TRAINING THE MEMBERS OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

IN CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA, IN THE

CHRISTICONIC HERMENEUTIC

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A Project

Presented to

the Faculty of

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Doctor of Ministry

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by

Daniel Mark Rasor

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APPROVAL SHEET

TRAINING THE MEMBERS OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

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To my wife, Ash Lynn,

without whose support and encouragement I could not have completed this

project, and by whose love and friendship I find life so rich.

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PREFACE

This project was a challenging endeavor, but I am forever grateful. When I was called to ministry as a teenager, my greatest fear was public speaking. I wrestled with God and refused him again and again. Eventually, I surrendered and entrusted my future to Him. Now, God has taken my fear and made it my passion. Not only do I desire to lead, but I love to teach. My soul longs to see the people of God learn more about him. This project gave me tools, resources, and abilities to grow my skills and further his kingdom. Praise be to God!

I am thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla, for igniting a fire in my heart to "privilege the text." It has changed the way I read, study, and teach Scripture. It has spread into my church family, and we have all been blessed as a result.

During this work, the Lord called me to a new place of ministry. I cannot express the overwhelming joy of doing this project at Faith Baptist Church. It is the honor and privilege of a lifetime to be their pastor. I am thankful for my church family.

Thank you to my family. My father always pushed me and challenged me to be a better student, husband, father, pastor, and follower of Christ. I would not be the man I am today without him. My children, Adelaide, Merritt, and Haddon, have always been my greatest encouragers. Finally, to my wife, Ash Lynn, my partner in ministry and life. This grace-filled woman has richly blessed me beyond measure.

Daniel Rasor

Claremore, Oklahoma

December 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A challenge with any communication is discerning the correct meaning. All forms of communication, verbal, non-verbal, listening, visual, or written, require the receiver to properly discern what the author is doing with what they are saying. At times, there may be a significant challenge in correctly discerning this meaning. One of these challenges is the Bible, a book that is thousands of years old. However, this is the endeavor to which Christians commit each time they open their Bible. It is in those pages that the Creator of heaven and earth has revealed himself to his people. To know God, believers must read his word. So, believers strive to read the Bible, interpret meaning, understand truth, and derive application. For this task, the Lord gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for this task. However, too few pastors and church leaders provide sufficient instruction and training in this discipline of biblical hermeneutics.

Context

Faith Baptist Church in Claremore, Oklahoma, has ministered to Claremore and the surrounding communities for nearly fifty years. Ten years ago, the church averaged 250 in its Sunday morning service. People were excited, ministries were active, and the church steadily grew. However, in the last seven years, the church has dwindled in numbers. The church has a faithful core but averages less than half attendees on Sunday mornings. Despite the decrease in attendance, the commitment to faithful biblical teaching remains.

Since its founding in 1975, the church has committed itself to biblical teaching

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as it seeks to make disciples of Jesus. One small yet powerful way this commitment is displayed is in the regular meetings that focus on the teaching of Scripture. For the last three years, Faith Baptist Church has met three times a week for Bible study. These gatherings are Sunday school, Wednesday evening Bible Study, and Sunday morning worship. Examining these meetings and their approach to biblical teaching reveals this commitment to biblical teaching.

For decades, Sunday school has served as a primary tool of discipleship in the lives of believers of all ages. At Faith Baptist Church, the class participants rarely change as they are divided by age and sometimes gender. This provides a unique opportunity for the class teachers to invest years into the same students. The teacher has the freedom to choose the curriculum. Traditionally, the classes use a version of Lifeway's quarterly. This material allows the small group to cover a wide range of subjects and Scripture in their time together.

While Sunday school primarily focuses on discipling the believer, Wednesday evening gatherings strive to minister to both the believer and non-believer. The children and youth ministries attempt to reach new people and new families in their program and format. While the ministries offer snacks and games, teaching the Bible is always a priority. The pastor leads a topical Bible study and prayer meeting for the adult ministry.

On Sunday mornings following Sunday school, Faith Baptist Church gathers the church family together for corporate worship. The purpose of the gathering is to worship and equip believers. This is accomplished through prayer, congregational singing, giving, and preaching the Word. In this setting, the senior pastor works alongside the worship pastor and youth pastor to facilitate worship for the congregation.

In the fall of 2022, Faith Baptist Church began offering Sunday evening discipleship classes. The Bible study classes vary in topic and teacher. To begin, the senior pastor taught "Theology 101," a class that studies Southern Baptist doctrine. *The Baptist*

Faith and Message 2000 was the curriculum.[1] The worship pastor also taught a class on discipleship and doctrine titled "The Wonder of Worship." Finally, the women's director led a video study on Jeremiah. In each of these classes, the Word was the primary teaching curriculum. The purpose of Sunday evenings was to facilitate deeper levels of learning for believers through lectures and small group discussions.

Each of these ministry spaces seeks to equip and train the believer for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). However, these spaces fail to provide sufficient, progressive levels of training. One element preventing growth may be the complacency and comfort of the current format. Many individuals have had the same classes and teachers in Sunday school for decades. Week after week, they see the same friends and hear a lesson that does not challenge them because it is objective rather than subjective. The curriculum is written for a broad audience, not the individuals in the room. While the subject matter may be good, it may not meet the theological maturity of the classroom. Though the teacher will adapt and shape the lesson to their audience, they are significantly restricted by available resources. A church must provide opportunities for members to grow in areas where they lack knowledge. A curriculum must be written for those in the room.

The Bible commands believers to disciple and teach one another. Every believer needs a theological education, but members must often attend a higher education institution to be adequately equipped for ministry. The primary trainer of a disciple must be the church, not the seminary. At Faith Baptist Church, this is the case. The members may grow in their faith and knowledge in Christ, but it is slow because attending church is more of a habit than a desire to grow in the knowledge of God.

A second weakness is that the members are not provided an opportunity for new, opposing, and challenging views and proper discussion of these views. While Sunday school provides some time for discussion, nearly all Bible studies are in lecture

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[1] Charles Kelley, Richard Land, and Albert Mohler, *The Baptist Faith & Message* (Nashville, Tenn. Lifeway, 2007).

format. This allows the teacher to present a claim, a reason, and evidence without many conversations from the listeners. Continuous teaching in this format allows for only the views of the teacher to be given. While the text may permit different interpretations, the audience is not exposed to these views. Even if they disagree with the view, it is beneficial to understand other perspectives to test their own.

Though the exposition of Scripture is essential to the life of Faith Baptist Church, the church's teaching ministry, as a whole, fails to provide an environment for believers to grow in their own study and interpretation of Scripture. The only method of hermeneutical instruction comes from observation rather than instruction. Believers are expected to learn how to read and interpret their Bible but are not taught best practices to do so. While pastors have been given to the church to preach and teach the Word, they have also been given to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:11-12). Essential equipping includes the ability to interpret the Word for oneself properly.

Faith Baptist Church certainly prioritizes the preaching and teaching of the Word; the pastors seek to train and equip their flock. However, there is room for improvement. Growth in the believer does not happen simply because Bible study happens. The leadership at Faith Baptist Church must strive to keep the Bible as the primary source of teaching material and provide opportunities for believers to grow in their knowledge and faith in God as they study the Word for themselves.

Rationale

An essential element of sanctification is growing in the knowledge of God. To grow in this area, pastors are instructed to preach the Word and equip the saints for the work of ministry. At Faith Baptist Church, the Word is taught at every Bible study. While this is essential and beneficial, the current format fails to provide adequate opportunities for deep growth. The members are not growing in their knowledge and wisdom of their faith as they ought. There are several reasons for this lack of growth.

First, the church prioritizes engagement. The leadership has designed activities

and roles for programming. These activities aim for members to attend, connect, and serve. For years, the church has called itself successful if a significant number of individuals are in these roles. However, members may attend, connect, and serve without growing spiritually. Attending a class does not mean a participant is learning or applying the material. Connecting with people is significant in building relationships but does not develop spiritual maturity. Serving is necessary in the church, but it will help one learn the Bible better? Rather than emphasizing programming, the church must emphasize transformation: called, coached, and commissioned. The goal of the church should not simply be to have people involved but to have them involved and grow. Individuals attending a class ought to hear the Lord calling them to a task. Through the classes offered, they should be coached and trained for that task, and the church must commission them. The church must empower its members, not just engage them.

Second, if the church seeks to empower its members, the leadership should provide adequate opportunities to push and challenge members to grow. Though, no learning progression encouraged members to delve into deeper theological truths. Young Christians and mature Christians were always in the same Bible study. While believers ought to study together to encourage one another, it would be beneficial for the church to offer classes that are directed at different levels of spiritual maturity.

Third, the culture of Faith Baptist Church does not encourage a desire to grow deeply. The lack of desire may stem from the unchanging discipleship format and topics. To grow requires change and the introduction of new ideas. Many are happy with hearing messages and lessons that are familiar and easy to receive. New, challenging doctrines must be introduced to grow the believer's knowledge and faith. A possible reason for this unwillingness is that many members have been in church for decades and now see themselves as retired from their careers and their spiritual growth. This attitude is not only dangerous for church growth and self-growth; it is unbiblical. Deep, intentional

theological education is needed. Both young and old members must see the importance of knowing Scripture in order to know God.

The pastors of the church have a special responsibility to teach these things. Paul teaches in Ephesians that pastors are given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).[2] A primary role of the pastor is to equip the saints and build up the body of Christ. Building up the body of Christ includes building up the individual members of the body. Paul continues in verse 13 with the extent of the building up: "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). The purpose of discipleship is evident—mature manhood. This implies progression and growth in the ones being discipled. Discipleship does not happen by chance but through planned, purposeful instruction and care. It happens by introducing new ideas, views, doctrines, and subjects, some of which may challenge existing opinions individuals have held for years. These new ideas will either be accepted as truth or rejected so the currently held belief may be strengthened. Church leaders, pastors, preachers, and teachers are a gift from God for the benefit of the church. Leaders must train members so that they may be built up.

Faith Baptist Church would benefit from a biblical hermeneutics course that teaches believers the methods and practices of interpreting Scripture. Members would be empowered to grow in their Lord and the calling he has placed on their lives. This course sought to fulfill the command of Scripture to see believers growing in their knowledge and wisdom of Christ and His Word.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train members of Faith Baptist Church in the christiconic hermeneutic.

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[2] All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

Goals

Four goals were developed to train the members at Faith Baptist Church in the christiconic hermeneutic. The first goal was to evaluate the members of Faith Baptist Church in their understanding and confidence of biblical hermeneutics. The next three goals focus on teaching pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic to equip the members for effective Christian ministry.

1. The first goal was to evaluate the confidence in interpreting the Bible among the members of Faith Baptist Church.

2. The second goal was to develop a curriculum on pericopal theology to train the members of Faith Baptist Church.

3. The third goal was to register at least fifteen participants for the class with at least 80 percent completing the class.

4. The fourth goal was to evaluate the increase in confidence in interpreting the Bible among participants after the class is completed.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to evaluate the confidence in interpreting the Bible among the members of Faith Baptist Church. This goal was measured by conducting a survey before the class began.[3] This goal was successful when the surveys were assessed to determine participants' current confidence in biblical hermeneutics.

The second goal was to develop a curriculum on pericopal theology. This curriculum was adapted from Abraham Kuruvilla's *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* into a Bible study that implements the christiconic hermeneutical method.[4] This goal was successful when the curriculum contained a nine-week lesson outline with resources.

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[3] See appendix 1. 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.

[4] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

The third goal was to register fifteen individuals for the class, with at least 80 percent of the individuals completing the class. The goal was measured by observing the number of people who enrolled and completed the course. Completing the course included attending all sessions and completing the pre- and post-surveys.

The fourth goal was to evaluate the knowledge among participants after taking the biblical hermeneutics class. This goal was measured by administering a post-survey, which was used to measure the change in knowledge and confidence.[5] This goal was considered successfully met when the participants displayed increased knowledge and desire to apply this knowledge. A *t*-test was given to determine the change in confidence.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

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

Pericopal theology. Abraham Kuruvilla defines *pericopal theology* as

> the theology specific to a particular pericope, representing a segment of the plenary world in front of the canonical text that portrays God and his relationship to his people, and which, bearing a transhistorical intention, functions as the crucial intermediary in the homiletical move from text to praxis that respects both the authority of the text and the circumstances of the hearer.[6]

Christiconic interpretation. Abraham Kuruvilla's definition of *christiconic interpretation* is used in this project:

> Scripture is geared primarily for this purpose of God, to restore the imago Dei in mankind by offering a theological description of Christlikeness, pericope by pericope, to which God's people are to be aligned. In this sense, the focal point of the entire canon of Scripture and all of its pericopes is the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect man and the paramount imago Dei himself.[7]

One limitation applied to this project. The accuracy of the pre-class survey was dependent upon the willingness of respondents to take the survey and to be honest about

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[5] See appendix 1.

[6] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, new ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 110.

[7] Abraham Kuruvilla, "Christiconic Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173 (April-June 2016): 144.

their understanding and knowledge of the material covered in the class. To mitigate this limitation, the surveys were administered anonymously, and detailed instructions were given on the importance of honesty and accuracy when taking the survey.

There was one delimitation to this project. The course only taught pericopal theology.

Conclusion

Studying the Bible is essential in the life of every church and believer. Churches must seek to equip and empower their members to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. In doing so, the church accomplishes its mission to equip the church for the work of ministry and to mature manhood (Eph 4:12-16).

CHAPTER 2

THE CHRISTICONIC HERMENEUTICAL METHOD

This chapter considers hermeneutics that leads to valid application. This chapter begins with a definition of hermeneutics and the christiconic method of interpretation.[1] The chapter then describes the christiconic hermeneutic from three perspectives: linguistic, theological, and applicational. Finally, this chapter considers arguments against this method.

Brief Definition of Hermeneutics

Before studying the christiconic hermeneutic, it is necessary to have a firm grasp of the term "hermeneutics." Moisés Silva explains, "Hermeneutics is the discipline that deals with principles of interpretation."[2] The challenge in deriving accurate interpretation stems from accurate and proper exegesis. Silva continues and defines exegesis as "the analysis and explanation of a text, usually with reference to detailed scientific interpretation of Scripture in which the meaning is drawn from the text rather than imposed over it."[3] Drawing the meaning out of the text is true exegesis, which is necessary for all hermeneutics. Donald Fairbairn writes of the relationship between the two: "Exegesis is the microlevel task of understanding a particular passage of Scripture

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[1] This chapter leans heavily on the work of Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, new ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2013).

[2] Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. and exp ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 17.

[3] Kaiser and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 334.

accurately in its original context."[4] Exegesis seeks to answer the question, what did this passage mean to its original audience? Since the reader is removed from the original audience, one must do hermeneutics to place the text in its setting. Fairbairn continues by defining hermeneutics as "the macro level task of placing a given passage in the context of the book in which it falls, the group of writings of which it is a part, the Bible as a whole and the various traditions for interpreting the Bible."[5] Any time a person opens the Bible to read, they practice hermeneutics. Some do this well, while others do not. Therefore, believers must strive to practice proper hermeneutics as they seek to interpret the Bible for themselves.[6]

One difficulty in hermeneutics is discerning the author's intention and purpose. Each text is different, so each should have a unique meaning and interpretation. In recent years there has been a trend to systematize every pericope. Rather than studying a particular text to discern its meaning, individuals have categorized texts into different subjects and genres. The text is not privileged; instead, it is shoved into a category of Christian doctrine. Abraham Kuruvilla highlights this problem:

> There is systematization, by which all that is endeavored is an attempt to squeeze a given pericope into the appropriate pigeonhole of systematic theology, by organizing facts and by systematizing detail. The healing of the blind man in Mark 8 must fit into the omnipotence of God/Jesus (theology proper). The story of Abraham's (non-)sacrifice of Isaac must accommodate substitutionary atonement (soteriology) and, perhaps, the love of God in that "he gave his only begotten Son." Second Samuel 11-12 (the account of David and Bathsheba) ought to remind us of the depravity of mankind (hamartiology) and the perfect messianic King (Christology). Revelation and the books of prophecy draw us into the end times, the Second Advent, and God's final judgment (eschatology). And so on. There is an element of *a priori* reception

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[4] Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 109.

[5] Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, 109.

[6] Understanding the Word of God is only possible by the illumination given by the Holy Spirit. The Westminster Confession 1:6 states, "We acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word." Gerald Bray further explains, "mental persuasion of the literal truth of the bible is not enough for a living faith. The book inspired by the Holy Spirit must be interpreted by the same Spirit." Gerald Bray, *Doing Theology with the Reformers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 100-101.

about all this, since systems of theology already inform us about how and what we must hear; so the task of interpretation becomes merely an exercise in discovering where in that neat system a given passage of Scripture fits. Such systematization is essentially generalization carried far beyond the terra firma of the text; the specificity of the texts is lost in favor of the generalities of systematized axioms.[7]

Systemization is one end of the spectrum; atomization is the other. Atomization "attempts to make application out of every tidbit of textual material. A shotgun style of exegesis that chases every rabbit."[8] Both approaches fail to discern the intent of the authors. One systemizes the text while the other picks it apart. Therefore, there must be a middle ground where the two extremes are not present.

Linguistic Rationale

The purpose of language is to communicate meaning. Scholars have developed several models to describe different means of communication. In the context of written communication, the linear model is most applicable. The linear model describes how a sender, the speaker, transmits a message to a receiver, the listener. The message is transmitted through a channel—in this case, it is written—from the sender to the receiver. While the message is being transmitted, there are obstacles called noise. Noise is any interference in the channel or distortion of the message.[9]

The Bible functions as a linear means of communication. Authors of Scripture, the senders, transmit a message by writing. The message is sent to the receiver in hopes that it has not been altered or changed by the noise in the world. Over the last several years, scholars have begun to recognize that linear communication is an inferential process.[10] They believe there to be a distinction between a sentence's meaning and utterance

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[7] Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 20-21.

[8] Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 22.

[9] University of Minnesota, "1.2 What Is Communication?," November 25, 2015, https://open.lib.umn.edu/businesscommunication/chapter/1-2-what-is-communication/.

[10] Abraham Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," in *Homiletics and Hermeneutics: Four Views on Preaching Today*, ed. Scott M. Gibson and Matthew D. Kim (Ada, MI: Baker, 2018), 50.

meaning. The context surrounding the utterance provides clarity to the sentence. Kuruvilla notes these differences as semantics (sentence meaning) and pragmatics (utterance meaning). He argues that authors are *doing* something with what they are saying or writing: "Decoding an utterance produces semantics; an inferential process yields pragmatics."[11]

A helpful example of this in today's culture is when a wife tells her husband, "The trash is full." In this linear communication model, the sender, the wife, sends a message to the receiver, her husband. The semantics of her message is a statement regarding the state of the trash. However, the inferential meaning of her message is imperative: "Take out the trash!" The sender is doing something with what she is saying. Kuruvilla argues, "Pragmatics, an inferential process, uses the statement of a speaker as an input and, with contextual information, generates an output of the speaker's meaning."[12]

In the context of the Bible, the authors are most certainly doing something with what they are saying. Kuruvilla calls this the "thrust" of the text.[13] The Bible is not given to inform the receivers; it intends to change the receivers. The difficulty in interpreting Scripture is that the human author is unavailable, and readers are far removed from the text's original context. However, readers may discern what the author is doing through a proper hermeneutic, good exegesis, and careful reading of the semantics of Scripture. This notion of the author doing things with what they are writing falls into pragmatics.[14]

With a great emphasis on pragmatics, one must not completely ignore the semantics of the text—they are essential. The semantic elements of a text form the message that is sent. The receiver must hear the semantic message to arrive at its meaning. When

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[11] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," 50.

[12] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," 51.

[13] Abraham Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173, no. 689 (January 2016): 11.

[14] Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology," 11.

A tells *B*, "Hey, you are standing on my foot!" the semantic meaning tells the spatial location of *A*'s foot. However, the pragmatic meaning of the exclamation, the doing, is attempting to have *B* move his foot.[15]

Biblical authors use semantics to convey a message. No text of Scripture is written to the void; they are all doing something with what they are saying. The reader must discover the correct meaning. This discovery is only possible through proper hermeneutics.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Theological Rationale</h3>

Authors are doing something with what they are saying. They are writing so that readers will respond to their words. The response to reading the Bible must be application. The primary purpose of Scripture is to be read and applied. James writes, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas 1:22). Paul affirms this in Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The reader's responsibility is to catch the author's doings so that the teaching may be applied.

The World in Front of the Text

The Bible is not an end in itself. The Bible is not designed to be a dictionary or encyclopedia to simply provide information about God; it is a revelation of God so that the people of God may become like God. This written revelation is a literary instrument of the author's action of projecting a transcending vision. Kuruvilla uses the term the "world in front of the text."[16] Through Scripture, God invites his people to live in his ideal world. The text portrays a projected world beyond the confines of the text and invites the reader

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[15] Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 49-50.

[16] Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology," 10.

to respond and inhabit the ideal world.[17] Kuruvilla argues, "All literary texts function in this manner to project worlds in front of themselves: thus, texts serve as instruments or agents of that world-projecting action and, in this way, such texts have bearing upon the future."[18] Because the biblical authors intended their readers to apply their text, the interpretation of their text must arrive at their pragmatic: what they are doing. Kuruvilla explains, "The interpretation of Scripture cannot cease with the elucidation of its lexical, grammatical, and syntactical elements (semantics), but must proceed further to discern the world in front of the text—the thrust of the text, what the author is doing."[19]

Consider the instance of A standing on B's foot. When A exclaims, "You're on my foot!" A is doing something with what he is saying. He is attempting to have B move his foot. With this doing, A is projecting a world to B where no one is standing on his foot. The way B inhabits the world of A is by not standing on his foot, by applying the projected world.[20]

Text ⟹ World in front of the text ⟹ Application
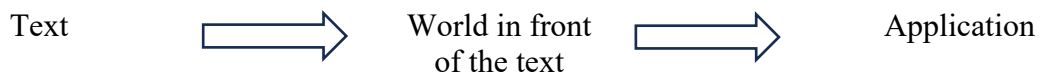
Figure 1. From text to application

Biblical authors also project a world in front of the text where God is inviting His people to live. However, most interpretations of the text often do not lead to the author's doing. Instead, preachers, teachers, and readers dwell on the semantics of the verse. A preacher might spend time expositing and detailing the composition of a human

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[17] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," 54.

[18] Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology," 11.

[19] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," 53.

[20] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," 54. Figure 1 is Adapted from Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text*, 51.

foot as well as the Greek origins and cultural importance of a foot. The preacher would teach the hearers a great deal about the foot but miss the author's intended application: "Get off my foot!" If the author is doing something with what he is saying, then the reader must seek to find that doing. Kuruvilla describes it in this way: "Unless one catches what A is doing (pragmatics, the world in front of the text: an ideal world in which no one stands on A's foot to cause A pain), valid application in response to A's statement is impossible."[21]

The entire Bible projects God's ideal world, but this world is described and depicted in smaller units called pericopes. Pericopes reveal different facets and aspects of this world, and each pericope is God's gracious invitation to mankind to dwell with him in his ideal world in his presence enjoying his blessing.[22]

Pericope		Segment of the Ideal World	Plenary Ideal World
Pericope 1	⇨	Segment 1 of the Ideal World	
Pericope 2	⇨	Segment 2 of the Ideal World	
Pericope 3	⇨	Segment 3 of the Ideal World	
Pericope 4	⇨	Segment 4 of the Ideal World	God's Ideal World
Pericope 5	⇨	Segment 5 of the Ideal World	
Pericope …	⇨	Segment … of the Ideal World	
Pericope n	⇨	Segment n of the Ideal World	
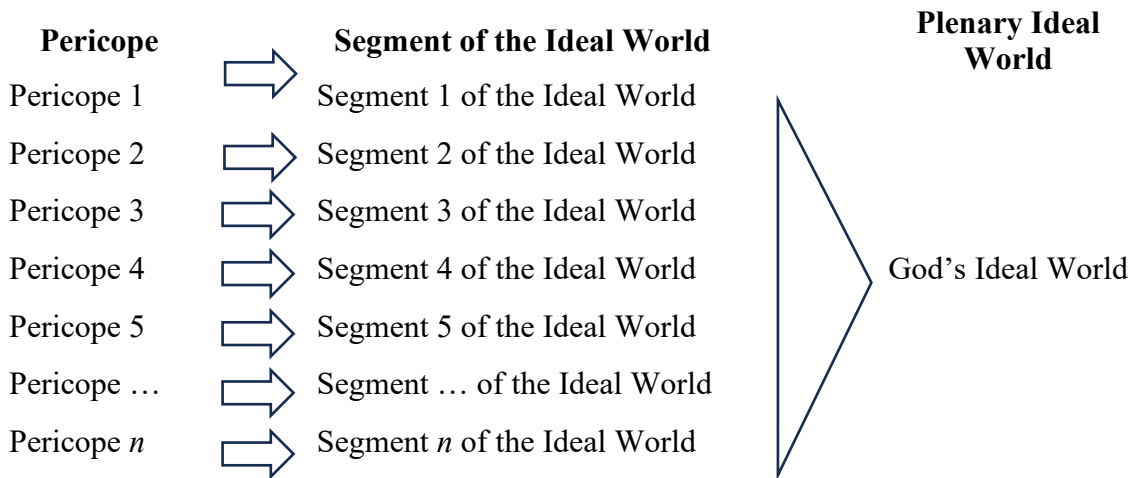
Figure 2. From pericope to God's ideal world

Pericopal Theology

Each pericope of Scripture contains a facet or aspect of God's ideal world. Because these facets and aspects are about God, their study may rightly be called

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[21] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic View," 55.

[22] Figure 2 adapted from Abraham Kuruvilla *Privilege the Text*, 55.

"theology." To best understand God's ideal world, these pericopes should not be considered alone; they are like a pearl necklace. In a pearl necklace, each pearl is unique and beautiful by itself. However, they are not designed to be viewed alone; they fit together to form something more beautiful. Each pearl contributes to the piece. In pericopal theology, each pericope contributes to the world in front of the text. So, through regular study of sequential pericopes, one may understand more and more about God's ideal world. One inhabits God's world by applying the pericopal theology revealed in the text.[23]

Pericope		Segment of Pericopal Theology	Plenary Ideal World
Pericope 1	⇒	Pericopal Theology 1	
Pericope 2	⇒	Pericopal Theology 2	
Pericope 3	⇒	Pericopal Theology 3	
Pericope 4	⇒	Pericopal Theology 4	Theology/God's World
Pericope 5	⇒	Pericopal Theology 5	
Pericope …	⇒	Pericopal Theology …	
Pericope *n*	⇒	Pericopal Theology *n*	
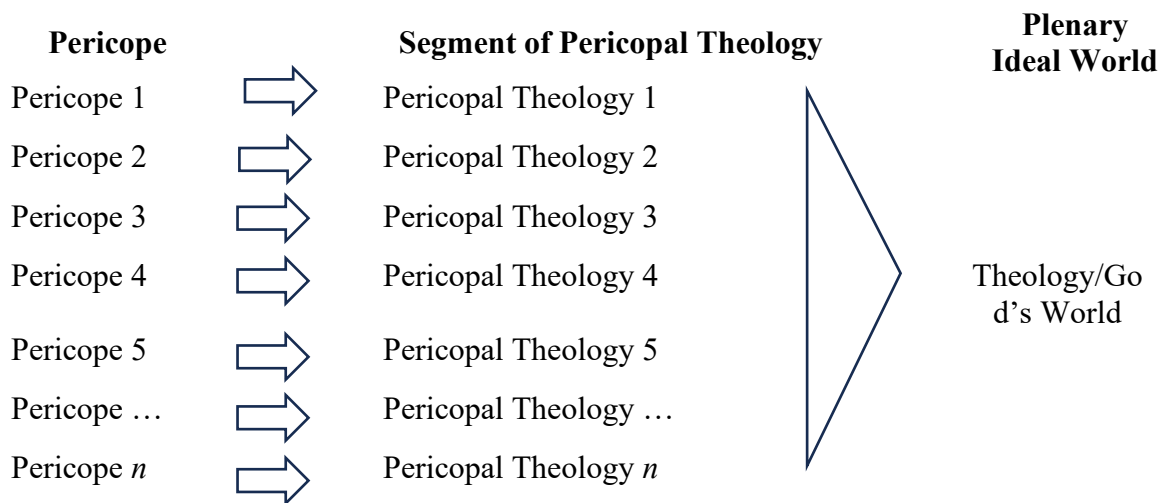
Figure 3. From pericope to theology

Pericopal theology differs from systematic theology and biblical theology due to its specific nature. Systematic theology, according to Wayne Grudem, "involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic."[24] This discipline generalizes the text. Generalizing the text softens the unique nature

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[23] Figure 3 adapted from Abraham Kuruvilla *Privilege the Text*, 59.

[24] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 21.

of each pericope—the focus of the application shifts from the text itself to the principal truth. Similarly, biblical theology is more general in its approach. Biblical theology considers the development of broader biblical themes across the Bible, such as atonement, justice, or forgiveness. Again, the application becomes principle-driven. The application is derived from a principle of the text, not the text itself. Pericopal theology differs from these in seeking to discern the application from the author's doings.

Discerning the author's doing requires theological exegesis that privileges the text. The hermeneutician exegetes the text, looking for clues to what the author is doing. These clues are found in the author's literary style and semantics. Kuruvilla likens the text of Scripture to a stained-glass window:

> The text is not a plain glass window that the reader looks through (to discern some events behind it). Instead, the narrative is a stained-glass window that the reader looks at (theological exegesis). The glass stains, the lead, the copper, and everything else that goes into the production of the stained glass are meticulously planned for the appropriate effect, to tell a particular story.[25]

The Bible was written with intention and precision. Every word is divinely inspired and serves a purpose. Therefore, one must privilege the text of Scripture and not simply the ideas of which it is speaking.

Readers must pay close attention to the text because not only is what is being said important, but also how it is being said and why. Each message sender has an agenda. For the biblical authors, this message is the theology of the pericope.[26] The theology of these pericopes is God's invitation to live in his ideal world.

Applicational Rationale

While the semantics of a text is essential to understanding Scripture correctly, pragmatics is equally vital in comprehension and application. In writing, each author projects a world in front of the text. In the context of the Bible, God has inspired the

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[25] Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology," 16.

[26] Kuruvilla, "Pericopal Theology," 16.

biblical authors to project his ideal world in His Word. Individual pericopes reveal this world. Studying these pericopes reveals different facets and aspects of God's ideal world. Applying the theology of the pericopes is how man dwells within God's ideal world. While all men and women are called to live in this ideal world, only one individual has perfectly inhabited it by perfectly meeting all of God's demands and being without sin, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus alone perfectly abided by the theology of every pericope. Therefore, every pericope portrays a characteristic of Christ, showing what it means to fulfill God's command just as Jesus did.[27]

Christiconic Interpretation

The christiconic hermeneutic derives its name from texts like Romans 8:29. God's ultimate purpose and goal for believers is that they "be conformed to the image of his Son." Kuruvilla argues, "Scripture is geared primarily for this glorious purpose of God, to restore the imago Dei in mankind by offering a theological description of Christlikeness."[28] Believers are made in the image of God, like the rest of humanity, but they are being conformed to the second person of the Trinity (the Son), unlike the rest of humanity. The process by which this happens is sanctification, which is achieved through the work of the Holy Spirit. Over a lifetime, the Spirit molds, shapes, and builds the individual into the image of the Son. In this sovereign work of God, there is also man's responsibility. The two work together. As man reads the Word, the Spirit reveals the Word. As man strives to resist temptation, the Holy Spirit empowers. Only through the words of the Holy Spirit can an individual be made like Christ. As they conform to Christ's image, they begin to dwell in the Father's ideal, established world. Salvation is Trinitarian.

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[27] Abraham Kuruvilla, "Christiconic Interpretation," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 173, no. 689 (January 2016): 144.

[28] Kuruvilla, "Christiconic Interpretation," 144.

Conforming to the image of the Son is not an instantaneous action but rather an ongoing process. Each pericope of Scripture describes a facet of the image of the Son to which man is being conformed, so a regular study of pericope after pericope gives a fuller picture of Christ and the world he inhabits. Therefore, the application of all Scripture is not morality or principles to live by; instead, it is a command to become like Christ.

Pericope	Segment of Christ's Image	Plenary Image
Pericope 1	Facet 1 of the Image of Christ	
Pericope 2	Facet 2 of the Image of Christ	
Pericope 3	Facet 3 of the Image of Christ	
Pericope 4	Facet 4 of the Image of Christ	Image of Christ
Pericope 5	Facet 5 of the Image of Christ	
Pericope …	Facet … of the Image of Christ	
Pericope n	Facet n of the Image of Christ	
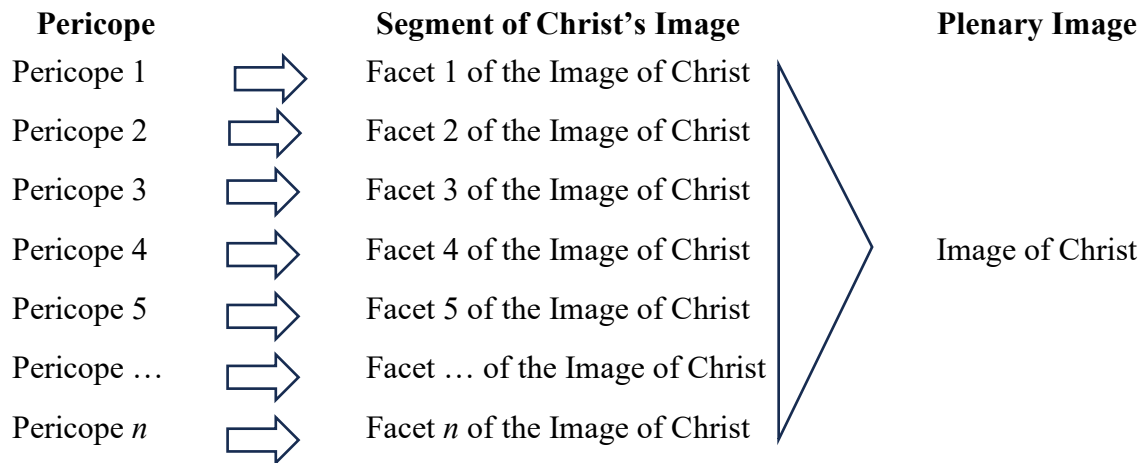
Figure 4. From pericope to the image of Christ

The process of sanctification, becoming like Christ, may be likened to a weekly visit to the doctor.[29] If a patient visits a dermatologist, the doctor may instruct on a specific treatment for dry skin. The following week, the patient will return and receive another instruction for nail care. The patient continues to care for dry skin and adds the nail care routine. Week after week, the patient's health improves under the doctor's instruction. After several weeks, the patient may move to another doctor to better understand how to care for their heart and blood pressure. The cardiologist will begin to make weekly recommendations. As the patient applies the instruction, he is conformed to a healthier person.

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[29] Kuruvilla uses this analogy in several of his works. Kuruvilla,"Christiconic View," 62; Kuruvilla, "Christiconic Interpretation," 144.

An important distinction is that this sanctification process only occurs after salvation. This world in front of the text is only inhabited by people who have trusted in Christ alone for forgiveness. It is not moralism where believers are expected to live like Christ, but because they are like Christ, they are expected to live like him. Each time a believer reads a pericope, discerns the thrust of the text, identifies the pericopal theology, and applies the text, the believer is being conformed to the image of the Son and dwelling in God's world.

Arguments against a Christiconic Interpretation

The christiconic interpretation is a relatively new hermeneutical method that continues to grow. Several scholars have expressed hesitation and concerns about the method as it grows. There exists an intramural debate among scholars and preachers on the value of application within the christiconic method. This section deals with several critics' primary concerns against the hermeneutic.

Bryan Chappell's Critique against
the Christiconic Method

Bryan Chapell is one of the most prominent advocates for the christocentric preaching method, also called the redemptive-historical hermeneutic. Chapell describes this hermeneutic in this way:

> This hermeneutic holds that God is revealing himself through his interaction with his people in the context of a redemptive history that displays his gracious nature. In this sense, the entire Bible is Christ-centered because Christ's redemptive work—in all of its incarnational, atoning, rising, interceding, and reigning dimensions—is the capstone of God's revelation of his dealings with his people. No aspect of revelation can be fully understood or explained in isolation from God's redeeming work that culminates in Christ's ministry. Christ-centered preaching, rightly understood, does not seek to discover where Christ is mentioned in every biblical text but to disclose where every text stands in relation to Christ's ministry.[30]

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[30] Bryan Chapell, "Redemptive-Historic View," in Gibson and Kim, *Homiletics and Hermeneutics*, 7.

The goal of the christocentric hermeneutic is to reveal the nature of God and his redemptive work in every text, as well as the aspect of human nature that requires redemption. Chapell describes this as "using gospel glasses" to read the text.[31] The gospel of Jesus Christ must be how interpreters approach the Bible. In reading the text this way, the individual seeks to proclaim God and his relationship with his people.

Considering the christiconic hermeneutic, Chapell agrees with Kuruvilla in a couple of ways. First, the theological rationale to determine the purpose of the text without settling for plain meaning is necessary. In the christocentric method, there are two authors at work. The human author is writing to a specific audience at a particular time. At the same time, the Holy Spirit is at work writing to a far greater audience. In each pericope, the Holy Spirit writes to communicate truths about Christ. There is more at work than what is simply being said.

Second, Christ is always the focus, as he is revealed in every text. Chapell points to Jesus's interaction with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). Explaining the verse, Chapell writes, "Jesus related all portions of Scripture to his own ministry. This does not mean that every phrase, punctuation mark, or verse directly reveals Christ, but rather that all passages in their context serve our understanding of his nature and/or necessity."[32] The whole of the Bible is about Jesus.

While there are some commonalities between the two hermeneutics, Chapell's primary concern with the christiconic method is its application in discerning the application of the text. He contends that readers do not fully understand a biblical passage until they have discerned why the Holy Spirit included it in Scripture—knowing a text's purpose is

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[31] Chapell, "Redemptive-Historic View," 15.

[32] Chapell, "Redemptive-Historic View," 8.

essential to truly understanding it. The way to determine the reason for a text is by identifying the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF). Chapell defines the FCF as "the mutual human condition that contemporary persons share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God's people to glorify and enjoy him."[33]The text's application is Jesus's answer to the FCF.

Chapell believes hermeneuticians, interpreters, and preachers must seek to discover the FCF of the text. From this FCF, they must identify how Jesus meets the fallen condition's needs. The result is always "Trust in Jesus. Trust in his person and work for the forgiveness of sin and sanctification for this particular fallen condition."

The problem is that under this hermeneutic, every pericope of Scripture has the same application and purpose: live like Jesus. However, each pericope is very different. Each has a different audience, author, and purpose for writing. To distill the application of the text down to this one truth ignores those unique traits. Kuruvilla's approach to application begins with the question, "what is the author doing with what he is saying?" Not every text is about Christ, but every text contains the "world in front of the text" in which Christ lives. This is the world in which individuals are invited to live. Living in this world means submitting to the precepts, priorities, and practices.

While Chapell and Kuruvilla agree on many issues in hermeneutics, the point of application draws a division. Chapell believes every text is about Christ, while Kuruvilla goes further by believing that not only is every text about Christ, but every text contains a facet of the world in which Christ dwells, and individuals are called to dwell with him.

**Buist Fanning Critiques against
the Christiconic Method**

Another helpful contributor to the discussion is Buist Fanning. In a response to Kuruvilla's article on the christiconic method, Fanning outlines several concerns: the

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[33] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 30.

intellectual lineage of "the world in front of the text," the abstract nature, and the importance of the ancient setting.

Fanning's first concern is the intellectual lineage of "the world in front of the text" and how it affects the approach to the text itself. Paul Ricoeur's "world in front of the text" functions as a license to detach the meaning of a text from its author and impose a new meaning created by the reader.[34] The written text is different than the spoken text. Fanning holds that "writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant. [The text] transcends its own psychosociological conditions of production and thereby opens itself up to an unlimited series of readings."[35] Fanning continues with Ricoeur's argument to understand oneself in front of the text: "It is not a question of imposing upon the text our finite capacity of understanding, but of exposing ourselves to the text of receiving from it an enlarged self."[36] This philosophical approach may cause individuals to misunderstand and misuse the text.

The second critique expressed by Fanning is the abstract nature of this approach. He claims it is "abstract, theoretical, and vague."[37] The primary concern is the ability of the reader to discern the author's doing from an ancient text accurately. The heart of the critique is that the interpreter cannot assuredly say, "This is the thrust of the text." There is too much room for subjective interpretation. Fanning believes Kuruvilla's interpretations of texts, such as Mark 14, Mark 16, and Genesis 22, are thin. One of the reasons for this is that Kuruvilla does not use the world "behind the text" (information about the author,

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[34] Abraham Kuruvilla uses Paul Ricoeur's "world in front of the text" from "Naming God," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 34, no. 4 (1979): 215-28.

[35] Buist Fanning, "Response to Abraham Kuruvilla, 'What Is the Author Doing with What He Is Saying'' Pragmatics and Preaching—An Appeal!," Homiletix, accessed May 5, 2022, 3-4, https://www.homiletix.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Buist_response-FINAL.pdf.

[36] Fanning, "Response to Abraham Kuruvilla," 3.

[37] Fanning, "Response to Abraham Kuruvilla," 4.

the original readers, their specific situation, or the larger-cultural-religious world in which they lived) for interpretation. Ignoring these aspects of interpretation may cause the reader to miss important aspects and points of interpretation.

Third, Fanning believes Kuruvilla neglects the importance of the ancient setting for biblical interpretation. He believes the interpreter must examine the text's extra-linguistic context, not just its features. The gap in time, culture, and worldview of the author and first readers would play a significant role in their interpretation. While present-day readers share a common humanity with the primary audience and our existence as creatures subject to God, there are many differences. The text by itself cannot be enough to connect the distance between the two audiences. For example, when modern-day readers read about "freedom" in Galatians 5, a world in front of the text is drawn. But the world that the primary audiences sees will be different from the world a modern-day reader would see because both audiences have a different meaning and experiences of "freedom." Fanning argues that the semantics and pragmatics of a text must be construed in light of the literary context as well as the extra-literary context.

Fanning raises legitimate concerns, but they fail to rule out the christiconic method. In his critique of "the world in front of the text," he argues that the text may have too much autonomy. While the autonomy of the text is undoubtedly dangerous, Scripture never truly stands alone; it fits into the canon. In interpreting Scripture, a reader must always approach the text with specific rules and guidelines. One of the rules is that the Bible must be viewed as one book. Kuruvilla calls this the Rule of Singularity.[38] Because the Bible is one book, there is one author. The Word of God is breathed out by God, and He stands as its creator. While many texts may stand alone from their author in autonomy, the Bible is intrinsically attached to God. When interpreting a text of Scripture, the entire canon must be considered.

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[38] Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 71-72.

Fanning also believes the christiconic method to be "abstract, theoretical, and vague."[39] In his rejoinder to Fanning, Kuruvilla argues for a "thick" reading of the text. A "thick reading" was first introduced by Gilbert Ryle by contrasting a wink and an involuntary eyelid twitch. Kevin Vanhoozer adopted the metaphor in textual interpretation in his definition: "a description is sufficiently thick when it allows us to appreciate everything the author is doing in a text."[40] Kuruvilla summarizes their work as "a thick description, judiciously and discriminatingly employing semantics that lead to pragmatics, explicates what the author is doing—the world in front of the text that, bearing the theology of the pericope, prepares the way for the move to application."[41] The christiconic hermeneutic requires a deep study of the text that seeks to notice the semantics of the text to discover the pragmatics.

Fanning's third critique, dealing with the ancient setting text in a modern setting, is not a critique unique to the christiconic method. In any form of interpretation and translation, there is difficulty in ensuring accuracy regarding the application. He writes, "the semantics and pragmatics of a text must be construed in light of the literary context as well as the extra-literary context. . . . This must not be neglected in our search for the text's meaning and application."[42] Kuruvilla would agree with this concern; it is essential to seek accurate meaning. The christiconic method does not neglect that aspect.

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[39] Fanning, "Response to Abraham Kuruvilla," 4.

[40] Abraham Kuruvilla, "Authorial Rejoinder to Response to "What Is the Author Doing with What He Is Saying?' Pragmatics and Preaching—An Appeal!," Homiletix, accessed March 22, 2022, 1, https://www.homiletix.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Abe_rejoinder-FINAL.pdf.

[41] Kuruvilla, "Authorial Rejoinder," 1.

[42] Fanning, "Response to Abraham Kuruvilla," 6.

Peter Mead's Critiques against
the Christiconic Method

Peter Mead joins the conversation and offers three critiques. First, he is concerned with Kuruvilla's view of God. Mead writes, "The persistent recurrence of 'divine demand' language presented a God who seems pre-eminently concerned with conformity to behavioral standards."[43] God is not seen as a benevolent father seeking to build a relationship with is children, but rather a gruff, restrictive father expecting perfect obedience from his children. Mead also believes the focus on the Father's ideal world plays into a lack of Trinitarian focus and preaching in this hermeneutic.

Mead's second concern is Kuruvilla's view of man. His problem rests in the onus of responsibility of their own willingness to self-align to God's preferred future. The heart of his argument is that even if Kuruvilla's vision of preaching were fulfilled, believers would still feel distant from God as their goal would be obedience and not union with Christ. He believes Kuruvilla's method lacks intimacy with Christ in the gospel. Kuruvilla submits, "What God would have is that his people be captivated by the world projected in front of the text and that they seek to be its inhabitants, aligning themselves to its precepts, priorities, and practices."[44] Mead offers an alternative:

> What God would have is that his people be captivated by Christ who reveals the Father's heart, whose love is poured out into our hearts by the Spirit, so that we are progressively transformed from the inside-out by God's great New Covenant solution to our fallen sinful state—this sin being manifested not only in sinful behavior but also in autonomous obedience and religiosity. God's goal is not simply to be served by a holy people, but to be in union with His people who are transformed into the true holiness that is the context of His own fellowship within the Trinity. [45]

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[43] Peter Mead, review of *Privilege the Text! by Abraham Kuruvilla*—Part 2, Biblical Preaching (blog), July 11, 2014, https://biblicalpreaching.net/2014/07/11/review-privilege-the-text-by-abraham-kuruvilla-part-2/.

[44] Mead, review of *Privilege the Text!*

[45] Mead, review of *Privilege the Text!*

Mead's definition highlights his issue with Kuruvilla: Christians should be "captivated" by Christ rather than bound by filial obedience while being transformed to the image of the Son, and God's people are united with him rather than simply living in his world.

Finally, Mead believes the christiconic method to be too restrictive. Considering the Old Testament, he believes the Word to be more informational and historical, more than simple moral instruction. He suggests the text is divine revelation: "The Bible reveals God to us, and in that revelation, we discover the fullness of life . . . we lose the heart of Christianity when holiness, loosened from a rich and delightful intra-trinitarian fellowship, becomes the primary emphasis."[46]

While Mead raises some helpful critiques, they ultimately fail to properly understand and summarize the christiconic hermeneutic. In every way, the method is misunderstood or insufficiently presented. First, Mead misunderstands Kuruvilla's "filial obedience." In the section Mead quotes, Kuruvilla writes concerning the order of relationship and responsibility. God's children have a duty, a responsibility, to God because God has begun a relationship. The believer's responsibilities are to conform to the image of the Son.[47] Mead further claims this demonstrates Kuruvilla's limited Trinitarian approach to preaching. Again, Mead is mistaken. The christiconic approach to preaching demands a high view of the Trinity, especially in salvation. The Father's world is projected in "the world in front of the text"; the Son lives in that world and demonstrates how the children of God are called to live within. By the power of the Holy Spirit, believers may fulfill the application demanded by the pericopal theology. Though the emphasis is on being conformed to the image of the Son, the Trinity surrounds the work of sanctification.

His second critique pushes the christiconic hermeneutic to go beyond its purpose and definition. The "filial" obedience is not a slave to master but a father to a son. Believers

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[46] Mead, review of *Privilege the Text!*

[47] Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text!*, 273.

join the family of God at salvation and become more like the Firstborn as they conform to his image while dwelling in the world of the Father. The relationship is intimate. It is not moralism, where Christians are living obediently because they are forced to, but they are aligning themselves to the precepts, priorities, and practices of the Father.

Finally, the problem with believing the Bible to be revelatory is that it simply dismisses the applicational aspect of the Bible. If the Bible is primarily revelatory, then conformity to the precepts, priorities, and practices may be rejected. The Bible reveals so that the reader may apply and live its truths. In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus reveals the Greatest Commandment. It is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This is not simply revelation about the character of God but a direct command to love God in this way. The Bible is more than revelation; it is revelation for application.

Conclusion

The christiconic hermeneutic seeks to privilege the text. In this method, the interpreter moves from text to praxis. Beginning with the pericope, moving to pericopal theology, and finally to application. This is the purpose and intent of the Bible: to instruct the reader to do something with what the author is saying.

CHAPTER 3

DEMONSTRATION OF PERICOPAL THEOLOGY

This chapter uses three genres of Scripture to demonstrate pericopal theology: historical narrative (Gen 22), wisdom (Ps 25), gospel (Mark 14:1-34), and epistle (Eph 6:10-24). Each section will answer the question, "what is the author doing with what he is saying?" Each section will start by considering the theological exegesis. This exegesis focuses on the author's literary and stylistic choices that point to his agenda and doings. After these considerations, the pericopal theology will be stated and an example of practical application provided.

**Christiconic Hermeneutics in the Historical
Narrative: Genesis 22**

In Genesis 22, the Lord God tests his servant, Abraham. As the chapter opens, the narrator states, "After these things" (v. 1). Understanding "these things" is necessary to understand the rest of the chapter. "These things" are the events, lessons, and revelation from God to Abraham in the previous ten chapters.

Abraham's first test begins in Genesis 12 as the Lord calls him to leave his country, his family, and his father's house to secure a blessing from the Lord. The Lord's blessing is expressed in seven statements that explore aspects of the blessing. The first three and the fifth and sixth statements are God's promise of what he will do. The fourth statement is about Abram, and the last is about all peoples on earth:

1. I will make you a great nation (God's promise).

2. I will bless you (God's promise).

3. I will make your name great (God's promise).

4. Be a blessing (an imperative, here expressing an invitation to Abraham).

5. I will bless those who bless you (God's promise).

6. I will curse those who treat you with contempt (God's promise).

7. All the peoples of the earth will consider themselves blessed through you (the people's reaction).[1]

This entire blessing will be fulfilled through Abraham's heir. Though Abraham trusts the Lord and steps out in faith, he fails to trust God fully. Even though the command from God was evident—"leave your kindred"—Abraham brought Lot, his nephew (Gen 12:4). Lot is Abraham's insurance policy. Abraham has a plan if God cannot provide an heir for him.[2]

Soon after leaving his homeland and father's house, Abraham travels toward the land of Canaan. As they enter Canaan, the Lord appears to Abraham and promises, "To your offspring, I will give this land" (Gen 12:7). Abraham builds an altar, worships the Lord, and continues to travel. However, when famine strikes the land, Abraham flees to Egypt—again displaying faithlessness in God's power to provide for him and his family.

Before arriving in Egypt, Abraham plans another provision for himself in case the Lord is unable to protect him. He tells his wife, Sarah, that she is beautiful and is fearful that the Egyptians will kill him to take her as their wife. To protect himself, he decides to pass her off as his sister. Abraham and Sarah are still childless, and even though the Lord promised a descendant, Abraham fears he may be killed. He, again, displays faithlessness in God's power to provide and protect him.

In Genesis 15, the Lord renews his promise to Abraham. The Lord is specific in his decision for Abraham's heir this time. Though Abraham first believes it will be Eliezer, God rejects him and affirms, "Your very own son shall be your heir" (Gen 15:4). This promise is outlined in covenant form (Gen 15:5-21). This covenant-promise does not come as quickly as Abraham expects, and he begins to doubt the Lord. Genesis 16 states that

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[1] Andrew E. Steinmann, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol 1. (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 144.

[2] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 163.

Sarah remained barren. To solve the problem of the Lord, Sarah instructs Abraham to conceive an heir with her servant (Gen 16:1-2). In this way, Abraham's heir will come "from your own body," fulfilling God's promise. However, this was not God's plan. Again, the two doubted God's faithfulness, power, and provision to fulfill his plan in their lives. In Genesis 17, God appears to Abraham and makes his plan clear. Abraham will have a son, and he will be the child of Sarah. The text reiterates this three times (Gen 17:16, 19, 21). God will provide.

God continues to lead, direct, and guide Abraham, but in Genesis 20 is another sign of faithlessness. As Abraham and his family sojourned in Gerar, Abraham called Sarah his sister before Abimelech, king of Gerar. After the Lord appears to Abimelech, reveals Sarah's true identity, and instructs her to be returned, Abraham explains the reason for his lies: "There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife" (Gen 20:11). For the second time, Abraham passes off Sarah as his sister to protect himself—displaying continued faithlessness in God.

Finally, in Genesis 21, Isaac, the heir, is born. Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son, fulfilling God's promises. Three times in two verses, Yahweh's faithfulness is established: "Yahweh took note of Sarah as He had said" (21:1a); "Yahweh did for Sarah as he promised" (21:1b); "Sarah conceived and bore a son . . . at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him" (21:2).[3] This is a strong rebuke toward Abraham's consistent faithlessness. God's plan will surely come to pass. He has always been faithful to Abraham, and he always will be. The issue Abraham had been trying to solve on his own had not been settled, as God had promised.[4]

In the next chapter, Genesis 22, God tests Abraham. Kuruvilla describes this as a necessary test: "Had Abraham learned his lesson? Would he come around to realizing,

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[3] Abraham Kuruvilla, "The Aqedah (Genesis 22): What Is the Author Doing with What He Is Saying?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 3 (September 2012): 498.

[4] Kuruvilla, "The Aqedah (Genesis 22)," 498.

finally, that God was faithful. . . . A test was necessary—not for God's benefit, of course, but for Abraham's, and for the benefit of all succeeding generations of readers of the text, to demonstrate what it meant to trust God fully, to take him at his word."[5]

A key phrase of Genesis 22 is Genesis 22:12: "Now I know that you fear God." The idea of "fearing God" is a critical element in the account. The last time this phrase was used in the life of Abraham was in Genesis 20, when Abimelech confronts Abraham. Abraham states that he feared the people in Gerar because there was "no fear of God in this place" (Gen 20:11). There is a great deal of irony at work. In Genesis 20:8, the author states, "The men were very much afraid" upon hearing they have stood against God. Abraham is the one the reader expects to fear, trust, and respect God, yet the unexpected people of Gerar display these traits. Abraham does not fear God enough to trust him to care for him when God promised to do so. An essential aspect of Abraham's test will be to test the fear and trust he has for God.

A second key phrase of the test is Genesis 22:12: "Your son, whom you love." The father-son relationship is emphasized fifteen times in Genesis 22:1-20. Readers are never to forget the relationship. In the only recorded conversation in the Bible between Abraham and Isaac, Isaac's words begin with "my father," and Abraham's end with "my son." These are also Abraham's last words to Isaac before he prepares to slay him. Kuruvilla argues that this is the narrator creating emotional tension in the story. The narrator is highlighting that a father is called to slay the son he loves.[6]

Another emphasis in the account is highlighted in the proclamation from God before and after the test.

Pre-test:
    22:2 "your son, your only son, the one you love"
Post-test:
    22:12 "your son, your only son"
    22:16 "your son, your only son"

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[5] Kuruvilla, "The Aqedah (Genesis 22)," 498.

[6] Kuruvilla, "The Aqedah (Genesis 22)," 501.

The narrative omission in 22:12 and 22:16 reveals the reason for the test. The threefold description of Isaac in 22:2 emphasizes the place Isaac held in Abraham's heart. Abraham loved Isaac potentially more than he loved God. Isaac, the son of promise, had taken the place of God in Abraham's devotion and priority. The removal of the phrase in 22:12 and 22:16 demonstrates that Abraham's love was truly focused on God. The test was a demonstration of the love of God against anything that may rival that love.[7]

The final key phrase in this account is in Genesis 22:19: "They [Abraham and his young men] . . . went together." This starkly contrasts the similar phrase found in 22:6 and 22:8. In the first two verses, the narrator notes, "So the two of them [Abraham and Isaac] walked on together." After the test, Isaac vanished. Indeed, the father and son are never shown speaking to one another again in the narrative. Isaac does not even show up in the account of Sarah's death and burial. The only interaction between the two is in Genesis 25:9 at Abraham's funeral. The reason for the omission is that the author is doing something with what he is saying. More specifically, he is doing something with what he is not saying. By omitting the name of Isaac, the emphasis is on Abraham and his love for God, not his son.

Genesis 22:16-18 describes the reward of having passed the test. God will now surely multiply Abraham's offspring; they will become as numerous as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky because Abraham did not withhold his son.

Pericopal Theology and Application

What is the author doing with what he is saying in Genesis 22? Considering chapter 22 and the previous ten chapters, the narrator teaches his audience about faith in God's promises. Kuruvilla states the theological focus: "Faith in God's promises and his word is required from the child of God, and such a faith is liable to be tested. This faith, equivalent to a supreme love/fear of God that trumps every other allegiance, is manifest

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[7] Kuruvilla, "The Aqedah (Genesis 22)," 502.

in self-sacrificial obedience to his word. Such faith in God (love/fear of God), God sees fit to reward with blessing."[8] The people of God are expected to display faith in God and at times this faith will be tested.

God's ultimate goal is to conform each believer into the image of his Son (Rom 8:29). This pericope seeks to conform believers by their faith. Christ perfectly trusted in the Father and always displayed faith, so believers must do the same. While this will find its fulfillment one day, Scripture also demands immediate application. One way to apply this text to one's life is to consider the idols in one's own life. In a sermon on this text, Kuruvilla suggests four suggestions for sacrifice. He calls them "the disciples of abstinence: solitude, fasting, frugality, celibacy."[9] In practicing abstinence from these things, the believer practices trusting God.

Christiconic Hermeneutics in the Psalms: Psalm 25

Psalm 25 is a prayer psalm with themes of affliction, forgiveness of sin, and instruction. The psalm forms an incomplete alphabetical composition.[10] The alphabetical form suggests that the psalm is designed to cover prayer from A to Z. John Goldingay reasons that this gives a distinctive power and dynamic that makes it different from the more emotional and expressive psalms.[11] It certainly has elements of expression and emotion, but its primary function is to instruct and teach. With this original purpose, the author's doing is essential to understand the theology of the psalm. Several clues point toward the pericopal theology.

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[8] Kuruvilla, "The Aqedah (Genesis 22)," 508.

[9] Abraham Kuruvilla, "The Real Sacrifice | Dr. Abe Kuruvilla," Buck Run Baptist Church, February 6, 2022, YouTube video, 40:37, https://youtu.be/kniYpOQv8v4.

[10] The incompleteness of this psalm is a lacking ק line and two ר lines. Peter Craigie suggests the ק was probably omitted accidentally by virtue of the similarity with the following ראה. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 218.

[11] John Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) 367.

The psalm begins with a heading (vv. 1-3) wherein the speaker approaches the Lord. As he approaches the Lord, he does so in the appropriate manner. First, he has "waited" on the Lord, implying an attitude of both patience and hope. Second, he is preparing to worship as he says, "I lift up my soul" (v. 1). In this "lifting," he is displaying confidence in the Lord's ability to hear.[12] The metaphor of "lifting up" suggests the inward equivalent of lifting up one's hands or eyes involved in prayer.[13] Finally, he has "trusted." The attitude of trust is essential for the psalmist's place before the Lord. He comes to the Lord with humility, trust, and confidence in his assured deliverance.[14] He knows he will not be put to shame, and his enemies will not exult over him. This is not a naïve or supposed confidence but rather a human response to God's self-revelation of his character and historical experience. The psalmist knows that God will answer. He moves from prayer (v. 2) to confidence (v. 3). God will not only hear his prayer, but God will save him from his enemies and shame.

Having established confidence in the Lord, the psalmist petitions the Lord to act in two ways: guidance and instruction. Not only does he need to know the ways of the Lord, but he also needs the ability to walk in them—he needs enlightenment and strength.[15] This is how the psalmist will not be put to shame when he is led and taught by God. God alone is his salvation, his source of freedom. There is no way to resist shame without aid from the Lord. However, the psalmist is overwhelmed with his past sins, calling for the Lord to guide and instruct. He cries out, "Remember your mercy. O Lord, and your steadfast love. . . . Remember not the sins of my youth . . . according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness" (vv. 6-7). Three times, he uses

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[12] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 218.

[13] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 369.

[14] Craigie, *Pslams 1-50*, 218.

[15] Craigie, *Pslams 1-50*, 219.

"remember;" first in asking God to remember his past acts of mercy, second to remember not the sins he committed when he was young, and third to remember him as an individual.[16] The sequence is significant. The psalmist establishes God's goodness and mercy, then he recalls his sinful youth before the Lord, and finally he asks the Lord to remember him in light of God's mercy and sin. The prayer is one of forgiveness and salvation in light of God's righteousness and his own sin. He cannot honestly pray to be directed in God's path without first confessing and praying for forgiveness in repentance.[17]

In verse 8, the psalm shifts from a prayer for forgiveness to an expression of confidence in God. He exclaims to those who listen that the Lord is good and upright. These qualities are not seen as qualifying each other, as if goodness might be too soft in isolation and uprightness too hard.[18] If God was upright, then he could not overlook the sins of the youth; if God were good, then he would desire to overlook them as the psalmist repented. However, God is both upright and good. God would not ignore sin, but he will forgive sin.[19] Goldingay argues, "Whereas human uprightness can make people intolerant of failure, it increases God's commitment to people who fail to walk in the way that is right."[20] The psalmist confidently requests the Lord to remember, lead, and guide him. He is confident that God's steadfast love and faithfulness will always be upon those who keep his covenant and testimonies.

This reminder launches the prayer of forgiveness in Psalm 25:11. If God's response depended upon the sinner, there would be no pardon. However, glory be to God that he does not forgive for the sinner's sake but for his own name's sake. The psalmist is

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[16] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 219.

[17] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 219.

[18] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 372.

[19] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 220.

[20] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 372.

confident that God will forgive him of his sins because God will stay true to his character as good and upright toward those who keep his covenant and testimonies. This does not give a license to sin but rather a confidence in forgiveness when sin has been committed. Goldingay explains, "God's character requires the expectation of commitment, but it also requires the manifestation of mercy."[21]

To explain this idea, the psalmist raises a rhetorical question: "Who is the man who fears the Lord?" (v. 12). He answers that the God-fearing man is the man instructed by the Lord. This man shall abide in the well-being given by the Lord. This man will secure the divine blessing.

The confidence found in the forgiveness of sin stems from the relationship the sinner has with the Lord. Though he is guilty of sin, the psalmist desires to be instructed by the Lord. The result of obedience to this instruction is that the Lord shall be abiding with him and he will receive an inheritance from the Lord. The implication is not that he and his descendants would become great landowners but that they would continue to share in the possession of the land God promised to his people.[22] They would remain the people of God.

Though this is the first blessing listed, it is not the greatest blessing for the God-fearing man. The greatest blessing is that this man will be friends with the Lord and in covenant with God. This is a privileged, intimate relationship that God held with his people.[23] Those who feared and revered God were friends with God. Within this friendship, the psalmist finds confidence in himself and his Lord.

In the following verse, the psalm shifts once again. Attention is now a first-person, fixed gaze toward the Lord. There is no more talk of teaching or mindfulness.

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[21] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 373

[22] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 221.

[23] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 221

Instead, the imagery of vision is prominent. In raising his eyes to the Lord, he is trying to catch the Lord's eye so that the Lord will then be gracious. The psalmist is appealing to the Lord's favor when he deserves nothing.[24] Though similar to the previous cry for rescue, this stanza takes a more personal tone. Goldingay notes,

> Here for the first time, the Psalter uses that most common term for "forgive," which means "carry," rather than the more technical term 'pardon.' It implies that weakness, trouble, and sin are all facts about human experience that the suppliant needs God to handle by carrying them, coping with their implications, and accepting us as we are.[25]

The psalmist continues to pray for forgiveness and rescue. He requests the Lord to be gracious to him because he is lonely and afflicted. This results in a heart that is enlarged, troubled, and distressed, and this heart is a result of a twofold problem: the weight of his sins (v. 18a) and his surrounding foes (v. 19). If these are not removed, the psalmist feels as though he would be barred from the divine friendship.[26] He returns to the cry for help and requests to be saved from shame. He calls upon the integrity and uprightness of the Lord. That alone is his preservation.

The final verse of the psalm contains two unusual traits. First, it is not a part of the alphabet acrostic sequence. Second, it introduces a different tone by placing "Israel" into the psalm for the first time. These differences suggest that it may be a liturgical addition added at a later date. Craigie argues,

> The effect of the postscript is to transform the more individual prayer of the psalm into a prayer suitable for Israel as a nation; the "troubles" of the psalmist are analogous to the troubles of Israel. As the whole community utilized this psalm in their worship, they rose above their own troubles and prayed that God would ransom Israel from those enemies who were the sources of the entire nation's troubles.[27]

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[24] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 375

[25] Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41*, 376

[26] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*,221

[27] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*,222.

The hermeneutical decision must now be made. Was verse 22 inspired by the Holy Spirit and sufficient to be called Scripture, or should it be kept as a comment or note about Scripture because it was not the semantics of the original author?

Considering the purpose of the psalm, the former view must be determined as the best position; the psalm functions as an instruction on how to pray; therefore, it is written for all people. The addition of verse 22 encourages the people to pray this psalm.

Pericopal Theology and Application

Psalm 25 deals with issues such as forgiveness, confession, and confidence. It reveals the character of God, good and upright, as well as the sinful and afraid man. Thus, the pericopal theology may be stated in this way: God is a teacher, guide, and savior to the afflicted, suffering, and hurting. One might follow the acrostic as a prayer guide to apply this psalm properly, using the psalm to inspire words of prayer for confession, repentance, and confidence in the Lord.

Christiconic Hermeneutics in the Gospels: Mark 4:1-34

In Mark 4, Jesus uses several parables to teach the crowd. While each contains different facets of theology and teaching on the issue, it is best to consider them as a whole as they are connected with a series of "and he said" clauses. This discourse provides an explanatory framework to help the reader better understand the narrative that precedes and follows it.[28] The placement of this discourse follows a pericope dealing with individuals whom the reader would expect to hear and receive but instead they hear and reject. The question Jesus's teaching seeks to answer is simple: how could there be such a diverse

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[28] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 182.

response to the same message? Mark 4:1-34 speaks to the two elements at work: the human element and the divine element. The structure of the pericope may be viewed in table 1.[29]

Table 1. Mark 4:1-34 structure

Structural Elements	Text	Content
Narrative Introduction	4:1-2	"Many things in parables"
Seed Parable	4:3-9	Lesson Expressed: Parable of Growth
Mystery	4:10-13	
Private Discussion	4:14-20	Lesson Explained: Human Element in Growth
Revelation	4:21-25	
Seed Parables	4:26-32	Lesson Extended: Divine Element in Growth
Narrative Conclusion	4:33-34	"Many parables"

The Human Element: Mark 4:1-25

As Mark 4 opens, the writer sets the scene. Jesus begins to teach beside the sea but is quickly surrounded by a large group of people. In response, Jesus moves into a boat and onto the sea. The crowd remains on the land. Kuruvilla writes, "The precise, but somewhat redundant, description of the crowd as being on 'land' prepares the ground for the parable that deals with different kinds of 'soil,' both good and bad."[30] The parable deals with different types of soils, and each soil has a different result from the gospel message.

As Jesus tells this parable, it becomes clear that he is identified as the sower: both he and the sower "go out" (Mark 4:3; see also 1:35, 38-39; 2:13, 17); one sows the word, the other preaches the word (Mark 4:14-15, 33; 1:38-39; 2:2; 8:32); both have a negative and positive result.[31] As the sower, the responsibility to sow the seed is complete. It is now the responsibility of the soil to receive the seed and allow it to grow.

[29] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Mark: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 77.

[30] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 80.

[31] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 80.

However, not every soil results in growth. Alan Cole explains, "The operation of the divine word on the human heart is not automatic, and that, while the doctrine is unvarying, the nature of the response is dictated by the nature of the heart that receives it."[32] Here, the reader begins to see the responsibility of the soil to receive the seed. Not only is the divine seed important, but also the soil. When the seed falls onto the good soil, the result is incredible: "thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold" (Mark 4:8). While the produce is substantial, the verbs describing the fruit provide insight into the type of fruit. Kuruvilla notes that the verbs in 4:8 are in the imperfect tense ("yielding" and "producing"), which denotes continuous fruitfulness— "a hint that this is to be the uninterrupted and ongoing norm of the disciple's life."[33]

Following the parable, Jesus privately discusses it with his apostles. He teaches that the kingdom of God is a mystery or a secret (μυστήριον). The term "mystery" means that it is hidden, not necessarily incomprehensible. Mark's use of "mystery" notes that the kingdom of God is not something to be kept secret; instead, it is to be revealed and made known. Mark affirms this in 4:21-22: "Nothing is hidden except be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light."

At the same time, the revelation is not given to all. Mark introduces the language of outsiders/insiders in 4:11: "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God [insiders], but for those outside everything is in parables [outsiders]." Mark notes that it is not just the parables that will not be understood by the outsiders, but "everything." The soil on which the seed lands will never give understanding. They are blind and deaf so they will not turn and be forgiven. This teaching reveals the divine aspect of the seed. Not only is the soil (the heart of the unbeliever) not receiving the message, but God is also preventing it. When the seed does not take root, it cannot bear fruit.

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[32] R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 2 (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity), 1:149-50.

[33] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 80.

Following his teaching on the secret nature of the gospel, Jesus rebukes the apostles for not understanding the parable and in turn, all parables. After his rebuke, he provides a clear explanation of the sower parable. The Word is the seed, and the soil is the heart of the hearer. The fault of the seed not taking root is not on the sower, but on the soil. There is a requirement for the soil for "hearing the word" (Mark 4:16, 18, 20), "receiving [the word] with joy" (Mark 4:16), and "accepting it" (Mark 4:20).[34] The soil has a responsibility, when God allows, to allow the Word to take root. In the one instance where the Word takes root, fruit is abundant: "Thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold" (Mark 4:20).

In the final portion of the human element of receiving the gospel, Mark includes Jesus's teaching on revelation. This revelation section (4:9-13) parallels the mystery section (4:21-25).[35]

Table 2. The mystery and revelation of Mark 4:11-24

Mystery: Mark 4:10-13	Revelation: Mark 4:21-25
4:11b, to you has been given (δίδωμι, *didōmi*)	4:25a, to him it will be given (δίδωμι)
4:11, μυστήριον (*mystērion*, "myster")	4:22, κρυπτός, ἀπόκρυφος (*kryptos, apokryphos*, "hidden, concealed")
4:11c, everything is γίνομαι (*ginomai*) in parables	4:22b, neither is (γίνομαι) it hidden
4:12, ἵνα (*hina;* telic/result) clause	4:21-22, four ἵνα clauses
4:12, see-hear (βλέπω-ἀκούω, *blepō-akouō*)	4:24, see-hear (βλέπω-ἀκούω)

This "revelation" motif emphasizes that all are given an opportunity to hear, heed, and accept the call to discipleship. Just as a lamp is designed to be put on a stand and give light to the whole house, the mystery of the gospel is to be made known to all. Kuruvilla notes, "There is nothing to keep *anyone* from being receptive to God's

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[34] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 83.

[35] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 84.

word."[36] Jesus, the lamp, came to earth to reveal the gospel to all people.

The tension of the text is evident. In 4:21-23, there is an optimism that all will hear and see. In 4:24-25, there is a realism that not all will be receptive and will thus suffer the consequences. Kuruvilla notes, "This realism leads to the subsequent section that pictures the sovereign work of God—the divine element—in disciples' growth and fruit-bearing."[37]

The Divine Element: Mark 4:26-34

The divine element of the discourse contains two parables dealing with the kingdom of God. Though this is new to the discourse, it is a theme throughout Mark's Gospel. The first parable has no parallel in the other Gospels. It functions as a further explanation of the parable of the sower, specifically on the fourth soil.[38] The Word has taken root in this parable and begins to produce fruit.

There is a deliberate movement from the activity of the man, to the activity of the fruit, to the activity of God. Then, the movement is in reverse order—from God, to the fruit, to the seed. The chiastic emphasis is on the work of God. Outside the initial seed-throwing and sickle-harvesting, the sower does nothing but wait.[39] Martin Luther, in speaking to the passive nature of the seed-thrower, preached: "I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise, I did nothing. And while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses on it. I did nothing; the word did everything."[40]

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[36] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 84.

[37] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 85.

[38] Cole, *Mark*, 1:53-54.

[39] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 87.

[40] Matt Smethurst, *Before You Open Your Bible: Nine Heart Postures for Approaching God's Word* (Leyland, Lancashire, England: 10Publishing, 2019), 53.

Just as God is the one who nourishes the seed that grows, it is also God who nourishes the heart to produce fruit.

The final parable compares a mustard seed to the kingdom of God. It serves as an encouragement to disciples seeking to bear fruit. After it is sown, what began as the smallest of all the seeds grows into a large tree that puts out branches so that birds of the air can make their nests in its shade. This detail of birds building nests in the tree's shade alludes to eschatological language from Ezekiel 17:23 and 31:6. Robert Stein contends, "No clear allusion to these OT texts is made in the parable, however, and the reference to the birds, like the reference to the large branches, makes perfectly good sense as an example of the greatness of the final product without allegorizing it."[41] The importance of not allegorizing the parable is essential. Mark is arguing that there is a direct result of the Word taking root in the heart and God growing the believer to bear fruit. If the Word takes root, then the disciple *will* bear fruit. This is not on account of the disciple but God, who causes growth.

The pericope concludes with Mark's comments about Jesus's teaching. Kuruvilla notes the nature of Jesus's teaching by connecting the phrase "speak the word" (4:33) to the phrase in Acts to indicate this was the regular way in which Jesus taught: he spoke parables publicly; he explained everything to his disciples privately.[42]

Pericopal Theology and Application

Sharyn Dowd notes Jesus's use of agricultural parables was a "master stroke of cross-cultural communication."[43] Agricultural teaching illustrations were common in the

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[41] Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Ada, MI: Baker, 2008), 236.

[42] Kuruvilla, *Mark*, 89.

[43] Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark*, Reading the New Testament Commentary Series (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2000) 40.

Old Testament and among Greek philosophers and rhetors.[44] The power of the parable is that hearers of different cultural backgrounds would have found a connection. Mark uses these specific teachings of Jesus to communicate why some receive the teachings of Jesus while others reject them. The Christian has a responsibility to bear fruit in discipleship (the human element) by being receptive to the Word of God when it is sown. Additionally, God is responsible (the divine element) for growing the Word in the disciple's heart so that it ultimately bears fruit.

Finally, moving to application, Christians, upon hearing the Word of God preached, must allow it to take root in their heart and strive to produce fruit for the kingdom. The human element must be to receive the Word of God with ears that hear and eyes that see. The divine element rests on God to produce bountiful fruit. One of the practical ways believers allow the Word to take root in their hearts is by memorizing and meditating on the Word. In the same way, a seed grows, the Word must also grow. By memorizing and meditating on Scripture, the Word will grow.

Christiconic Hermeneutics in the Epistles:
Ephesians 6:10-20

The final pericope of Paul's letter to the Ephesians deals with finding victory in supernatural warfare. Throughout the book's second half, Paul's instruction focuses on how believers "walk" (Eph 4:1; see also 4:17; 5:2, 8, 15). Now, he concludes with how believers "stand" (Eph 6:11, 13 [x2], 14). What was once a communal journey through life now becomes a communal resistance.[45] If believers wish to stand against the enemy, they must trust in the provision and protection provided by God.

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[44] Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 40.

[45] Abraham Kuruvilla, *Ephesians: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock), 202.

The pericope notes the balance of divine provision and human responsibility regarding each piece of divine armor.[46] There is an apparent tension and balance between the indicative and the imperative. God has indeed provided for the believers, but the believer is also expected to be responsible for appropriating what God has done.

Table 3. The panoply of God

Armor	Indicative: Divine Provision	Imperative: Human Responsibility
Belt of Truth (6:14)	Salvation through *truth* (1:13) Fruit of light (5:9)	*Speak* truth (4:15, 25)
Breastplate of Righteousness (6:14)	New person: *righteousness* (4:24) Fruit of Light: *righteousness* (5:9)	Put on the new person (4:24)
Shoes of Gospel-Peace (6:15)	*Peace* from God and Christ (1:2) Christ and *peace* (2:14, 17)	*Preserve* peace (4:3)
Faith (6:16)	*Faith*: gift from God (2:8-9), Building up in *faith* (4:11-14)	*Believe* in Christ (1:13)
Salvation (6:17)	*Salvation* by grace (2:5, 8-9) Christ and *salvation* (5:23)	Believe in Christ: *salvation* (1:13)
Word of God (6:17)	*Word* brings salvation (1:13)	Believe in *word* (1:13) Edify with Scripture (5:18-19)

This pericope also contains a shift in Paul's instructions regarding "walking" the Christian life. Paul no longer calls believers to walk but to "stand." The picture of "standing" occurs four times in the pericope (6:11, 13 [x2], and 14). An interesting detail of this pericope is that the believer is only called to "stand" against the enemy, not "fight." Though there is an overwhelming warning against the strength and power of the evil forces, the entire passage has an air of confidence and hope. Kuruvilla writes,

> And why should that not be the case when Christ is far above every rule and authority and power and dominion?—hostile powers now put by God 'in subjection under His [Christ's] feet'? God's purposes can never be thwarted and even now, his plan to consummate all things in Christ is being triumphantly announced to those already defeated (but still active) forces of evil. The very existence of the church, the body

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[46] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 204.

of Christ, corroborates this inevitable outcome. Perhaps that is why believers are not commanded to win victories in the spiritual warfare they engage in; rather, they are only asked to *stand*—to stand in a victory that has already been won![47]

As the believer stands against the evil forces, they are commanded to do so in the armor of God. Ernest Best agrees with Kuruvilla by stating, "The weapons are primarily defensive since a position has to be held; any direct attack on the powers is left to Christ and is conceived as already having taken place."[48]

In 6:14, Paul uses an imperative, "stand," followed by four participles, "girding," "putting on," "shoeing," and "taking up." The believer can stand against the enemy by donning the armor of God. God gives the armor, but each believer has a responsibility to don it themselves. It is not the weapons themselves that are important, but Paul's explanations.[49] While a great deal is placed on the physical items, the battle is spiritual, not physical. Believers should focus on the truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, and the Word that defends them. Each is dealt with briefly below.

Paul begins with the belt of truth. Best argues that there is no clear meaning to what Paul meant by this word: "The normal English translation 'belt' gives too precise a connotation and is probably wrong. . . . The metaphor goes back, at least in the Near East, to the 'wrestling belt.'"[50] Regardless of its specific meaning, Paul alludes to the leather apron under the armor protecting the thighs. This apron was a piece of clothing kept tight and secure. Similarly, God's truth must also be kept close and tight to the believer. Believers must be prepared with God's gospel truth to stand against the enemy.

The breastplate was a metal piece that protected the chest. Righteousness is the breastplate for believers (the genitive τῆς δικαιοσύνης should be taken as a genitive of

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[47] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 208-9.

[48] Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (London: T & T Clark, 1998), 597.

[49] Best, *Ephesians*, 597.

[50] Best, *Ephesians*, 598.

apposition, "the breastplate, which is righteousness"). An aspect of putting on

righteousness means that believers gain a full knowledge and appreciation of this new

identity in Christ, especially as it relates to Christ as their righteousness.[51] At the same

time, it is more than a simple identity. To don righteousness is to produce righteous fruit

in life. Kent Hughes explains, "When you have this righteousness from God, you begin to

develop and manifest a righteous character in righteous living."[52] The armor of God is

not something that is put on and then taken off; it becomes an essential part of the

believer's life as they are conformed more and more to the Son.

The third piece of armor Paul lists is the footwear. The shoes of gospel peace

are the only item not found in the description of Yahweh's personal armor in Isaiah 11:4-

5 and 59:17. However, it is connected with the Messiah's presence in Isaiah 5:27.[53] The

item Paul commands believers to put on is not the gospel or shoes, but "preparation." Paul

speaks of preparation that needs to take place in association with the gospel: "Shoe your

feet with the preparation."[54] The preparation of the gospel is the good news of God's grand

plan for consummating all things in Christ.[55] Believers are called to prepare to live in the

gospel and share it. This involves having a full knowledge of the gospel that Christ gives.

Next, Paul commands believers to take up the shield of faith. The shield of faith

is given to extinguish the darts of the evil one. This defensive piece has a unique

description. Unlike the participles in the previous verses, the shield must be taken up "in

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[51] Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 453.

[52] Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 225.

[53] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 210.

[54] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 454.

[55] Kuruvilla argues the consummation of all things in Christ is God's grand plan for the cosmos (Eph 1:10). Throughout his commentary, he refers to this plan and points to it as the driving force of Paul's *doings.* Paul is instructing the Ephesians how to live in God's grand plan. Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 8.

all circumstances" (Eph 6:16). Paul recognizes that faith is needed in every situation.

Paul then commands the believer to "take up" the helmet of salvation. The theme of salvation stretches throughout the book. It is not the moment of salvation but the past, present, and future truths of salvation. The element of salvation-past has already been secured (Eph 2:5, 8; 5:23); salvation-present is ongoing, and salvation-future is yet to come.[56] Paul calls believers to live in the salvation that God has wrought and gifted. Believers take up the helmet in confidence and assurance that salvation is not only complete but continuing to completion.

Finally, believers must take up the sword of the Spirit. While the sword has often been described as the only offensive weapon in the panoply, there is no command to swing or use the sword offensively. Kuruvilla argues, "No itemization of armor would be complete without the sword."[57] The use of the sword is the deployment of Scripture against the enemy. According to Harold Hoehner, a prime example of wielding the sword of the Spirit is Jesus's response to Satan in his temptation. In his first temptation, Jesus cites Deuteronomy 8:3 in saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). This is not preaching the gospel but speaking God's Word against the spiritual force.[58] To defend against the enemy, believers speak the Word of God.

While each piece is dealt with individually, the entire armor is vital for engaging in spiritual warfare. Though Paul commands believers to put on the armor, each of these elements describes a believer's natural state. Believers ought to be wearing this armor day by day and moment by moment. Kuruvilla summarizes this life: "The God of truth and righteousness, accomplishes salvation for those who exercise faith, and consummates his

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[56] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 211.

[57] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 212.

[58] Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Ada, MI: Baker, 2002), 1202.

grand and glorious plan through them, bringing peace to humility and to the cosmos, triumphing over his foes by the power of his word."[59]

Paul transitions from his panoply illustration and into instruction on prayer. However, Hoehner believes Ephesians 6:18-20 is not a new idea but a continuation. It is not a new imperative but an expression of how the helmet and sword are taken. He writes, "In a certain sense, they express exhortations, not parallel to the imperative in verse 17 but subservient to it. Hence, the punctuation at the end of verse 16 should be a comma rather than a period."[60] Clinton Arnold concurs,

> Be praying (προσευχόμενοι) is not a finite verb, but a participle dependent on a preceding verb. Although some have seen it as dependent on "take" (δέξασθε) in v. 17, it is most likely dependent on the imperative "stand" (στῆτε) in v. 14 and should be interpreted as expressive of the means by which believers stand; thus, "stand . . . by praying.[61]

Believers constantly wear the armor, and so too should they be "praying at all times" (Eph 6:18). It is essential to note that prayer does not function as a weapon. Instead, prayer is foundational and essential to deploying the other armaments.

"With all prayer and supplication" indicates the types of prayers believers ought to pray. Paul is thinking of every conceivable form of prayer. Simultaneously, believers are called to "keep alert with all perseverance" (Eph 6:18). Believers must be in constant prayer because they do not know when the enemy will attack them. Additionally, Arnold warns, "There will always be people in the community who are under attack and desperately need the members of the body to be appealing to God on their behalf."[62]

Demonstrating this need, Paul requests prayer for himself. Ironically, he prays as one who is an "ambassador in chains," not a "prisoner in chains" (Eph 6:20). Though

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[59] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 212.

[60] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 1204.

[61] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 463.

[62] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 464.

he is in prison at the hands of Rome, he recognizes his actual position as an ambassador of Christ. As an ambassador of Christ, he requests prayers for boldness that he may speak as he ought. Kuruvilla explains, "Despite chains, shackles, fetters, bonds, or any other temporary deprivation, destitution, or disaster, the child of god persists in living a life pleasing to God, boldly standing unconquered by the dark forces of wickedness by donning divine armor and by immersion in prayer."[63]

Pericopal Theology and Application

The final pericope of Ephesians ties the rest of the book together. After proclaiming God's grand plan for the cosmos, Paul recognizes that not all creatures in the cosmos are excited about this plan. Paul provides a warning and encouragement to prepare believers for their demonic adversary. The pericopal theology of Paul's pericope teaches that God has already achieved victory against supernatural foes, and now believers must stand in victory, wearing the armor of God and praying at all times as the enemy schemes and opposes.[64] Therefore, believers would do well to trust in God's victory and grow their prayer life by praying for all things at all times.

To apply this pericopal theology to daily life, a believer might focus on the command to "make supplication for all the saints" (Eph 6:18). As they practice putting on the full armor of God and standing in faith, they pray to the Lord on behalf of other believers. They may begin by praying for their immediate family, praying for spiritual growth and protection from the evil forces in the world. They may then pray for their church family that they, too, would grow and be protected, and pray for their pastors to lead and shepherd well. Finally, they may pray for the brotherhood of saints around the world who stand in faith and opposition to Satan and his forces. Prayer is not a weapon to be wielded; it is the tool by which the armor is donned.

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[63] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 215.

[64] Kuruvilla, *Ephesians*, 202.

Conclusion

The christiconic hermeneutic uses pericopal theology to prioritize the text to discern what the author is doing with what he is saying. Each pericope contains theology where believers are invited to live in God's ideal world. In Genesis 22, believers are confronted with the theology of true sacrifice. God will test believers, and they must trust God to find victory. In Mark 4, believers learn of the human and divine elements of the Word taking root. While God is ultimately responsible for causing growth, believers must also prepare to receive the Word and cultivate it well. Finally, in Ephesians 6, believers are warned of the supernatural forces that oppose them. To stand firm against them, they must trust in God's person and work as they diligently pray for one another and live as the people they are created to be.

CHAPTER 4

TRAINING THE MEMBERS OF FAITH BAPTIST
CHURCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project was to train members of Faith Baptist Church in biblical hermeneutics. For the purposes of this project, this class taught pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic. This project implemented three components to meet the purpose and goals over a fourteen-week period: preparatory study, a nine-week class, and evaluation work. This chapter will recount the events and procedures from each week of the project and provide a brief summary for each class session.

Preparatory Work and Study

Preparatory work and study preceded the main teaching element of the project. This component comprises weeks 1 and 2. The preparatory stage consists of the study and outline of the content for the instructor. This two-week period also allows time for the recruitment of participants for the classroom component.

Week 1

To recruit for this class, I focused on two areas. First, I made Sunday morning announcements for three weeks. During the Sunday morning service, I shared with the congregation the new class and some of the material it would cover. I informed them the class would be answering questions like "How do I read the Bible well? How do I find the main idea? How do I know what the Bible is telling me to do?" Second, I invited individuals from the church. I prioritized Sunday school teachers, deacons, and regular attenders.

In addition to recruiting participants, I began to work on class materials and resources. Hermeneutics was a new subject to nearly everyone in the class, and I knew the content's difficulty could discourage participants. The primary resource I created this week was the Christiconic Workflow.[1] Logos Bible Software's Workflow resources inspired this workflow. I follow the content of Kuruvilla's *A Manual for Preaching* to organize the material.[2] This resource was used every class period in the group work portion of the class.

Week 2

With a small group of people having registered for the class, I encouraged them to invite their friends and family. I continued to make the Sunday morning announcements as well as personal invitations. Members continued to sign up.

Nine-Week Class

A nine-week class formed the foundation of the entire project and its instruction element. This component comprised weeks 4 through 12 of the project. The class began with an introduction to hermeneutics and the need for correct biblical interpretation in the believer's life. In the following eight weeks, the class worked through Genesis 37-50.

Each class session followed a similar structure.

6:00 p.m.-6:05 p.m.—Summary of the previous pericope(s)

6:05 p.m.-6:10 p.m.—Reading the session's text

6:10 p.m.-6:35 p.m.—Group work through the Christiconic Workflow

6:35 p.m.-7:00 p.m.—Discovering and discussing the Pericopal Theology

The summary of previous pericopes allowed me to draw emphasis on relevant passages that were previously discussed. I read the text for the class to articulate specific

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[1] See appendix 3.

[2] Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019).

words or phrases that may be relevant. Additionally, in each session, I provided a printed copy of the text so participants could mark up the text as they worked. During this time, I encouraged participants to highlight, circle, and note words or phrases they believed pointed to the author's doing. A large portion of the class was devoted to group work. This essential aspect of the class allowed participants to hear different perspectives and ideas while considering the text. Finally, I taught through the text, drawing out relevant clues. During this time, I asked questions to the group to lead them where they needed to go. I also fielded questions as they were relevant to the class.

Week 3: Class 1

The third week of the project began the teaching component. Twenty-three participants gathered around five round tables. I started the class by thanking participants for their desire to learn how to interpret the Word of God better. I briefly described the nature of the course and its connection to my doctoral work. Then, I requested that if they wished to participate in my doctoral project, they would complete the "Hermeneutical Competency Survey (Pre-Test)."[3] Eighteen of the twenty-three individuals in the class completed the survey.

Upon completing the survey, I commenced formal teaching. The main idea for the first class was an introduction to hermeneutics. I shared with the participants three foundational truths of hermeneutics: the Bible is literal; the Bible must be interpreted historically, grammatically, and contextually; and the Bible has a purpose. I also shared the dangers of bad hermeneutics: making the Bible about ourselves; reading the Bible to make us feel good; reading with confirmation bias; and the difference between eisegesis and exegesis. I moved on to the importance of understanding the Bible as applicational. I used Kuruvilla's illustration of "you're on my foot" to demonstrate what an author is doing with what they are saying. I continued teaching through the ideas and definitions of "the

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[3] See appendix 1.

world in front of the text," transhistorical intention, distanciation, and significance. I used the example of Ephesians 5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine," to explain these ideas. While the topic of drinking alcohol was controversial, this illustration served the class well in understanding transhistorical intention and significance. One individual was adamant that drinking alcohol was a sin and forbidden by the Bible. Using the tools and ideas I had just discussed, I argued that Paul did not forbid the consumption of alcohol in Ephesians 5:18. Through this individual pressing the issue, I was able to demonstrate the importance of looking at a single author and a single pericope rather than a systematic or biblical approach to hermeneutics.

I concluded the class with a brief definition of three types of hermeneutics: systematic theology, biblical theology, and pericopal theology. The class ended with a positive response from the participants and an eagerness to return the following week.

Week 4: Class 2

The second class began with a summary of the previous week's introduction to hermeneutics. Next, the participants worked through the Workflow. After the allotted Workflow time, I invited the class to answer some questions as we sought to discover the pericopal theology: What seemed significant? What did the author repeat? What seemed odd or out of place? I followed these definitive questions with leading questions that highlighted the attitude of Joseph's brothers toward Joseph. I noted things such as the shift from a dislike for Joseph quickly escalating into hatred and jealousy, even though God revealed that Joseph would be a blessing. Near the conclusion of the class, I provided the pericopal theology: one who expects to be an agent of God's blessing to others can anticipate misunderstanding and mistreatment from them. To end the class, we discussed how this theology is derived from the text.

Week 5: Class 3

The third class covered Genesis 38. This pericope seems odd in the Joseph story

due to its focus on Judah, so I spent time before the group work to highlight significant aspects of the text: the "going down," unhappy relationships in Judah's life, wrongs committed, the satisfaction of need sought from the one wronged, the garments used as evidence, a transformation of character, and the noting of offspring. Then, I reminded the class of the end of Judah's story—through Judah, not Joseph, the Christ would come. I challenged the class to consider what the author told the reader about Judah at the beginning of the chapter compared to the end. I emphasized that this chapter is not telling the reader to be like Judah; rather, it is revealing the man he became as he repented of sin. The class concluded by discussing the pericopal theology: those who will be agents of God's blessing exhibit selfless concern for others and a humble awareness of their fallibility.

Week 6: Class 4

The fourth class covered Genesis 3, the temptation of Joseph. The author emphasizes significant events in this chapter by noting time's passage. I used this chapter to demonstrate how some authors structure a text based on changing scenes and time passages. In discussing the content, I focused on the great temptation before Joseph and his battle against sinfulness. He was a young man placed into a position of authority and tempted by a powerful, older woman. Yet, Joseph remained faithful to God and his master, contrary to his older brother Judah. To end the class, I noted the danger of allowing the text to slip into a simple understanding of sexual immorality and temptation while ignoring the pericopal theology: integrity in every situation enables one to be an agent of divine blessing. The class ended by sharing ways believers can live with integrity each day.

Week 7: Class 5

Class 5 began the two chapters per week section of the class, Genesis 40-41. In this week I instructed the class to look for divisions in this chapter, specifically scene or focus change. The group worked through the Workflow of chapter 40, and we discussed

their findings. I made one point of emphasis regarding the dreams. I encouraged the class not to add meaning where Scripture does not. Joseph interprets the dreams, so we do not need to try. Instead, we focused on the passage of time, the people in Joseph's life, and the circumstances in which Joseph found himself, even though he remained faithful to God in every way.

Next, I instructed the class to look for scene changes in Genesis 41. As a group we worked through how the text may be divided. This allowed us to see the chiastic structure of the chapter as it emphasized Joseph's interpretation and exaltation. We concluded by discussing the pericopal theology: trusting in God's work, even when indiscernible, results in abundant divine blessing.

Week 8: Class 6

I began the sixth class by reading Genesis 42-43. As I read, I instructed the class to note themes, section divisions, and interesting pieces within the text. One interesting aspect of the text is that Joseph is not the agent of divine blessing, as he had been for weeks. The author was now pointing to the brothers as agents. This class spent a great deal of time noting the relationship between Joseph and the brothers, as it would play a significant role in the rest of the narrative and history. The most significant emphasis was on the trial and testing Joseph imposed upon his brothers. I asked several leading questions to bring the pericopal theology to the class's participants: Would the brothers betray Joseph and display favoritism? Had the brothers learned from their previous betrayal? Did the brothers change? These questions led us to the pericopal theology: God's discipline and their selflessness and submission to God led agents of divine blessing to resolve past sin. The class ended by discussing possible past sins in our lives and how we must repent, confess, and forgive.

Week 9: Class 7

Class 7 covered Genesis 44-45 and the reconciliation between Joseph and his

brothers. I began the class by discussing the structure of chapter 44. However, rather than providing the structure, we worked as a class to decide the divisions. After discussing the structure, the class worked through the Workflow in small groups. In the large group discussion I emphasized Judah and the brothers rather than Joseph. In these chapters, Joseph sought to put his brothers to the test and caused them to suffer at his hands, similar to how he suffered at theirs. However, through their suffering they displayed repentance and a change of heart; they were reconciled to their brother. As a result, Pharaoh blesses the family of Israel. To conclude we discussed the pericopal theology: self-sacrificing solidarity with the suffering, recognizing God's overriding sovereignty, promotes divine blessing.

After this class, I read through the pre-test surveys. Many participants answered that they "agree" or "strongly agree" with their confidence and ability to interpret the Bible. Now, over halfway through the class, I believe some of them were recognizing they answered too confidently in their ability. If they gave the same answers for the post-test, I would not be able to know if they genuinely learned and grew in confidence. So, I modified the post-test survey to include a short answer section where students might provide deeper insight into what they learned.

Week 10: Class 8

This class covered Genesis 46-47, Jacob and Joseph reunited, and the family's trip to Egypt. To begin, I shared the structure of this pericope and its connection to the previous. In these chapters the author emphasizes Joseph's family being reunited and settling in Egypt. Before the reunion, God appears to Jacob to remind him of his promise. This also functions as an encouragement and affirmation to travel to Egypt. Additionally, the author reminds the reader of the promises made to Israel by listing wives, servants, and sons of Israel.

In the second half of this pericope, the author shows the audience how Pharaoh trusted the people of Egypt in the care of Joseph. Joseph's wisdom and discernment is

demonstrated as he provides for the people. As a result, we were able to see the pericopal theology of these chapters: agents of divine blessing, obediently trusting God for blessing in their own lives, extend God's blessing to others.

Week 11: Class 9

Class 9 was the final class period of the project. Rather than the usual hour-long class, I requested class be extended an hour. This allowed time for the pericopal theology, followed by questions and answers and the post-test.

The final pericope covered three chapters, Genesis 48-50. In Genesis 48, Jacob summarizes his life and echoes God's promises. For the third time Jacob points out that his remains are to be buried in the Promised Land with his ancestors. Jacob then proclaims that Joseph's sons are his sons. As Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, he extends and crosses his arms. In doing so, he places his right arm on the younger and remarkably blesses him. When Joseph tries to correct him, Jacob refuses. Finally, Jacob blesses Joseph.

In Genesis 49, the focus shifts to Jacob's sons. In this portion of the pericope, Jacob blesses his sons. However, some of the sons receive curses while others receive a simple comment. The arrangement of this section emphasizes Jacob's prayer. It is not a blessing, curse, or comment but a prayer to God.

Finally, in Genesis 50, the author describes the end of Jacob's life. The emphasis was not placed upon his death but upon his arrival to his final resting place. After the burial ceremony, there is a final interaction between Joseph and his brothers. Once again, Joseph assures his brothers that he loves them and will care for them.

After working through these aspects of the text, we focused time on the pericopal theology: agents of divine blessing remember the blessings of the past, pass on the blessings in the present, and expect the consummation of blessings in the future.

To conclude the class I summarized the Joseph narrative and emphasized the question, "What is the author doing with what he is saying?" We noted the importance of textual grammar, structure, and syntax to clue us into the author's doings. Finally, I

administered the post-test, and the class was dismissed.

Class Evaluation Work

During the project's final week I began the compilation and analysis of survey data to determine the project's effectiveness in accomplishing its goals. Furthermore, the project's final component allowed reflection on the project's strengths and weaknesses.

Week 12

The project's twelfth week consisted of compiling the pre- and post-project surveys and beginning analysis of the data. I accumulated and tabulated the students' responses to the survey. The pre-project survey would be compared against the identical survey administered after the final class's lecture. Then, I cataloged all the answers to the final survey to determine the effectiveness of the course's teaching and curriculum. I performed a t-test to determine the project's effectiveness.

Week 13

Week 13 was devoted to tabulating the short answer responses to understand better the specific areas in which participants grew in confidence and ability. Similar responses were grouped together to determine the most common answers.

Week 14

I dedicated week 14 to completing the remaining survey analysis and commencing an overall project assessment.

Conclusion

This project set out to train the members of Faith Baptist Church in Claremore, Oklahoma, in biblical hermeneutics. Three progressive stages comprised this doctoral project: preparation, execution, and evaluation. In preparation for the course, I created a Workflow to guide students through the christiconic method and registered participants for the class. The nine-week course served as the execution of the project. Over this time

I prepared and taught an introduction to hermeneutics and Bible study lessons on Genesis 37-50, the Joseph story. During this time, I also administered a pre-test and post-test to discover the students' confidence in interpreting the Bible. The project's final stage was dedicated to compiling and analyzing survey data. Upon completion of data analysis I evaluated the entire project to determine its effectiveness and areas in need of improvement.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This chapter summarizes my evaluation of the ministry project. The cumulative evaluation for this project consists of seven parts. First, I evaluate the project's purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. I then reflect on various actions I would take if I were to implement the project again. Finally, this chapter includes both theological reflections and personal reflections learned throughout the process of training the members of Faith Baptist Church in pericopal theology and the christiconic hermentuic.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to train members of Faith Baptist Church in Claremore, Oklahoma, in pericopal theology. Once the preparations were completed, I taught a nine-week course over Genesis 37-50, the Joseph story. Prior to the Joseph story I taught a single introduction to hermeneutics class. In this class, I provided insight into the depth of the Bible. I wanted the class to see the richness of the Word of God. There is more at work in Scripture than a surface-level reading. To accomplish this, I trained the class to ask questions about the text. Some of these questions are as follows: What words or phrases are repeated, what words do I not understand, what grammar is difficult, what concepts do I not understand, is there anything out of place or puzzling, does the text have a structure, are there unusual elements, what is the emphasis, and how does this fit in with the rest of the book? These questions were compiled into a document titled "Christiconic Workflow."[1]

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[1] See appendix 3. This document was adapted from Abraham Kuruvilla, *Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching*, new ed. (Chicago: Moody, 2013).

To help determine the success of the project, I included a specific question in the post-class survey ("Hermeneutical Competency Post-Test Survey"). Participants were asked to respond to the Likert-scale statement: "I feel confident in determining the single, central meaning of a passage of Scripture." In the pre-test, all of the students stated that they "somewhat agree," "agree," or "strongly agree." In the post-test, all of the students stated they "agree" or "strongly agree." The average score of all of the students to this statement was calculated to be 4.7.[2]

By the participants' assessment, the class successfully trained the members in biblical hermeneutics.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Four goals formulate the standard by which to assess this project's success. The following section will consider each goal and assess whether the project accomplished the goal. The analysis below demonstrates that this project met its goals and effectively accomplished its purpose of training in biblical hermeneutics.

Goal 1: Assess Participant Understanding

The first goal was to evaluate the confidence in interpreting the Bible among the members of Faith Baptist Church. To accomplish this goal, a Hermeneutical Competency Survey Pre-Test was administered. At the beginning of the first class, before any lecture, I distributed the survey and allowed participants time to complete it.

This goal was successful when the surveys were assessed to determine participants' current confidence in biblical hermeneutics. The surveys were administered to 18 participants, and 15 surveys were completed and returned. The goal's benchmark for success was met.

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[2] See appendix 5 for the pre-test and post-test results for the evaluation survey.

The responses to the survey were assessed to determine each participant's confidence and ability to interpret the Bible. Two observations from this first survey deserve mention at this point in the project's assessment. First, nearly the entire class felt confident in their ability to interpret the Bible. Students were asked to respond to the Likert-scale statement: "I feel confident in reading the Old Testament." In the pre-test, the class average was calculated to be 3.9, reflecting an "agree somewhat response."[3] While this level of confidence was not unexpected, it was higher than might be assumed. This seemed to present somewhat of a problem as it would leave little room to grow in confidence. One of my fears was that the class would have the opposite effect and decrease confidence as the participants learned how difficult and intricate biblical hermeneutics may be.

The second notable observation is that the class scored higher in their confidence and ability to interpret the individual genres of Scripture in the Old Testament (historical narrative, prophecy, psalms, wisdom literature) than in their confidence and ability to interpret the Old Testament as a whole. The same was true regarding the New Testament.

Table 4. Old Testament confidence pre-test response average

Confidence in Reading Old Testament Genres	Average Score
# 14 I feel confident in reading the historical narratives of the Bible (Genesis, Kings, etc.)	4.6
# 15 I feel confident in reading prophecy in the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.)	4.2
# 16 I feel confident in reading the Psalms.	4.5
I feel confident in reading the wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.)	4.7
# 20 I feel confident in reading the Old Testament.	3.9

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[3] See appendix 3.

Table 5. New Testament Confidence Pre-Test Response Average

Confidence in Reading New Testament Genres	Average Score
#18 I feel confident in reading the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)	5.4
#19 I feel confident in reading the letters of the New Testament.	4.9
#21 I feel confident in reading the New Testament.	4.9

Goal 2: Develop Teaching Material

The second goal was to develop a curriculum on pericopal theology to train the members of Faith Baptist Church. The first aspect of the curriculum I developed was the Christiconic Workflow.[4] This document was designed to guide the students through Abraham Kuruvilla's method of christiconic hermeneutics and pericopal theology as detailed in *A Manual for Preaching*.[5] It provided questions that students were able to answer by studying the text. The aim of this document was that by answering these questions, participants would discover the clues that revealed what the author was *doing* with what they were *saying*.

Next, I wrote teaching material to guide the class through the weekly pericope, highlighting many of these clues. My goal in teaching was not to provide the pericopal theology at the beginning of the lecture but to have the students discover it along the way. For this curriculum, I relied on Kuruvilla's *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* as it is the only commentary focusing on pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic.

The goal was completed as I developed the Christiconic Workflow and weekly lessons.

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[4] See appendix 3.

[5] Abraham Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching: The Journey from Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019).

Goal 3: Class Participation and Completion

The third goal was to register at least fifteen participants for the class, with at least 80 percent completing the class. In addition to the academic purpose, this class served as the Sunday evening Bible study for the members of Faith Baptist Church. The average attendance of the class ranged from 20-35 participants. Of these participants, 15 volunteered to participate in the study. Each week, I kept attendance. After the project, I recorded an attendance of 15 participants. All 15 participants met the 80 percent class attendance. Therefore, the benchmark goal of class participation and attendance was met.

Goal 4: Evaluating the Increase
in Confidence

The fourth goal was to evaluate the increase in biblical knowledge among participants after the class was completed. As documented in chapter 4, I utilized the curriculum in a nine-week course emphasizing the Christiconic Workflow and small group discussion.[6] Two surveys ultimately measured the effectiveness of the teaching and attainment of this fourth goal.

First, I administered a pre-class survey to determine the participants' confidence in reading and understanding the Bible. The benchmark of success for this goal would be a positive, statistically significant change, as evidenced by a t-test for dependent samples. The teaching of pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic made a statistically significant difference, increasing their pericopal and hermeneutical knowledge ($t_{(14)} = 4.0965$, $p < 0.0005$).

Second, in the post-class survey I provided opportunities for short answers.[7] The purpose of the short answers was to receive a qualitative explanation for the quantitative data. A helpful example of the usefulness of this data is statement 23 of the pre- and post-test survey. The statement reads, "Without the use of chapter or verse markers, I am able to

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[6] See appendix 3.

[7] See appendix 6.

determine the beginning and ending of a self-contained passage of Scripture to be studied."
In the pre-test, participants' average revealed they "disagree somewhat" (0.9).[8] In the post-test survey, participants increased to "agree somewhat." The short answers revealed that the text's structure was the most common concept learned. By providing students with the ability to determine the structure, they grew more confident in their ability to determine the beginning and end of a passage without chapter or verse markers.

The most helpful hermeneutical tool was asking, "What is the author doing with what he is saying." Statement 10 in the pre- and post-test survey reveals why this was the most helpful tool. Statement 10 reads, "Knowledge is the goal of the Bible." In the pre-test, participants responded with 3.9, "somewhat agree;" in the post-test, participants responded with a 3.5.[9] While participants averaged the same answer, the students revealed a rejection of the statement. Knowledge is not the goal of Bible study. A key emphasis in the class was finding application. I believe the shift in response to be from a focus on knowledge to valid application. However, more statistical data would be necessary to confirm this theory.

Finally, the most significant lesson learned from the class was "reading the text carefully and asking questions." This lesson grew from the emphasis on the Christiconic Workflow. The resource encouraged participants to ask questions and read the text critically, which resulted in discovering connections and clues for the author's doings.

As a result of these three, the class demonstrated a better grasp of reading the Bible critically and gaining the tools to do so. One comment summarized the participants' response: "I have been opened up to a deeper interpretation, which makes me more excited to read the Bible, especially the Old Testament."

The fourth goal of teaching pericopal theology and the christiconic

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[8] See appendix 6.

[9] See appendix 6.

hermeneutic to increase confidence and ability in interpreting the Bible was met.

Strengths of the Project

This project's strengths will be assessed under three components: teaching, resources, and group work.

Considering the project's purpose, the teaching component deserves the most significant scrutiny and examination. This material covered was new to every student in the class. Though the participants responded in the pre-test survey that they were confident in their ability to interpret Scripture, I knew there would be many challenges as they had never studied interpretation. To introduce the concepts of hermeneutics, I devoted the entire first class to interpretation challenges. Then, I explained how we would use pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic to discover the text's purpose and application. In each of the following classes I walked the students through the text and intentionally sought to lead them to what the author was doing. To accomplish this I focused on the structure, which often gave clues to the passage's focus. As a result, many participants responded that they learned the structure was significant in interpretation. Participants showed an increase in their confidence to interpret the Bible as nearly showed an increase in agreement with the statement: "Without the help from a commentary or someone else, I feel confident in making my own observations about a passage."[10]

The second strength of this class was the Christiconic Workflow. As this material was new, I wanted to give participants a resource that would walk them through discovering the pericopal theology. I adapted Abraham Kuruvilla's *A Manual for Preaching* to provide them with this resource.[11] During each class period, participants worked through it. As the class stretched for several weeks, several participants approached me after a Sunday morning sermon and discussed many of the questions on the

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[10] See appendix 6, statement 24.

[11] Kuruvilla, *A Manual for Preaching.*

Christiconic Workflow[12] regarding the Sunday morning text. They began asking questions about the Bible in the hermeneutic class and in other Bible studies.

Finally, the group work was essential to this class. Small group work allowed participants to discuss challenges and work through them together. They were able to wrestle with topics and learn from one another. Additionally, it gave them confidence when they began to struggle with topics or ideas as they saw others attempting to learn the material.

The participants grew in confidence and ability to interpret the Bible in large part due to the consistent class structure that emphasized "what is the author doing with what he is saying," the Christiconic flow to provide a question-and-answer learning environment, and small groups to wrestle with difficult or complex topics and ideas.

Weaknesses of the Project

Though the teaching was a strength of the project, the following consideration of the project's weaknesses must be noted: introduction of new ideas, lack of time, more precise pre- and post-test, and curriculum evaluation.

Pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic were all new concepts, and participants wrestled with comprehensively grasping them. Though participants believed themselves to be confident in interpreting Scripture before the class, they were quickly made aware of the challenging nature of hermeneutics. Teaching new material provided to be difficult as many of the concepts and ideas of hermeneutics are completely foreign. Additionally, the jargon of hermeneutics presented a challenge. New words and ideas left participants feeling ignorant and unable to learn. Students voiced concerns in the short answer portion of the post-test: "providing printed terms and definitions since they would be so very relevant" and "it felt overwhelming the first class. Maybe a printed

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[12] See appendix 6.

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out vocabulary list or definitions for these "scholarly collegiate words."[13]

Second, each class period was designed to be sixty minutes. The class period plan was to have a summary of the previous pericope or pericopes, read the text for the class, conduct small group work on the Christiconic Workflow, and conclude with instructor led class discussion. The signs of this weakness arose during the second class session as participants began to feel pressed for time during their small group work. While they were making progress, they felt as though they needed to have answers within the designed small group time. For some participants, this led to frustration and giving up on the work. In the large group discussion, because the group was also pressed for time, I was not able to answer some questions as they did not fit the direction of the pericopal theology. These issues caused the class to run 10-15 minutes longer than scheduled. Each aspect of the class was necessary, but sixty minutes was too short an amount of time. Participants also noticed the time constraint as two expressed a desire for the class to be longer.[14]

Third, the pre- and post-test survey was sufficient for collecting data, but the Likert-scale statements could have been more accurate to my focus. In writing the survey, I focused too much on Bible intake and reading. Instead, I should have focused on interpretation and application. For example, statement 8 and 9 were not beneficial to my study. Statement 8 read, "From creation to Jesus' second coming, I could give a brief overview of the story of the Bible," and statement 9 read, "I know where most of the books of the Bible fit into the overarching story of the Bible." In hindsight, these statements have no bearing or benefit to specific project.[15] While the class showed an increase in confidence in these statements, I do not believe this increase in confidence came as a

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[13] See appendix 6 for the short answer results.

[14] See appendix 6 for the short answer results.

[15] See appendices 1 and 2.

result of this class because we did not cover any text outside of Genesis.

Finally, the curriculum was not evaluated by an expert panel. During the project I changed ministry positions and did not have sufficient staff to evaluate the material. While I could have had experts in the field or other pastors evaluate the project, I did not. This evaluation would have been beneficial to determine biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and applicability of the class.

What I Would Do Differently

Given the opportunity to teach this course again, I would make the following changes. First, I would rewrite the curriculum to focus more on pericopal theology and its methodology. Participants were given beginner-level knowledge, but many were still left wanting. They were beginning to understand the concepts as the class ended. I would spend more time teaching how to ask questions to discern the clues in the text. Additionally, I would request another pastor to evaluate the curriculum before teaching to ensure it covers the intended concepts.

Second, to alleviate some of the problems of time constraints, I would allot more time for the course. I would extend the number of class sessions and session length. The ten-week course was sufficient to introduce new concepts, but most of the class participants desired more concepts, instruction, and time. Adding six more weeks to the class would allow more teaching on the field of hermeneutics and more teaching on the methodology of discovering the author's doings. Making this change would allow the class to be used as an Equip Class at Faith Baptist Church. Additionally, lengthening the individual class period to ninety minutes would enable sufficient time for small and large group discussions. However, the practicality of a ninety-minute class may be difficult in the weekly life of the church. If this change occurred, the class may need to shift from a large group to a small discipleship like group.

Third, I would not teach on Genesis 37-50. While this text was beneficial to introduce participants to an often misread and misunderstood text of Scripture, there was

too much text each week. Four of the pericopes included two chapters, and the final pericope included three. This amount of text was daunting to some participants. Not only was the amount of time reading the text each class period burdensome, but it was incredibly difficult to work through the text in small and large groups. A shorter book with shorter pericopes would be better for this class. Additionally, the content of a narrative proved challenging for learning pericopal theology as the author's application was not always clear. Beginning with a pericope may have proven easier for individuals learning this for the first time.

Theological Reflections

Though this project's purpose intended that I would teach, I learned a considerable amount about God, his complexity of the Word, the Author and author of Scripture, and the lack of biblical literate people in churches. My understanding of God deepened in two particular areas. From studying Genesis and preparing lessons, I began to understand more and more of God's providence. One of the shocking realities of Joseph's story is that God is not mentioned in several chapters. When Joseph's story begins, God sends dreams but does not defend him to his father or brothers. When he is sold into slavery, God is nowhere to be found in the text. However, years later, in Genesis 39, when Potiphar's wife tempts Joseph, Joseph asks the woman, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (v. 9) Even though God is not present in the text, he is most assuredly present in Joseph's life. Joseph is keenly aware that God is with him despite all his misfortune. In the conclusion of his story, Joseph reminds his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Gen 50:20). Even though believers may not see God in their lives, he is always present and is always working things together for his good. The call of the believer is not to live an easy, enjoyable life but to glorify God in all circumstances.

The second lesson I learned in teaching this class is the beauty of Scripture. While the Bible is sufficient for salvation in a simple reading, there is no end to the depths

of Scripture. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Moses wrote a beautiful work that reveals and glorifies God. A prime example is Genesis 49:31. Moses emphasizes the location where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were buried "in the land of Canaan," representing a down payment on the eternal possession God promised to his Patriarchs. A striking detail about this verse is the first letter of the named people in which they appear א, שׁ, ‘, ר, and ל. Nicholas Lunn notes, "It might be conceived as merely coincidental, especially since the order in which the letters occur may be arbitrary. Yet it is contended here that the sequence is significant and itself is indicative of deliberate design. . . . Inverted symmetrical patterns have been found employed at all levels."[16] Lunn demonstrates that if the initial consonants of the five names are read working outward from the center, the letters make up the Hebrew word "Israel." Lunn concludes, "Jacob is there requesting his sons to bury him in the cave in Canaan, not simply because his forefathers rest there, but because in cryptic fashion, "Israel" lies there."[17] Jacob, who is called Israel, must be laid to rest in the Promised Land. In a shallow reading of Genesis 49:31, it is clear where Jacob desires to be buried. However, searching and wrestling with Scripture reveals there is often more at work and more to be revealed.

The third lesson I learned is the complexity of understanding the purpose and relationship between the divine author and the human author. Jesus and other New Testament writers understood the Bible to be written by men but inspired and authored by God himself. In Mark 12:36, Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 and introduces it by saying, "The Holy Spirit, declared." In Hebrews, the author quotes the Old Testament with phrases such as, "The Holy Spirit says" (3:7; 10:15) and "The Holy Spirit indicates" (9:8). Paul quotes the Old Testament, saying, "as God says" (2 Cor 6:16). Additionally, he reminds Timothy, "all Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible's primary author is God

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[16] Nicholas Lunn, "The Last Words of Jacob and Joseph: A Rhetorico-Structural Analysis of Genesis 49:29-33 and 50:24-26," *Tyndale Bulletin* 59, no. 2 (2008): 172.

[17] Lunn, "The Last Words of Jacob and Joseph," 172.

himself.

However, the Bible was also written by human hands. God inspired around forty authors who wrote in three languages from three continents over a roughly 2,000-year period.[18] Tim Chaffey notes the diversity of these authors:

> Shepherds, kings, scholars, fishermen, prophets, a military general, a cupbearer, and a priest all penned portions of Scripture. They had different immediate purposes for writing, whether recording history, giving spiritual and moral instruction, or pronouncing judgment. They composed their works from palaces, prisons, the wilderness, and places of exile while writing history, laws, prophecy, and proverbs. In the process, they laid bare their personal emotions, expressing anger, frustration, joy, and love.[19]

Yet, with such a diverse and unique set of authors, the Bible remains inerrant and infallible. God is the original and ultimate author who inspires every word.

As God inspired every word, it was ultimately his sayings and his doings. At times, God was doing something with what he was saying, even though the human author was entirely unaware. In Isaiah 9, the text is not explicitly written about Jesus. John Watts argues, "It is not spoken by the prophet or in the name of God. It is an attempt to assemble from the resources of faith and doctrine words to bolster hope."[20] Nevertheless, through the divine author, this text was clearly written to describe the Christ who would one day be born and fulfill these prophecies more significantly. The divine author is always at work through the human author. The task of the reader is to read the human author to discover the divine author. Having discovered the divine author's purpose and intent, the reader must then dwell in God's ideal world by living in obedience to the pericopal theology.

Finally, I learned church members must be trained in hermeneutics. Many active

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[18] Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 22-23.

[19] Tim Chaffey, "Unity of the Bible: Seven Compelling Evidences," Answering Genesis, November 1, 2023, https://answersingenesis.org/the-word-of-god/3-unity-of-the-bible/.

[20] John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, World Biblical Commentary, vol. 24 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 135.

church members believe themselves to be good at biblical interpretation without being trained. Unfortunately, they often believe they have been trained because they have attended church for years. There is a difference between studying the Word of God and being taught the Word of God. This course affirmed Paul's command to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). Preaching is undoubtedly the most impactful way to equip the saints weekly, but particular time ought to be given to discipleship in studying the Word. Not only do believers need to know how to understand the Bible, but they also need to be taught how to discern meaning and application for themselves.

Two statistics are worth considering as a result of training the members in hermeneutics. First, participants grew in their frequency of Bible reading.

Table 6. Frequency of Bible reading

The number of participants that selected the following when answering: How often do you personally read the Bible?		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Daily	2	3
Several times per week	5	7
Once a week	6	4
Several times a month	1	1
Rarely	1	0
Never	0	0

Though not a significant increase, those who attended the class are spending more time in God's Word.

Second, those who increased the frequency of Bible reading also increased their confidence in interpreting the Bible. Four of the six participants who responded with an increase in their frequency of reading the Bible also responded with an increase in their confidence in interpreting the Bible. While the correlation of these two statistics cannot be determined, it is encouraging to see an increase in frequency and confidence.

A positive score in column B indicates an increase in the frequency of Bible reading. A positive score in column C indicates an increase in confidence of personal

Bible study. The greater the number, the greater the increase.

Table 7. Bible reading and Bible confidence

Participant	Change in Frequency of Bible Reading	Change in Confidence of Bible Interpretation
0468	1	2
4914	1	2
5120	1	0
5680	1	1
0162	1	2
2008	1	0

By teaching pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic, several participants increased the frequency of reading the Bible and their confidence in interpreting the Bible for themselves.

Personal Reflections

My love for hermeneutics was sparked in January 2022 when I took Abraham Kuruvilla's "Hermeneutics of Preaching" course. The importance of privileging the text and discovering the author's doing took root in my heart. The Bible was not written as a dictionary or an encyclopedia. It was not inspired so that man may simply know facts about God; it was inspired so that man may know God and dwell with God in his ideal world. The purpose of the divine author and the human author was to reveal the glory of God, redeem the hearts of sinful men, and conform them to the image of the Son. Every pericope of Scripture works toward this goal. Every pericope of Scripture reveals God's ideal world and invites the reader to dwell therein. It is the responsibility and task of every believer to read the Word of God to learn about God and his ideal world.

The ability to interpret the Bible is an invaluable resource to every follower of Christ. Having found a deeper love and excitement for the word as I grew in my own ability, I felt convicted and excited to bring this joy of reading and interpreting God's word to my church members. As the senior pastor at Faith Baptist Church, I have a great

privilege and opportunity to help my church grow in hermeneutics, but it will be a long process. In the immediate future, I have identified several specific ways in which I will continue to train my congregation.

My first goal to help them grow in hermeneutics is to demonstrate healthy, biblical hermeneutics in my teaching. I strive to teach and preach in a way that reflects a thorough understanding of the text, what the author is saying, and how God calls his people to respond. These teaching environments range from Sunday morning sermons to Wednesday prayer meetings. Every opportunity to preach is an opportunity to train. Going beyond the moment of speaking, I strive to have christiconic conversations with members. In the days since the class concluded, I have been blessed with more questions on hermeneutics and understanding the Bible well.

Second, I hope to teach another class on pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic. Many individuals have requested to continue their education in this area and cover a New Testament book. An epistle will allow participants to continue their study in pericopal theology while tackling a new genre of Scripture. An epistle would present new challenges in interpretation. For example, considering 1 Timothy, how would a church member read and apply a letter written to a young pastor? Teaching through a new genre of Scripture will provide more insight and opportunity to learn hermeneutics and different writing styles.

Finally, Faith Baptist Church has been blessed with several young men called to ministry. In response, I have begun meeting with these men on a regular basis. In these meetings, we talk through the pericope that will be preached on Sunday. We wrestle with semantics and pragmatics. We ask questions about the text and we seek to discern the author's sayings and doings. During this time, I am seeking to intentionally train these men in biblical hermeneutics. This developing ministry of the church has already proved to be instrumental in shaping their understanding of the Bible and its purpose. Training them this way will prepare them for Bible study and Bible teaching as they grow in their

ministry.

In addition to providing a pathway of discipleship over the next couple of years for these men, this course taught me how to prepare an academic course within the church. The Lord has led me to change the current program structure of Faith Baptist Church, and in the fall of 2023, the church will move away from traditional Sunday school, replacing it with "Equip Classes." Equip classes will offer biblical teaching in seven genres of Christianity. Writing a curriculum, creating resources, and planning the teaching schedule will serve me well in creating this new program.

Conclusion

This project was designed to train the members of Faith Baptist Church in biblical hermeneutics. In this course, the class studied pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic. The text used for the course was the Joseph story, Genesis 37-50. The above analysis concludes that this project's purpose and goals were attained. Participants grew in confidence and ability to understand the Word of God. This course excelled in introducing new ideas, providing helpful resources, and creating an environment to learn alongside one another. This course could have been improved by providing a few more resources to ease the transition into new ideas.

Additionally, it may have been helpful to teach less Scripture each week. Thus, if the class is taught again, I would provide more resources and select a shorter unit of Scripture. The curriculum should also focus more on the methodology of pericopal theology to better train participants to discover it themselves. I intend to teach biblical hermeneutics again to continue equipping the church for accurate interpretation and application so that the saints may be more confident and better prepared for ministry.

APPENDIX 1

HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCY SURVEY PRE-TEST

The following survey was administered to all participants before they took the nine-week hermeneutical training. The purpose of this research instrument was to assess the participants' confidence in hermeneutical competency and confidence before the training sessions.

HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCY SURVEY

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to train participants in biblical hermeneutics. This research is being conducted by Daniel Rasor for purpose of increasing knowledge and ability to interpret the Bible through the christiconic hermeneutic. In this research, you will learn the christiconic hermeneutical method and apply it to Genesis 37-50. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.
By the completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

You will answer questions at the beginning of the project, and you will answer the same questions at the end of the project.

Your responses to this survey will remain anonymous. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Please use the last four digits of your Social Security Number as your personal identification number.

Date _____   Personal Identification Code _____

Part 1
Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. What is your age?
   ___ A. 18-21
   ___ B. 22-24
   ___ C. 25-34
   ___ D. 35-44
   ___ E. 45-54
   ___ F. 55-64
   ___ G. 65 and over

2. Do you consider yourself a follower of Jesus?
   ___ A. Yes
   ___ B. No

3. How often do you personally read the Bible?
   ___ A. daily
   ___ B. several times per week
   ___ C. once a week
   ___ D. several times a month
   ___ E. rarely
   ___ F. never

4. What keeps you from regularly reading the Bible? (Check all that apply)
   ___ A. lack of time
   ___ B. don't feel like it
   ___ C. don't know how
   ___ D. don't understand what you read
   ___ E. lack motivation
   ___ F. don't see the relevance for your life
   ___ G. other _____

5. What translation of the Bible do you normally use to read the Bible on your own?
   ___ A. King James Version (KJV)
   ___ B. New King James Version (NKJV)
   ___ C. New International Version (NIV)
   ___ D. New Living Translation (NLT)
   ___ E. English Standard Version (ESV)
   ___F. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
   ___ G. Message (MSG)
   ___ H. Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
   ___ I. Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
   ___ J. Other
   ___ K. I Don't Know

Part 2

Directions: Respond to each statement with your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree
D = disagree
DS = disagree somewhat
AS = agree somewhat
A = agree
SA = strongly agree

1. The Bible is important and should be regularly read and studied.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

2. I have a regular time scheduled to read the Bible.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

3. I feel confident studying the Bible on my own.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

4. I could teach someone else how to study the Bible.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

5. Context is very important to consider when interpreting the Bible.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

6. The Bible should always be interpreted literally.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

7. I know the difference between eisegesis and exegesis.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

8. From creation to Jesus' second coming, I could give a brief overview of the story of
   the Bible.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

9. I know where most of the books of the Bible fit into the overarching story of the Bible.
   SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. Knowledge is the goal of Bible study.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. I feel comfortable using a commentary to help me understand the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. I understand what the following phrase means: The Bible interprets the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. I am familiar with the various genres found within the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. I feel confident in reading the historical narratives in the Bible (Genesis, Kings, etc.).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. I feel confident in reading prophecy in the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. I feel confident in reading the Psalms.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. I feel confident in reading the wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.)
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. I feel confident in reading the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. I feel confident in reading the letters of the New Testament.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. I feel confident in reading the Old Testament.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. I feel confident in reading the New Testament.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. I am able study the Bible and apply what I learn to my own life.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

23. Without the use of chapter or verse markers, I am able to determine the beginning and
    ending of a self-contained passage of Scripture to be studied.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

24. Without the help from a commentary or someone else, I feel confident in making my own observations about a passage.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

25. I feel confident in determining the single, central meaning of a passage of Scripture.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

26. Application is the goal of Bible study.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

27. I have love for the Word of God.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

APPENDIX 2

HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCY SURVEY POST-TEST

The following survey was administered to all participants after they completed the nine-week hermeneutical training. The purpose of this research instrument was to assess the participants' confidence in each hermeneutical competency and confidence after the training sessions.

HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCY SURVEY

Agreement to Participate
The research in which you are about to participate is designed to train participants in biblical hermeneutics. This research is being conducted by Daniel Rasor for purpose of increasing knowledge and ability to interpret the Bible through the christiconic hermeneutic. In this research, you will learn the christiconic hermeneutical method and apply it to Genesis 37-50. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.
By the completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

You will answer questions at the beginning of the project, and you will answer the same questions at the end of the project.

Your responses to this survey will remain anonymous. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Please use the last four digits of your Social Security Number as your personal identification number.

Date _____   Personal Identification Code _____

Part 1
Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. What is your age?
    ___ A. 18-21
    ___ B. 22-24
    ___ C. 25-34
    ___ D. 35-44
    ___ E. 45-54
    ___ F. 55-64
    ___ G. 65 and over

2. Do you consider yourself a follower of Jesus?
    ___ A. Yes
    ___ B. No

3. How often do you personally read the Bible?
    ___ A. daily
    ___ B. several times per week
    ___ C. once a week
    ___ D. several times a month
    ___ E. rarely
    ___ F. never

4. What keeps you from regularly reading the Bible? (Check all that apply)
    ___ A. lack of time
    ___ B. don't feel like it
    ___ C. don't know how
    ___ D. don't understand what you read
    ___ E. lack motivation
    ___ F. don't see the relevance for your life
    ___ G. other _____

5. What translation of the Bible do you normally use to read the Bible on your own?
    ___ A. King James Version (KJV)
    ___ B. New King James Version (NKJV)
    ___ C. New International Version (NIV)
    ___ D. New Living Translation (NLT)
    ___ E. English Standard Version (ESV)
    ___ F. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
    ___ G. Message (MSG)
    ___ H. Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
    ___ I. Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
    ___ J. Other
    ___ K. I Don't Know

Part 2

Directions: Respond to each statement with your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree
D = disagree
DS = disagree somewhat
AS = agree somewhat
A = agree
SA = strongly agree

6. The Bible is important and should be regularly read and studied.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

7. I have a regular time scheduled to read the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

8. I feel confident studying the Bible on my own.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

9. I could teach someone else how to study the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

10. Context is very important to consider when interpreting the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

11. The Bible should always be interpreted literally.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

12. I know the difference between eisegesis and exegesis.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

13. From creation to Jesus' second coming, I could give a brief overview of the story of
    the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

14. I know where most of the books of the Bible fit into the overarching story of the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

15. Knowledge is the goal of Bible study.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

16. I feel comfortable using a commentary to help me understand the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

17. I understand what the following phrase means: The Bible interprets the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

18. I am familiar with the various genres found within the Bible.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

19. I feel confident in reading the historical narratives in the Bible (Genesis, Kings, etc.).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

20. I feel confident in reading prophecy in the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

21. I feel confident in reading the Psalms.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

22. I feel confident in reading the wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.)
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

23. I feel confident in reading the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

24. I feel confident in reading the letters of the New Testament.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

25. I feel confident in reading the Old Testament.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

26. I feel confident in reading the New Testament.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

27. I am able study the Bible and apply what I learn to my own life.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

28. Without the use of chapter or verse markers, I am able to determine the beginning and
    ending of a self-contained passage of Scripture to be studied.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

29. Without the help from a commentary or someone else, I feel confident in making my own observations about a passage.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

30. I feel confident in determining the single, central meaning of a passage of Scripture.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

31. Application is the goal of Bible study.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

32. I have love for the Word of God.
    SD   D   DS   AS   A   SA

Please answer the following questions:

33. Did you learn new concepts or ideas for interpreting and applying Scripture from this class? (Circle one)

    Yes   No

34. Please share one or more of the new concepts or ideas you learned (structure, chiasms, etc.)

    _____

    _____

    _____

35. What is the most helpful hermeneutical tool you learned in the class? Why?

    _____

    _____

    _____

36. What was the least helpful aspect of the class? Why?

    _____

    _____

    _____

37. What was the most significant thing you learned from this class? Why?

    _____

    _____

    _____

38. What do you wish this class would have covered in more detail?

_____

_____

_____

39. In what ways could this class have been improved?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 3

CHRISTICONIC WORKFLOW

1.0 Preparation

Before you begin, pray!

2.0 Read and Digest the Thought of the Text

2.1 Observe the text. Read the text.

2.2 Meditate on the passage.

Write down a prayerful response for each phrase, sentence, or paragraph – turn each on into worship.

3.0 What is the Author Saying?

3.1 Questions and Answers.

List repeated words or phrase.

List words you do not understand.

List grammar that you struggle with.

Are there any concepts you do not understand?

Is there any background that is vague?

Are there any text-critical issues that are thorny?

Is there anything out of place or puzzling?

Additional questions or comments about the text:

3.2 Significance and Insignificance

Do not chase every conceivable rabbit in the text. Not everything is important. Be discriminatory. Keep asking from the start, "Will this help me discern the doing of the author? Do I need to know this to apply this text?"

Is there anything that stands out as significant in this text?

4.0 What is the author doing? Is there a structure to the text?

Are there unusual elements in the text?

What is the emphasis of the text?

Are there contrasts to the text?

Are there links between pericopes?

4.1 Validate the Author's Doing

Intrapericopal coherence – there are a number of textual elements/clues. If your "diagnosis" of the author's doing is accurate, then all of those elements will cohere.

Interpericopal coherence – Between pericopes, there should be coherence. This pericope is one pearl in a necklace.

Does this doing have intrapericopal and interpericopal coherence? How?

5.0 Derive Application

State the pericopal theology:

5.1 Application

How does this need to be applied generally?

How does this need to be applied specifically?

APPENDIX 4

SESSION SUMMARIES

Each session, the Christiconic Workflow was distributed to each participant. Participants were encouraged to work through the Workflow in small groups. The time allotted for each session varied between 15 minutes and 25 minutes. After the small group work, I led discussion on their findings to lead them to the pericopal theology and application. The pericopal theology for each session is as follows:[1]

Session 1 (Introduction) – No pericopal theology. This session introduced hermeneutics and the need for practicing biblical hermeneutics.

Session 2 (Genesis 37) - One who expects to be an agent of God's blessing to others can anticipate misunderstanding and mistreatment from them.

Session 3 (Genesis 38) - Those who will be agents of God's blessing exhibit selfless concern for others and a humble awareness of their own fallibility.

Session 4 (Genesis 39) - Integrity in every situation enables one to be an agent of diving blessing.

Session 5 (Genesis 40-41) - Trusting in God's working, even when it is indiscernible, results in abundant divine blessing.

Session 6 (Genesis 42-43) – The discipline of God and their own selflessness and submission to him, lead agents of divine blessings to resolve past sins against others.

Session 7 (Genesis 44-45) - Self-sacrificial solidarity with the suffering, recognizing God's overriding sovereignty, promotes divine blessing.

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[1] Pericopal theology statements taken from Abraham Kuruvilla, *Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014).

Session 8 (Genesis 46-47) – Agents of divine blessing, obediently trusting God for blessing in their own lives, extend God's blessing to others.

Session 9 (Genesis 48-50) – Agents of divine blessing remember the blessings of the past, pass on the blessings in the present, and expect the consummation of blessings in the future.

APPENDIX 5

PRE- AND POST-TEST SURVEY PROJECT
EVALUATION: *T*-TEST FOR
DEPENDENT SAMPLES

Upon completing both pre-test and post-test surveys, I performed a t-test for

dependent samples to determine the project's effective in producing change in the

participants' perspective. The teaching of biblical hermeneutics to the members of Faith

Baptist Church made a statistically significant different resulting in the increase of their

confidence in interpreting the Bible ($t_{(14)}$ = -4.0965, p< 0.0005). The following chart

presents the summary information of the "t-test" for dependent samples.

Number of Participants	15
Pre-Test Mean	118.93
Post-Test Mean	268.92
t-Stat	-4.0965
P(T<=t)one-tail	0.0005
t Critical one-tail	1.7613

APPENDIX 6

PRE- AND POST-TEST RESULTS FOR EVALUATION:
RESPONSES FROM CLASS PARTICIPANTS

To evaluate the effectiveness of this project, the class participants completed the "Hermeneutical Competency Survey Pre-Test" (appendix 1) and "Hermeneutical Competency Survey Post-Test" (appendix 2). The following catalogs the students' answers by listing the average score for each answer before and after the course's lectures. A comparison of the two scores and a summary of the data will be provided for each question.

The "Hermeneutical Competency Survey Post-Test" included short-answer questions to provide more insight into the possible increase of ability and confidence. These answers are listed below.

The following scale provides the potential responses for each question and this chart also notes the numerical score assigned to each response according to the Likert-scale (i.e., Strongly Agree = 1, etc.)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6

1. The Bible is important and should be regularly read and studied.

Pre-Project Average Score	5.9
Post-Project Average Score	6.0
Change	0.1
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics made almost no change in the participant's perspective on Bible reading and study.

2. I have a regular time scheduled to read the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score   4.3

Post-Project Average Score   4.5

Change   0.2

Analysis   Teaching biblical hermeneutics made almost no change in a scheduled Bible reading time.

3. I feel confident studying the Bible on my own.

Pre-Project Average Score   4.4

Post-Project Average Score   4.5

Change   0.1

Analysis   Teaching biblical hermeneutics made almost no change in confidence in studying the Bible.

4. I could teach someone else how to study the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score   3.6

Post-Project Average Score   4.2

Change   0.6

Analysis   Teaching biblical hermeneutics gave participants confidence in teaching someone else how to study the Bible.

5. Context is very important to consider when interpreting the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score   5.7

Post-Project Average Score   5.6

Change   -.01

Analysis   Teaching biblical hermeneutics did not change the participants' opinion on the context's importance.

6. The Bible should always be interpreted literally.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.7
Post-Project Average Score	3.9
Change	0.2
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in almost no change in the participants' view of always interpreting the Bible literally.

7. I know the difference between eisegesis and exegesis.

Pre-Project Average Score	2.3
Post-Project Average Score	5.3
Change	3.0
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in a significant number of participants being able to differentiate between eisegesis and exegesis.

8. From creation to Jesus' second coming, I could give a brief overview of the story of the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.4
Post-Project Average Score	5.1
Change	0.7
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in some of the students being able to give a brief overview of the story of the Bible.

9. I know where most of the books of the Bible fit into the overarching story of the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.9
Post-Project Average Score	4.7
Change	0.8
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in an increase in knowledge regarding where most of the books of the Bible fit into the overarching story of the Bible.

10. Knowledge is the goal of Bible study.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.9
Post-Project Average Score	3.5
Change	-0.4
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in some of the participants rejecting the idea that knowledge is the goal of the Bible.

11. I feel comfortable using a commentary to help me understand the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score	5.0
Post-Project Average Score	5.0
Change	0.0
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in no change in the participants' comfort in using a commentary to help understand the Bible.

12. I understand what the following phrase means: The Bible interprets the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.9
Post-Project Average Score	4.9
Change	1.0
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in significant change in the participants' understanding of "the Bible interprets the Bible."

13. I am familiar with the various genres found within the Bible.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.9
Post-Project Average Score	4.9
Change	1.0
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in a significant increase in familiarity with the various genres of the Bible.

14. I feel confident in reading the historical narratives in the Bible (Genesis, Kings, etc.).

Pre-Project Average Score	4.6
Post-Project Average Score	5.1
Change	0.5
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants growing in confidence when reading historical narratives.

15. I feel confident in reading prophecy in the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.).

Pre-Project Average Score	4.2
Post-Project Average Score	4.5
Change	0.3
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants slightly increasing confidence when reading the prophecy genre.

16. I feel confident in reading the Psalms.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.5
Post-Project Average Score	4.7
Change	0.2
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants slightly increasing confidence when reading the Psalms.

17. I feel confident in reading the wisdom literature (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, etc.)

Pre-Project Average Score	4.7
Post-Project Average Score	5.1
Change	0.4
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants increasing confidence when reading the wisdom literature genre.

18. I feel confident in reading the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

Pre-Project Average Score	5.4
Post-Project Average Score	5.7
Change	0.3
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants slightly increasing confidence when reading the gospels.

19. I feel confident in reading the letters of the New Testament.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.9
Post-Project Average Score	5.4
Change	0.5
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants increasing confidence when reading the letters of the New Testament.

20. I feel confident in reading the Old Testament.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.9
Post-Project Average Score	4.5
Change	0.6
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants increasing confidence when reading the Old Testament.

21. I feel confident in reading the New Testament.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.9
Post-Project Average Score	4.3
Change	-0.6
Analysis	Even though each genre of the New Testament revealed an increase in confidence in reading the New Testament, participants decreased their confidence in reading the New Testament.

22. I am able study the Bible and apply what I learn to my own life.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.7
Post-Project Average Score	5.0
Change	0.3
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants increasing confidence when reading and applying the Bible to their life.

23. Without the use of chapter or verse markers, I am able to determine the beginning and ending of a self-contained passage of Scripture to be studied.

Pre-Project Average Score	3.2
Post-Project Average Score	4.1
Change	0.9
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics significantly increased confidence when discerning the beginning and ending of a self-contained passage of Scripture.

24. Without the help from a commentary or someone else, I feel confident in making my own observations about a passage.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.1
Post-Project Average Score	4.3
Change	0.2
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in participants slighty increasing confidence in their own ability to make observations about a passage.

25. I feel confident in determining the single, central meaning of a passage of Scripture.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.1
Post-Project Average Score	4.7
Change	0.6
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in an increase of confidence to determine the central meaning of a passage.

26. Application is the goal of Bible study.

Pre-Project Average Score	4.9
Post-Project Average Score	5.1
Change	0.2
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in a slight increase in the belief that application is the goal of the Bible.

27. I have love for the Word of God.

Pre-Project Average Score	5.7
Post-Project Average Score	5.7
Change	0.0
Analysis	Teaching biblical hermeneutics resulted in no change in the participants' love for the Word of God.

Short Answers

Did you learn new concepts or ideas for interpreting and applying Scripture from this class?

15 participants answered "Yes"

Please share one or more of the new concepts or ideas you learned (structure, chiasms, etc.)

- ❖ How groups of Scriptures fit within chapter flow and from one chapter to another

- ❖ How pericope's break up chapters into several different thoughts and messages

- ❖ Structure mostly and not ignoring obvious structure layouts

- ❖ Importance of grammar/structure to find an emphasis/purpose

- ❖ I think I have learned to go deeper in study. First, to look at overarching narratives and themes, but also looking at chiasms and doublets

- ❖ Breaking down structurally the text, looking for chiasms, focusing on the important pieces of Scripture instead of chasing rabbits.

- ❖ The structure is understandable. Some of the chiasms are more able to understand

- ❖ Structure, paying attention to the time line history

- ❖ Pericopes and chiasms

- ❖ Pericope and structure

- ❖ I have been shown how to use the tools to look for the structure and chiasms found in the text. It is still to be unseen on whether I am able to productively use these tools.

- ❖ Chiasms, asking questions

- ❖ Structure

- ❖ Identifying structure as a means to understand the author's purpose

What is the most helpful hermeneutical tool you learned in this class? Why?

- ❖ Why is the chosen central theme relevant, and does it pertain to Christ as the criterion of Scripture interpretation

- ❖ Avoid predetermined lessons and ideas.

- ❖ Seek God's guidance in all interpretations and applications. This seems to work best

- ❖ Looking for concepts spread over multiple verses or chapters

- ❖ Interpericopal theology helps most with application to my life

- ❖ I think to look at the overview and then go deeper

- ❖ Asking what is the author really trying to tell us and looking at the structure of the text and what culturally might be happening

- ❖ Paying attention to applying the Bible to change my life

- ❖ Finding and identifying pericopes and how to "unpack the Scriptures by asking questions repetitiveness. Asking, "what is the author doing with what he is saying?"

- ❖ What is the author doing? Better enables me to grasp meaning before getting too bogged down into detail

- ❖ Read the text, then ask what is the author doing and saying with the text. In asking this it switches my minds from reading to listening to God

- ❖ Asking questions. Helps me to understand why something is happening, therefore making it easier to accept

- ❖ Working with and identifying chiastic structure

What was the least helpful aspect of the class?

- ❖ Details that, in my non-seminary understanding of Scripture interpretation, do not contribute to interpretation though they may not detract either

- ❖ Seeking the deepest meaning to each verse. Understanding does not always translate to correct application for me.

- ❖ More time for group work but that was always necessary

- ❖ I don't know

- ❖ Better understand the reading and pulling structure of Bible together

- ❖ Determining pericopal theology – too difficult for me

- ❖ The $10 words. There surely is/are lamen (sic) terms that can be used. Keep it simple for the simple.

- ❖ Big words. Made it hard to follow

- ❖ None

What was the most significant thing you learned from this class? Why?

- ❖ That it's so important to learn "how to interpret the Bible so as not to minimize our Lord Jesus Christ"

- ❖ Learning that interpretation can have numerous applications

- ❖ How to identify a pericope and then look for the theology of it, not just taking verses out of context and using them how we want

- ❖ Learning to not skip over the background info / its not just narrative but determines the chiasms

- ❖ How to look at Scripture with a different, more prying lens the structure of the text is significant and to not look into things / add context to Scripture that isn't there

- ❖ Discussion and ideas of others

- ❖ When I see repeated things, go back and analyze

- ❖ Having increased my confidence in understanding Scripture

- ❖ Reading Scripture more critically – promotes better understanding

- ❖ That God is able to say more than just what the face value of the words say

- ❖ How to study the Bible better. 1) That was the point. 2) It will help me learn the Bible and more about the Trinity more

- ❖ New ways to read the Bible

- ❖ The interpericopal consistency and its importance in interpreting the author's intent

What do you wish this class would have covered in more detail?

- ❖ A schematic (cursory) of what the goal is

- ❖ Identifying pericopes in New Testament, but we had to start somewhere

- ❖ How to decide which chapters go together

- ❖ It was all good looking at Scripture from a different author to understand how pericopal theology might translate differently

- ❖ None – plenty of detail

- ❖ I don't know. I feel like there is something but I can't put my hands on it.

- ❖ "Rabbit trails." stuff that is impossible to know

In what ways could this class be improved?

- ❖ providing printed terms and definitions since they would be so very relevant

- ❖ Just ready for class 2.0!

- ❖ None, enjoyed the group work to help lead us along. If any of the survey answers are worse, it is because I have been opened up to a deeper interpretation which makes me more excited to read the Bible, especially the Old Testament

- ❖ More snacks. Just kidding. It was good

- ❖ More time but I understand it wasn't feasible

- ❖ Longer time period so we don't have to skim over where more depth could have been explored

- ❖ It felt overwhelming the first class. Maybe a printed out vocabulary list or definitions for these "scholarly collegiate words!" It may have prevented an increase of blood pressure and decreased a minor panic attack :)

- ❖ Fewer number of classes

- ❖ I can see a great value in this kind of study being done in a smaller setting, maybe separated by men and women.

- ❖ Did pretty good. I learned a lot for not having a theology degree

- ❖ None

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING THE MEMBERS OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH
IN CLAREMORE, OKLAHOMA, IN THE
CHRISTICONIC HERMENEUTIC

Daniel Mark Rasor, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Abraham Kuruvilla

This project sought to equip members of Faith Baptist Church to grow in their knowledge and practice of biblical hermeneutics. Chapter 1 presents the ministry context of Faith Baptist Church and the goals of the project. Chapter 2 provides a brief analysis and critique to three common hermeneutical methods. Chapter 3 demonstrates how to practice pericopal theology and the christiconic hermeneutic may be applied to Scripture. Chapter 4 describes the project itself. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on the completion of the specified goals. Ultimately, this project sought to train Christians in biblical hermeneutics so that they may be equipped to study and interpret the Word with the intent to glorify, worship, and love Jesus more fully.

VITA

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