Scripture, no Lord. No Scripture, no Christ. And no Scripture, no salvation.”<sup>53</sup> Frame’s point is that Scripture is the foundation of the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ. At the end of the day, everything is tied to God’s special revelation that has come through Scripture. Having established the necessity of the Scriptures, the discussion now shift to the sufficiency of those same Scriptures.

### **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

The sufficiency of Scripture is based upon the fact that it has been given for the benefit of God’s people. Whereas the necessity of Scripture affirms the Bible is what is needed, the sufficiency of Scripture affirms the Bible is all that is needed. According to Frame, “The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.”<sup>54</sup> The sufficiency of Scripture says that nothing is missing from God’s revelation to humanity that is necessary for humanity to know. Wayne Grudem writes, “The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture answers the question of whether or not we are to look anywhere outside of Scripture to find words from God.”<sup>55</sup> To believe that Scripture is sufficient is to acknowledge that God has spoken uniquely and finally in the Scriptures. To believe in the sufficiency of Scripture is to deny the need of any further revelation from God. In other words, because God has given his sufficient Word, there is no reason to look to anything or anyone else to find words from God. It is here that a major break occurred between Protestants and the Catholic Church. While not doubting the divine origins of Scripture, the Roman Catholic Church began to place the tradition and official teachings of the church on the same level as Scripture. J. I.

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<sup>53</sup> Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God*, 212.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>55</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

Packer explains, “The Catholic tradition, in all its forms, holds that Holy Scripture, interpreted in terms of itself, is not sufficient as a guide for those who would live under the authority of God.”<sup>56</sup>

It was into this context that reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin began to champion the sufficiency of Scripture. In fact, according to Ward, “The strong reassertion of the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture was at the heart of the Protestant reformation.”<sup>57</sup> The cry of the Protestant Reformation was that Scripture alone was all that God’s people needed. These reformers paved the way for the men and women who would come after them by firmly holding to the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. The consensus opinion that has shaped church history since the Reformation is summarized by English Puritan John Owen:

The Holy Spirit of God has prepared and disposed of the Scripture so as it might be a most sufficient and absolutely perfect way and means of communicating unto our minds that saving knowledge of God and his will that is needful which we may live unto him, and come unto the enjoyment of him in his glory.<sup>58</sup>

This understanding leaves no room for any lack concerning the sufficiency of Scripture. All that is needed for salvation and living has been given in the Scripture. One of the best formulations of the doctrine of sufficiency is the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which says: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.”<sup>59</sup>

One common way that the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture is undermined is the tendency to use language that implies God’s regular communication apart from His Word. This most commonly occurs through describing personal

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<sup>56</sup> Packer, *God Has Spoken*, 106.

<sup>57</sup> Ward, *Words of Life*, 109.

<sup>58</sup> John Owen, quoted in Allison, *Historical Theology*, 157.

<sup>59</sup> Westminster Assembly, *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:6.

experiences or mystical impressions. When this kind of language is used to describe communication from God that regularly happens apart from His Word, the sufficiency of Scripture is subtly being denied. The danger that comes with this subtle denial is that Christians begin expecting to hear from God in ways that God has not definitively committed himself to speak. This expectation of divine communication, in effect, begins to lessen the role of Scripture and personal Bible intake in the normal Christian life. The sufficiency of Scripture teaches that the only sure way for a Christian to hear from God is through the His Word. This gives the Christian confidence as he or she sits down and opens the Bible seeking to hear from God.

### **The Clarity of Scripture**

The clarity of Scripture is based upon the fact that Scripture itself assumes that it can be learned and understood. As Mark Thomson states, “The clarity of Scripture can be affirmed based on Scripture’s own teaching. The biblical text can be approached with confidence by the believer who seeks to know God and his purposes. God has been good to us in giving us the Scripture we have.”<sup>60</sup> The clarity of Scripture deals with the Christian’s ability to understand what it says. Wayne Grudem states, “The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.”<sup>61</sup> The fact that God has graciously revealed himself to his people assumes that his people are able to understand what he has revealed. At the heart of any denial of the clarity of Scripture is the assumption that God’s people are not able to understand God’s revelation.

Much like the sufficiency of Scripture, the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture marks a break between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Leon Morris argues that,

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<sup>60</sup> Mark D. Thomson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 110.

<sup>61</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 108.

because of the clarity of Scripture, “we do not need somebody to tell us what the main lines of biblical teaching are. We are not so delivered over into the hands of the experts that we cannot speak about the Bible and its teaching without a professorial or ecclesiastical opinion to back us up.”<sup>62</sup> The ability for common people to read and understand the Bible is attested to throughout the history of the church. Morris continues, “Through the centuries, millions of ordinary men have read the Bible just as it is, without expert guidance, and have heard God speaking to them. The ordinary man can still read the Bible and understand enough of it to serve his purpose as he seeks to live for God.”<sup>63</sup> This was the conviction behind William Tyndale’s desire to translate the Bible into English. Tyndale was convinced that with an English translation, even a plow boy could understand the Scriptures.<sup>64</sup>

It must be stated what clarity does not mean. To affirm the clarity of Scripture does not mean that every section and every verse of the Bible is easy to understand. This is a common misunderstanding of what clarity means. Bavinck acknowledges that the doctrine of the clarity, or perspicuity, of Scripture has frequently been misunderstood and misrepresented:

It does not mean that the matters and subjects with which Scripture deals are not mysteries that far exceed the reach of human intellect. Nor does it assert that Scripture is clear in all its parts, so that no scientific exegesis is needed, or that, also in its doctrine of salvation, Scripture is plain and clear to every person without distinction.<sup>65</sup>

One can affirm the clarity of Scripture while also affirming the difficulty of understanding certain parts or sections of Scripture. One can affirm the clarity of Scripture while also

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<sup>62</sup> Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, 76.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 79.

<sup>65</sup> Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:477.

affirming that intense and deliberate study is sometimes required to understand Scripture.

Bavinck continues,

It means only that the truth, the knowledge of which is necessary to everyone for salvation is nevertheless presented throughout all of Scripture in such a simple and intelligible form that a person concerned about the salvation of his or her soul can easily, by personal reading and study, learn to know that truth from Scripture without the assistance and guidance of the church and the priest.<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, the clarity of Scripture does not mean that there should never be any doctrinal disagreements or denominational differences. Although doctrinal and denominational differences are often used to show disunity or problems with Christianity, the reality is that the substance of Christian agreement far surpasses that of Christian disagreement. The amount of agreement on major theological issues that is found throughout church history is strong support for the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. Agreement on issues like the doctrine of God, the person a Christ, the gospel message, and other orthodox beliefs serve as testimonies to the clarity of Scripture. Thus, when it comes to disagreements or difficulty in understanding Scripture, it must always be remembered that, as Grudem writes, the lack of clarity “always lies with not with the Scripture but with ourselves.”<sup>67</sup> Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, the clarity of God’s revelation has been affected. This means that human sin must always be considered when it comes to understanding the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. Grudem explains, “We affirm that all the teachings of Scripture are clear and able to be understood, but we also recognize that people often (through their own shortcomings) misunderstand what is clearly written in Scripture.”<sup>68</sup>

It should also be noted that many discussions on the clarity of Scripture consider the numerous helps that God has given his people in the endeavor to understand the

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<sup>66</sup> Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:477.

<sup>67</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 109.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

Scriptures. Mark Thomson mentions three specific resources: the Holy Spirit, the larger context of the Bible, and a fellowship of readers that span the entire timeline of church history.<sup>69</sup> The role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of Scripture is often mentioned, but the role of the same Spirit in the reading of Scripture is sometimes neglected, especially in discussions surrounding the clarity of that Scripture. On one side of the equation, it must be confessed that there is a sense in which the plain meaning of Scripture cannot be understood by the natural man. Every person who sits down to read the Bible is dependent upon the illuminating work of God the Holy Spirit. This is the cry of Psalm 119:18: “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” On the other side of the equation, it must be confessed that God has not left his people to read the Bible on their own. He has given his Spirit to his people which means that when the Christian sits down to read the Scriptures, he or she does so in the presence of the God who “speaks in and through them.”<sup>70</sup> God’s presence in the activity of reading the Bible is central to understanding the clarity of Scripture. God has not left his people without divine aid. As Thomson points out, “The same Spirit who moved men to write these words moves in the hearts of men and women to bring about an understanding that demonstrates itself in repentance and faith.”<sup>71</sup>

A proper understanding of the clarity of Scripture is extremely important for the purposes of this project. If the plain meaning of Scripture is not accessible to the average Christian, then what reason does he or she have to engage in personal Bible intake?

Thomson makes a similar observation when he notes,

So much classical interest in the doctrine of Scripture’s clarity is driven by a concern to encourage direct engagement with the Scriptures by those who are not scholars or specialists in biblical studies. The advocates of this doctrine understood

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<sup>69</sup> Thomson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 110.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



that without a confidence that Scripture is clear, few could be expected to begin or to persevere in reading the Bible.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, a proper understanding of the clarity of Scripture causes every Christian to take seriously the activity of personal Bible intake. In Thompson's final section, he argues that the practice of reading in light of the clarity of Scripture will be both serious and attentive: "It will take seriously the text we have and expect that these very words have the power to cut deep and to heal profoundly even today."<sup>73</sup> To put it another way, "God has something to say and he is very good at saying it."<sup>74</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Having worked through six significant attributes or characteristics of Scripture, we have laid the first necessary foundation for Bible intake. The conviction of this project is that an understanding of the doctrine of Scripture is the first step in learning to read the Bible more effectively. I am convinced that a right understanding of the nature of Scripture would necessarily lead to better Bible intake. Having laid the first foundation, we are now able to move on to the second foundation in Bible reading. The next chapter will focus on addressing practical issues related to Bible intake.

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<sup>72</sup> Thomson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 160.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 3

### PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO PERSONAL BIBLE INTAKE

The previous chapter argued that a basic understanding of the doctrine of Scripture was the first necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. It was argued that the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, necessity, sufficiency, and clarity are all essential attributes of Scripture that set a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. This chapter will move away from focusing on the doctrine of Scripture and address the actual process of personal Bible intake. This chapter will argue that a basic understanding of how to study the Bible is the second necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. In order to build a basic understanding of how to study the Bible, four particular issues related to personal Bible intake will be discussed. The first issue is the role of the gospel in personal Bible intake. It will be argued that the gospel is the only proper entry point into the story of the Bible. This means that understanding the Bible is dependent upon understanding how the gospel shapes our understanding of the Bible. The second issue that will be addressed is how an understanding of the big picture of the Bible is necessary for understanding any part of the Bible. Finally, the processes of interpretation and application will be discussed. It will be argued that these two steps are required for all personal Bible intake. Understanding these basic issues will establish the second necessary foundation for personal Bible intake.

#### **The Gospel as the Bible's Front Door**

In this section, it will be argued that the gospel is the Bible's front door. The basic assumption is that understanding the gospel is necessary for studying the Bible. But before one can consider how the gospel shapes one's perspective of the Bible, a larger

concern must be addressed. The larger concern is understanding how the gospel shapes and informs one's approach to God himself. The first observation to be made is that the gospel is the key to approaching God himself. Since the aim of this chapter is to address practical issues with personal Bible intake, it must be stated at the outset that an interest in personal Bible intake should normally be preceded by conversion. In other words, anyone who comes to the Bible with the hope of personally benefitting from its content should first have been reconciled to God through faith in Christ and have received the Spirit of Christ upon that conversion. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." This means that no one enters into relationship with God except through Jesus Christ. This also means that those who have not experienced the reality of conversion that comes through the power of the gospel will be restricted in their personal Bible intake. Another way of saying it is that one's personal experience of the salvation that comes only through Christ is the first step in personal Bible intake. This doesn't mean that non-Christians cannot benefit from the reading of Scripture. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear stories of individuals who are converted through their personal reading of Scripture. But what it does mean is that someone who attempts to read the Bible without having been born again by the Spirit of God will miss the main point of the Bible. More will be said about this in a later section, but the entire purpose of God's self-revelation in the Scriptures is to reveal Christ. The divine purpose behind God's revelation of himself to humanity is so that humanity might come to know God. It should be noted that this knowledge is much more involved than mental knowledge or information transfer. God can be known intimately by fallen humanity through a unique, covenant relationship. This covenant relationship only comes through personal union with Christ which comes only through faith and repentance. Therefore, a personal experience of grace is necessary for someone to most beneficially read the Bible for themselves. The gospel is the key to

approaching God himself because it sets the individual in a right relationship with God. But the gospel is also the key to approaching the rest of Scripture.

Having addressed the larger concern of how the gospel is the key to approaching God, a second, more specific observation is that the gospel enables Christians to rightly approach the rest of Scripture. It is only in light of Jesus and the gospel that any other part of Scripture can be rightly understood. This means that a proper understanding of the Old Testament must be shaped by the person and work of Christ. This also means that the coming of Christ gives a new lens through which to view the Old Testament. In fact, Jesus made this very point numerous times during his ministry on earth. In the most well-known instance, on the Road to Emmaus with two dejected disciples in Luke 24:27, Jesus “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” These two disciples were dejected because they had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus and they could not reconcile his death with his claims to be the Messiah. In this situation, Jesus addressed their questions by showing them how all the Scriptures testified to the necessity of his suffering and his death. In other words, the suffering of Jesus didn’t disqualify him from being the Messiah, it affirmed that he was in fact the Messiah. According to Jesus, these disciples’ understanding of the Old Testament, paired with His own teaching regarding himself, should have led them to recognize the necessity of his suffering and death. This means that the death and resurrection of Jesus, the gospel, ought to shape how we view the Old Testament scriptures. Another instance where Jesus teaches that all of Scripture must be understood in light of him is found in John 5. Amid rebuking his Jewish opponents for failing to come to him for life, in verse 39 Jesus specifically says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” Jesus does not hesitate to confirm that the Old Testament Scriptures testify to him. But it is not only Jesus who teaches this basic truth regarding the Old Testament. According to David Murray, Christ, Peter, and Paul were all in

agreement that the entire Old Testament was all about Christ and His salvation.<sup>1</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy similarly summarizes, “The overwhelming testimony of the New Testament is that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, which is another way of saying that the Old Testament is about Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> Understanding that the Old Testament is about Jesus means that reading the Old Testament must not be done in isolation from the person and work of Jesus. This is what is meant by referring to Jesus and his gospel as the front door to the Bible. Since the entire Bible is about the person and work of Christ, the message of Christ and his gospel are the necessary entry point into the storyline of Scripture. Another way of putting it is that the gospel provides the correct glasses with which to view the rest of the Bible. Everything in Scripture finds its meaning in Christ. The prominence of the person and work of Christ means that all our Bible study must be Christ-centered. Graeme Goldsworthy explains: “We do not start at Genesis 1 and work our way forward until we discover where it is all leading. Rather we first come to Christ, and he directs us to study the Old Testament in the light of the gospel. The gospel will interpret the Old Testament by showing us its goal and meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

This is why, when someone is interested in Christ or investigating Christianity, it is common to refer them to one of the four gospels. How many times have mature Christians been bogged down in the laws and regulations of Exodus or Leviticus? Imagine what that experience would be like for a non-Christian who is attempting to investigate the Bible. It is right to point them to the Gospel of Mark or the Gospel of John because there they will encounter Jesus Christ. It cannot be overstated: the most important thing about the Bible is the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the main idea, the climax. This idea is touched on by the author of Hebrews in the first two verses

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<sup>1</sup> David Murray, *Jesus on Every Page* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 53.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

of the book: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” The point of beginning the book of Hebrews that way is to show the priority and supremacy of Christ over all other figures and messengers that preceded him. The author of Hebrews would have his audience know that Christ is the climax of all of God’s dealings with fallen humanity. The author would also have his readers know that Jesus is the final word. Everything before Him pointed forward to him and everything after him points back to him. Jesus and his gospel are the climax of the entire Bible. Or, as Edmund Clowney summarizes it, “The Bible is the greatest storybook, not just because it is full of wonderful stories but because it tells one great story, the story of Jesus.”<sup>4</sup>

Consider a few specific examples to illustrate this point. First, consider the promise that God makes to Satan in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15. As a result of the serpent’s role in the fall, the Lord says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Now, if we had just picked up the Bible and started reading in Genesis 1:1, we probably wouldn’t think much of that promise. But, if our entry point into the storyline of Scripture is the Gospel, we read Genesis 3:15 already understanding that the seed of the woman who crushes the serpent’s head is none other than Jesus Christ. If our entry point into the storyline of Scripture is the person and work of Christ, we are not surprised to hear that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. This is why Genesis 3:15 is sometimes referenced as the first promise of the gospel. Entering through the Bible’s front door, we already have categories for understanding the seed of the woman, Satan, and the climax of their conflict. It is not a stretch to say, as

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<sup>4</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 1988), 9.

Goldsworthy does, that the enmity between the snake's offspring and the woman's offspring foreshadows the conflict between Christ and Satan.”<sup>5</sup>

Next, consider the Abraham and Isaac episode. Throughout the Abraham narrative in Genesis 12-50, there is a constant emphasis on God's promise and Abraham's seed. After a long time of waiting, God eventually blesses Abraham and his wife Sarah with the promise of a son. They name him Isaac and he is clearly the son of promise and the one through whom God's promises are going to be accomplished. Abraham is confident of this until God commands him to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering. Having been with Abraham through all the ups and downs of waiting for a son, readers of the story sympathize with Abraham and wonder why God would command such a thing. As the story unfolds, Abraham, not sure exactly what is going to happen, trusts the Lord plans to follow through with the command to sacrifice his son. And as Abraham is on the verge of killing Isaac, God intervenes and stops the process. God tells Abraham not to harm the child. Immediately, Abraham looks up and sees a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. God provided a sacrifice in the place of Isaac. For the reader who started in Genesis 1 and read through Genesis 22, there would be all kinds of questions regarding the nature of God's command and the reasoning behind it all. But, if you come to Genesis 22 through the front door of the Bible, you have a paradigm for understanding the sacrifice of Isaac. After entering the storyline through the gospel, it is not a foreign idea that a father would sacrifice his own son, whom he greatly loved. In fact, entering the storyline through the gospel enables one to see the sacrifice of Isaac as a foreshadowing of the Father sending the Son and even increases our understanding of the gospel. As Edmund Clowney explains, “without the typology of Abraham's sacrifice, we could not understand the depth of meaning in the New Testament teaching about God's love in giving His Beloved.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 106.

<sup>6</sup> Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery*, 59.

A final example would be Psalm 23, one of the best-known Psalms and one that has served as a great comfort for Christians in times of difficulties throughout the ages. The significance and popularity of Psalm 23 throughout church history is easily understood. It is a great psalm about a great God who shepherds his people. But when Psalm 23 is read in connection with the person and work of Christ, it offers even more reason for comfort and joy in the midst of trials. In John 10, Jesus picks up on the imagery of a shepherd to describe himself and what he came to do. In verse 11, Jesus claims to be the good shepherd and then claims that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Understanding Jesus as the fulfilment of the Good Shepherd changes the way that we go back and read Psalm 23. Add to this, the additional things that Jesus says in John 10, about his willingness to lay down his life, the security of his sheep in his Father's hand, and the eternal life that he gives to his sheep and Psalm 23 begins to take on a much fuller meaning. For instance, consider the last verse of Psalm 23: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," in light of what Jesus says in John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." God's people will dwell with the Lord forever because Jesus has given them eternal life that will last forever. Jesus, as the good shepherd, gives fuller meaning to Psalm 23.

These three simple examples show the importance of entering the storyline of the Bible through the person and work of Christ. There are dozens of other examples that could be discussed. The point is that Jesus and his gospel provide the lens through which the Bible must be read. Understanding the gospel as the Bible's front door is another way of arguing for gospel-centered hermeneutics. This idea has been proposed by Graeme Goldsworthy in his book, "Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics."<sup>7</sup> Goldsworthy argues that the gospel should be the foundation of all Bible study. In other words, the correct way to

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<sup>7</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).



read and understand the Bible is based on the person of Jesus Christ. Goldsworthy further explains, “in order for hermeneutics to be gospel-centered, it must be based on the person of Jesus Christ. That is, the person and work of Christ are at the heart of our hermeneutics.”<sup>8</sup> Understanding this idea of gospel-centered hermeneutics is important for any Christian who wants to grow in personal Bible intake. When Jesus is the lens through which the rest of Scripture is viewed, it leads to depth and fullness in personal Bible intake. It also ensures that the main idea of the Bible remains the main idea of the Bible, namely, the person and work of Jesus.

### **The Bible’s Big Picture**

In a similar way that the previous section argued that gospel-centered hermeneutics are necessary for personal Bible intake, this section will argue that understanding the Bible’s big picture is also necessary for personal Bible intake. The basic assumption is that every individual part of the Bible must be understood in light of the whole. Since the Bible consists of so many books that span so many centuries and contains so many characters and types of literature, sometimes it can be easy to get lost in the details. Much like a zoomed-in satellite view is better understood when the view is zoomed out, so also, when the Bible’s big picture is understood, it helps give clarity to the smaller parts. It is understandable that the Bible sometimes seems to lack unity or a comprehensive story. There are sections of poetry, there are seemingly random stories about lions and giants, there are letters written to specific people in specific places, and there are sections akin to fantasy novels with dragons and fire and angels. As confusing as all those things seem, understanding the big story of the Bible actually gives unity and clarity to all the seemingly random and confusing parts.

Discussing the Bible’s big picture, talking about the one unified story that the Bible tells, is part of a discipline called biblical theology. While all theology should aim

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<sup>8</sup> Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 58.

to be biblical, the discipline of biblical theology is concerned with the one, divinely inspired story that stretches from Genesis to Revelation and tells the true story about God's saving work in history.<sup>9</sup> Another way to define biblical theology comes from Michael Lawrence, who says, "Biblical theology is the attempt to tell the whole story of the whole Bible as Christian Scripture."<sup>10</sup> Biblical theology assumes that God has inspired all of Scripture and that all of Scripture tells the one story that God intends it to tell. Understanding the Bible's big story is important for personal Bible intake because it gives clarity to specific Bible passages. Knowing the big story helps ensure that every small part of the story is understood in its appropriate context.

One of the reasons that this is so crucial in personal Bible intake is because of the numerous popular examples of biblical theology gone wrong. For instance, the story of David and Goliath, when not properly understood in light of the Bible's big picture, becomes a moralistic story about how Christians can slay their own giants. Or it becomes a story about how having enough faith will lead to victory over your enemies. Or, worst case scenario, it becomes an object lesson and is used to teach that every Christian needs five stones to fight the Devil. All of these understandings fall short because they all fail to take into account the bigger story that David and Goliath are a part of. Understanding the story of David and Goliath in light of the Bible's big picture changes the way the story is interpreted and applied. Understanding the bigger story shifts the focus away from following the example of David and onto God's gracious provision in choosing David, a courageous, faith-filled warrior who accomplishes victory for God's people, not primarily because of his great faith, but because God has anointed him to be the next king of Israel and has given him his own Spirit for the task. Understanding the story of David and

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<sup>9</sup> Nick Roark and Robert Kline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 89.

Goliath in light of the Bible's big story ensures that we, as readers, do not too quickly displace God by inserting ourselves into the hero role. Understanding the storyline of Scripture places Christian readers in the place of the faithless Israelites on the sideline watching as the Lord's anointed one accomplishes victory on their behalf.

Another common example of biblical theology gone wrong is seen in the way that many Christians think about the Ten Commandments. It is often assumed, by Christians new and old, that the Ten Commandments are laws to be kept. This understanding, though not completely incorrect, totally misses the vast covenantal differences between members of the Old and the New Covenants. Understanding the Bible's big story prevents the Ten Commandments from being directly applied to the New Covenant believer. The Bible's bigger story reveals that the purpose of the law does not function the same way in the life of the Christian that it did in the life of the Israelite. The Old Testament laws were not given to Christians as rules to keep. Understanding them this way misunderstands the bigger story.

A final example of biblical theology gone wrong is seen in the common misunderstanding of the relationship between Old Testament Israel and modern day America. There are countless t-shirts and bumper stickers with American flags that quote 2 Chronicles 7:14 which says, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." That this specific verse is applied to modern-day America reveals a major misunderstanding of the Bible's larger story. The problem is not that America should not be filled with individuals who pray for their country. It is not even that American Christians should not pray for the Lord to heal our land. The problem is that the specific promise and healing related to 2 Chronicles 7:14 was directly tied to the nation of Israel and that Israel played a very significant role in God's plan of salvation. Modern-day America does not occupy that same position. For someone to claim Old Testament promises that God made to Israel for any modern-day

nation is to misunderstand the Bible's big picture. These common examples make clear, there is a need among Christians for a clearer understanding of the Bible's big picture.

### **The Specifics of the Bible's Big Picture**

Having established the necessity of understanding the Bible's big picture, it is necessary next to ask, what exactly is the Bible's big picture? The short answer to that question was mentioned earlier when it biblical theology was defined as the one true story about God's saving work in history.<sup>11</sup> But more specifically, what exactly does God's saving work in history consist of? The most common way for this saving work to be described is in the four stages of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.<sup>12</sup> These four stages cover the entire storyline of the Bible from start to finish and help convey the big picture.

#### **Creation**

This first stage of the Bible's story is probably the most well-known. It is found in the first two chapters of the Bible and is known as the creation account. The creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 establishes two crucial truths from the very beginning of the story. The first truth is the transcendence of God. The beginning of the story records God creating all things out of nothing. Genesis chapter 1 begins with the famous words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." All creation is a product of God's personal will.<sup>13</sup> This means that God is outside of creation – he is not part of it. As the creator of all things, God naturally has authority over all things. And, as

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<sup>11</sup> Roark and Kline, *Biblical Theology*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Two other examples are T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008); and Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Gospel and the Kingdom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 33.

Graeme Goldsworthy points out, “The rule of God over creation through his word points to the real distinction between God and the creation.”<sup>14</sup> He continues, “The Bible teaches that God is distinct from and beyond everything that has been made and that exists in the universe. The word used to describe this is transcendence.”<sup>15</sup>

The second truth that is found in the first two chapters of Genesis is that God creates man in his own image for the two purposes of relating to himself and ruling his creation. In light of God’s transcendence, it is quite shocking that he would make humankind with the intent of having relationship with them. But that is exactly what the creation account teaches. Men and women are made for intimate relationship with God, and our earthliness is no obstacle to that relationship.<sup>16</sup> The Creator God not only creates the first man and the first woman, he also places them in a garden paradise and gives them authority and dominion over it. As Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen explain, “The creation itself is described as a marvelous home prepared for humankind, a place in which they may live and thrive and enjoy the intimate presence and companionship of the Creator himself.”<sup>17</sup> The first man and woman lacked no good thing. They had been given all that they could ever want or need. And their life in the newly created paradise consisted of living in God’s place, under God’s rule. As Genesis 2 transitions to chapter 3, it does so having clearly established God as the King over all things. The created order had been established by God’s own word of power and was his own vast kingdom. By causing the creation to come into being by his powerful word, God established himself as the King and creation as his kingdom. He was “the great King over all creation, without limits of

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<sup>14</sup> Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 91.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>16</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 36.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

any kid, and worthy to receive all glory, honor, and power in the worship of what he has created.”<sup>18</sup>

## **Fall**

Moving from the first stage of the Bible’s big story to the second, the idea that the first man and woman would even think of rebelling or disobeying the Creator God seems far-fetched. But as Genesis 3 comes into view, that is exactly what happens. The second stage of the Bible’s story is known as the fall. It is called the fall because that is exactly what the first man and woman do: They fall from their original state of innocence. They are declared guilty. The story is well known but it is necessary to point out that the driving motivation behind the fall of Adam and Eve was the temptation of autonomy. Through the temptation of the serpent, Adam and Eve were first introduced to the idea that God’s word was not true. They were introduced to the idea that there might be life apart from God. They doubted God’s goodness to them. And the pull that they felt to be out from underneath the rule of God was too much for them. In eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were asserting their autonomy. As Bartholomew and Goheen explain, “Autonomy means choosing oneself as the source for determining what is right and wrong, rather than relying on God’s word for direction.”<sup>19</sup> In their quest for autonomy, Adam and Eve only found shame, fear, and judgment. In their attempt to be a law unto themselves, Adam and Eve rejected the One who had created them and given them purpose. The consequences of the fall were immediate and far-reaching. After Genesis chapter 3, there was no place in God’s creation that was not affected by the fall. The sin that took root in the hearts of the first man and woman began to dwell naturally in every human heart. There was no longer a state of innocence for mankind. God’s people were no longer in God’s place and no longer lived peacefully under God’s rule.

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<sup>18</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 34.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

## Redemption

As the Bible story moves on from Genesis 3 and the fall, it may seem as though everything is ruined. But, as Bartholomew and Goheen note, “even in the tragic tale of sin’s entrance into the world, God does not give up his purposes for his creation and his kingdom.”<sup>20</sup> Even in the darkness that follows the fall, there are glimmers of light. There is God’s provision of animal skins to clothe Adam and Eve’s nakedness. There is the promise that comes in the form of a curse to the serpent. God tells the serpent that the seed of the woman would bruise or crush his head. God will not let the serpent have the last word. And beginning with those glimmers of light, the third stage of the Bible’s story appears: Redemption. The process of redemption takes up most of the Bible’s bigger story. It begins in Genesis 3 and continues all the way through the first four books of the New Testament. The process of God redeeming fallen people is a journey that involves lots of people, lots of places, and lots of years. It concerns God’s choice of Abraham to be the father of many sons. It leads to God growing the small family of Abraham into a nation. God’s story of redemption involves God delivering his people from slavery in Egypt and giving them a land and a law. It portrays God patiently bearing with his hard-hearted people when they continue to rebel and continue to be a law unto themselves. God’s process of redeeming his people leads to sending his people into exile, away from their land, because of their disobedience. And it involves his prophets who speak his word to his people. Some prophets speak words of hope, while some prophets speak words of judgement.

As the journey of redemption travels through the books of the Old Testament, the one constant throughout is that God has not given up on his original plan for creation or his people. Bartholomew and Goheen explain, “When his good creation was fouled by human rebellion, God immediately set out on a salvage mission. He had created it, and it

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<sup>20</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 44.

thus belonged to him by right. Now he would redeem it, buy it back for himself, so that it might be restored to what he had always intended it to be.”<sup>21</sup> Though the process was long and stretched over many centuries, God’s plan to redeem his people was there all the time. Bartholomew and Goheen continue, “The Old Testament tells of God’s moving among the people of Israel to make progress toward this goal, of his first acts of redemption and restoration, and of his repeated promises that one day he will complete for the whole of creation what he has begun within this one small nation.”<sup>22</sup> And as the Bible’s big story transitions from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it reaches its climax. The process of God’s redemption of his people reaches its climax in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not only the climax of the story of God’s redemption, he is also the climax of the entire Bible story. Jesus comes to redeem God’s people and to establish God’s kingdom on the earth again. In other words, Jesus comes to re-establish what was lost in the Garden of Eden. He comes to establish God’s rule over God’s people in God’s place.

As the story unfolds, this does not occur the way that one might expect it to. Instead of Jesus coming, overthrowing all opposition, and establishing an earthly kingdom, Jesus comes to die. He spends a few years teaching and gaining followers only to suffer and die on a cross three years into his earthly ministry. After his death comes his resurrection. This changes everything. The resurrection is the start of something new. The resurrection actually proves that the curse of Genesis 3 has been overcome. As a result of the resurrection of Christ, Satan, sin, and death no longer have free reign on the earth. The result of the resurrection of Christ is the rapid spread of the message of the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ disciples, equipped with Jesus’ Spirit, were empowered to powerfully proclaim the same Kingdom of God that Jesus had proclaimed. Only now, they knew the

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<sup>21</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 129.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



king. Jesus was Lord. He was the one who had been sent by God to reclaim what was lost in Eden. And his resurrection from the dead was the beginning of a new age. It was the beginning of a new order of things.

### **New Creation**

The final stage in the Bible's big story is new creation. This new creation started with the resurrection of Jesus and will not be fully realized until Jesus comes again. Bartholomew and Goheen explain, "When God set out to redeem his creation from sin and sin's effects on it, his ultimate purpose was that what he had once created good should be utterly restored, that the whole cosmos should once again live and thrive under his beneficent rule."<sup>23</sup> The redemption that was accomplished by Christ has cosmic implications. The result of Christ's victory over Satan, sin, and death is that everything will eventually be made right again. Because of Christ's resurrection, there is a day coming when all that was lost in Eden, will be repaid a thousand times over. The future hope of God's people is centered on a new creation where God will once again dwell with his people, and his people will once again live in perfect relationship with him and one another. This is the final stage of the Bible's big story. All Christians long and wait for the consummation of this new creation.

### **The Importance of the Bible's Big Picture**

Having briefly covered the four stages of the Bible's big picture, the question that must now be asked is, so what? How does knowing the specifics of the Bible's big story impact personal Bible intake? There are two specific ways that an understanding of the Bible's big story influences Bible reading. First, as was emphasized earlier in this section, knowing the specifics of the Bible's big story impacts personal Bible intake because it provides a foundation for all Bible reading. There is not one passage anywhere

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<sup>23</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 207.

in the entire Bible that does not find its place within the scope of the four stages of the Bible's bigger story. But a second way that knowing the Bible's big story impacts personal Bible intake is that the Bible's big story provides the true story within which every single human story is found. Jim Hamilton explains, "What we think and how we live is largely determined by the larger story in which we interpret ourselves."<sup>24</sup> The truth is that everyone finds answers to life's biggest questions from a story. How people understand the story of the world, the purpose of life, the events behind human existence, and many other important issues determines how those people understands themselves. Leslie Newbigin is quoted by Bartholomew and Goheen as saying, "The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is part?"<sup>25</sup> The assumption behind Newbigin's statement is that everyone places his or her own story in the midst of a bigger story. And it is in the story of the Bible that the one true story of the whole world is found. This is important for personal Bible intake because every time that someone comes to Scripture, he or she is coming as someone who is living within the Bible story. Understanding the Bible story enables men and women to rightly answer all of life's big questions. For example, knowing the Bible's big story provides the right answers to big life questions related to human existence and purpose. Knowing the Bible's big story also provides the truth about what is wrong with the world and what the solution is. "The Bible provides us with the basic story that we need in order to understand our world and to live in it as God's people. We know that it is one thing to confess the Bible to be the Word of God, but often quite another thing to know how to read the Bible in a way that lets it influence the whole of

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<sup>24</sup> James M. Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 11.

<sup>25</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 18.

our lives.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, understanding the Bible’s big picture enables it to be read in a way that influences the whole of our lives.

### **The Interpretive Journey**

The final section of this chapter will move toward two specific steps in personal Bible intake that enable Christians to read the Bible in a way that influences the whole of their lives. This section will address the two essential steps in the interpretive journey.<sup>27</sup> According to Duval and Hays, “the interpretive journey is the process of reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible.”<sup>28</sup> The two essential steps of this interpretive journey to be discussed are interpretation and application. Each step will be addressed separately, but it must be stated at the outset that both steps are necessary for personal Bible intake. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions*, Matthew Harmon highlights the necessity for both steps when he argues that the Bible was not written to us, but that the Bible was written for us.<sup>29</sup> Harmon’s point is that every Bible passage must be interpreted because we are not members of the original intended audience of any book or letter of Scripture. Interpretation is necessary because there are many differences between the original audience and a modern reader. But the second part of Harmon’s statement, that the Bible was written for us, requires us to do the hard work of application. The process of interpretation will be considered first.

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<sup>26</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, 21.

<sup>27</sup> The term *interpretive journey* comes from J. Scott Duval and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew S. Harmon, *Asking the Right Questions: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 55.

## Interpretation

According to Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, the aim of good interpretation is simple: to get at the plain meaning of the text, the author's intended meaning.<sup>30</sup> This is the first step in the interpretive journey. And this first step, as Robert Plummer points out, "assumes that there is, in fact, a proper and improper meaning of a text and that care must be taken to not misrepresent the meaning."<sup>31</sup> Determining this meaning is the first step in personal Bible intake. When it comes to interpretation, there are many things that could be said, but there are two specific principles that seem to rise above the rest in terms of importance. The first principle to recognize when it comes to biblical interpretation is understanding what type of literature you are reading. Although the Bible tells one big story and is ultimately written by one author, it also consists of numerous literary genres. Understanding the type of literature that is being interpreted is essential. Along these lines, Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton point out, "An appreciation for the diversity of genres within Scripture is crucial to its interpretation, because different genres require different ways of reading them."<sup>32</sup> Understanding literary genre enables readers to be on the same page as the authors. A modern-day example is the phrase, "Once upon a time." When a story begins with that line, it is safe to assume that what follows is a fairy tale. The story that follows, "Once upon a time," is understood in accordance with its literary genre. While there are no fairy tales in the Bible, there are different literary genres that determine how they are to be interpreted. Some of the literary genres found in Scripture are: narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, parables, epistles, and apocalyptic. All of these different genres of Scripture require specific attention to be given by the Bible reader. As Plummer notes,

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<sup>30</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 22.

<sup>31</sup> Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 79.

<sup>32</sup> Dan McCartney and Charles Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 223.

“We need to approach the Bible as sympathetic readers, respecting the various genres and authorial assumptions that accompany such genres.”<sup>33</sup>

The second principle that needs to be mentioned is the need to pay attention to context. McCartney and Clayton explain, “All texts have contexts; as human communicative acts, they do not take place in a vacuum.”<sup>34</sup> When it comes to specific biblical texts, the most important context to take into consideration is always the literary context. Plummer explains, “Any portion of Scripture must be read within the context of the sentence, paragraph, larger discourse unit, and entire book.”<sup>35</sup> When words, phrases, verses, or entire chapters are interpreted apart from their original literary context, the chances of right interpretation are nearly impossible, or as Plummer puts it, “virtually guaranteed to result in distortion.”<sup>36</sup> But literary context is not the only context that the process of interpretation concerns. As McCartney and Clayton explain, “Words and sentences are set within a larger linguistic utterance or conversation, they are set within a particular historical situation, and they occur within a particular cultural, social, and linguistic setting.”<sup>37</sup> Other contexts to be aware of are the situational (or circumstantial) context, the canonical context, and the redemptive-historical context. Every biblical text falls within every single one of these various contexts. And being aware of all these unique contexts is necessary for ensuring accurate interpretation.

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<sup>33</sup> Plummer, *40 Questions*, 101.

<sup>34</sup> McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 149.

<sup>35</sup> Plummer, *40 Questions*, 104.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> McCartney and Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand*, 149.

## Application

As the discussion shifts from interpretation to application, it should be noted that there is a dependent relationship between these two steps. As Duval and Hays point out, “We cannot apply the Bible without knowing what it means.” Interpretation must always be the first step, but interpretation must never be the last step. There is an implicit danger in knowing how to interpret Scripture well. The danger is to stop the process after interpretation. It is tempting to be content with knowledge only. But, as Duval and Hays point out, “Knowledge by itself is not enough; it should lead to action.”<sup>38</sup> This is why application must also be addressed. Another reason that getting to the application step is necessary in personal Bible intake is because of the God-ordained purpose of Scripture in the life of Christians. In his book on Christian sanctification, David Powlison argues that Scripture is one of the ways that God changes us.<sup>39</sup> This means that our lives and actions ought to be changed through personal Bible intake. The reality is that Bible reading is a God-ordained means of changing and transforming Christians. This is why personal Bible intake must not stop at interpretation. It must proceed all the way to application.

When it comes to studying and applying the Bible, asking good questions is essential.<sup>40</sup> Or to put it another way, one of the best ways to apply the meaning of a particular Bible passage to our lives is by asking questions. The four questions that Matthew Harmon suggests are: What do we learn about God?, What do we learn about people?, What do we learn about relating to God?, and What do we learn about relating to others?<sup>41</sup> Some other common questions that are suggested to aid in application are: Is there a command to obey? Is there an example to follow or avoid? Is there a promise to

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<sup>38</sup> Duval and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 213.

<sup>39</sup> David Powlison, *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 64.

<sup>40</sup> Harmon, *Asking the Right Questions*, 63.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-72.

claim? Is there a warning to heed or a teaching to act on? These questions all aim at getting the reader to pause and think about the message of Scripture and how it should be heard and applied. This is the fundamental goal of application.

One final point to be made regarding application is the necessity to resist thinking about application simply in terms of “doing.” There is a common tendency to understand Bible application on how the reader’s actions must change. While this is certainly part of how Scripture is applied, it is not the only way. Matthew Harmon explains, “A common problem we face when we think about applying the Bible is that our view of application is too narrow. We tend to think largely or even exclusively about what we should do in response to what God says in his Word.” He continues, “That is indeed an important aspect of application. But the Christian life is about more than what we do. Since the goal of reading and applying the Bible is life transformation, we need to make sure that we apply the Bible to our whole lives, not just actions.”<sup>42</sup> In order to help his readers grow in their ability to apply Scripture to their whole lives, Harmon lists four simple questions that help Christians think through four different aspects of application.<sup>43</sup> Harmon identifies four categories: thinking, believing, desiring, and doing. These four categories are given to provide the Bible reader with a comprehensive understanding of application. Asking questions related to these four categories pushes the reader to examine his or her whole life in light of God’s word.

Although application is the second step in the interpretive journey and follows interpretation, its importance cannot be overstated. As Duval and Hays explain, God’s “ultimate goal in communicating with us is to transform our thinking and acting so that

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<sup>42</sup> Harmon, *Asking the Right Questions*, 101.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 101-9.

we conform to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ. When we come to the point of truly grasping God's Word, we will find God's Word grasping us."<sup>44</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that a basic understanding of how to study the Bible is the second necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. In order to establish a basic understanding of how to study the Bible, four particular issues related to personal Bible intake were addressed. The first issue was the role of the gospel in personal Bible intake. It was argued that the gospel is the only proper entry point into the story of the Bible. The second issue that was addressed was how the big picture of the Bible is necessary for understanding any part of the Bible. Finally, the processes of interpretation and application were discussed. It was argued that these two steps are required for all personal Bible intake. Taken together, the principles demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3 form a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake.

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<sup>44</sup> Duval and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, 214.



## CHAPTER 4

### PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Previous chapters have shown that two necessary foundations for personal Bible intake are a knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and understanding several practical issues related to personal Bible intake. The specific attributes of Scripture that were discussed were inspiration, authority, inerrancy, sufficiency, clarity, and necessity. The practical issues related to personal Bible intake were how to read the Bible in light of the gospel, how to read the Bible in light of its big picture, and how to read the Bible focusing on interpretation and application. This chapter outlines the methodology for implementing a project aimed at equipping members of a local church for personal Bible intake.

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia, for personal Bible intake. In order to accomplish this objective, a five-week sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture and a five-week teaching series on practical issues related to personal Bible intake was developed.<sup>1</sup> An eight-week Bible study was also developed to aid the participants in putting what they learned into practice after the project was complete.<sup>2</sup> This project began May 6, 2018, and continued for seventeen weeks. This consisted of three phases. During the first phase (weeks 1-8), the five sermons for the sermon series, the five lessons for the teaching series, and the eight-week Bible study questions were written. At the beginning of the second phase, the Doctrine of Scripture and Personal Bible Intake Survey (DSPBIS) was

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<sup>1</sup> See appendices 5 and 6 for Sermon Series and Teaching Session outlines.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 7.

administered as a pre-project survey.<sup>3</sup> During this phase (weeks 9-13), the sermon series was preached during the Sunday morning worship service and the teaching sessions took place on Sunday evenings at 6:00pm in the church sanctuary. In the third and final phase (weeks 14-17), the DSPBIS was administered again as a post-course survey. A t-test for dependent samples was conducted to determine if there was a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre-course survey answers and the post-course survey answers. At the conclusion of the third phase, the eight-week Bible study was distributed to the project participants.

### **Target Population**

The target population for this project was a group of no less than ten members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church. After receiving approval from the Ethics Committee of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to use human subjects in research, this project was implemented. Because of the relatively small size of FHRBC, this project was open to any members who wished to be involved. Initially, there were twenty-four participants who signed up to participate in the project. By the time the project concluded, sixteen members in total completed the project by taking the pre- and post-survey and by attending or listening to audio recordings of the sermons and the teaching sessions.

### **Phase 1: Initial Preparation**

#### **Expert Panel**

Before beginning this project, it was necessary to assemble an expert panel to evaluate and provide direction for the sermon series, the teaching sessions, and the eight-week Bible study. The expert panel consisted of five local church pastors. Three members of the panel were regular preaching pastors and two members were associate pastors whose ministries included regular teaching in their respective churches. These

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<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1.

experts were selected because of their expertise in local church ministry, their ministry experience, and the educational training they had received. The five sermons and the five lessons were initially prepared during Phase 1 and were then submitted to the expert panel the week that each sermon or session was scheduled to be preached or taught. The eight-week Bible study was initially written and then submitted to the expert panel after the project, prior to the plan being distributed to the participants. The five sermons were evaluated on eight criteria, and each of the five sermons was evaluated separately. Each criterion was centered around a statement to which each expert panel member would respond with either (1) Insufficient, (2) Needs Work, (3) Sufficient, or (4) Exemplary.

The statements were as follows:

1. The sermon is clearly relevant to the doctrine of Scripture.
2. The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on the doctrine of Scripture.
3. The material is theologically sound.
4. The thesis of the sermon is clearly stated.
5. The points of the sermon clearly support the thesis.
6. The sermon contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake.
7. The sermon is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.
8. Overall, the sermon is clearly presented.

All five members of the expert panel provided feedback remotely using electronic copies.<sup>4</sup>

The five teaching sessions were evaluated on seven criteria, and each of the five lessons was evaluated separately. Each criterion was centered around a statement to which each expert panel member would respond with either (1) Insufficient, (2) Needs Work, (3) Sufficient, or (4) Exemplary. The statements were as follows:

1. The lesson is clearly relevant to the issues related to personal Bible intake.
2. The material is theologically sound.

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 8 for Sermon Evaluation Table.

3. The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.
4. The sections of the lesson clearly support the thesis.
5. The lesson contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake.
6. The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.
7. Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.

All five members of the expert panel provided feedback remotely using electronic copies.<sup>5</sup>

The Bible study was evaluated on seven criteria, and each of the five lessons was evaluated separately. Each criterion was centered around a statement to which each expert panel member would respond with either (1) Insufficient, (2) Needs Work, (3) Sufficient, or (4) Exemplary. The statements were as follows:

1. The questions are clearly relevant to the teaching of the Scripture passage.
2. The material is theologically sound.
3. The main idea of each passage is clearly stated.
4. The questions of the plan are relevant to the points of each passage.
5. The lesson contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake.
6. The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the passage.
7. Overall, the plan is clearly presented.

All five members of the expert panel provided feedback remotely using electronic copies.<sup>6</sup>

### **Sermons Series**

Since the goal of this project was to equip members for personal Bible intake, the sermons, teaching sessions, and the Bible study had to be focused solely on this goal.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix 9 for Session Evaluation Table.

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 10 for Bible Study Evaluation Table.

<sup>7</sup> See appendices 5-7 for all sermon, session, and Bible study outlines.

Since personal Bible intake is a process that continues for the entirety of one's Christian life, this project was not presented as the final solution for personal Bible intake. This project was designed to equip members of FHRBC with basic tools for personal Bible intake in order to equip them to spend the rest of their Christian lives growing in their knowledge and love of God through His Word.

**Sermon 1.** The first sermon was on the doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture. The thesis of the sermon was that the inspiration of Scripture is the foremost attribute of Scripture and serves as the foundation of every other attribute. The sermon highlighted the foundational role that inspiration plays in every other attribute of Scripture. By looking at 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:16-21, the sermon argued that a proper understanding of inspiration set the foundation for understanding all other attributes of Scripture.

**Sermon 2.** The second sermon covered the doctrine of the Inerrancy of Scripture. The thesis of the sermon was that the inerrancy of Scripture naturally follows from inspiration. Simply put, because Scripture is inspired, Scripture is also inerrant. The sermon highlighted the character of God, the testimony of Jesus, and basic biblical assumptions in support of biblical inerrancy. The sermon also included several potential objections to the doctrine of inerrancy.

**Sermon 3.** The third sermon covered the doctrine of the Authority of Scripture. The thesis of the sermon was that the authority of Scripture naturally follows from inspiration. Simply put, because Scripture is a word from God, Scripture is authoritative. The sermon highlighted the nature of God and the nature of God's word throughout redemptive history as evidence of Scripture's authority. The sermon also included common ways that the authority of Scripture is often undermined.

**Sermon 4.** The fourth sermon covered the doctrine of the Necessity of Scripture. The thesis of the sermon was that apart from the special revelation of God, now found in the Scriptures, we would have no rule of saving knowledge, faith or obedience. The sermon covered the doctrine of general revelation in order to show its insufficiency and then highlighted the nature and content of special revelation.

**Sermon 5.** The fifth sermon covered the doctrine of the Clarity and Sufficiency of Scripture. The thesis of the sermon was that God’s word is clear and that God’s word is enough. Christians are capable of understanding the Bible on their own and do not need any additional revelation from God outside of Scripture. The sermon highlighted the general biblical assumption that God’s word is capable of being understood and biblical examples of Scripture being understood in order to establish the doctrine of the clarity of Scripture. The sermon also highlighted the biblical teaching that Scripture is sufficient and that it contains all the divine words needed for salvation and godly living. A weekly breakdown of the sermon series is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Weekly breakdown of sermon series

| Sermon | Attribute(s) of Scripture | Thesis of Sermon   |
|--------|---------------------------|--|
| 1      | Inspiration               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiration of Scripture is the foremost attribute of Scripture and serves as the foundation of every other attribute.</li> </ul>   |
| 2      | Inerrancy                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Inerrancy of Scripture naturally follows from inspiration; because Scripture is inspired, Scripture is also inerrant.</li> </ul>  |
| 3      | Authority                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority of Scripture naturally follows from inspiration; because Scripture is inspired, Scripture is also authoritative.</li> </ul>   |
| 4      | Necessity                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from the special revelation of God, now found in the Scriptures, there would be no rule of saving knowledge, faith or obedience.</li> </ul>   |
| 5      | Clarity<br>Sufficiency    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scripture is clear and Scripture is enough. Christians are capable of understanding the Bible on their own and Christians do not need any additional revelation from God outside of Scripture.</li> </ul> |

## Teaching Sessions

**Session 1.** The first session was entitled, “*The Bible’s Front Door.*” The thesis of this session was that the gospel message is the Bible’s front door. This session taught that understanding the gospel is a necessary foundation for studying the Bible. The session included a thorough explanation of the gospel message and then showed how the person and work of Christ provides a lens through which the entire Bible should be viewed. The session ended with several test cases showing the participants how the gospel helps understand certain biblical themes and passages.

**Session 2.** The second session was titled, “*The Bible’s Big Picture.*” The thesis of this session was that understanding the storyline of the Bible is necessary for studying the Bible. In other words: every part must be seen in light of the whole. This session focused on giving the participants a big picture overview of the entire Bible story. It also traced several different themes throughout the entire Bible story and showed how there are different ways to understand the one story. The session ended with test cases showing how often Christians misunderstand certain parts of the Bible because of their inability to understand the big picture.

**Sessions 3-5.** Sessions 3 through 5 were parts 1, 2, and 3 of the interpretive journey. These three final sessions were aimed at equipping Christians with basic tools to aid them in their personal bible intake. Sessions three, four, and five discussed the interpretive journey from reading the text to applying the text. The two main points that were focused on were interpretation and application. Session Three gave an overview of the interpretive journey and concluded with a test case to illustrate the interpretive journey. Session Four focused specifically on interpretation by discussing the various genres of Scripture, literary context, historical context, and salvation-history context. Session Five focused specifically on application by discussing the purpose of personal Bible intake and covering specific questions to ask when attempting to apply Scripture personally. A weekly breakdown of teaching sessions is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Weekly breakdown of teaching sessions

| Session | Title of Session                     | Main Idea(s)   |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1       | “The Bible’s Front Door”             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gospel message is the Bible’s front door.</li> <li>• Understanding the gospel is a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake.</li> </ul>   |
| 2       | “The Bible’s Big Picture”            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the storyline of the Bible is necessary for personal Bible intake.</li> <li>• Every part must of Scripture be seen in light of the whole.</li> </ul>                                  |
| 3       | “The Interpretive Journey, Part I”   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation and application are the two essential ingredients in personal Bible intake.</li> </ul>   |
| 4       | “The Interpretive Journey, Part II”  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation requires understanding the literary genre, the literary context, the historical-cultural context, and the salvation-historical context of every text.</li> </ul>                     |
| 5       | “The Interpretive Journey, Part III” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application is necessary for personal spiritual growth, which is the goal of personal Bible intake.</li> <li>• Application is determined primarily by asking good questions of the text.</li> </ul> |

### **Eight-Week Bible Study**

The eight-week Bible study was designed for the participants to be able to use after the project so that they could continue to put in to practice all that they learned through the project. The Bible study was also designed for participants to be able to read Scripture with someone else. The Bible study booklet explored the Gospel of Mark in eight weeks with each week containing a passage to read and a list of questions to ask. A weekly breakdown of the Bible study is presented in table 3.

Table 3. Weekly breakdown of Bible study

| Week | Passage        | Main Idea  |
|------|----------------|--|
| 1    | Mark 1:1-15    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Son of God who came to establish the Kingdom of God.</li> </ul>            |
| 2    | Mark 2:1-12    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Son of God who has the authority to forgive sins.</li> </ul>               |
| 3    | Mark 5:1-43    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Son of God who has authority over demons, disease, and death.</li> </ul>   |
| 4    | Mark 8:27-38   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Christ who must suffer.</li> </ul>   |
| 5    | Mark 9:1-37    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Son of Man who must suffer.</li> </ul>                                     |
| 6    | Mark 10:17-45  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Son of Man who came to serve and to call others to do the same.</li> </ul> |
| 7    | Mark 14:1-72   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus is the Christ who willingly goes to the cross.</li> </ul>                         |
| 8    | Mark 15:6-16:8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus, the Son of God, is crucified, buried, and resurrected.</li> </ul>                |



## **Phase 2: Implementation of the Course**

### **Recruiting Participants**

To properly determine the effectiveness of this project, at least ten members needed to be involved in this project. This number was reasonable based on the size of the membership at FHRBC at the time and would ensure an accurate representation of the membership as a whole. Participation in this project was open to all FHRBC members. Since the purpose of this project was to equip members for personal Bible intake, the open invitation to all members was intended to ensure that all types of members were involved in the project. The members who agreed to take part in the project proved to be an accurate representation of the congregation as a whole. Initially, there were twenty-four members who agreed to participate in the project. By the time the project concluded, sixteen members took the pre-and post-survey and either attended or listened to every sermon and teaching session. This number was above the required number.

### **Execution of the Pre-Course Survey**

Prior to the preaching of the sermon series and the teaching sessions, each participant was given a copy of the Doctrine of Scripture and Personal Bible Intake Survey (DSPBIS) The DSPBIS was administered to evaluate and assess the knowledge of each participant related to the doctrine of Scripture and familiarity of each participant in practical issues related to personal Bible intake. The DSPBIS was developed based mainly on personal observations and research from chapters 3 and 4.

In order to properly keep track of each participant's responses, each participant created a four-digit identification number. The identification number was used throughout the project to maintain anonymity. The number also ensured that the pre- and post-surveys could be paired. All completed surveys were submitted through the church office where they were kept for the duration of the project.

### **Five-Week Sermon Series**

Each of the five sermons for the sermon series was preached on successive Sunday mornings throughout the month of July. Each participant was encouraged to be in attendance for every sermon, but each sermon was also recorded for those who could not be in attendance.

### **Five-Week Teaching Series**

The teaching sessions took place each Sunday evening in July at 6:00 p.m. These teaching sessions were designed to run for five weeks alongside the sermon series. Each participant was expected to be in attendance for each session, but each session was also recorded for those who could not be in attendance. Each meeting generally flowed in the following way:

1. I arrived early for each meeting to print out participant handouts and to set up my laptop for recording.
2. As participants arrived, I had them record their attendance on a sign-in sheet. This sign-in sheet contained Sunday morning and Sunday night attendance and kept track of participation throughout the project.
3. Each teaching session was recorded and made available online through our church website. This was also the case for each sermon. This ensured that every participant was able to listen to every sermon and teaching session.
4. Each teaching session was conducted lecture-style and allowed time throughout for questions and discussion. Each session lasted approximately 50-65 minutes, depending on questions and discussion.
5. Each session ended with a time for final discussion and concluded with prayer.

In general, each week of this phase (weeks 9-13) included receiving final approval from the expert panel for the sermon and teaching session to be taught, preaching the sermon, and teaching the session.

## **Phase 3: Evaluating Results**

### **Calculating Results**

To complete this project, the pre-course and post-course surveys were compiled in a spreadsheet for calculation. The collection of all post-course surveys took

two weeks. By week fifteen, seventeen surveys had been received and all the data from each survey was recorded.<sup>8</sup> In the process of recording the results of the post-survey it became evident that two survey questions were proving to be extremely problematic for the vast majority of the participants.<sup>9</sup> Upon further evaluation, both questions proved to be unclear and confusing to the participants. This conclusion was arrived at because both questions consistently received the least desirable result on the scale. In light of the confusing nature of the two questions, both were excluded from the survey. After deleting the results from questions 3 and 7, a t-test for dependent samples was administered in order to identify whether or not the course led to a statistically significant difference from the pre-course survey to the post-course survey. In order to get more specific results, the results from the DSPBIS were divided into two groups. The first group contained all questions that dealt with the doctrine of Scripture, while the second group contained all the questions that dealt with practical issues in personal Bible intake. The results were analyzed according to these groups since the project was aimed at addressing both areas. The results from the t-test are as follows:

The Doctrine of Scripture and Personal Bible Intake Survey (DSPBIS) sought to determine the project's effects on each participant's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture as well as each participant's confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake. For the questions dealing with the doctrine of Scripture, there was a statistically significant difference ( $t(15) = 3.95, p = .0006$ ) in each participant's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture. It is also worth noting that the mean score increased 6.6875 points from the pre-test to the post-test in this group of questions. For the questions dealing with the issues related to personal Bible intake, there was a statistically significant difference ( $t(15) = 4.36, p = .0003$ ) in each participant's confidence in issues related to personal

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<sup>8</sup> One survey was discarded because the participant failed to answer two questions on the pre-survey.

<sup>9</sup> See questions 3 and 7 under section 1 on appendix 1.

Bible intake. There was also a rise in the mean score among these questions of 5.4375 points.

Table 4. Doctrine of Scripture pre- and post- survey results

| Participant ID | Pre-Test Score | Post-Test Score |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1124           | 83             | 94              |
| 1177           | 80             | 88              |
| 1282           | 78             | 80              |
| 1381           | 77             | 92              |
| 1469           | 65             | 75              |
| 2223           | 79             | 93              |
| 2495           | 81             | 86              |
| 2744           | 72             | 79              |
| 4463           | 88             | 90              |
| 5235           | 69             | 76              |
| 5258           | 89             | 78              |
| 5558           | 78             | 85              |
| 6223           | 66             | 73              |
| 6791           | 67             | 85              |
| 7846           | 87             | 92              |
| 9104           | 96             | 96              |

Table 5. Practical issues in personal Bible intake pre- and post-survey results

| Participant ID | Pre-Test Score | Post-Test Score |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1124           | 28             | 34              |
| 1177           | 32             | 35              |
| 1282           | 35             | 41              |
| 1381           | 30             | 36              |
| 1469           | 32             | 29              |
| 2223           | 36             | 35              |
| 2495           | 37             | 42              |
| 2744           | 20             | 37              |
| 4463           | 21             | 35              |
| 5235           | 26             | 33              |
| 5258           | 28             | 36              |
| 5558           | 25             | 31              |
| 6223           | 26             | 32              |
| 6791           | 32             | 36              |
| 7846           | 28             | 31              |
| 9104           | 42             | 42              |

## **Conclusion**

The goal of this project was to equip members of a local church for personal Bible intake. The development of the preaching series and the teaching sessions were intended to meet this goal. The preaching series was dedicated to helping the project participants grow in their knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture. Every sermon in the sermon series was dedicated to a particular attribute of Scripture. The teaching sessions were aimed at helping the project participants become more confident in reading the Bible on their own. This is why the teaching series was aimed at addressing very practical issues related to personal Bible intake. The combination of understanding the nature of Scripture and gaining several basic tools to aid in personal Bible intake was intended to equip the project participants in their personal Bible intake.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate whether the project was successful in equipping church members for personal Bible intake. This will be done by evaluating the methods used to accomplish this goal. The chapter contains seven sections. First, the purpose of the project will be evaluated to determine whether this project made a difference in the ability of the participants to effectively read the Bible. Second, the goals of the project will be evaluated to determine if they were successfully met. Third, the strengths of this project will be examined. Fourth, the weaknesses of this project will be examined. Fifth, a section will focus on recommended changes were this project completed again. Finally, the chapter will conclude with several theological and personal reflections.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to equip members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia, for personal Bible intake. This project was necessary because of an underlying assumption among the membership at the church. Many church members assumed that the pastor or extra-spiritual people could read the Bible in a way that no one else could. This underlying assumption revealed a basic misunderstanding of the doctrine of Scripture itself as well as the inability of these members to effectively read the Bible on their own. Throughout the process of the project, it was clear that this project and its purpose were very necessary. A project that successfully equipped members for personal Bible intake would lead to growth in the personal spiritual lives of these members, as well as a growth in the spiritual health of the church itself.

## **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

A project of this scope required measurable indicators to determine its effectiveness. In order to equip members for personal Bible intake, four goals needed to be met. These four goals will be evaluated below.

### **Goal 1**

The first goal was to develop a five-week sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture. The initial goal was a six-week sermon series but because each participant was required to attend a Sunday sermon and a Sunday evening class, the sermon series was reduced to five weeks. This enabled the project to be limited to the five Sundays in the month of July. This change required two attributes of Scripture to be combined in the final sermon. The six attributes of Scripture that were covered were decided upon as a result of the research from chapter 2. The aim of the sermon series was to accurately and successfully convey the nature of Scripture.

Throughout the project, each sermon was submitted to an expert panel consisting of five other local church pastors, to be evaluated. Each sermon was evaluated using eight criteria:

1. The sermon is clearly relevant to the doctrine of Scripture.
2. The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on the doctrine of Scripture.
3. The material is theologically sound.
4. The thesis of the sermon is clearly stated.
5. The points of the sermon clearly support the thesis.
6. The sermon contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake.
7. The sermon is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.
8. Overall, the sermon is clearly presented.

The evaluation rubric for each session was as follows: 1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary. At the conclusion of each evaluation process there were no "insufficient" responses (0 percent), no "requires attention"

responses (0 percent), 46 “sufficient” responses (23 percent), and 154 “exemplary” responses (77 percent). Feedback from the expert panel was considered with great care and each suggestion led to minor changes to the sermons. Before proceeding with each sermon, I received verification from the expert panel based on any edits made during this process. This goal was considered successfully met because a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.<sup>1</sup>

## **Goal 2**

The second goal was to develop a five-week teaching series on issues related to personal Bible intake. Just like the sermon series, this teaching series was initially six weeks but was shortened so that it aligned with the sermon series. The content of the teaching series resulted from personal experience in Bible intake as well as from research done for chapter 3. The issues covered in this teaching series were as follows: how to read the Bible in light of the gospel, how to read the Bible in light of its big picture, and how to read the Bible focusing on interpretation and application. The aim of this teaching series was to give the participants some basic tools to aid them in their personal Bible intake.

Throughout the project, each teaching session was submitted to an expert panel consisting of five other local church pastors, to be evaluated. Each session was evaluated using seven criteria:

1. The lesson is clearly relevant to the issues related to personal Bible intake.
2. The material is theologically sound.
3. The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.
4. The sections of the lesson clearly support the thesis.
5. The lesson contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake.

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<sup>1</sup> See table in appendix 8.



6. The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.
7. Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.

The evaluation rubric for each session was as follows: 1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary. There were no “insufficient” responses (0 percent), no “requires attention” responses (0 percent), 22 “sufficient” responses (13 percent), and 153 “exemplary” responses (87 percent). Feedback from the expert panel was considered with great care and each suggestion led to minor changes to the sessions. Before proceeding with each teaching session, I received verification from the expert panel based on any edits made during this process. This goal was considered successfully met because a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.<sup>2</sup>

### **Goal 3**

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and the confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake among members through the sermon series and teaching series. This was accomplished through preaching the sermon series and teaching the sessions that were developed in goals one and two. Each sermon and teaching session were recorded so that any participant who could not make any of the sermons or sessions could still listen to them. Each participant either attended or listened to all five sermons and all five teaching sessions.

The measurement used to determine the success or failure of this goal was a comparison of the pre- and post-course scores, assess whether there was any positive significant difference. A paired *t*-test was applied to the pre- and post-course survey scores to determine if there was a difference. In order to determine the positive significant difference in each participant’s knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and their confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake, the questions dealing with the

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<sup>2</sup> See table in appendix 9.

doctrine of Scripture and the questions dealing with practical issues in personal Bible intake were considered separately. The results of the DSPBIS indicated there was a positive significant difference in both areas. For the questions dealing with the doctrine of Scripture, there was a statistically significant difference ( $t(15) = 3.95, p = .0006$ ) in each participant's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture. It is also worth noting that the mean score increased 6.6875 points from the pre-test to the post-test in this group of questions. For the questions dealing with the issues related to personal Bible intake, there was a statistically significant difference ( $t(15) = 4.36, p = .0003$ ) in each participant's confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake. There was also a rise in the mean score among these questions of 5.4375 points.

Overall, the results of the *t*-test were very encouraging. The results indicated that there was a positive significant difference in each participant's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture as well as each participant's confidence in dealing with issues related to personal Bible intake. The positive results from the pre- and post-course survey results confirm that this goal was successfully met. This project made a clear statistically significant difference in equipping the participants for personal Bible intake.

#### **Goal 4**

The fourth goal was to develop an eight-week Bible study in order to equip church members to put into practice what they learned as well as to train others in personal Bible intake. The Bible study was an eight-week study through the Gospel of Mark that helped participants put what they had learned into practice. It was also designed as a tool to help participants lead others in personal Bible intake.

At the conclusion of the sermon series and the teaching series, the eight-week Bible study was submitted to an expert panel that consisted of five other local church pastors to be evaluated. The Bible study plan was evaluated using seven criteria:

1. The questions are clearly relevant to the teaching of the Scripture passage.
2. The material is theologically sound.

3. The main idea of each passage is clearly stated.
4. The questions of the plan are relevant to the points of each passage.
5. The lesson contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake.
6. The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the passage.
7. Overall, the plan is clearly presented.

The evaluation rubric for each session was as follows: 1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary. There were no “insufficient” responses (0 percent), no “requires attention” responses (0 percent), 2 “sufficient” responses (6 percent), and 33 “exemplary” responses (94 percent). This goal was considered successfully met because a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.<sup>3</sup> The eight-week Bible study was distributed to participants at the conclusion of the project.

### **Strengths of the Project**

Since all four of the project goals were met, this project successfully equipped members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church for personal Bible intake. The strengths of the project were that it (1) increased the participants’ knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture, (2) increased the confidence of the participants in issues related to personal Bible intake, (3) cultivated a new-found excitement for personal Bible intake in some participants, (4) prepared each participant to continue pursuing personal Bible intake, and, (5) benefitted members who were not part of the test group.

As stated in the purpose of this project, the main goal was to equip church members for personal Bible intake. The main way that this goal was to be met was by addressing two specific areas. The first area that was addressed was an insufficient knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture. This was done through the preaching of a five-week sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture. The second area that was addressed, to

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<sup>3</sup> See table in appendix 10.

equip church members for personal Bible intake, was practical issues related to personal Bible intake. This was done through a five-week class that addressed several practical issues related to personal Bible intake. Since there was marked improvement in both areas, it can confidently be assumed that two of the greatest strengths of this project were the increased knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and the increased confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake.

A third strength of this project was the newfound excitement for personal Bible intake that resulted. While this was not necessarily the experience of all sixteen participants, there were several participants who expressed sincere excitement about personal Bible intake. One participant expressed several times throughout the project how much she had been helped by the teaching sessions and how she had been eagerly practicing what she had learned. Another participant remarked how much she wished the whole church would have been able to take part in the project. The excitement of these members that resulted from this project was a definite strength.

A fourth strength of this project was that it prepared each participant to continue pursuing personal Bible intake. Since personal Bible intake is a process that continues for the entirety of one's Christian life, a strength of this project was not that it was the final solution for personal Bible intake. Instead, a strength of this project was that it equipped participants to spend the rest of their Christian lives growing in their knowledge and love of God through personal Bible intake. Every sermon and teaching session consisted of simple truths and basic tools that were easily remembered and replicated. There was nothing complicated about this project's content.

A final strength of this project was its wide range of influence. Members who were not part of the test group were still able to benefit from the sermons and the teaching sessions.. The layout of this project was such that the sermon series and the teaching series were easily included in the natural rhythm of our church's weekly schedule. While only sixteen members completed the project by listening to all the

sermons and teaching lessons, over 100 people heard the sermons and over twenty people were in attendance at every class. This was because the sermons were preached during the regular corporate gatherings and the class sessions were held on Sunday nights when the church has traditionally had a service.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

Despite the clear strengths, this project also had several weaknesses. The first weakness was related to the survey that was created to assess the improvement or growth of the participants. For one, the questions for the DSPBIS that was given before and after the project were created at the beginning of the project and were not re-visited until the end of the project. While most of the questions were worded well and properly assessed the participants' knowledge, two survey questions proved problematic for most participants.<sup>4</sup> Upon further evaluation, it was realized that both questions were not worded as clearly as they could have been and ended up confusing to participants. This conclusion was arrived at because both questions consistently received the least desirable result on the scale. In light of the confusing nature of the two questions, both were excluded from the survey and not included in the project calculations. Another weakness of the DSPBIS was the distribution of questions in each section. The first section, on the doctrine of Scripture contained eighteen questions. This number was chosen so that all six attributes of Scripture that were covered had two questions related to it. However the second section, which related to the issues in personal Bible intake, only had seven questions. These seven questions were more general questions related to the content of the teaching sessions and not directly tied to each week's content. Although the questions still assessed where the participants were in terms of confidence in dealing with the general issues of personal Bible intake, they could have been clearer and more thorough.

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<sup>4</sup> See questions 3 and 7 under section 1 in appendix 1.

A second weakness of the project was the inability to have follow-up discussion surrounding the sermons. The participants found the teaching sessions to be more beneficial because of the interaction that took place throughout each session. Since the sermon series was preached during the Sunday morning worship service, there was not a time built in for discussion or follow-up questions.

A third weakness of this project was the material overload that the participants felt. The preaching of the sermon series took place on Sunday mornings and the teaching sessions took place that same Sunday night. This means that for five consecutive Sundays, the participants were required to sit through almost two hours of preaching and teaching. For many of them these sermons and teaching sessions were their first exposure to some of the content of the project. This left some of the participants overwhelmed at the end of each week.

A fourth weakness of the project was that participants were allowed to miss sermons or sessions and still take part in the project. I consider this a weakness because it seemed like some participants used the online recordings as excuses not to attend the sermon or teaching session in person. While every sermon and teaching session was listened to by all sixteen participants, not everyone attended in person. In these cases, the participants were prohibited from asking questions or contributing to in-person discussion and their experience of the project was somewhat limited.

### **Recommended Changes**

Having completed this project from start to finish, there are three changes that I would make if I were to conduct the project again. The first, and most significant change, would be to consider combining all the content into one ten-week class. I would divide the ten-week class into two sections, with one section focusing on the doctrine of Scripture and the second section focusing on issues related to personal bible intake. There are several reasons for this change. First, the classroom setting provided participants with opportunities for questions and discussion which helped them learn and retain the

knowledge better. The number of positive comments I received in response to the teaching sessions far outnumbered the comments I received in response to the sermon series. Another reason for this change is that the project schedule was a major commitment for five straight weeks. The five-week schedule required participants to listen to a sermon on an attribute of Scripture in the morning and attend a class on specific issues related to personal Bible intake in the evening. By the time the teaching session was ending, I would notice several participants struggling to stay awake. Although a ten-week class would double the time, it would not be so much information in such a short amount of time.

Another change would be to schedule a final meeting with all participants in order to finalize the project. This final class meeting would be for multiple purposes. First, I would communicate with the participants the findings of the project. Since the conclusion of the project, most participants have asked how the project turned out. Another purpose for this additional meeting would be to revisit surveys. None of the participants were made aware of how they did on the survey. Going through the survey together would give them a chance to ask any questions and it would give me a chance to explain the most desirable answers for each question. Lastly, this additional meeting would give me an opportunity to ensure that all participants received an eight-week Bible study.

A final change that I would consider making to this project in the future would be to more specifically define the group of participants. This project would make a greater impact on the life of the church if the participants were leaders within the church. Whether small group leaders, Sunday School teachers, or a group of deacons, having church leaders participate in the project would have longer-lasting impact because the leaders are the ones who are guiding and shaping the church.

## **Theological Reflections**

Through this project, I was given the opportunity to study God's word at a deep level, especially as it relates to the doctrine of Scripture and some basic hermeneutic issues. The reading, writing, and study culminating in this project have sharpened and strengthened several theological convictions in my mind. First, this project has strengthened my convictions regarding the nature of Scripture. Specifically, I have come to see the utter importance of rightly understanding the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. From my study on 2 Timothy 3:16 and reading numerous sources, I have become convinced that inspiration is the foundation of a right understanding of the doctrine of Scripture. It is because Scripture is inspired that it is also authoritative and inerrant. To get inspiration wrong is to get everything wrong.

A second theological reflection from this project is the role of the Holy Spirit in personal Bible intake. About halfway through the project I realized that I had not contributed much time or thought to the role and influence of the Holy Spirit in personal Bible intake. This was brought to light primarily through studying and meditating on 2 Peter 1:21. Specifically, I was reminded of the Spirit's role in "carrying along" the prophets as they wrote the Scriptures, but I was also reminded of the role of the Spirit in opening the eyes of Christians to God's truth. This realization showed me my utter dependence upon the Spirit in order for my project to effect real change. I could teach on the doctrine of Scripture and I could give basic hermeneutical help, but what I could not do was make participants read their Bibles or cause their Bible reading to be effective. That is the role of the Spirit alone. And thankfully, he is eager to lead His people in truth.

A third theological reflection is the role that Scripture plays in the process of sanctification. This reflection came primarily through the study and reading on the topic of application. As I read through book after book that stressed the importance of application in personal Bible intake, it became clear that the emphasis on application was the result of significant role that Scripture plays in the spiritual growth of the Christian.



This further emphasized the importance of a project like this that equips Christians for personal Bible intake.

The final theological reflection that resulted from this project was the openness and receptivity of believers to Scripture. This was especially true for the sermons on the attributes of Scripture. Since the doctrine of Scripture and some of its attributes are often heavily debated, I was expecting some pushback from some of the participants. I expected this from those who had not previously been taught on the doctrine of Scripture. But to my surprise, all the participants seemed to eagerly receive the teaching of Scripture regarding itself.

### **Personal Reflections**

In addition to the theological reflections that resulted from this project, I also came to several personal realizations. The first personal impact that this project had on me is that it cultivated a real sense of humility. As I endeavored to preach and teach church members on the nature of Scripture and the necessity of personal Bible intake, I was regularly reminded of my continual need to put into practice what I was preaching and teaching. At several points, I remember thinking how undeserving I was to lead others in this practice when I still have so much room for growth. In light of this, it was also humbling to hear from others how beneficial the project had been and how much they had been encouraged by the preaching and teaching.

The second personal reflection from this project was the ways that it encouraged me in my role as a pastor. I was greatly encouraged as I saw church members growing in their love and excitement for personal Bible intake. Though I was encouraged and humbled to be used in this way, my encouragement was primarily from getting to see men and women grow in something as crucial as personal Bible intake. This experience reminded me of the privilege of pastors in having a front row seat from which to see the personal growth of Christian brothers and sisters.

The last personal reflection from this project is the realization of how much this project is actually needed. At the outset of the project I was aware of the need in my own local church. But as I talked with other local pastors, I realized that something like this project is needed in almost every local church. There was a pastor from an established church of over 1,000 people who contacted me asking me to come train their small group leaders how to read their Bibles. I also had the pastor of a small church plant talk with me about the need of his leaders to grow in their ability to effectively read the Bible. This was surprising to me because I would have assumed that both churches would be full of leaders who were already well-equipped in something as basic as personal Bible intake. These interactions made it clear to me the great need of a project like this.

### **Conclusion**

Designing and implementing this project to equip members of Fox Hill Road Baptist Church in personal Bible intake has been a great privilege. Through this process, I saw sixteen church members successfully equipped in personal Bible intake and I saw many more church members benefit from the sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture and the teaching sessions on personal Bible intake. It's my hope that as I continue to improve and refine the material, that I will have more opportunities to equip members of my own local church as well as members of other local churches in personal Bible intake.

## APPENDIX 1

### DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE AND PERSONAL BIBLE INTAKE SURVEY

The following instrument is the Doctrine of Scripture and Personal Bible Intake Survey (DSPBIS). This survey consists of twenty-five total questions on a six-point Likert scale. The purpose of the first eighteen questions measured each participant's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and the purpose of the final seven questions measured each participant's confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake. Overall, the instrument's purpose was to assess each participant's knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture and confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake.

DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE AND PERSONAL  
BIBLE INTAKE SURVEY (DSPBIS)

**Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess the current understanding of the doctrine of Scripture and the knowledge of issues related to personal Bible intake. Nathan Cecil is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same 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 identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

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

I agree to participate (personal ID# \_\_\_\_\_)<sup>1</sup>

I do not agree to participate

**Section 1**

The first section of the DSPBIS will assess your knowledge of the doctrine of Scripture.

Directions: Answer the following questions by marking the appropriate answer. Please answer using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

**The Doctrine of Scripture**

- |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. The fact that the Bible is “God-breathed” means that the human authors played no role in its writing. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. If humans played any role in writing the Bible, there are potential errors.                           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. The Bible contains everything that is needed for any aspect of human life.                            | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

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<sup>1</sup> Please create and remember a personal 4-digit personal ID# to be used for this project.

- |     |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|-----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 4.  | “Clarity” cannot be an attribute of the Bible since there are many confusing stories, passages, and teachings.     | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5.  | To disobey or disbelieve the Bible is to disobey or disbelieve God.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6.  | It is possible for people to be saved apart from the message of the Bible.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7.  | Inspiration means that God takes human words and makes them his own.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8.  | The fallen nature of the Bible’s human writers prevents us from being able to say that the Bible is without error. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9.  | The Bible is not always applicable to life because it was written so long ago.                                     | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. | The Bible is a special revelation from God and requires a pastor or teacher to explain it to ordinary people.      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. | The best evidence for the authority of the Bible comes from the Bible itself.                                      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. | People can know that God exists apart from hearing or receiving the message of the Bible.                          | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. | God and humans cannot both be the authors of the Bible.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. | What I believe about God and what I believe about the Bible are directly connected.                                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. | The primary way that I hear from God is through the Bible.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 16. | Generally speaking, the Bible is difficult to understand.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. | The authority of the Bible is based upon God himself.  | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. | Only the Bible gives us knowledge that is necessary for salvation.   | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

## **Section 2**

The second section of the DSPBIS will assess your confidence in issues related to personal Bible intake.

### **Issues Related to Personal Bible Intake**

- |    |  |    |   |    |    |   |    |
|----|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. | I am confident in my ability to read and understand the Bible on my own.       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. | I understand how the whole Bible fits together.                                | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. | I find it difficult to understand how to interpret certain books of the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. | I am confident in my ability to apply the Bible to my personal life.           | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. | I could clearly explain the entire message of the Bible.                       | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. | I could confidently explain how the entire Bible points to Jesus.              | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. | I am able to identify the different types of literature within the Bible.      | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

## APPENDIX 2

### SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC

The sermon evaluation rubric was used by a group of local church pastors in order to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture.

SERMON EVALUATION RUBRIC

| <b>Doctrine of Scripture Sermon Evaluation Tool</b>                                   |   |   |   |   |          |
|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| <b>Sermon One Evaluation</b>  |   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>                 |   |   |   |   |          |
| Criteria  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments |
| The sermon is clearly relevant to the doctrine of Scripture.                          |   |   |   |   |          |
| The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on the doctrine of Scripture.        |   |   |   |   |          |
| The material is theologically sound.  |   |   |   |   |          |
| The thesis of the sermon is clearly stated.   |   |   |   |   |          |
| The points of the sermon clearly support the thesis.                                  |   |   |   |   |          |
| The sermon contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake. |   |   |   |   |          |
| The sermon is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.                  |   |   |   |   |          |
| Overall, the sermon is clearly presented.   |   |   |   |   |          |



## APPENDIX 3

### TEACHING SERIES EVALUATION RUBRIC

The teaching series evaluation rubric was used by a group of five local church pastors in order to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the teaching series on issues related to personal Bible intake.

TEACHING LESSON EVALUATION RUBRIC

| <b>Issues Related to Personal Bible Intake Teaching Evaluation Tool</b>               |   |   |   |   |          |
|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| <b>Lesson One Evaluation</b>  |   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>                 |   |   |   |   |          |
| Criteria  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments |
| The lesson is clearly relevant to the issues related to personal Bible intake.        |   |   |   |   |          |
| The material is theologically sound.  |   |   |   |   |          |
| The thesis of the lesson is clearly stated.   |   |   |   |   |          |
| The sections of the lesson clearly support the thesis.                                |   |   |   |   |          |
| The lesson contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake. |   |   |   |   |          |
| The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.                  |   |   |   |   |          |
| Overall, the lesson is clearly presented.   |   |   |   |   |          |

## APPENDIX 4

### EIGHT-WEEK BIBLE STUDY EVALUATION RUBRIC

The discipleship plan evaluation rubric was used by an expert panel of five local church pastors in order to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, clarity, and relevance of the discipleship plan in equipping church members to train others in personal Bible intake.

DISCIPLESHIP PLAN EVALUATION RUBRIC

| <b>Discipleship Plan Evaluation Tool</b>  |   |   |   |   |          |
|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| <b>Weeks One through Eight</b>  |   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>                 |   |   |   |   |          |
| Criteria  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Comments |
| The questions are clearly relevant to the teaching of the Scripture passage.          |   |   |   |   |          |
| The material is theologically sound.  |   |   |   |   |          |
| The main idea of each passage is clearly stated.                                      |   |   |   |   |          |
| The questions of the plan are relevant to the points of each passage.                 |   |   |   |   |          |
| The lesson contains points of practical application related to personal Bible intake. |   |   |   |   |          |
| The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the passage.                   |   |   |   |   |          |
| Overall, the plan is clearly presented.   |   |   |   |   |          |

## APPENDIX 5

### SERMON SERIES OUTLINES

The following outlines were used to preach five sermons on the doctrine of Scripture at Fox Hill Road Baptist Church from July 1, 2018 – July 29, 2018.

## *The Inspiration of Scripture*

### Sermon 1

**Thesis:** The inspiration of Scripture is the foremost attribute of Scripture and serves as the foundation of every other attribute.

**Definition:** Inspiration refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers that rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or that resulted in what they actually wrote being the Word of God.<sup>1</sup>

### OUTLINE

- I. “Did God actually say?”
  - a. Importance of rightly answering the serpent’s question in Genesis 3
  - b. How the doctrine of inspiration changes how we view Scripture
  
- II. The God-breathed Scriptures
  - a. 2 Timothy 3:16
    - i. Paul’s understanding of “God-breathed” or “inspired”
    - ii. Illustration: difference between “inspiration” and “God-breathed”
  - b. Paul teaches that God is the source of the Scriptures
    - i. Practical Applications
  
- III. The Spirit-led Authors
  - a. 2 Peter 1:16-21
    - i. Not the will of man
      1. No prophet could ever ultimately say: “Thus says Elijah or Jeremiah”
    - ii. But spoke from God
      1. the OT prophets were agents of God in writing his word
  - b. Historic understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in “dictating” Scripture
  - c. Peter teaches that God is the source of the Scriptures
    - i. Practical Applications
  
- IV. Inspiration and the Church
  
- V. Inspiration and You
  - a. God has spoken
  - b. We have God’s Word
  - c. Understanding inspiration doesn’t solve the problem

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<sup>1</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 169.

**The Inerrancy of Scripture**  
Sermon 2

**Thesis:** The inerrancy of Scripture naturally follows from inspiration. Simply put, because Scripture is inspired, Scripture is also inerrant.

**Definition:** A simple definition is that the Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings or that it is wholly true. For a more complex definition, inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Sermon Introduction
  - a. Relationship between Inspiration and Inerrancy
  - b. What's at stake in the inerrancy debate?
    - i. Defining terms
    - ii. Defining the significance of the terms
- II. Inerrancy and the Character of God
  - a. Num. 23:19; 2 Sam. 7:28; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18
    - i. No one will doubt that God speaks only what is true; but if all Scripture comes from God so that what it says, he says, then all Scripture must be true.
- III. Inerrancy and the Testimony of Jesus
  - a. Jesus on God's Word and Truth
    - i. John 10:35; 17:17
  - b. Jesus' treatment of OT narrative
    - i. Men of Nineveh (Matt. 12:41)
    - ii. Days of Noah (Matt. 24:37)
    - iii. Lot and Sodom (Luke 17:26-32)
  - c. Jesus and Moses
    - i. Matt. 19:4-5; cf. Gen. 2:24
    - ii. Rom. 9:17; cf. Ex. 9:16
- IV. Inerrancy Assumed
  - a. Ps. 12:6; 119:60, 89, 151; Prov. 30:5; Matt. 24:35
- V. Objections Considered
  - a. The Bible is only inerrant in matters of "faith and practice"
  - b. The Bible is full of errors and contradictions
  - c. The Bible was written by humans
  - d. We no longer have the original manuscripts
  - e. Too many interpretations
- VI. Inerrancy and You
  - a. God is true
  - b. Education vs. Evangelism

**The Authority of Scripture**  
Sermon 3

**Thesis:** The authority of Scripture naturally follows from inspiration. Simply put, because Scripture is a Word from God, Scripture is authoritative.

**Definition:** The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to believe and obey the Bible is to believe and obey God himself.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Authority in Crisis
  - a. Authority in our culture
    - i. Ingrained skepticism about authority
      1. Parents
      2. State
      3. Pastors
      4. Professors
    - ii. Human autonomy (individualism overload)
  - b. God's Authority
    - i. Tied to his character
    - ii. Reaches our current culture
- II. The Nature of God
  - a. Genesis 1:1-3: Creator of all things
  - b. Nehemiah 9:6: Life-giver to all things
  - c. Jeremiah 32:26-27: Nothing is too hard for him
  - d. Isaiah 45:5: There is no other God
  - e. Isaiah 6:3: Holy, holy, holy
- III. The Nature of God's Word
  - a. The authority of Scripture is directly tied to the authority of God
  - b. God's Word demands obedience
    - i. Noah
    - ii. Abram
    - iii. Moses
    - iv. Prophets
    - v. Disciples
- IV. Authority in Practice (Application)
  - a. Authority is undermined when...
    - i. We pick and choose parts of Scripture we want to obey
    - ii. We are embarrassed or ashamed about certain parts of Scripture
    - iii. We attempt to justify (or approve) of what Scripture clearly condemns
  - b. Authority should shape our approach to Scripture
  - c. Authority should shape our response to Scripture
  - d. Authority should shape our attitude towards Scripture



*The Necessity of Scripture*  
Sermon 4

**Thesis:** Apart from the special revelation of God, now found in the Scriptures, we would have no rule of saving knowledge, faith or obedience.

**Definition:** To say that Scripture is necessary is simply to say that we need it.<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem offers the following definition: “the necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God’s will.”<sup>3</sup>

**OUTLINE**

I. Sermon Introduction

- a. Illustration of blurred vision; inability to see clearly

*“Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will be begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.”* (Calvin, Institutes I.6.1)

- b. We can’t see clearly without the special revelation of God that has come through Scripture  
c. Define necessity: apart from the message of Scripture we cannot know God rightly, know ourselves accurately, know our purpose fully

II. God’s General Revelation

- a. Before looking at the necessity of the message of Scripture, we must begin with a different kind of message, a message that has been proclaimed since the beginning of time
- i. A message of God’s glory
    - 1. Psalm 19:1-6
  - ii. A message of God’s invisible attributes
    - 1. Romans 1:18-32
  - iii. A message of God’s common grace
    - 1. Acts 14:8-18; Matt. 5:45
- b. But this message, which has been on display since the beginning of time, is a message that is blurry and incapable of being clearly seen and understood by fallen humanity because...
- i. We suppress the truth
  - ii. We exchange God’s glory for a lesser glory
  - iii. We worship everything else besides God

*“Creation gives evidence of its Creator. A reverent contemplation of the physical universe with its order and design and beauty tell us not only that God is but also that*

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<sup>2</sup> John Frame, *Doctrine of the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P &R, 2013), 211.

<sup>3</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 116.

*God is a certain kind of God. God has left his imprint in creation so that his universe reveals something about him to men.” (Leon Morris)*

### III. God’s Special Revelation

- a. Because of the inability of fallen humanity to rightly interpret general revelation, God has chosen to reveal himself more specifically in the person and work of Jesus Christ
- b. Because of the inability of fallen humanity to rightly interpret general revelation, God has chosen to reveal himself more specifically in the Scriptures
  - i. which attest to and preserve the person and work of Jesus
  - ii. which build on the person and work of Jesus (apostles / NT)
- c. The revelation of God in Christ and Scripture are not the same, but cannot be separated from one another

### IV. The Content of God’s Special Revelation

- a. Only in Scripture’s message do we have the Sum of Saving Knowledge
  - i. Creation (God)
  - ii. Fall (Man)
  - iii. Redemption (Christ)
- b. Only in Scripture’s message do we have the Explanation of Saving Faith
  - i. Faith in Christ
  - ii. Repentance from Sin
- c. Only in Scripture’s message do we have the Description of Obedient Faith
  - i. Major
    - 1. Loving God
    - 2. Loving others
  - ii. Minor
    - 1. Christian living
    - 2. Ethics
    - 3. decisions

*The Clarity and Sufficiency of Scripture*  
Sermon 5

**Thesis:** God's word is clear and God's word is enough. Christians are capable of understanding the Bible on their own and Christians do not need any additional revelation from God outside of Scripture.

**Definition:**

The clarity of Scripture upholds the notion that ordinary people using ordinary means can accurately understand enough of what must be known, believed, and observed for them to be faithful Christians.

The sufficiency of Scripture means that the Bible contains everything that we need for knowledge of salvation and godly living. It contains all the divine words needed for any aspect of human life.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Sermon Introduction
  - a. Why we need a clear Word from God
  - b. Why we need a sufficient Word from God
  
- II. Clarity
  - a. Explained
    - i. Old Testament Teachings
      1. Deut. 30:9-14 (*"it is not too hard for you"*)
      2. Josh. 1:8-9
      3. Psalm 119:105 (*"Your word is a lamp...a light..."*)
    - ii. Old Testament Examples  
(Scripture is understood in times and places far from its original context)
      1. 2 Kings 22
      2. Nehemiah 8
    - iii. Jesus and the Old Testament
      1. Jesus' teaching assumes that his hearers had not only heard or read the OT, he also assumed that they could understand what they had heard or read.
        - a. *"You have heard that it was said..."*
        - b. *"Have you not read?"*
      2. Failure to understand the OT among Jesus' hearers wasn't their inability to understand the Scriptures; it was an inability to understand Jesus as the fulfilment of the Scriptures
    - iv. Paul and the Old Testament
      1. Paul's teaching assumes that his hearers had not only heard or read the OT, he also assumed that they could understand what they had heard or read.
        - a. *Romans 1:16-17* (cf. Habakkuk 2:4)
        - b. *Romans 4:1-6* (cf. Abraham)
    - v. The God behind Scripture
      1. Character

*"We expect to be able to understand the Bible because we know that God is committed to our*

*welfare and there can be no impediment to the fulfilment of his plans for us.”<sup>4</sup>*

2. Promise (Is. 55:10-11)

b. Misunderstood

- i. Clarity is not disproved because some parts of the Bible are difficult to understand.
- ii. Clarity is not disproved because of doctrinal or denominational differences among Christians.

c. Aides to Clarity

- i. Holy Spirit
- ii. The Bible’s Big Story
- iii. Fellowship of Readers throughout Church History

III. Sufficiency

a. Explained

- i. Sufficiency means that Scripture contains all the divine words needed for salvation
- ii. Sufficiency means that Scripture contains all the divine words needed for godly living (“*every good work*” cf. 2 Tim. 3:17)

*“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”* (WCF).

iii. Sufficiency has applied at every stage of progressive revelation

b. Misunderstood and Denied

- i. Catholicism vs. Protestantism
- ii. Seeking additional revelation
- iii. Function of Scripture in individual Christian life
- iv. Function of Scripture in corporate Christian worship

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Thomson, *A Clear and Present Word* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 83.

## APPENDIX 6

### TEACHING SESSION OUTLINES

The following outlines were used to teach class five sessions on issues related to personal Bible intake at Fox Hill Road Baptist Church from July 1, 2018 – July 29, 2018.

**The Bible's Front Door**  
Session 1

**Thesis:** The gospel is the Bible's front door. This means that understanding the gospel is a necessary foundation for studying the Bible.

**OUTLINE**

- VI. Session Introduction
- VII. The Key to Approaching God: the Gospel
  - a. What is the Gospel?
    - i. How conversion alters personal bible intake
      - 1. Reconciliation with God
        - a. One God, One Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)
      - 2. The role of the Holy Spirit
        - a. Author (2 Peter 1:20-21)
        - b. Guide in truth (John 16:13)
- VIII. The Key to Approaching Scripture: the Gospel
  - a. Jesus is the main idea of Scripture
    - i. OT witness
      - 1. Moses and all the prophets (Luke 24:27)
      - 2. Abraham (John 8:56)
      - 3. Scriptures and Moses (John 5:30-47)
    - ii. Four gospel accounts
    - iii. Revelation
  - b. Jesus is the lens through which the Bible must be read
    - i. Gospel-centered hermeneutics
      - 1. *"in order for hermeneutics to be gospel-centered, it must be based on the person of Jesus Christ. That is, the person and work of Christ are at the heart of our hermeneutics."*<sup>1</sup>
- IX. Test Cases
  - a. Eve's "Offspring"
  - b. Abraham's "Seed"
  - c. David's "Son"
  - d. Psalm 23's "Good Shepherd"
- X. Conclusion
  - a. Importance of knowing the gospel and reading Scripture in light of the gospel

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<sup>1</sup> Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 58.

**The Bible's Big Picture**  
Session 2

**Thesis:** Understanding the storyline of the Bible is necessary for studying the Bible.

**OUTLINE**

- I. Session Introduction
  - a. Overlap between the Bible's Front Door and the Bible's Big Picture
  - b. Difference between systematic and biblical theology
  - c. Examples of biblical theology gone wrong
    - i. Health and Wealth Gospel
    - ii. God and Country Theology
    - iii. Racism
    - iv. Promises to Israel
  
- II. What is the Bible's Big Picture?
  - a. The reality of one story; one meta-narrative
    - i. One author; unity
  - b. No one way to understand the One Story
    - i. Creation / Fall / Redemption / New Creation
    - ii. Eden to the New Jerusalem
    - iii. Kingdom
      1. Established / Promised / Foreshadowed / At Hand / Consummated
      2. God's People / God's Place / God's Rule
    - iv. God's Presence
      1. Eden / Tabernacle / Temple / Jesus / New Temple / Heavenly City
    - v. Covenants
  
- III. Finding Your Place in the Bible's Big Picture
  - a. Knowing the One Story enables you to know your story
    - i. Answering life's big questions
      1. God's Story
      2. Other Stories (philosophy; science; culture)
    - ii. What time is it now?
      1. Knowing the big picture enables us to think and live rightly right now
  - b. Knowing the One Story enables you to read the Bible better
    - i. Test cases:
      1. Health and Wealth Gospel
      2. God and Country Theology
      3. Racism
      4. Promises to Israel
  
- IV. Conclusion

## *The Interpretive Journey (Part I)*

### Session 3

**Thesis:** This session is aimed at equipping Christians with basic tools to aid them in their personal bible intake. Over the next three sessions, we will discuss the “interpretive journey” from reading the text to applying the text. The two main points that will be covered over the next three weeks are (1) Interpretation and (2) Application. This session will give an overview and a brief example.

### OUTLINE

- XI. Session Introduction
  - a. “The Bible was not written **TO** us...
    - i. Importance of **interpretation**
      - 1. Dangers of moving straight from text → application
    - ii. Interpreting the text
      - 1. Authorial intent
      - 2. “Plain meaning”
      - 3. Contexts (literary; historical-cultural; salvation history)
  - b. ...but the Bible was written **FOR** us.”
    - i. Importance of **application**
      - 1. Dangers of “shallow” application
    - ii. Purpose of the Bible in the life of a Christian
      - 1. Christ-likeness
        - a. Think / Believe / Desire / Do
          - i. Application is not only “do”
  - c. Disclaimer on “golden bullet” bible study techniques
    - i. Adopt any technique / model / acronym that gets you in the text
  - d. One Example: “The Interpretive Journey”<sup>2</sup>
    - Step 1: “Grasping the Text in Their Town”
      - o Q: What did the text mean to the biblical audience?
    - Step 2: “Measuring the Width of the River to Cross”
      - o Q: What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
    - Step 3: “Crossing the Principlizing Bridge”
      - o Q: What is the theological principle in this text?
    - Step 4: “Grasping the Text in Our Town”
      - o Q: How should individual Christians today apply the theological principle in their lives?

**Test Case:** Joshua 1:1-9

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<sup>2</sup> This method comes from J. Scoot Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 19-27.



**The Interpretive Journey (Part II)**  
Session 4

**Thesis:** This session is aimed at equipping Christians with basic tools to aid them in their personal bible intake. This is the second part of our discussion on the “interpretive journey” from reading the text to applying the text. The two main points that will be covered over the next two weeks are (1) Interpretation and (2) Application. This session focuses on some of the basic tools for interpretation..

**OUTLINE**

- I. Review
  - a. “The Bible was not written ***TO*** us...
    - i. Importance of interpretation
  - b. ...but the Bible was written ***FOR*** us.”
    - i. Importance of application
  
- II. Basic Tools for Interpretation
  - a. Before Coming to the Text
    - i. Genre
      1. OT: Narrative; Law; Poetry; Prophets; Wisdom
      2. NT: Letters; Gospels (Parables); Acts; Revelation
    - ii. Context
      1. Literary (general)
      2. Historical-Cultural
      3. Salvation-history
  - b. While in the Text
    - i. Read, read, read
    - ii. Observation (slow down)
    - iii. Ask questions

## *The Interpretive Journey (Part III)*

### Session 5

**Thesis:** This session is aimed at equipping Christians with basic tools to aid them in their personal bible intake. This is the second part of our discussion on the “interpretive journey” from reading the text to applying the text. The two main points that will be covered over the next two weeks are (1) Interpretation and (2) Application. This session focuses on some of the basic tools for application..

### OUTLINE

- I. Review
  - a. “The Bible was not written ***TO*** us...
  - b. ...but the Bible was written ***FOR*** us.”
  
- II. The Bible and the Christian Life
  - a. Sanctification is the goal of the Christian life
  - b. Application is the goal of Bible reading
  
- III. Basic Tools in Bible Application
  - i. Asking Questions
    1. Matthew Harmon (*Asking the Right Questions*)
      - a. What do I learn about God?
      - b. What do I learn about others?
      - c. What does God want me to *think / believe / desire / do?*
    2. Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard (*Intro to Biblical Interpretation*)
      - a. Is there a command to obey?
      - b. Is there an example to follow or avoid?
      - c. Is there a promise to claim?
      - d. Is there a warning to heed or a teaching to act on?
  - ii. Identifying Timeless Truths
  - iii. Dangers to Avoid
    1. Failing to apply
    2. Applying apart from the local church
    3. Applying generally; avoiding personal confession/repentance
  - iv. Other Aids to Application
    1. Meditation
    2. Memorization
    3. Reading, reading, reading

## APPENDIX 7

### EIGHT-WEEK BIBLE STUDY HANDOUT

The following handout was issued to all project participants following the completion of the project.

## WEEK 1

### Mark 1:1-15

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Son of God who came to establish the Kingdom of God.

- How does Mark introduce his gospel?
- Who would you guess is going to be the main character in Mark's gospel?
  - o What do we know about him from verse 1?
- Who is introduced in verses 2-8?
  - o What are some observations about him?
  - o What is his message?
- What four people are mentioned in verses 9-11?
- What is the significance of verse 11?
- What are some implications of verse 14-15?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 2

### Mark 2:1-12

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Son of God who has the authority to forgive sins.

- What was Jesus doing in Capernaum?
- Why do you think four friends brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus?
  - o Do you think they were disappointed in verse 5?
- Are the claims of the scribes in verse 7 true or false?
- What is the implied answer to Jesus' question in verse 9?
  - o Which is easier to *say*? Why?
  - o Which is easier to *do*? Why?
- Why does Jesus heal the man in verses 10-11?
- What do these verses teach us about Jesus?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 3

### Mark 5:1-43

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Son of God who has authority over demons, disease, and death.

- How does the demon-possessed man identify Jesus?
  - o Who else has identified him this way?
- What does verse 13 reveal about Jesus?
- Does the ending in verses 18-20 surprise you? Why or why not?
- Who are the two individuals that Jesus heals in verses 21-43?
  - o How does he heal them?
- Which healing do you think is more miraculous? Why?
- What do these healings reveal about Jesus?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 4

### Mark 8:27-38

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Christ who must suffer.

- Why do you think that some people identified Jesus the way they did in verse 28?
  - o What does that tell us about Jesus?
- What is Peter's answer regarding the identity of Jesus?
  - o Who else has answered in a similar way in Mark's gospel?
- What should we think of the interaction between Jesus and Peter in verses 31-33?
- What do you think Peter opposes Jesus' teaching?
- How do these verses contribute to your understanding of the Son of Man?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 5

### Mark 9:2-37

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Son of Man who must suffer.

- How do verses 2-8 contribute to our understanding of the identity of Jesus?
  - o What is the significance of Elijah and Moses?
  - o What is the significance of the voice from heaven?
- How does the father's perspective change from verse 22 to verse 24?
  - o What brings about the change?
- What was is about Jesus' teaching in verse 31 that was hard for the disciples to understand?
- How does Jesus' teaching in verses 33-37 related to his teaching in verse 31?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 6

### Mark 10:17-45

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Son of Man came to serve and to call others to do the same.

- What was the obstacle that the rich young man could not get over in order to follow Jesus?
- In verse 23, why do you think Jesus says that it will be difficult for someone with wealth to enter the kingdom?
- What promise does Jesus make to those who "lose" everything to follow him?
- Compare verses 33-34 with 8:31 and 9:31.
  - o What are some similarities? Differences?
  - o What point is Mark trying to make with this repetition?
- Verse 45 serves as a summary of the entire second half of Mark's gospel. What is surprising about the statement?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 7

### Mark 14:1-72

**Main Idea:** Jesus is the Christ who willingly goes to the cross.

- Other than Jesus, who are the two main characters in verses 1-11?
  - o How do these two individuals treat Jesus? What is surprising about how they each treat Jesus?
- In verses 12-25, is Jesus in control of the situation and events surrounding him? Why or why not?
- What is the significance of Jesus instituting the “Lord’s Supper” during the feast of the Passover?
  - o What was the significance of the Passover for the Israelites? (Read Exodus 12 for the background of Passover)
- What are some of the lessons that we learn from Jesus regarding prayer in verses 32-42?
- What is it about Jesus’ answer to the high priest in verse 62 that causes the high priest to respond so dramatically? What is Jesus saying?
- How many times does Peter deny Jesus in verses 66-72?
- How do verses 26-31 inform your reading of verses 66-72?
  - o How is Peter portrayed?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

## WEEK 8

### Mark 15:6 – 16:8

**Main Idea:** Jesus, the Son of God, is crucified, buried, and resurrected.

- How many times does the title, “King of the Jews” appear in verses 1-32?
  - o What is ironic about the repeated use of this title in this section?
- Why don’t people believe that Jesus can actually be the King of the Jews?
  - o What might be some of their objections?
- What does the Centurion remark about Jesus in verse 39?
  - o Where else have we seen that confession in Mark’s Gospel?
- What are some ways that Mark emphasizes the reality of Jesus’ death?
- What are some ways that Mark emphasizes that reality of Jesus’ resurrection?
- What does the burial and resurrection of Jesus confirm about what Jesus taught throughout the Gospel of Mark?
  - o What are some of the specific teachings that were confirmed?
  - o What does this tell us about Jesus?

**Application:** Think – Believe – Desire – Do

APPENDIX 8

EXPERT PANEL SERMON EVALUATIONS

Table A1. Expert panel sermon evaluations

| Sermon | Feedback Question | Review 1 | Review 2 | Review 3 | Review 4 | Review 5 | Avg. |
|--------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------|
| 1      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|        | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 4                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 5                 | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|        | 6                 | 3        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.4  |
|        | 7                 | 3        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.4  |
|        | 8                 | 3        | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.6  |
| 2      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|        | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 4                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|        | 6                 | 3        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 3        | 3.2  |
|        | 7                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 8                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
| 3      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|        | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 4                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|        | 5                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|        | 6                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|        | 7                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|        | 8                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |

Table A1 continued

| Sermon                 | Feedback Question | Review 1 | Review 2 | Review 3 | Review 4 | Review 5 | Avg.      |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 4                      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 2                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6       |
|                        | 4                 | 3        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.4       |
|                        | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 6                 | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6       |
|                        | 7                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 8                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.8       |
| 5                      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 4                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 6                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 7                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 8                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        |                   |          |          |          |          |          | % of each |
| Frequency of responses | Needs attention   | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0%        |
|                        | Sufficient        | 22       | 7        | 0        | 16       | 1        | 23%       |
|                        | Exemplary         | 18       | 33       | 40       | 24       | 39       | 77%       |



APPENDIX 9

EXPERT PANEL SESSION EVALUATIONS

Table A2. Expert panel session evaluations

| Session | Feedback Question | Review 1 | Review 2 | Review 3 | Review 4 | Review 5 | Avg. |
|---------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------|
| 1       | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|         | 4                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 5                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|         | 6                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
|         | 7                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 3        | 4        | 3.6  |
| 2       | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 4                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 6                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 7                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
| 3       | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |
|         | 4                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 6                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4    |
|         | 7                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8  |

Table A2 continued

| Session                | Feedback Question | Review 1 | Review 2 | Review 3 | Review 4 | Review 5 | Avg.      |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 4                      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 4                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 6                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 7                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
| 5                      | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                        | 4                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 6                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        | 7                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                        |                   |          |          |          |          |          | % of each |
| Frequency of responses | Needs attention   | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0%        |
|                        | Sufficient        | 18       | 0        | 0        | 4        | 0        | 13%       |
|                        | Exemplary         | 17       | 35       | 35       | 31       | 35       | 87%       |

APPENDIX 10

EXPERT PANEL BIBLE STUDY EVALUATIONS (BSE)

Table A3. Expert panel session evaluations

|                              | Feedback Question | Review 1 | Review 2 | Review 3 | Review 4 | Review 5 | Avg.      |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Discipleship Plan Evaluation | 1                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                              | 2                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                              | 3                 | 3        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 3.8       |
|                              | 4                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                              | 5                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                              | 6                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                              | 7                 | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4        | 4         |
|                              |                   |          |          |          |          |          | % of each |
| Frequency of responses       | Needs attention   | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0%        |
|                              | Sufficient        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 6%        |
|                              | Exemplary         | 5        | 7        | 7        | 7        | 7        | 94%       |

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## ABSTRACT

### EQUIPPING MEMBERS OF FOX HILL ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH IN HAMPTON, VIRGINIA, FOR PERSONAL BIBLE INTAKE

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018  
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This project equipped members at Fox Hill Road Baptist Church (FHRBC) for personal Bible intake. The equipping process involved a sermon series on the doctrine of Scripture and a teaching series addressing specific issues related to personal Bible intake. At the end of the equipping process, an eight-week Bible study plan centered on Bible intake in order for project participants to put into practice what they learned, as well as to train others in personal Bible intake.

Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context of FHRBC, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, definitions, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 argues that a basic understanding of the doctrine of Scripture is a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. The inspiration, authority, inerrancy, necessity, sufficiency, and clarity are all essential attributes of Scripture that set a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. Chapter 3 argues that a basic understanding of how to study the Bible is a necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. Understanding the gospel as the entry point into the Bible, the Bible's big picture, the process of interpretation, and the process of application are all practical issues related to personal Bible intake that set a second necessary foundation for personal Bible intake. Chapter 4 details the sermon series, teaching series, and Bible study plan. Chapter 5 concludes with an overall evaluation of the project and suggestions for improvement and further development.

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