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EQUIPPING THE LAY LEADERS OF GRASS LAKE BAPTIST
CHURCH IN GRASS LAKE, MICHIGAN, TO EMPLOY
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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EQUIPPING THE LAY LEADERS OF GRASS LAKE BAPTIST
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I dedicate this to my wife, Elizabeth, for her resiliency, dedication,
and selfless service to our family and the local church.

I also dedicate this project to Dr. Bruce Compton, fellow military
chaplain, seminary professor, and mentor in the faith.

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PREFACE

This project will capstone a conversation I remember from the wisdom spoken to me many years ago, it has challenged me throughout years of ministry, “There is nothing more important you will do in this life than to rightfully teach and preach the Scriptures, for behind it is the power of salvation and eternity.” I did not fully understand the wisdom until I found myself in the pulpit preaching and teaching, feeling unsteady and in awe of the power God utilizes in the preaching of his Word.

I am eternally grateful for my Savior Jesus Christ who has eternally saved me from eternal damnation, loving Christian parents who raised me on their knees, and for godly men and women to challenge and invest in me at many stages of my life. I am indebted to my Youth Pastor Kevin Winningham who loved me where I was at in the spiritual journey of my youth, he provided exhaustive counsel and the truth of the Word to me without seizing.

Lastly, I am thankful for my best friend and wife, Elizabeth. There are no words to describe the love she gives to me and our four children. After twenty-one years of marriage, I fall in love with her afresh and anew each day. I am constantly reminded of her enduring sacrifices through my previous military deployments and ongoing church obligations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When lay leaders teach Scripture, it is important for them to understand the biblical truths contained within. Church members are eager to listen to teaching and make application into their life, but if lay leaders wrongfully understand Scripture themselves, then they will not be able to be able to pass on wise counsel and could confuse church members in doctrine and practice. For this reason, it is necessary for the church to teach foundational truths so that lay leaders can properly understand and teach Scriptures in the church and in their homes. It is imperative that lay leaders faithfully employ biblical hermeneutics into all areas of their studies, personally and corporately. A ministry project focusing on hermeneutical principles through the Pauline Epistles will positively affect the lay leaders and members of Grass Lake Baptist Church not only in their study of the Pauline Epistles but all of Scripture.

Context

Grass Lake Baptist Church (GLBC) has existed for sixty-eight years and has gone through significant changes since its inception. A strong constant for the church is its high view of Scripture as evident in its different ministries of teaching, preaching, membership classes, church discipline, missions, and counseling. The church strives to ensure that its ministries are based on God's Word and, whether they are understood fully or not, biblical principles guide the actions of the church. The church strongly craves the meat (1 Pet 2:2) of the Word and soaks each sermon and lesson on systematic theology as fast as they are typed and presented.

Another strength of the church is its rapid growth, spiritually and numerically. This growth has led to the church recently breaking ground on a new building to accommodate the growing congregation. Members are excited for their personal and corporate growth. Sunday morning worship is filled with excitement and vigor from attendees. There are many different ministries of the church and all of them need to properly comprehend and employ proper hermeneutical principles.

After many generations of legalism having a strong hold in the church, the church recently completed a lengthy educational series that corrected errors in practice and polity. This created a new paradigm of understanding in both their personal success as Christ-followers and as members of the body of Christ. These changes included theological and practical ministry applications that were widely accepted and implemented. There is significant interest in further corrections of the church to include revising the church's constitution, which has not been addressed in eleven years and contains many archaic and legalistic practices. The recent changes have been embraced by all the families within the church and even generational members who are normally reluctant to change are optimistic for the future.

The greatest weakness of GLBC is for lay leaders to understand and teach the Scriptures from a proper hermeneutic. Because they are not equipped, lay leaders are content to spend minimal time in educational preparation and deliver lessons with little to no concentration on biblical hermeneutics. At the end of teaching by a lay leader, there is consistent engagement being pursued by the audience to fully understand the meaning and application of the selected text. There is no record or report that biblical hermeneutic principles have previously been taught in the church at any time in its history. This issue is prevalent in the lay leader's study and presentation of the Scriptures at and away from the church. The issue impacts the entire church as lay teachers teach classes without adequate hermeneutical training.

Rationale

It is important for the lay leaders of GLBC to feel confident when they read the Scriptures in the church or at home. When they pick up and open their copy of Scripture there should be introductory framework before reading the passage. Key aspects like literary genre, context, authorship, and audience are just a few key principles needed to properly understand and apply Scripture. Reading the text *per se*, outside of a hermeneutical framework, could cause lay leaders to stumble into false doctrine or an improper application of Scriptures into their lives. This is one example of why equipping the lay leaders at GLBC with proper hermeneutical principles to read, understand, compare, contrast, and faithfully apply the truths to their lives is important. The Word of God is good for all matters in life, not just when a Christian is interacting in the church setting. GLBC needs faithful lay leaders who employ biblical hermeneutical principles in their teaching, corporate worship, and in their daily reading of Scripture.

Understanding and applying the truths of Scripture appropriately is important to all ministries of the church. Not understanding biblical hermeneutics could allow lay leaders to remain stuck in the milk of the Word and not be sanctified and progressing to the meat of Scripture (Heb 5:12). The desired result is for the lay leaders to develop an apologetic of their faith and stand victoriously in trials while being ready to give an account of the hope they possess (1 Pet 3:15). GLBC is the vehicle to remedy efficacy. The church seeks to equip its lay leaders for their individual ministries within the church and in their private lives.

Without lay leaders who handle the Word of God properly, all ministries of the church will eventually fail. GLBC desires to produce faithful stewards of the Word in the church and in lives outside of the church; the church must equip lay leaders with the tools to do so. The Bible is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17). This project provided due diligence to the lay leaders of GLBC to equip them with instruction and principles to increase their knowledge in biblical hermeneutics.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church in Grass Lake, Michigan, to study the Pauline Epistles by training them in biblical hermeneutics.

Goals

There was a need for hermeneutics training at Grass Lake Baptist Church. Three goals provided a remedy to this need for biblical hermeneutics. These goals were progressive in nature.

1. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and application of biblical hermeneutics amongst the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop a seven-week curriculum focused on biblical hermeneutics and concentrating on the Pauline Epistles.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge and application of biblical hermeneutics amongst the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess knowledge in biblical hermeneutics amongst the lay leaders of GLBC. This training was open to all lay leaders of GLBC and all leaders had an equal chance for participation. This goal was measured by the completion of an anonymous pre-training survey administered to the lay leaders of the church.¹ In addition, lay leaders were tasked with individually teaching through a selected passage of Scripture in the Pauline Epistles. A rubric was used to evaluate the performance of the participants.² This goal was considered successfully met when the participants completed the pre-training survey, taught an assigned biblical passage, and their scores were analyzed.

¹ 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.

² See appendix 2.

The second goal of this project was to develop a seven-week curriculum focused on biblical hermeneutics, concentrating on the Pauline Epistles. The goal was measured by three expert reviewers using a rubric.³ The reviewers consisted of doctoral level experts in the field of biblical preaching and hermeneutics. The goal was considered successfully completed when all scoring criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level on the rubric. If any criterion did not achieve the sufficient level, then the curriculum was revised and resubmitted to panelists until it achieved this level.

The third goal of this project was to increase the knowledge and application of biblical hermeneutics amongst the lay leaders of GLBC. The seven-week curriculum was instructed at GLBC on Wednesday nights in lieu of the normal Bible study service. Each session was at least one hour in length and volunteer participants were expected to attend all sessions of the instruction. A participant who missed one session was provided with materials to allow them to remain for all aspects of the class. Participants who were absent for more than one session were excluded from the post-training survey and post-teaching opportunity. In addition, project participants were tasked with individually teaching through an assigned passage of Scripture in the Pauline Epistles. To assess the increase in knowledge, a *t*-test was utilized to measure the difference in responses from the pre-course survey and the post-course survey.

To measure the increase in application, a *t*-test was utilized to measure the difference in performance from the pre-course biblical teaching and post-course biblical teaching. The rubric contained five categories, and each participant was graded on their ability to address each of the categories in their teaching opportunities: literary genre, writer identification, purpose, revelation of Jesus Christ, and acceptable application. The categories had a rating scale from (1) insufficient, (2) requires attention, (3) sufficient,

³ See appendix 3.

and (4) exemplary. Each project participant was given a total score on a summation of all the categories as they properly interacted with them in their teaching opportunities.

To measure the change in the application portion of biblical hermeneutics, project participants were assigned a text from the Pauline Epistles to teach through. A rubric was utilized to score their performance as they utilized biblical hermeneutical principles into their teaching opportunities. This goal was considered successful if both *t*-tests statistically showed a positive difference between pre- and post-surveys and pre- and post-teachings through biblical passages.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitation

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

Biblical hermeneutics. *Biblical hermeneutics* is defined as the principles and art by which the meaning of a biblical text is determined.⁴

Lay leaders. *Lay leaders* are defined as the members of GLBC who are in a teaching role or interested in a future teaching role in the church.

Pauline Epistles. The *Pauline Epistles* are the letters written by Paul to specific and individual communities that fit in the epistolary genre of the New Testament.⁵

The first limitation was the commitment of lay leaders to the seven Wednesday nights during this project. This project allowed participants to miss one instruction block during the project and skip weeks that have major holidays that fall on a Wednesday.

The second limitation was the breadth and depth of the project. The project provided basic education in biblical hermeneutics but was not exhaustive. The lay leaders needed additional practice and mentorship on the implementation of their new learning.

⁴ Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 1991), 19.

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 2.

To mitigate this limitation, additional education was provided post-project and small groups learned and exercised the new learning under pastoral supervision.

The first delimitation of this project was that only GLBC lay leaders over the age of 18 were able to partake in the project. This delimitation was necessary because (1) the minimum age required for church membership at GLBC, and (2) it allowed participants to cogently maneuver the surveys and curriculum at the appropriate pace.

The second delimitation was that only lay leaders participated in the project. In lieu of the requirement of participants to teach through a passage of Scripture, it was arduous for the scope of this project for every GLBC member to participate.

Conclusion

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom 10:17). An omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God has provided GLBC members with the Scriptures to guide their lives. This project will equip lay leaders to properly read and apply Scripture in their teachings in the church and in their private lives. The following chapters will provide biblical and theological support, theoretical and practical issues, details and description of the project, and evaluation of the project.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS
FOR BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

A solid and faithful biblical hermeneutic is important to the proper study and application of Scripture in the believer's life. The believer is to study the Scriptures responsibly to show approval unto God. Biblical hermeneutics gives due diligence to rightly divide the Word of truth and assists the believer in errors of meaning and application and recognizing false teachings. This chapter contains exegesis of three New Testament passages, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 3:14-18, and 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31, to highlight the necessity and positive outcomes of properly studying the Scriptures.

**Study the Scriptures Rightfully and
Carefully (2 Tim 3:14-17)**

The individual and the church will benefit from studying the Scriptures from a proper hermeneutic. Growing in faith is accomplished through recognizing biblical truth that is consistent with other truths located in the Scriptures. Training and preparation to employ a biblical hermeneutic is important and necessary. The goal of proper study draws out the truth from Scripture while ensuring that false doctrines are refuted and repudiated in the believer's personal application and teachings within the church. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, the imprisoned Paul is writing young Timothy to ensure he is fully ready to stand up to the attacks on the deity of Jesus Christ and to encourage him to remain steadfast in the faith. The time that followed Jesus' ascension into heaven was marked throughout the New Testament with moral degradation and selfish behaviors of the greater Mediterranean society. However, Paul knew that Jesus was still preeminent through all of the widespread issues and encouraged Timothy to remain focused on his calling.

Refusing to Be Deceived (2 Tim 3:14-15)

Only God is infinite and perfect, and mankind is depraved from the fall and can be deceived by the evil one if not watchful for devious attacks. Believers are to arm themselves with Scripture (Eph 6:17) to protect themselves from being led astray from their beliefs and capitulating to the evil one's advances. Biblical hermeneutics assists the believer to interpret and implement the truths of Scripture.

A preliminary consideration when reading Scripture is to define in which literary genre the text belongs. If one misunderstands the genre of the text, then the rest of one's study and application will be askew and there can be profound errors. The interpretation could be profound and insightful in many ways, but it will be fatally flawed from the beginning when one misreads the genre of the text.¹ According to Adolf Deissmann all of Paul's writings should be understood as letters and distinct from epistles. His argument is that Paul wrote letters to deal with a specific problem that arose, and he wrote them to a specific people of the time. Epistles on the other hand are broader and written for a wider audience to deal with a larger issue.² However, many of Paul's writings dealt with the application of Godly principles that would permeate beyond his immediate audience. Normative applications can be made from Paul's writing to Timothy, and biblical hermeneutics (e.g., Scripture defines Scripture) is an important aspect to consider.

The *ESV Study Bible* makes note that Paul was imprisoned in Rome at the time of the writing, likely during his second imprisonment by the Romans and awaiting his impending death. This is a different imprisonment than the one recorded in Acts 28 and would have been written after 1 Timothy and Titus.³ The context of when Paul is writing to Timothy is important. Paul will advise Timothy in the next chapter that he is ready to

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 11.

² Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 228-41.

³ Ray V. Nestle, "Date," in *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2335.

be sacrificed for the faith (2 Tim 4: 6-7) and knows he was going to be killed a short time later. Paul highlights specific areas of ministry throughout the chapter and speaks on them with urgency prior to his death.

It is best to understand 2 Timothy 3:14-15 as Paul writing personal correspondence to his beloved friend Timothy for the purpose of providing encouragement and continuance in the faith. Even though this letter would go on to encourage many believers and pastors throughout the ages, the recipient of the letter was one person, but combined with the historical and cultural backgrounds the writing can be properly understood and applied today. Paul warns Timothy that because of his love for Christ he should expect persecution in his future, akin to Paul's imprisonment he was experiencing at the time of the writing.

In the preceding verses Paul refuted those living as imposters and the accompanying danger of letting their behavior continue unchecked, deceiving and then being deceived (2 Tim 3:12-13). Paul does not desire this for Timothy, and he tersely instructs him how to achieve perseverance of character now, as a leader. Timothy first learned of this resilience of character from his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois (2 Tim 1:5). The remedy to the current issue is the same as was prescribed here by Paul in his charge to Timothy: remain sincere in his faith through the study of the Scriptures. Paul reverberated this same message to the believers in Rome: "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom 10:17), and now he seeks for Timothy to remain steadfast in the faith as he faithfully learned it as a child.⁴

The juxtaposition between evil people and imposters and the firmly grounded Timothy is made even greater when considering his childhood and *modus operandi* of glorifying the Lord with whom he has engaged in for most of his life. However, Paul is aware that the evil one is the great deceiver and must be kept at bay and that believers need

⁴ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

to be on constant guard to avoid engaging in his evil plans. One of the ways the devil deceives believers is through division among the brethren, often through interpretation and application of Scripture. Timothy was reminded to remain in the one true faith on which he was raised and to proclaim that faith in bringing unity to the people of God. Paul likely had in mind here a previous warning to the church in Ephesus asking them to no longer be children that are “tossed to and from by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (Eph 4:14). Paul’s warning and encouragement to his beloved Timothy is intentional and points to a desired terminal outcome: bring glory to God.

Edification through the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16-17)

Paul is convinced in the object of how Timothy will remain faithful and true: the Word of God. Paul uses a rare term in verse 15 that is only used in the one place in New Testament writings *ἱερα γραμματα*, to denote the instruction of Timothy in the *sacred writings* of the Old Testament.⁵ This instruction in the Scriptures reiterates Timothy’s resolve to the method and manner he had been raised in and to the object of his resilience that will be needed in the future.

Timothy is reminded that “through faith in Jesus Christ” his life is eternally changed and, in his faith, there is the power of Christ to both save and sustain him. In other words, the instruction of the Scriptures describes both the process of conversion and how Timothy is to live, grow, and serve as a leader in the church.⁶

Paul’s encouragement then turns to the origins of Scripture and how the source can be counted on to provide all necessary elements of his current and future ministry. First, he professes all Scripture is breathed out by God (*θεοπνευστος*) and in doing so

⁵ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 218-19.

⁶ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 220.

recognizes the divine origin and perfection from which it came. Paul asserts that, because the author is indeed God himself, the sacred writings will never fail and are good for all areas of his ministry. Paul then lists specific responsibilities Timothy will need to endure in: teaching, reproofing, correcting, and training in righteousness.⁷ Through these important disciplines Timothy will provide for the ministerial needs of his current listeners and to all those God will sovereignly place under his lifelong ministerial efforts. Timothy can be assured that because the author of the object into which his ministry is based upon is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent he can continue to remain faithful in his office and succeed as a minister of the good news.

The pericope ends in 2 Timothy 3:17 with Paul showing the end state of following his instruction. The intent of the clause, “so the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” is not altogether clear, as it should point to those receiving the instruction. In this context and with the addition of the “man of God,” Paul’s encouragement has been understood by some to accept that he is only referring to one person. Considering the entire context of the epistle and the focus of the first five verses of chapter 4, Paul’s target is clearly visible. By continually nurturing his own life in the Scriptures Timothy will not only be thoroughly equipped for every good work in his ministerial obligations, but also for the ministry of the gospel itself.⁸

Even though Paul is writing only to Timothy as his recipient, the epistle is in line with other biblical writings and the appeal to Christians to proclaim the gospel (Mark 16:16; Rom 1:16; Acts 10:42) and remain steadfast in the faith while contending for the faith (Jude 3-4). Paul is advising Timothy that the content and direction of Scripture is necessary for him, Christian leaders, and by implication all Christians, to be fully equipped for the work of the Lord. For Christians to be complete and equipped by God they need to

⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 280.

⁸ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 280.

look to Scripture as a necessity to accomplish good works for the kingdom.⁹

Contemporary believers can heed the advice from Paul to Timothy and study Scripture to ensure that every challenge, task, and opportunity is washed through the lens of an authoritative source. Paul desires that Timothy, and all believers, not fall into the snares of every new doctrine or idea that would distort their biblical worldview on the transcendence of God in their lives. How much more is the call to not only study and apply Scripture but also to partake of it in a careful and rightful manner? This is what Paul addressed earlier with Timothy when he charges him to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). In this charge he desires that Timothy remain in the Scriptures as once taught to him and to ensure that he is doing so in a reasonable and responsible manner. Employing solid biblical hermeneutical principles in the study of Scripture will enhance interpretation and application of God's Word in the believer's life.

Diligence in Combatting Distortion (2 Pet 3:14-18)

Grant Osborne defines the goal of evangelical hermeneutics to be quite simple: "To discover the intention of the Author / author (author = inspired human author; Author = God) who inspires the text."¹⁰ One difficulty in biblical hermeneutics is determining the author's intent in a contemporary context and how to interpret and apply what was written thousands of years ago to a specific people at a specific time. Factors to consider in achieving Osborne's goal is the literary genre of the writing (wisdom, prophecy, poetry, historical narrative, etc.), original audience, historical context, syntax, and cohesion with the rest of Scripture. Osborne notes that the ultimate goal of biblical hermeneutics is not systematic theology but the sermon, not explanation but exposition, not description but

⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 571.

¹⁰ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 24.

proclamation.¹¹

Combatting wrongful interpretation and application of Scripture is a constant work of the believer. In this second epistle, Peter is likely writing from Rome to address faithful churches toward the end of his life sometime during AD 64-67. Peter is writing to encourage Christians to live a life that is pleasing to God, and a primary task of obedient living is to combat false witnesses by the rightful interpretation and application of Scripture. In this passage Peter is desiring for them to remain faithful in the true gospel of Jesus Christ and not fall into the theological pitfalls of the times. Developing and equipping the believer with a strong hermeneutic is crucial to the biblical success of the believer and the local church. It is wise for believers to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1) to assess if the teaching is indeed in line with other biblical teachings and beliefs. The church is to be diligent in teaching its hearers how to identify and discredit false teachings when heard and how to address them in a charitable way while biblically remaining firm in truth of Scripture.

The Path of Diligence (vv. 14-16)

One important aspect of understanding Scripture is to ensure contemporary readers can evaluate the original intent and context of the original hearers of the writing.¹² Peter is deliberate in his closing discourse by beginning with the conjunction $\delta\iota\acute{o}$ (therefore), where he first reminds his hearers that because there is an inevitable “day of God” (v. 12) that will occur they are to live their lives as such of that glorious revelation. Peter then instructs them to live without blemish and to be at peace during their remaining time before this event takes place. Peter previously spoke in 1 Peter 3:11-13 about the need to remain faithful in Christ as he reminds the church that the Lord will return on his

¹¹ Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 29.

¹² Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 71.

second advent and claim them for himself. Since the world will one day fall into the judgmental hand of God, the challenge is how to live in lieu of this cosmic appointment.

Two basic rules are prevalent when employing biblical hermeneutics. First, a text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or their readers. Second, whether Christians share comparable particulars (i.e., similar specific situations) with the first-century hearers, God's Word today is the same as his Word to the original audience.¹³ First-century readers would have been exposed to the many readings of existing Scriptures during their time. As such, they would have been familiar with the many prophetic examples in Scripture that Peter cites in his discourse to the churches. It is consistent with other texts, and it is still true that Christians should continue to labor in a fashion that always keeps the future glory that awaits them in the forefront of their current tasking.

Peter then reminds readers that the Lord's timing is perfect, akin to his charge in 3:9 about the perfected timing of the Lord, and believers should repent from evil (v. 15). This prelude is followed by a call of adherence to Paul's writings that contained wisdom given to him (v. 15b). Thomas Schreiner equates that Peter is essentially saying in 3:14-15,

Because you are waiting from God to destroy the present world and to form a new one, you should know two things. First, be diligent to live godly lives so that you will receive your eternal reward. Second, consider the Lord's patience, or apparent delay in coming, as an opportunity for salvation. Both of these notions, that is, that we should live godly lives to receive salvation and that the Lord has exercised patience so sinners can repent, are also taught by Paul.¹⁴

In verse 16, Peter will again speak of Paul and refer to him to provide a warning about the necessity of properly understanding the Scriptures. The phrase "hard to understand" does not mean that some passages in the Scriptures cannot be understood or are beyond any type of meaningful comprehension. It means that sometimes great effort will be required to understand a certain passage of Scripture. This effort will require great

¹³ Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 74-75.

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: B & H, 2003), 349.

personal discipline, study, and wisdom from a mighty God to achieve proper understanding of certain passages of Scripture. The reason for the warning is in the subsequent section of verse 16, where ignorant and unstable people are charged with twisting not only Paul's writings but also that of other Scriptures. What Peter likely has in view here is the proactive distortion of Scripture by false prophets. One noted group of these false prophets were the gnostics, and though not fully developed until the second or third century, their early form was likely being targeted here.

The gnostics' aim was to acquire *gnosis* (knowledge), which would enable the soul to return to the heavenly world after death. An essential part of this *gnosis* was the need to circumvent the heavenly warders who tried to stop the soul from making its ascension.¹⁵ With this goal in mind, early gnostics sought to disrupt, twist, and misinterpret Scripture that was having a significant impact in the Mediterranean region. To that end, Peter's second epistle utilizes the words *epignōsis*, *gnōsis*, *oida*, and *proginōskō* twelve times in his prose, with the semantic range of the words "to know" or have "knowledge" of something.¹⁶ Combatting this twisted view of the gnostics was an area of concern that Peter wanted to give adequate warning about. Verse 16 is important to understand how the gnostics were working toward their own destruction but also to understand how the early church viewed New Testament documents from one apostle to another. With one apostle giving authority to another, that at the least Peter viewed Paul's writings on par with the Hebrew Scriptures.

With this authority given to Paul's writings from Peter, the warning is terse and poignant and should be heeded with great resolve. The church benefits by continuing to teach these normative warnings and how it interprets and applies Scripture. In these verses Peter sets up his closing to the book and provides an answer as to why it is important to

¹⁵ Jonathan Knight, *2 Peter and Jude*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), 81.

¹⁶ Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), 367-68.

heed both his and Paul's advice.

A Believer's Rightful Response (vv. 17-18)

Peter begins his final verses of his second epistle and quickly removes any doubt from believers to claim they were misinformed or simply did not know of the warnings given. If they later find themselves in a theological dungeon far away from the truths to which they were once beholden, then the weight of that burden will be theirs to carry. Roy Zuck eloquently provides for the need of Scripture to deal with false witnesses sternly, which will produce many outcomes for the believer: "The Scriptures are a fire, to consume false teaching (Jer 23:39); a hammer, to shatter people's hard hearts; food, to sustain one's soul (Ps 119:103, Jer 15:16; 1 Cor 3:2; Heb 5:13-14, 1 Pet 2:2); a light, to guide our paths (Ps. 119:105); and a sword, for offense against Satan (Eph 6:17; cf. Luke 4:4, 8, 12)."¹⁷

Although not formally connected, Zuck utilizes fire as the first descriptor to what Scripture does to false witnesses: it exposes what is real and what is not. In the eschaton Christians will sit upon the *bēma* seat of Christ and will be judged by fire upon all they truly did for Christ while on earth and will be rewarded for what was true for the kingdom. Conversely, if the actions and motivations of the believer prove to be untrue, he will suffer loss but still be saved (1 Cor 3:13-15). The power of the Scriptures contains both the power to save and sustain for eternity, but believers are to be sober and vigilant to be watchful for anti-biblical teachings while being sanctified into the image of the living God (Col 2:9). The motif of fire throughout Scripture is often related to the presence of God and the refinement of his people throughout his overall redemptive plan of mankind (Exod 3:2-3; 13:21; Isa 66:15; Luke 3:16, Acts 2:3; Jas 3:5). Jesus freely gave himself to mankind as the incarnate Word (John 1:1) so the sanctifying work in the life of the

¹⁷ Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 2010), 280.

believer is through Christ himself.

In 1 Peter 3:17, Peter desires that his readers be on guard so “that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your stability.” The word “carried” (*ekpesēte*) refers to apostasy (cf. Rom 11:11, 22; 14:4, 1 Cor 10:12; Heb 4:11; Rev 2:5) and departing from the Christian faith. Peter clarifies that those who fall away, like the teachers, are destined for eternal destruction; therefore, believers are to maintain their secure position by heeding the warnings in Scripture and not ignoring them.¹⁸ This Word is the vehicle that causes the believer to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (v. 18) and it ensures the believer is not carried away with the error of lawless people (v. 17). Peter then summates the intended goal of his instruction (v. 18): so the believer will (1) grow in grace and knowledge of Christ (2) to bring glory to God both in the present time and forever. Believers are to heed the advice of Peter and diligently claim the truths of Scripture in combatting false witnesses, for in Scripture is stability through Jesus Christ to live a godly and obedient life unto him.

Sanctification through God’s Wisdom (1 Cor 1:26-31)

Growing in the faith and truth of Jesus Christ as a believer leads to seeking God’s wisdom through his Word. It is no longer mankind’s wisdom one seeks in theological matters but that of the inspired and inerrant Scriptures. The wisdom needed to be set apart for God’s service comes from the Scriptures—it is a lamp that shines a path for the believer to follow and is mutually exclusive from the carnal wisdom of the world. The need for sanctification of the believer is rooted in the Edenic setting where mankind failed to explicate God’s image into every facet of their existence and bring glory to God. Sanctification is needed as a restoration of the image and glory of God in the fullest sense,

¹⁸ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 353.

progressively in this life and fully in the life to come.¹⁹ The church in Corinth was beloved by Paul and planted during his second missionary journey, however, the church had begun to place improper value on the wisdom of the world and not in Christ. Paul reminded them of their call and what the Lord has accomplished in their lives to this point and encourages them not to lose sight of their new nature and the vehicle from which that nature has derived.

Paul was deliberate to remind the church in Corinth of who they used to be and that prior to their conversion they possessed no merits or accomplishments of their own. Earlier, in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul compares the worldly wisdom that is sought out by unbelievers with the incompatibility of godly wisdom and claims that any problems that arise in the church (vv. 10-11) cannot be worked out by the former. Paul brings this point to its precipice by first contrasting the church and how it should be operating much different from the carnal citizens who view the word of the cross (Scripture) as folly (v. 18). Paul then compares believers, specifically addressing those in the church of Corinth at this time, to remember they *are* being saved by the power of God. Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14 to remind them of the ultimate destination of earthly wisdom: it will be destroyed.

Paul employs a rhetorical question to reinforce and compare the wisdom of the highly intelligent people of his time to that of godly wisdom. In their highest form of wisdom, the world equated Paul and Christians of the time as fools but as Jesus Christ is the object of their foolishness, he will shame their charges against them. The need for signs and wonders to be displayed to the Jews and Greeks is one example Paul chooses to highlight how earthly wisdom is folly considering the true godly knowledge and conversation given to them through the gospel of Jesus Christ (vv. 4-5).

¹⁹ Rolland McCune, *The Doctrines of Salvation, the Church, and Last Things*, vol. 3 of *A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity* (Allen Park, MI: DBTS, 2010), 123.

Boasting in the Lord (1 Cor 1:26-29)

The things of Scripture are not to be understood in the light of human capacity in a fallen world. Paul tells the Corinthian believers they are to remember who they are in Christ regardless of some of them who may have gained carnal nobility from their birthright. The discussion of calling from verse 24 resumes in verse 26 with them considering being called by God, which does not refer to one's vocation but with one's station in life when they were called to salvation.²⁰ Paul ensures that the hearers know that true wisdom has come to the world but any other author than that of Christ is foolishness. In reading, studying, applying, or teaching Scripture, Wayne Grudem provides four attributes (or starting points) to be understood when partaking in this task. These attributes of Scripture interpretation are vitally important to properly understand God's Word today.

First, Scripture is authoritative. The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disobey or disbelieve any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.²¹ Second, Scripture is inerrant. The inerrancy of Scripture means that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact.²² Third, Scripture is necessary. The necessity of Scripture means that the Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, maintaining spiritual life, and knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character or moral laws.²³ Last, Scripture is sufficient. The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contains all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God

²⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2018), 74.

²¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2000), 73.

²² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 90.

²³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 116.

needed for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and obeying him perfectly.²⁴ Paul is boasting in the omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent God who is capable of bringing godly wisdom to mankind, as they have not been equipped to do so (v. 28). The apostles invited the Corinthians to remember their condition when God first called them. From a worldly point of view, these Corinthian Christians had been utterly foolish to believe in Christ as the way of salvation.²⁵

Paul echoes his words to the Christians in Rome where he desired that they renew their minds in Christ and not hold to the conformities of the world (Rom 12:2). Part of holding to the conformities of the world is boasting in one's ability to possess true wisdom outside of God and his Word, and Paul is urging the believers in Corinth to understand God has made them great through their faith in Jesus and to continue trusting only in him. Richard Garland explains, "Paul denigrates human wisdom that is tied to the human condition, circumscribed, as it is, by partial knowledge, susceptible to self-deceit, and twisted by the proclivity to become infatuated with status."²⁶

Paul then moves to the reason he is so intentional with his encouragement: to ensure that when they stand before God there is nothing of themselves to boast in but only in the godly wisdom given to them at their calling. God chose the foolish things of the world, the cross and the Corinthian believers, to remove any possible claims on their part of believing they are standing righteous in the divine presence with something in their hands to offer God.²⁷

²⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

²⁵ Richard L. Pratt Jr., *1 & 2 Corinthians*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 23.

²⁶ Richard E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 67.

²⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistles to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 88.

The Wisdom of Jesus (1 Cor 1:30-31)

Paul closes out 1 Corinthians 1 by extinguishing any personal wisdom that they find in themselves and reminds them they are *in* Christ Jesus and their godly wisdom is directly linked to their relationship with Christ. The new Corinthian believers have been changed by God from their previous state through this wisdom which is Jesus Christ. Paul then names three subsequent enrichments that will occur because of those who are in Christ Jesus: righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Righteousness is semantically used here for the first time by Paul to refer to one's justification. Elsewhere, he uses this term and it becomes his dominant metaphor as he deals later with the "Judaizing" in Galatia.²⁸ Righteousness is to be understood as the imputed righteousness of God to the believer that has them standing rightly before God through the propitiatory action of Christ on the cross. Sanctification refers to the process of becoming holy and by which the state of holiness is attained, it is also within semantic range to refer to the results that the sanctifying work obtained.²⁹ The last result is redemption the act of freeing or the state of being freed from bondage, such as that of a prisoner or slave by payment of a ransom.³⁰

Paul is essentially stating that God's chosen people have godly wisdom and are saved through the same godly wisdom. They are made holy in godly wisdom and are redeemed through godly wisdom, which is the person Jesus Christ. Christ purchased believers with the price of his own blood (Rom 3:24-25) and all believers have been "bought at a price" (1 Cor 6:20). Paul reminds the Corinthians that Christ has become the most important thing in their lives. They owe to him every dimension of their salvation.³¹

²⁸ Fee, *The First Epistles to the Corinthians*, 88.

²⁹ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 10.

³⁰ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 117.

³¹ Pratt, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 24-25.

Paul's last verse of the passage (v. 31) does not call for a cessation of boasting by the believers in Corinth but for them to stop boasting in anything other than Jesus Christ. Paul then paraphrases Jeremiah 9:24 where Judah was warned against boasting in their self-wisdom and abilities to make his final point—only Jesus Christ can bring the wisdom needed for salvation and should be the sole focus of any of their boasting.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on three passages to display the importance of the Word of God in the believer's life. Each is helpful for believers to understand their charge to properly employ Scripture into every aspect of their lives so they can study rightly, not be deceived, and be edified through the Word.

Hermeneutical training benefits believers in identifying false witnesses and being able to dismantle distortions that may occur from Genesis to the Revelation. It also assists believers in understanding, applying, and teaching Scripture while equipping them to identify erroneous contradictions in understanding and applying Scripture. The evil one is deceptive and cunning; he executes his craft with deception and subtlety. Believers are to be fine-tuned to the true gospel of Jesus Christ so they can withstand the wiles of the evil one and boast in none other than Jesus.

Though there are many passages of Scripture to choose from, including from the Old Testament, the selected New Testament passages provided in this chapter present a firm case to the desired result of Scripture: to bring glory to God. Equipping believers in hermeneutical training is one of many spiritual disciplines to comprehend and employ to achieve this result.

CHAPTER 3
HISTORICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES RELATED
TO BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Biblical hermeneutics has been a significant concern of the church for generations. Through the finite means of fallen mankind, God has allowed his church to be initiated and expanded through the teaching and preaching of the Scriptures. Throughout the centuries, if people correctly understood God’s Word, it is because they employed proper principles and methods of interpretation. This skill does not necessarily require an exhaustive formal training regimen in the art and science of biblical hermeneutics, but significant work is required of interpreters to reach their desired goal.

Modern biblical interpreters are tasked with bridging the gap to seek understanding on the original intent of the author and the semantics of the writing for today. Many concerns need to be addressed to properly exegete and apply the text to today’s audience, such as linguistic, historical, social, and cultural gaps that existed in the ancient times when the Scripture was recorded by the inspired writer. While considering these conditions while interpreting the text, a responsible interpreter cannot ignore the circumstances and understanding of those who attempt to explain the Scriptures today; no one does hermeneutics in a vacuum—everyone has presuppositions and preunderstandings.¹ All writers and hearers will approach the writing with a starting point of what they believe to be true or false according to their worldview before reading the first words of a text. Without the opportunity to ask the original writers clarifying questions on what they meant in a certain verse or passage of Scripture, the interpreter must not rely

¹ Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and William W. Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 47.

on their own perceptions or personal values as normative truths to arrive at the meaning and application of Scripture. If one genuinely seeks to interpret and apply the truths of Scripture consistently, then hermeneutical principles should be a very large part of the study and research.

This practice was understood throughout the history of the church. Even though the methods were not always agreed upon through the generations, intentional regard was taken for the careful understanding of the inspired Word. These interpretative concerns were present in the early church, Middle Ages, and the Reformation.

The Early Church AD 1-590

The early church had to contend with hermeneutical principles and deal with earlier Old Testament texts in light of the accomplished death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.² The early church had the challenge of articulating the truth of the ministry of Christ closest to when he accomplished his mission on the First Advent. The church was also tasked with how to grasp with earlier Jewish writings that dealt with the prophecy of his coming. All periods of time possess unique challenges in providing the methods and manner of interpretation, but the early church being positioned adjacent to the work of Christ against Jewish laws, rituals, and customs under the Old Covenant provided difficult challenges to harmonize.

The care for disciplined Scripture translation was not only carried out by disciples and apostles of the first century but was a focus of many patristic fathers within the early church. The New Testament church was in its formative years during this time and was deciding how to handle many items in the church, from polity, rituals, rites, creeds, and interpretive issues from their given sacred writings, all while experiencing tremendous growth throughout the greater Mediterranean region.

² I refer to the church age in this work as the period of time after Christ's ascension and indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as believers now await his imminent Second Advent to earth to consummate his earthly kingdom. Hence the phrase, "the kingdom is here but not yet."

There was strong appeal to the Old Testament in the early church. The Jewish translators, along with other contemporary religious groups, attempted to interpret the Scriptures in a manner that either recognized Jesus as the new Moses or by his arrival initiated the inauguration of the Messiahship and beginning of a new age.³ By examining the recorded words of Jesus in their proper context it was clear to see he was desiring for his hearers to know he was indeed the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies like that of Isaiah 53:1-6:

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus would speak early in his ministry on his identity, and the principle of literal fulfillment was indeed valid for the translators of the Old Testament: “The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). In addition, as a credentialed Jewish scholar, Paul studied under one of the most prolific and studied scholars on Jewish writings and he would speak on the ensuing confusion that existed between harmonizing Old Testament texts in lieu of the ministry of Christ and the beginning of the New Testament church. Paul challenged the church in Corinth not to be like the hardened Jewish minds who refused to remove the veil that prohibits their eyes from seeing the end of the Old Covenant (2 Cor 4:3-4). Here Paul is referring to the veil of blindness of not seeing the full deity of Christ throughout the Old Covenant and his pronouncements into the New Covenant.

³ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 77.

Another challenge facing the early church was the idea of translating everything from the Old Testament in lieu of Christ's First Advent. Translators in the early church were careful to give further considerations in the normative employment of hermeneutical principles to properly translate Old Testament texts. First, they often considered Old Testament historical and poetical sections to find predictions of the work of Christ and the church and in doing so utilized a *typological* method of interpretation to find events, objects, ideas, and divinely inspired types represented in the Old Testament that anticipate God's activity later in history.⁴

The typological approach of interpretation led to viewing the Old Testament tabernacle in lieu of the First Advent. The replacement of the priest who made propitiation for the nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled in Christ as he is now the eternal high priest for all believers. Their interaction with him is no longer an annual event. In this typological interpretation, Christ is the better priest, better Adam, better Moses, and better Joshua. For example, in Exodus 12:13-28, it was required to take the blood of an unblemished lamb and to cover the posts of their doors with the blood to avoid the plague of death. In the New Testament, this typological approach correlates Christ as the unblemished lamb for mankind and indeed it was his blood that was propitiation for mankind's sin. Christ was the perfect sacrifice unblemished in sin and possesses the power to save and sustain his people.

The second type of interpretation employed outside the literal fulfillment in Christ is the *literal-contextual* interpretation where Old Testament Scriptures are normally interpreted more broadly in their original contexts and as such used by the apostles when they taught on issues related to Christian moral behavior. An example of this would be

⁴ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 78.

Deuteronomy 32:35 with Romans 12:9, where Paul cites Old Testament law in his instruction to not take revenge on enemies.⁵

Lastly, early church interpreters used a method called *principle/application*, where they did not interpret the Old Testament passage literally, rather they interpreted it by applying its underlying principle to a situation different from, but comparable to, the one in the original context.⁶ This meant when writers of the Old Testament referred to a group or idea they not only meant for the meaning to have weight in the current time but it would also carry weight in the future. For example, when Paul quotes from Hosea 1:10 in Romans 9:25 he is using the Old Testament text to show that not only did Jesus come to save the Jews, but he also came to save the Gentiles. They are both God's redeemed people throughout the history of mankind. This method would delve into much greater discussions as to what extent God would deal with the New Covenant believers akin to the Jewish believers of old.

The early church had to deal with its normative practice of rituals, ordinances, sacraments, and polity in the church. They looked to their interpretation of Scripture to evoke what would become the daily practices in the church. For example, in the early church there were several views on the Lord's Supper, and the saints were each informed by their interpretation of Scripture to arrive at their personal beliefs and application. Some looked to the prophecy of Malachi 1:10-11, which rebuked the people of Israel for their worthless offerings and looked forward to a true sacrifice as they held to a sacrificial view of the Lord's Supper:

Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.

⁵ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 79.

⁶ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 78-79.

This sacrificial view was also tied to Jesus's words from the Sermon on the Mount about offering one's gift on the altar (Matt 5:23-24), but it is not clear as to why the early church specifically believed this about the Lord's Supper.⁷ Due to this interpretation and application of Scripture, there would be objection to this approach and some in the early church believed the sacrifices were indeed the actual body of Christ. They would claim the bread used in the Eucharist that originated from the earth, is no longer suffering from the fall, and possesses the hope of the resurrection just like human bodies that receive the bread is no longer corruptible but contains the hope of heaven.

Considering the context, semantic thrust, and purpose for writing, Augustine held to even a different view of the Lord's Supper. He believed that Christ was *present* in the elements and emphasized the bigger picture of the instructions by Paul to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 10:17). He also held that the Lord's Supper primarily communicated the unity of the members of the body of Christ and challenges believers to live genuinely as members of the body of Christ.⁸

As noted previously, and throughout the example, there are clear differences in how the early church interpreted (typological, literal-contextual, principle/application) the Scriptures, but as David Dockery notes, "While there were definite differences among the Fathers regarding their understanding of the literal-historical sense of Scripture, as well as the typological and allegorical, there existed a general consensus that Scripture should be interpreted christologically."⁹ Even though there was divergence of understanding in the interpretation of Scripture there is a motif of centrality to Christ, and that is to be celebrated. The apostles and early church fathers were not left to their own patterns of

⁷ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church, Foundations of Evangelical Series* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 368.

⁸ Augustine, "Sermon 272," in *Sermons*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill, Works of St. Augustine 7 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1993), 300-301.

⁹ David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 157.

interpretation just as the apostles followed Jesus in their patterns of their ministry efforts. For example, in Acts 9:36-43, Peter is summoned to the town of Joppa after performing another miracle in the adjacent city of Lydda and there he would raise Tabitha (Gk. Dorcas) from the dead by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Raising people from the dead was a rare occurrence in Scripture, including that of Jesus's three and a half years of earthly ministry where he only raised three people from the dead with Peter personally witnessing all three.

As Peter witnessed the incident of Jesus with Jarius's daughter (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43), he too sent the mourning people out of the room and prayed alone just like Jesus did. There Jesus had spoken a phrase that varied in only one letter from the Aramaic command Peter uttered here to Tabitha—Jesus's *Ταλιθηα κθμι* now becomes Peter's *Ταβιθηα κθμι*.¹⁰ The outcomes were the same with the resuscitation of the individual and Peter had followed the pattern of Jesus from beginning to end.

The apostles and early church fathers also handled the Scriptures with Christ at the center of their interpretation. During his earthly ministry, Christ modeled in his teachings how the fulfillment of the Old Covenant was made in and through him and the necessity to properly interpret the Old Testament Scriptures through this earthly ministry and future work in the eschaton. How should one of these early followers of Jesus read the Bible?—the way Jesus did. Jesus of Nazareth did not write any of the books in the Bible, but he taught the writers of the New Testament how to interpret earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they were narrating and addressing. On the human level, Jesus learned the interpretive perspective he taught to his disciples from Moses and the Prophets.¹¹

¹⁰ Kenneth O. Gangel, *Acts*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 147.

¹¹ James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19.

Through the Alexandrian School of thought (AD 150-400), the prevailing principle related to Scripture interpretation was to view it through the lens of the person and work of Christ. Two main spokesmen prevailed during this period and utilized an additional strategy of reading the Bible *allegorically* for interpretation and application: Clement of Alexandria and his successor Origen.¹² Clement held that there are two meanings in Scripture: one with a literal meaning and the other with a deeper spiritual meaning. The deeper meaning lessons of the texts are the more important spiritual ones that contain secret meanings that have a fuller effect on the believer than the literal ones. This is akin to a human being as it possesses a literal body but also possesses a spiritual one; hence, Scripture follows the pattern of literal and spiritual.

Origen espouses that there are many different world truths through the *logos* but these truths have unity through the primal truth of each created spirit or person.¹³ Origen argued for an addition to the two-fold meaning of his predecessor Clement and stated that Scripture does not possess a two-fold meaning but actually has a threefold meaning: body, soul, and spirit. Thus, Origen held that the wise interpreter must move from the events of a passage (literal sense) to find the hidden principles for Christian living (its moral sense) and its doctrinal truth (its spiritual sense).¹⁴ This method of interpretation shaped the way Christians interpreted Scripture for a millennium.

However well-intended during this period of mankind's redemptive history, an all-encompassing allegorical approach should cause the modern interpreter to pause and implement due care and caution. Great care needs to be made when interpreting Scripture to ensure an allegorical, typological, or symbolic method of interpretation is legitimate and prescriptive. Some valid strategies for ascertaining if a Scripture has another meeting than

¹² Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 85.

¹³ Hans Urs Von Balthasar, ed., *Origen—Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings*, trans. Robert J. Daly (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1984), 77.

¹⁴ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 85.

literal includes looking for other texts to provide support (Scripture defines Scripture), and identifying the writer's intended audience, cultural backgrounds, and a historical survey of events during the period of the writing.

The last early church era that provided significant impact to biblical interpretation and that of Christianity proper is the influence of church councils that primarily lasted from AD 400-590. These councils marked a period that sought harmony of the Scriptures between the orthodoxy and the heretics of the day who corrupted Scripture and its interpretations. Emperor Constantine's conversion provided footing for the orthodoxy to take up their arguments that the Scriptures and their interpretation were not a matter of governance, but they solely belonged to the church. The succession of apostolic fathers, and their subsequent held offices, were the primary vehicle that argued for "apostolic teachings," which led to the formations of church councils with the task of officially defining church doctrine.¹⁵

Renowned church leader Augustine contended for a primary literal interpretation of the Scriptures. However, he had some patience with other interpretive types when he believed their efforts were carried out with some type of reasonableness in their translation. He stood in rebuke of the natural law interpreters of the time, commenting, "It is better to be ignorant of the things of nature, yet possess a spiritual knowledge of God, than it is to be able to measure, number, and weigh all of the things of nature, yet pridefully neglect the One who put the universe in place."¹⁶

Jerome (AD 331-420) was influenced by leaders of church councils to translate the Scriptures from Greek and Hebrew manuscripts into Latin. The Latin Vulgate became the primary Bible for doctrinal issues within much of the Western church and remained until the Renaissance period. Unfortunately, Jerome's dynamic-paraphrasing methods

¹⁵ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 86.

¹⁶ Augustine, *Confessions* 5.4.7, ed. by Michael P. Foley, trans. F. J. Sheed, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

gave renderings that were not as accurate to the original languages as they could have been.¹⁷ Although there was dispute between interpretation and canonicity with the final version of the Latin Vulgate, it became the Bible for much of the Western world.¹⁸

The Middle Ages AD 590-1500

The Middle Ages marks a period of history where the foundation of the church was established with further work completed in biblical exegesis and interpretation. There was a marked movement toward a traditional interpretation of the Scriptures as it was the view of the commentaries passed down from centuries of the medieval fathers. Robert E. McNally states about this period, “Exegesis became almost synonymous with tradition, for the good commentator was the scholar who handed on faithfully to what he had received.”¹⁹ Middle Age biblical scholars were influenced by the earlier allegorical form of interpretation, along with Origen’s contribution of a three-fold meaning to every Scripture. Scholars later employed a four-fold meaning: literal (or historical), allegorical (or doctrinal), moral (or topological), and anagogical (or eschatological). Thus, a reading of Israel crossing the Red Sea might be understood by Bible scholars of the time to have four senses: (1) literal: the actual crossing by Moses and Israel; (2) allegorical: the Christian’s baptism and new life in Christ; (3) moral: the obedient Christian crosses from life’s difficulties to earthly blessings; and (4) anagogical: the Christian’s final crossing from death to eternal life.²⁰

Augustine became an influential leader during this period; he and Jerome had a significant impact in holding that the traditional method of interpretation was a normal

¹⁷ J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 117.

¹⁸ Jerome included translations of the apocryphal writing in his Latin Vulgate.

¹⁹ Robert E. McNally, *The Bible in the Early Ages* (Atlanta: Scholar, 1986), 30-32.

²⁰ Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1:339.

practice and sought to keep carnal interpreters from spreading their influence onto how the text was transmitted, interpreted, and applied. Of note during this time was the practice and involvement of monks in medieval times that shaped the Scriptures for generations to follow. In the eighth and ninth centuries, the medieval monks used a process called the *interpretive gloss*, which utilized annotations from the fathers that were written in the margins or other large areas on the page. These markings were made into a uniform work of glossed or “marked up” Bibles in Paris (ca. 1220). Around the same time, the *Glossa Ordinaria* (lit. “ordinary tongue”) also appeared, a massive multi-volume compilation of comments and glosses on individual biblical books that soon became the standard medieval commentary on the Bible.²¹ Augustine drew some of his influence from the philosopher Aristotle and leaned into Aristotle’s theory of causation and that of multiple causation. Applying this to the Bible opened the possibility of multiple reasons for the Scriptures.

During the thirteenth century, influential theologian Thomas Aquinas made significant contributions in biblical interpretation, and his works manifested themselves into modern day processes of interpretation and liturgy. In his massive work *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas banter with his contemporary theologians on their interpretations of Scripture on a myriad of different theological understandings. Much of his arguments springboard from his literal interpretation of Scripture as the starting point and he fervently challenges and debates contemporary theologians of his time, like Jerome and Gregory. For example, Aquinas spoke against the use of metaphors in the interpretation of Scripture:

It seems that Holy Scriptures should not use metaphors. . . . But to proceed by the aid of various similarities and figures is proper to poetry, the least of all the sciences. The higher creatures are, the nearer they approach to the divine likeness. If therefore any creature to be taken to represent God, this representation ought to chiefly to be taken

²¹ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 46-66.

from the higher creatures, and not from the lower, yet this is often found in Scriptures.²²

With the church pressing forward with the Latin Vulgate as their sacred document that guided their direction, there were concurrently major developments at that time that had a remarkable impact on the next several hundred years. The first was the rise of the Roman Catholic Church. It was believed to have become more powerful than Scripture. The church positioned itself, with appropriate leadership and theologians, to determine what was going to be in the canon of the Bible and what was not.²³ The Roman Catholic Church was the dominating force of Christian practice and polity during this time, and they solely possessed the freedom to alter interpretations of the texts and define the parameters on how they were to be applied to the believer. The Roman Catholic Church enforced harsh penalties on those who challenged its authority and proclamations.

The second large movement during this time came from the Italian Renaissance, which moved its way to northern Europe where it captured and challenged an audience who maintained the *prima facia* acceptance of the Latin Vulgate as the primary accepted Bible. This movement of *humanism* was defined through its motifs to scholarism and eloquent reading and writing that were prevalent in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Surprisingly, *humanism* was embraced by leading figures in the Roman Catholic Church as it called for the return to the foundations of the church and specifically to its foundational writings of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Greek New Testament, and the whole works of the church.²⁴

This return to the original Scriptures brought tension to the church as it was fully beholden to the Vulgate and apocrypha writings. If the church were to formally

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, 1947), Ia, Q.1, Art 9.

²³ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 50.

²⁴ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 50.

support the evaluation of returning to the original Scriptures, it would find itself in a difficult position as the church would have to wrestle with settled doctrine in lieu of its strong support of the Vulgate and apocrypha writings. The original Scriptures will prove not to support much of the implemented doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church at this time based on their implementation of the Vulgate and apocrypha writings. Jerome's ancient distinction between the accepted Bible and the Vulgate was reexamined during this time with him terminally stating the apocrypha could be read "for the edification of the people" but could not be used "to give authority to doctrine of the church."²⁵

A third development came out of the period that shaped the course of the Middle Ages and was a catalyst for the Reformers of the sixteenth century. The eventual comparison of the Latin Vulgate with the original writings brought disparities between the common Bible of the time and the original writings. This comparative act exposed major interpretive issues that had a large impact on many first level doctrines in the church. For example, the Greek manuscripts interpret Matthew 4:17 where Jesus is preaching to the people and instructing the people to "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" contra the Vulgate account which viewed the actions of Jesus as "doing penance." There is a significant difference of interpretation and semantics between the two, and the Roman Catholic Church charges that the penance spoke here by Jesus is the vehicle to sacramental fulfillment, like forgiveness by praying, giving to the poor, forgoing certain physical pleasures, and so forth.²⁶

The Vulgate's interpretation provided a reasonable standard that achieving forgiveness from God is to be accompanied by some outer action or work to be accomplished to receive justification. However, humanist theologians, translating from

²⁵ St. Jerome, *Preface to the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. and trans. Philip Schaff, vol. 6, *Early Church Fathers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 516-23.

²⁶ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 51.

the historical Greek text, translated and understood this word to be “repent,” where semantically an inner change is accomplished and the mind and heart have been changed to the things of the Lord.

Around this time, the Roman Catholic Church was at its height of influence (including scriptural) and its overall influence in both the Eastern and Western cultures was far and wide. Many events chipped away at its legitimacy throughout the decades but none more than the Great Schism that would all but call for the Reformation. Fourteenth-century disagreements in the Roman Catholic Church reached fever-pitched levels and large disagreements on who and where the future pope would reside, France or Italy, led to much negative responses from bishops and cardinals of the time. Many in the church were distrustful of one another but each fought for their interests and to remain in their offices and places of influence. This ultimately led to the creation of three popes vying for the open papacy that would result in one pope in prison (John XXIII), another (Gregory XII) resigned from Rome, and the last died without ever being recognized as pope (Benedict XIII).²⁷

The calls for Reformation did not come from only actions during the Great Schism but also by practices present in the Roman Catholic Church. A few of the practices in the church during this time included absenteeism, pluralism, and simony (the practice of buying ecclesiastical positions). Many who sat on the councils of the time were guilty of these practices but were not ready to give them up.²⁸ The teachings themselves came under scrutiny and the calls for increased attention given to the Latin Vulgate grew as did all other criticisms of the Roman Catholic Church. The Greek text was growing to become the preferred text and concerns over interpretation rapidly grew.

²⁷ Justo L. González, *The Reformation to Present Day*, vol. 2 of *The Story of Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 44.

²⁸ Gonzalez, *The Reformation to Present Day*, 7.

Within the church there remained a strong call for traditional interpretation but also a continued large call to allegorical interpretation. The intellectual movement that sparked during this period will eventually have a large impact on bringing an end to the palpable tension that existed between forms of interpretation. Leadership, church practices, Scripture interpretation, and a growing population educated in the Greek text set the stage for the beginning of the Reformation.

The Reformation AD 1500-1650

Scholastic theology of the Roman Catholic Church was evaluated by different schools of believers, each were entrenched in their beliefs and beholden to the merits of their own theology. On one side were those who held to the status quo of their interpretive methods of Scripture, which informed their corresponding doctrines and practices, while others felt the church needed to be reformed from its place of apostate practices and heresy. Theologians of the time, like Erasmus, proposed that the regnant theology of sterile speculation give way to what he called the “philosophy of Christ,” noted by genuine spirituality and concern for ethics centered on the teachings of Christ.²⁹

There was growing objection to the Vulgate from which the Roman Catholic Church drew most of its authority. The primary allegorical method of interpretation was under greater scrutiny along with practices that seemed to contradict the clear teachings of Scripture. The humanist thinkers determined the apocrypha books contained clear errors in historical and chronological information and many were rejected by the early church. The Reformers sought to have church doctrine and the practices of the church to originate and be supported by the Scriptures. Since the apocryphal books were non-canonical, the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church was operating outside of God’s inspired Word.

²⁹ Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 92.

This meant that beliefs like purgatory and praying for the dead were without legitimate biblical support and should be discontinued.³⁰

Martin Luther was the next major theologian since Augustine and Aquinas to lead a challenge on the interpretation of Scripture. Luther became a man of action by defying the pope, subduing the peasant, intervening in political crisis, teaching, preaching, debating, marrying, and giving in marriage—he attested his actions to that of “faith out of hearing.”³¹ One of Luther’s greatest concerns was the consistent allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, which he believed obscured the plain and literal sense of the writings. Luther abandoned the fourfold schema of interpretation in favor of a grammatical-historical sense and sought to have Christ first in all the church would do. Luther is famously noted for nailing his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, which is held by many in history as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Luther led biblical hermeneutics in an entirely different direction from the Roman Catholic Church. His *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) charge became the solid ground from which the Reformers called for and began their change. With the publication of Erasmus’s New Testament Latin translation from the ancient manuscripts in 1516, Luther affirmed the principle that Scripture itself is its own best interpreter, and consequently, readers no longer needed to depend as heavily as before on patristic commentary and church authorities to understand the Bible.³²

Luther was not alone in his charge and willingness to challenge the authority of his time. His convictions on the interpretive methods of Scripture ran so deep that he was willing to risk his own life to bring about illumination and change to the current method.

³⁰ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 52.

³¹ Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 55.

³² Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 93.

What emerged was a well-known group of theologians and groups from around the greater European area that spoke for that change in the church. Even though they did not agree with all of one another's theological convictions, they broadly agreed with the interpretation and objection that the Vulgate was the sole representation for all church matters.

The early Reformers spoke and wrote tersely against the practices of the church and were influential in the initial reformation efforts of the time. Some of the reformers included John Calvin (Germany), John Hus (Czechoslovakia), John Wycliff (England), Huldrych Zwingli (Switzerland), John Knox (Scotland), and William Tyndale (England). Along with other groups, like the Anabaptists and Anglicans, the rising tide of opposition reached its crashing point.

Luther is commonly referred to as the pioneer of the Reformation³³ and had large contributions to the interpretation and application of Scripture during this time, but of his contemporaries perhaps none did more in the area of *sola scriptura* than Calvin. He held that whatever could not be proved through the Scriptures should not be made as requirement in the Christian faith. Calvin argued for the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit to prove true the Scriptures to mankind through individual obedience to them, which flowed from the very mouth of God to the ministry of men.³⁴ Calvin believed the Scriptures would define and prove to be true through other Scriptures and testify unto itself through the obedience of man to its teachings.

One of Calvin's contributions was an attempt to allow religious freedom in areas of polity in the reformed churches where non-orthodoxy matters were not directly provided for or could be interpreted by the Scriptures. He created a category of *adiaphora* (things

³³ Gregg R. Allison and Chris Castaldo, *The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants after 500 Years* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 16.

³⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, vols 21 and 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1.8.4.

indifferent) and cited the early Jews' decision to follow the law as long as they did not impose on other people as their justification.³⁵ Even though this principle did not last for many years, it provided relief for people to have varying views on different items in the church that were not considered essential tenets of the faith.

Calvin's hermeneutical insight in *adiaphora* could glean some practical uses in the modern church today. With the modern interpreter being encouraged to read, interpret, and apply the Scriptures carefully, many Protestant churches will allow in their statements of faith room for freedom of conscience by the believer to be exercised when essential tenets of the faith are not being usurped. For example, one such discussion that finds itself into the foyers and classrooms of theological discussion in the church is the question of how many angels are there in the universe? As Scripture does not distinctively answer this question, the respective exegete might look to statements from the creation account, the revelation, or the words of Jesus in his ability to summon *legions* of angels if he chose to do so (Matt 25:53).

The point is (as Calvin claimed) that there is quarter for those who responsibly handle and interpret the Scriptures to have a divergence of opinion on matters not directly related to the core tenets of the faith. Good men and women can agree to disagree on these matters and should be able to continue worshipping together in corporate unity. Calvin's notion of freedom of interpretation would not survive into the next generation of Reformers as theologians held that, unless something was found in the Bible, any other understanding of semantics and understanding outside of the Scriptures had to be rejected.

They believed that the Bible said everything that needed to be said and the teachings of the Bible had to be followed. Unfortunately, issues like the interpretation of when Baptism (*credo* or *paedo*) is to take place is not precisely prescribed in Scriptures and the interpretation was left up to individual churches to decide its implication. Thus, many

³⁵ Gerald L. Bray, *Doing Theology with the Reformers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 99.

reformed churches have divided over matters like these where most people agree are of secondary importance but which remain powerful barriers to reconciliation within the Protestant world.³⁶

The Roman Catholic Church responded to the Reformation strongly and fervently in the Council of Trent (1545-1563) with most of their objection against the principle of *sola scriptura*. The council affirmed Roman Catholic tradition that combined Scripture and tradition, with the latter including the doctrinal decisions of popes and church councils.³⁷ The Roman Catholic Church then solidified its use of the Vulgate and did not allow for any additional interpretations outside of official church oversight.

Biblical hermeneutics were important to the Reformers. They not only challenged the status quo but implemented the work of the Spirit in the believer if they truly wanted to know the truths of Scriptures (1 Cor 2:14). Gerald Bray helpfully summarizes the Reformation period and its application to believers today as they handle the Word of God: “It was about transformation—a change that is possibly only in and through the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of the believers. That is the true Reformation hermeneutic, and it is as relevant today as it was five hundred or even two thousand years ago.”³⁸

Conclusion

This chapter covered three important periods of time dealing with biblical hermeneutics: the early church, Middle Ages, and the Reformation. Each period faced unique and individual challenges on how it received and interpreted the Scriptures for church doctrine and polity.

After thousands of years and efforts in biblical interpretation and application,

³⁶ Bray, *Doing Theology with the Reformers*, 100.

³⁷ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 96.

³⁸ Bray, *Doing Theology with the Reformers*, 104.

each period had their accomplishments and setbacks. How each period handled the Scriptures had ubiquitous impact on how the church framed justification, sanctification, and glorification—all major tenets of the Christian faith. Modern readers and interpreters of Scripture can do more today than look through their lenses of the historical struggles to arrive at the truth of Scripture. Being tempted to grimace with disappointment at what could have been during different ages can joyfully be replaced with bountiful harvest and learning from the charitable work of all the saints through all periods of time.

As the Lord tarries upon his Second Advent, believers would do well to be busy learning from the past so they themselves can rightly divide the Word of Truth.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This research ministry project concentrated on equipping the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church to faithfully employ biblical hermeneutics. Participants were selected based on being current lay leaders in the church who are in a teaching capacity or those who have expressed interest in teaching in the future. Project participants completed surveys prior to and after the seven training sessions. In addition, project participants provided a biblical lesson in the Pauline Epistles before and after the training sessions.

Preparation

The seven-week course was delivered in place of the normal Wednesday night service which, prior to the project, was already less formal than the Sunday worship service. Prior to the project I was teaching through the doctrines of the Bible for over a year, which incorporated many open-ended questions that fostered discussion and debate on a myriad of topics. Choosing Wednesday nights to deliver the classes was intentional as interaction was not just limited to the project participants in the church who were formally participating in the project, but all members who attended the normal Wednesday night services.

Once I developed the curriculum, it was reviewed by three seasoned pastors who are of like faith and convictions. Each at a minimum possess a Master of Divinity and a Doctorate in Ministry. The group was chosen based on years of service in the ministry, prior teaching experience in and out of the church, and the size and scope of their current ministries. Between the three pastors, perspectives were gained from pastors

of a larger church of several hundred, to a mid-sized church of around one hundred, to a smaller church of less than fifty. In addition, there was a fifteen-year age difference between the oldest and youngest pastor and a fourteen-year experience gap in vocational ministry between the most experienced to the least experienced.

Each pastor committed to review the topics and provide feedback. They were given a rubric to provide critical feedback with four criteria: biblical accuracy (faithful to theology of the Bible), clarity (clearly covers each issue it is designed to address), relevance (each lesson is practical in application, and thoroughness (the curriculum is sufficiently thorough for the scope of the project).¹ Each pastor reviewed the curriculum and provided feedback using a four-point scale of: 1 insufficient, 2 requires attention, 3 sufficient, and 4 exemplary. The pastors were also given space to provide free narrative comments or feedback. Working closely with the pastors a curriculum was finalized.

The next step was to select the participants who were willing and able to participate in all aspects of the project. Seven participants were selected from the congregation based on their current teaching role in the church or their desire to in the immediate future. The age range of the seven program participants was quite large, from 26 to 75 years old.

Prior to the start of the classes, each project participant completed a pre-course survey.² In addition, I provided a passage of Scripture from the Pauline Epistles and gave them two weeks to read, research, and deliver to me, one-on-one, a sermon or Sunday school lesson on their assigned passage of Scripture. I utilized a rubric to evaluate the participants in five areas: genre (the literary genre was identified), audience (the intended audience of the writing was identified), context (the context of the lesson was identified in the teaching), revelation to Jesus Christ (the teaching sufficiently addressed the

¹ See appendix 3.

² See appendix 2.

progressive revelation of Jesus Christ), and acceptable applications (the range of applications in the teaching were appropriate and acceptable).³ While participants were completing the teaching portion of the project I provided feedback on the rubric on a four-point scale: 1 insufficient, 2 requires attention, 3 sufficient, and 4 exemplary. To keep the integrity and attentiveness of the participants in the training sessions, I did not share any feedback with the participants until after all class sessions, post-surveys, and final teachings were completed.

Implementation

With the curriculum finalized and the pre-course surveys and participant teachings through the Pauline Epistles completed, it was time to begin the class sessions. Wednesday night services at GLBC are historically much smaller in number than Sunday school and the Sunday morning worship service. Since the teaching sessions would be valuable to congregational members in their personal study and handling of Scripture, I encouraged them to participate in the class discussions and follow along with the instructed material. Historically, to further connect and foster conversation with the congregation in a classroom format on Wednesday nights, I typically utilize a lectern and place it in front of the stage in the sanctuary. I continued that practice during each of the teaching sessions.

The classes started on the first Wednesday in June and ran to the third Wednesday in July; there were seven consecutive teaching sessions in a row on Wednesday nights. The course took the place of the regular Wednesday night services but included an extra thirty minutes because of the material covered in each teaching session. Seven selected participants participated in all aspects of the project, which included the surveys and teaching assignments.

The rest of the congregation was welcome to attendance but were only able to participate in the teaching sessions and engage in conversations with the rest of the class.

³ See appendix 1.

Initially, I was hesitant that the students being grossly outnumbered by the rest of the congregation would cause a problem in participant learning, time management, and topic delivery, but in actuality it was profitable and enhancing to hear from many peoples perspective on the specific topics being discussed.

Each week I introduced a new or continuing concept and utilized remaining class time to unpack or interact with class participants or the congregation members to ensure the material was being understood properly. I asked many open-ended questions to the group that fostered feedback and open discussion while being careful not to spend too much time in a discussion to ensure all presentation material was successfully delivered. I invited class participants and congregational members to remain after each class session if they desired to have further conversations on a topic. The opportunity to meet after class for more discussion allowed me to move the class on to another topic if too much time was spent in one area and also provided a one-on-one setting that many took advantage of during the program.

Three participants of the seven each missed one week of the class, they each made a separate appointment with me before the next class to get caught up on the previous weeks study before the next session was delivered.

At the end of the seven-week course, I provided each class participant with the post-class survey (same as the pre-course survey) and assigned a passage of Scripture from the Pauline Epistles that was different from the previous one they taught on. Each participant was given two weeks to read, research, and deliver to me in a one-on-one setting a sermon (or Sunday school lesson) on their assigned passage of Scripture.

Content Overview

The course began with an overview on the entirety of Scripture and worked systematically through several areas dealing with biblical hermeneutics. Each session was crafted to build from the previous week's learning and complemented each other to bring about learning related to biblical hermeneutics.

Session 1

The first class began with a brief overview of the Bible and how it came to be what it is today. I provided a chart on the timeline of the Bible that delineated the Old and New Testaments along with different periods of time where God revealed himself to mankind. Next, I asked the class for a working definition of biblical hermeneutics and received responses without providing feedback on their submissions.

I asked the class to consider a rhetorical question: “Imagine you just purchased a book and instead of reading it from the beginning to the end you just skipped over sections of the book without considering all the chapters, plot, understanding the setting, character introductions and development, or themes throughout the work, you open the book and read random pages in an unknown chapter?” Then, based on reading a short amount of the book you make assertions and inferences about the content you just read and also an evaluation on the entire book. It sounds irresponsible to make such inferences about an entire work by randomly reading a small passage of the prose. Without a proper foundation and considerations, the reader could arrive at a place the writer never intended the audience to go. The class was encouraged to be consistent and disciplined in their rightful study of the Scriptures.

If believers desire to grow in their faith, then they must interact with Scripture as it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17). For teachers in the church there is greater responsibility to understand and properly transmit the meaning of Scripture to the children and adults within the church. After opening the class with introductory considerations, I offered a working definition of biblical hermeneutics to be utilized throughout the class: biblical hermeneutics is both the art (principles) and science (task) by which the meaning of the biblical text is determined.⁴

⁴ Craig L. Blomberg, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and William W. Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 42.

Once a definition was provided, I began with some initial concepts to equip participants for when they begin studying Scripture to teach a lesson. I encouraged participants to address a few concerns before doing so, one being that they are not to begin with the here and now in today's world as Scripture was not written in a time and culture the contemporary reader would naturally be familiar with. Before reading the Scriptures, I provided the need to understand the occasion of writing and the original intent of the author.

It is important to utilize this important discipline in reading the Scriptures; failing to do so can result in assigning meanings to Scripture and assigning applications void of these considerations. If that occurs, Scripture can mean whatever someone wants it to mean. Scripture would then become completely subjective to the reader's own personal bias and experiences in the assignment of truth and semantics of God's Word.

To assist the class in handling Scripture properly, I provided five hermeneutical principles to guide future handling of Scripture. First, a text can never mean what it never meant to the writer or to their audience. This means that participants cannot input their own meaning or intention to the writer or the recipients that never would have been intended for at the time it was written.

Second, a single text cannot make a doctrine. Scripture interpretation cannot be contradicted by other portions of Scripture. A good rule to adhere to is Scripture defines Scripture. An example of this would be teaching on eternal security. I provided several verses (in context) to provide an argument for eternal security in the Scriptures: Jude 24; John 10:28; Ephesians 4:30; Romans 8:38-39; and 1 John 5:13. Contra to this would be receiving one verse of Scripture (typically out of context) and then receiving it as truth and solidifying a doctrine and belief behind it. For example, James 2:17 says, "So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." This verse is not teaching a works-based salvation that must be accomplished by the believer to maintain their salvation.

Considering the full context, immediate writing before and after this verse, and Scripture as a whole, it is clear that this is not what is being taught here by James.

Third, when participants read Scripture they share comparable situations with first-century hearers, God's Word is the same Word to them and should be incorporated in their teaching. An example would be, it is still true that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) and that "by grace we have been saved, through faith" (Rom 2:8). To be clothed with "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Col 3:12) is still God's Word to those who are believers.⁵

Fourth, when reading Scripture, an account for the historical and cultural relevancy of their day is necessary. For example, the Pauline Epistles are thirteen epistles written by the apostle Paul: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. They are written in the language and culture of the first century and were direct in dealing with most issues occurring in their day. It is true we are dealing with many of the same issues today (even if not identical in cultural background and location), but there must be great care employed into moving historical texts into a new and modern setting.

Fifth and finally, I encouraged participants that they should not loosely apply the truths meant for the theocratic (*theo* = God *cratic* = nation) of Israel to that of the New Testament church. This would be covered in greater length in future teaching lessons, but their needs to be analysis and consideration for what has already been fulfilled in the Old Testament, fulfilled in Christ, fulfilled in the New Testament church, or to be fulfilled in the future.

⁵ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 74-75.

Session 2

The second session built off the first session and incorporated practices and guidelines to assist participants in carrying out both the principles and tasks by which the meaning of Scripture can be ascertained. The nature of Scripture is an important aspect to understand and was the focus of the second session.

Scripture has eternal perfectness at the true source of its authorship (2 Tim 3:16). However, because God chose to communicate through the personalities and gifts of forty human writers throughout history, every book of the Bible also has a human side to it. Each of the writings is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written.

I attempted to encourage the class that knowing there is a human side to Scripture does come with challenges; it takes much work to rightly divide the Word of truth to understand it first and then teach from it. The Word was transmitted from God through the individual characteristics of the original writers and there is indeed a human element to the transmission of the Bible. I provided the class with a couple of points to consider when they are initially beginning their work on a passage of Scripture.

First, God chose to use almost every kind of communication: narrative history, genealogies, chronicles, laws of all kinds, poetry of all kinds, proverbs, prophetic oracles, riddles, drama, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalypses. To properly interpret the “then and there” rule learned in the previous last week there also needed to be consideration into what literary genre (category of writing) that the studied passage of Scripture falls.

Second, God has spoken to real persons, in a variety of circumstances, over a 1,500 year period. His Word was expressed in the vocabulary and thought patterns of those persons and conditioned by their culture of those times and circumstances. That is to say, as God’s Word is taught today, it was first of all his Word to them. If they were going to hear it, it could only have come through events and in language they could have understood.

The modern reader of Scripture is far removed from the original writer and audience but should strive to consider the original intent of the author and intended message to their hearers. To help Scripture readers and teachers, two terms to be consistently familiar with provide situational awareness when interacting with Scripture: eisegesis and exegesis.

Eisegesis is defined as leading into, this term is discouraged when partaking in biblical studies as one can read *into* Scripture their Western twentieth-century ideas.⁶ Eisegesis is reading and interpreting from a place and time far away from the original writing. I encouraged the class to be constantly observe and not input their own time, place, occasion, and life experiences *into* the text.

Exegesis is to *draw out* the original meaning from the text. The interpreter is led to conclusions by following the text. Second Timothy 2:15 speaks of this: “Present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” An honest student and teacher of the Bible will be an exegete in some form, allowing the text to speak for itself to arrive at the Word of truth.

Eisegesis easily lends itself to error, as the interpreter attempts to align the text with their own preconceived notions. The end of eisegesis forces the Bible to agree with the interpreter where exegesis permits the interpreter to agree with the Bible. However, sometimes there is a place for the contemporary experience(s) of the students in the teaching of Scripture. I provided an illustration of a biblical truth from Scripture in a contemporary context for today. Emphasis was given to ensure the illustration was indeed a biblical truth.

⁶ Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs: Victor, 1991), 83.

Session 3

In session 3 I discussed another important consideration for properly understanding Scripture and rightly dividing the Word of truth. Identifying the literary genre of a passage in Scripture was the focus of the third session. An introductory statement and definition were given to the class on literary genre. A literary genre is a grouping of writing that is similar in form, style, structure, and subject matter. It assists the reader to recognize the type of literature that is present and what to expect and not to expect from it.⁷ When handling a section of Scripture, it is possible to have a literary genre different than the overall literary genre of a book in the Bible. This session assisted in identifying the literary genre of a book and some of the themes located in the Bible.

I encouraged the class that, when they are preparing a lesson, a preliminary step is to identify the literary genre of the passage. To accomplish this, they should read the entire passage, then read back to ascertain how that passage fits into the greater argument the writer is making in that section of Scripture. From there, they should read how that section fits into the chapter and then how the chapter fits into the entire book. This will assist the students in identifying the overall literary genre and any sub-genres that may exist.

Identifying the literary genre of a passage in Scripture will assist the modern reader in identifying the purpose and style of the writing and present the opportunity to approach the identified Scripture more focused and informed of what biblical truth they seek to derive. Caution should be employed in the following list as some books can cover more than one genre within their pages but in the totality of the book their genres are as noted below:

1. Law Narrative (Genesis–Deuteronomy) Describes the historical books and how the events happened in the past. They also provided instructions and warning.
2. Historical (Joshua–Esther) Law books tell us how God intends the ancient nation of Israel to function religiously, politically, and socially.

⁷ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 419.

3. Wisdom (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes) Wisdom books are collations of wise sayings meant to guide the relationship of one to God and to one another.
4. Poetry (Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations) Poetry books are poetic forms of praise to God or gratitude for his gifts to humanity.
5. Prophecy (Isaiah–Malachi) Prophetic books contain predictions of future events, warnings, and preaching that calls people to repentance and obedience. They are at times both hopeful and dreadful predicting God’s blessing and justly wrath on mankind.
6. Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) Gospel books are short biographies of Jesus. There are four of them, each written by a different author with their own distinct perspectives.
7. Epistles (Romans–Philemon) The Epistles are letters that usually have a section dedicated to the teaching of truth about God and a section dedicated to telling people how to live in light of that truth.
8. Apocalypse (Revelation) Apocalyptic writings are a specific form of prophecy predicting disaster and destruction. Distinctive imagery and symbolism are used to communicate these future events.

I provided a summary on why identifying the literary genre is important: literary genres (1) help identify the framework for the passage of Scripture and book; (2) have unique features that need to be accounted for; and (3) can have sub-genres to consider, such as treating parables the same as the beatitudes in the gospels.

Session 4

In the fourth session I introduced a topic that is largely debated in theological circles—the continuity of Scripture. My intent was to give an introductory apparatus for students to consider as they teach through the Pauline Epistles and other portions of Scripture. After reviewing the different literary genres and types of writing in the Bible, I presented introductory concerns and care to take to learn how they all fit together—this is called the continuity of Scripture. I began by asking the class to think about the word continue or continuation of the Bible, from the Old Testament to New Testament. As an introduction to the lesson and to encourage interaction with the Old Testament, I instructed participants to open and divide their Bibles from the Old Testament and the New Testament and place a bookmark at that location. Then, participants closed their Bibles on the bookmark, looked at the open side of their Bibles, and observed the much

larger portion of Scripture that is contained in the Old Testament. Session 4 covered preliminary concerns on the continuation of Scripture, more specifically, the continuation of God's redemptive plan for mankind. The intent of this session was to encourage participants to interact often with the Old Testament and to teach from it with care and without apprehension.

I provided an overview of the Old Testament, with the narrative portion being over 40 percent of the writing, I encouraged participants to continuously read and study from the Old Testament as it would greatly benefit them and their hearers. Participants were encouraged, whether in their personal reading or lesson preparation, to not avoid the Old Testament because they do not feel it is applicable to them today.

Studying and teaching from the Old Testament is to further understand its purpose and character for that time and how God has dealt with his redemptive people throughout time. The history of Israel and the promises of God to the Hebrew people are very important to believers today. The narratives of the Old Testament are purposeful stories meant to retell the historical events of the past. They give meaning and direction for a given people during a given time. Moreover, the Old Testament is the gospel of the unnamed Messiah. For example, in Genesis 3:14-15 the punishments are given by God to Adam and Eve after the fall but also the future promise of what will transpire to the evil one in the future.

One of the challenges is understanding the value the Old Testament has for the believer today. I provided introductory concepts on the importance of studying the Old Testament and how it can inform one's reading of the New Testament in the Pauline Epistles and overall biblical hermeneutics.

I encouraged the class to consistently read and teach from the Old Testament as it contains timeless truths of God and his characteristics. Strewn throughout many places in the Old Testament is the person and coming Savior Jesus Christ. The Old Testament speaks often of his future sufferings for mankind, the glories that will follow,

and the promise of an unnamed Messiah in whom God will establish his glorious, eternal kingdom. When the Old Testament is interpreted correctly, the message on every page is Jesus, as he said in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think I have come to abolish the Law on the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Moreover, when it comes to sacrifices and various rites, rituals, and ceremonies Paul did point out that these things were indeed fulfilled in Christ: “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col 2:16-17). I then had a volunteer read Psalm 53 (Suffering Servant) aloud and asked the class who the psalmist was referring to while fostering a discussion on the specifics in the psalm that referred to Christ.

The Old Testament had a message for its original hearers not just for readers today. It is a mistake to read the Old Testament as if the Christ-centered message was only revealed in the New Testament; when read through the lens of the full council of Scripture, Christ is seen from beginning to end. The writer of Hebrews speaks to this in that God spoke in the past to Old Testament people through his servants the prophets; and he now speaks through his Son (Heb 1:1). The Pentateuch spoke God’s Word of challenge and promise to those who were about to enter the Promised Land in the days of Moses. Isaiah spoke to those who lived in Judah in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah, not just to those who read prophecies about the exile and future fulfillment in Christ. Both 1 and 2 Kings address the spiritual needs of those who found themselves wrenched away from the Promised Land because of their sins and the sins of their fathers.

The Old Testament prophets spoke on the future; they repeatedly predicted future events and sometimes in precise detail. Part of the Lord’s claim to uniqueness among the gods of the ancient world is the fact that he alone spoke the future accurately through his prophets (Isa 45:18–21; Amos 3:7). Indeed, one of the scriptural tests of a prophet’s authenticity is that the words he speaks are fulfilled (Deut 18:22); such a test

would require fulfilled predictions. Those predictions that came true in the short term were intended as encouragements to believe the promises of God that had not yet been fulfilled.⁸

The Old Testament writers did not fully understand everything about which they wrote. This reality is clear in several places in the Old Testament. Prophets such as Daniel and Zechariah did not fully grasp the visions God showed them (see Dan 8:27; Zech 4:13). However, New Testament writers correctly identified specific Old Testament prophetic texts that found their consummation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The New Testament writers did not creatively assign new and alien meanings to these old texts. Rather, the force of Jesus's statement that it was "necessary that the Christ should suffer these things" (Luke 24:26) suggests that a proper reading of the Old Testament expectation of the Messiah necessarily compelled them to recognize Jesus Christ as its true fulfillment. This is why Paul argues from the Old Testament so convincingly in the context of Jewish evangelism.⁹ I encouraged the class when interpreting the law of the Old Testament, not to forget the timeless truths that are in it like; murder, stealing, legal procedure of witnesses telling the truth, treating each other civilly, sexual relations outside of marriage are displeasing to God.

It is often helpful to understand the Old Testament in its greater framework within the full redemptive plan called the meta narrative. The narrative includes all that God has done for mankind to include how he called the nation of Israel unto himself and later would offer salvation to people of many different backgrounds. In addition, the class was instructed to consider the story of God's work to redeem a people unto himself, this happens twice, once in the Old Covenant (Old Testament: Israel) and once in the New Covenant (New Testament: Jews and Gentiles both). I encouraged the class to consider

⁸ Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 272.

⁹ Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 270.

all the events of both the Old Testament and New Testament (redeeming a people), to understand where exactly a book or chapter of Scripture is in the overall narrative of the Bible. This is a good step in understanding the message and meaning of a chapter or book. Understanding God's timing to redeem a certain people will assist in a greater understanding and application of his Word.

Lastly is the individual narrative of Scripture. The individual narrative is the most specific writing that is derived from the Old Testament and New Testament. It is directed toward God's redemptive people and provides a descriptive or prescriptive truth of Scripture within in. It is important when reading and teaching from the Scriptures to consider every layer of Scripture to understand where it fits in the overall framework of the Bible as illustrated in figure 1.

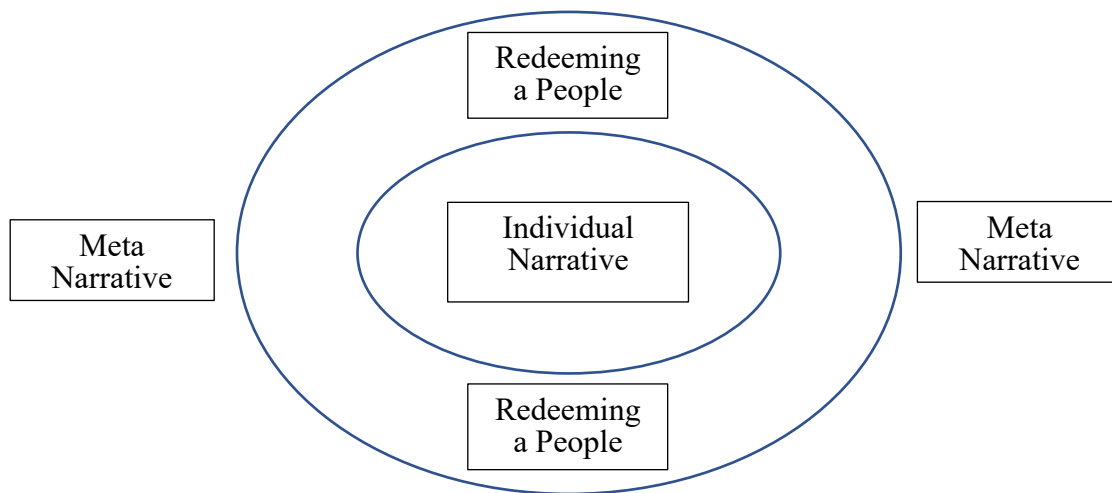


Figure 1. Narrative types

After much classroom discussion on the larger narrative, the class had some basic understanding of the entire picture of Scripture and how it fits together. This session then covered an area that has brought much confusion when studying from the Old Testament: future prophecies and how they are to be understood for today's reader.

There is much to be said in this area, however, I provided a few preliminary strategies for the class to use when reading their Bibles and preparing lesson.

1. The best starting point is to read a whole prophetic book in one or two sittings to get comfortable with its major themes and strategy.
2. Record observations with biblical references. Notice the recurring themes, prominent metaphors, intended audience, and overall question. Ask, why does this book develop this way?
3. Think about how this book may challenge the way Christians see the world today. The question to ask is, “How might this book transform my world today?”
4. With the book’s literary genre and context in mind, focus on smaller sections of verses in the passage and book. Notice what and how it is being said and attempt to understand the major points each section stresses.
5. When it comes to fulfillment of prophecy the Bible is the best tool for that. Ask, “When did or will this prophecy most likely reach fulfillment—in the Old Testament, New Testament, or still in the future? In the Old Testament, prophecies about Israel and Zion see their fulfillment found spiritually in the church. But those aspects that pertain to a physical nation of Israel may be in future fulfillment.”¹⁰

I provided several commentaries and Bible study tools for the class to utilize when individually studying or preparing to teach a biblical lesson.

Session 5

This session built upon previous sections and introduced four methods on interpreting Scripture. When to apply the different types of interpretation is pivotal to understanding Scripture and vastly important in how it is taught with appropriate normative applications for the hearer.

The first method is the *allegorical* interpretation of Scripture, which is the search for a hidden or secret meaning in the text that is a physical reality but points to a spiritual reality. It takes the remote possibility of the text instead of the more obvious literal meaning presented throughout the rest of the chapter and book. An incorrect example of this method would be the use of the term “fish gate” in Nehemiah 3:3. Using the allegorical method of interpretation, it is said to directly represent the evangelism as

¹⁰ Blomberg, Hubbard, and Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 487.

Jesus told his disciples to be “fishers” of men.

The easiest example to identify a proper allegorical approach is when the apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 4:24-26, “Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.” Another appropriate use of the allegorical method of interpretation would be the reading and teaching on the Song of Solomon where the love expressed in the prose is representing the love God has for the church.

Due care and caution should be employed when using the allegorical method of biblical interpretation as it is perhaps the most historically misused method throughout history. This biblical interpretative method was the primary interpretive method of the church for approximately 1,000 years until the Reformation, which called for a plain reading of Scripture.

The second method is the *mystical* interpretation of Scripture. Interpreting texts in this way is meant to reveal something about the future that is not plainly stated. For example, the book of Revelation uses the word “Jerusalem” to refer to the heavenly future of Christians (Rev 21:2). Therefore, when some interpreters found the word Jerusalem elsewhere in the Bible, they concluded it also had something to say about heaven. Another kind of mystical interpretation involves finding secret codes that deal with the here and now. The “Kabbalah” method of interpretation within Judaism finds coded meaning (in numbers and symbols) within the words of the Torah (e.g., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are said to stand for the emotions of love, fear and mercy respectively). Similarly, some believe that there are mystical codes about world history hidden within the biblical text.

The third method is the *figurative* interpretation of Scripture, which is when a passage is out of character with the subject discussed, or is clearly contrary to fact, experience, or observation. For example, if we hear a radio sports announcer say, “The

Detroit Lions were just destroyed by the Atlanta Falcons,” we know this is referring to two football teams and not suggesting that birds of prey are attacking a literal lion. When Jesus says, “and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (Matt 5:30), he is speaking figuratively about intentionally and quickly removing sinful influences from one’s life and not about lopping off one’s limb.

The last method is the *literal* interpretation of Scripture, which is the safest method to interpret Scripture and considers the historical, grammatical, and literary approaches to interpret the Bible. It seeks to understand the plain truths in which God has relayed them to mankind without having to search for hidden meanings that are subjective and informed by one’s bias.

In addition to the previous lessons on interpreting Scripture, there are a few additional strategies to employ to assist in interpreting and understanding Scripture. I instructed the class to take a passage as literal unless there is a reason not to. An example would be in the Revelation when John wrote that 144,000 will be sealed, with 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel there is clearly no need to take those numbers in their normal literal sense (Rev 7:4-8). Moreover, the next verse (Rev 7:9) could not literally be referring to the land animal (lamb) when it says, “Standing before the throne and before the lamb” is clearly a reference to Jesus Christ as indicated by John 1:29 and not an animal. Scripture defines Scripture.

If there is impossibility with the literal sense, such as the earth has ears to listen (Mic 1:2), or a ubiquitous impossibility, like the trees clapping their hands (Isa 55:12), a figurative approach is likely in order to present a literal truth. Understanding these methods is critical to being faithful stewards of biblical hermeneutics. Moreover, within the scope of this project and its stated goals, it is helpful to provide a brief discussion in a related aspect called biblical exegesis.

Biblical exegesis is the determination of the meaning of the biblical text within its historical and literary contexts. This is a process of determining the rightful meaning

according to the author's intended meaning. I explained to the class that whether they are in personal study or preparing a biblical lesson, they should ask the question of content (what is being said) and the question of context (why it is being said).¹¹

Understanding the interpretive options and placing the writing in its proper context will help the reader understand the passage of Scripture being studied. I explained there are two kinds of contextual questions: historical and literary. Historical context has to do with the general historical-societal-cultural setting of a document (e.g., the city of Philippi, its geography, people, religions, social environment, economy) and the specific occasion of the document (why it was written). Literary context has to do with why a matter was being addressed at a given point of the argument or narrative.

I provided the class with an array of books, digital resources, and commentaries to assist them in building upon this session's material and in crafting their biblical messages for the church.

Session 6

In this session I built upon the principles and concepts of earlier lessons while also beginning to equip participants to deliver their final biblical lesson in this project. These lessons further assisted participants as they re-engaged in leading the congregation of Grass Lake Baptist Church in Scripture teaching. This first lesson provided introductory instruction on how to make applications of Scripture while the second addressed how to present Scripture that is faithful to each session of the course.

Puritan divine William Perkins provides a definition of application that has stood the test of time: "The skill by which the doctrine, which has been properly drawn from the Scriptures, is handled in ways which are appropriate to the circumstances of the

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 5.

place and time and to the people in the congregation.”¹² A contemporary theologian, A. Berkeley Mickelsen, provides a theme in his works that permeated throughout this lesson: “A text without a context is only a pretext.”¹³

There was much discussion on Perkins’s definition with participants being challenged from different portions of Scripture to arrive at normative applications. The students were reminded to carefully consider the context before and after their passage of Scripture and to look for similarities in any other areas of Scripture when they consider the meaning and application of their selected passage. However, when the immediate context of the Scripture passage is much different than their audience today, they should try to locate genuine parallels that come from the same period of time.¹⁴ I provided an example for the class: “I can do all things through him [Christ] who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13) does not mean (significance) that anyone who taps into the power of Christ can become rich, be healed from Alzheimer’s, or win the state championship high jump. Paul did not have health and wealth in mind in his original meaning. Rather, Paul was encouraging Christians that he could rejoice even while in trials. Christ gave him the strength to persevere and rejoice even in prison. Correct application does not yank words out of their context.¹⁵

I provided a few examples of both normative and inappropriate applications of Scripture from select passages and discussed how the principles of the earlier lessons can guide this process. I encouraged students to strive to bring glory to God through the proper handling and application of his Word and not to meet the needs of the congregation

¹² William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying: The Calling of the Ministry*, Puritan Paperbacks (1592; repr., Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2021), 54.

¹³ A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible: A Book of Basic Principles for Understanding the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 113.

¹⁴ Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, 113.

¹⁵ Jeffery Arthurs, “The Fundamentals of Sermon Application,” in *Interpretation and Application*, ed. Craig Brian Larson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2022), chap. 7, para. 2, Logos.

through the twisting and misalignment of Scripture that was never meant by the writers or context they were part of. I provided a diagram and discussed with the participants how to methodically work through hermeneutical principles to arrive at normative applications.¹⁶ I selected a participant, and they chose a portion of Scripture from the Pauline Epistles. After much discussion, the class carefully worked together through the identified Scripture passages and provided normative applications.

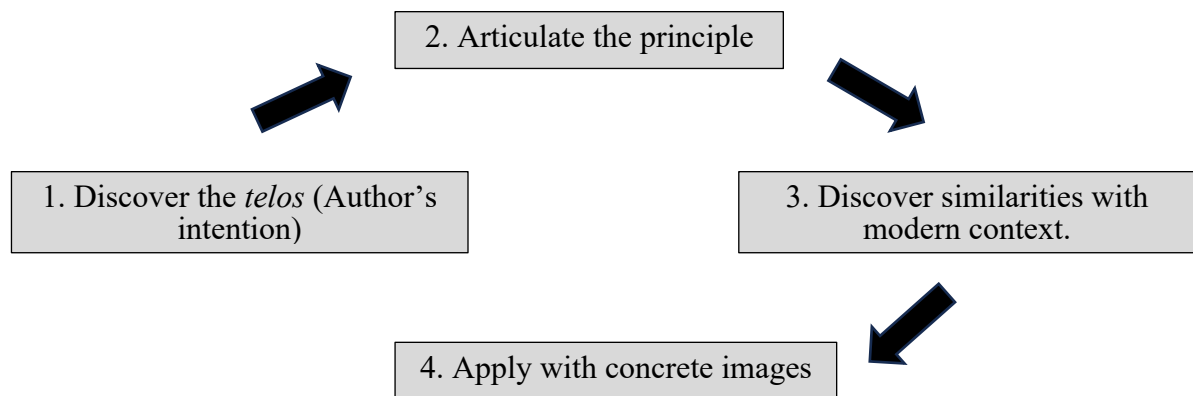


Figure 2. Application flow chart

Session 7

In the last session I reviewed the previous six lessons on biblical hermeneutics and further prepared participants for their post-teaching opportunity from the Pauline Epistles. This session began with the participants responding as a group to provide highlights from each session without opening their study guides or notes.

Participants interacted with their previous learning principles and each participant provided examples from a portion of Scripture in the Pauline Epistles to discuss and provide normative applications from. This session provided the framework in which the participants would deliver their biblical messages while remaining faithful to the biblical hermeneutical principles they had learned thus far.

¹⁶ Arthurs, “The Fundamentals of Sermon Application,” chap. 7, para. 3, Logos.

I introduced the students to four types of biblical messages and gave a brief description of their identifiers. Although there are more types of biblical messages, surveying four message types sufficed in providing encouragement for students to follow the best type of biblical message type that aligns with their new understanding of biblical hermeneutics. I encouraged participants to interact with each message type and to provide feedback on each one as we traversed the list.

First, *Motivating Message* is a form of communication that may or may not use Scripture. It will ultimately lead to some sort of motivational push that is not drawn from Scripture. It typically deals with areas like “being a better person” or “being more positive.” It is not rooted in Scripture and the speaker informs the audience on their take on a life principle or characterization based on their subjective experience.

Second, *Launching Pad Message* is a message where the speaker briefly presents a passage of Scripture and then launches into a different discussion not drawn from the text after having drawn out the necessary brief words from a verse to help prove their point. They do not return to the Scriptures in any follow-up or when making conclusions or applications. The meaning of the passage is determined by the speaker, not the Scriptures.

Third, *Topical Message* is self-describing—they are encompassed on one “topic” and not on the individual contexts or words of the individual texts. These messages are normally easily identifiable as they utilize multiple verses from many places in Scripture to present a concept or explain a topic without considering the full context and meaning of each specific passage. The speaker provides different viewpoints from places in Scripture to draw out an understanding on a topic they wish to communicate.

Fourth, *Expository Message* draws out the meaning (exegesis) from a specific and singular text. It builds concepts and points from the text and makes appropriate applications from the singular text. Expository messages are often reinforced from other texts in Scripture when they share contexts and situations occurring in a common context.

After considering each of the message types, the class unanimously agreed the safest and most biblical message type is that of an expository message. When queried, students provided the expository message as the most faithful to the concepts and strategies of biblical hermeneutics. There was conversation about the possibility to remain faithful to biblical hermeneutical principles in a topical message form, however, work would need to be done on each passage cited in the teaching. No other message type is continuously more genuine and authentic to the Scriptures than expository messages.

The session then pivoted to the importance of the speaker seeking to please God and not man in their messages. The power of the Word is in the message of God and not the message of man to those with itchy ears or those desiring not to be challenged in their current life circumstances. For in the true teaching of Scripture is the power to draw, turn away, and reveal the status of mankind's heart. However, it must be taught properly and clearly from the text. I provided an example from early on in the Scriptures: "The Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading" (Neh 8:7-8). The power of the message will come from the Word and not from the teacher. The students were encouraged to do so clearly from the Word and strive not to assign meaning or applications from their subjective experiences.

I also cited the New Testament in remaining faithful to the Word in teaching and the superfluous need to placate for mankind in adding or subtracting from it: "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). With both Old and New Testament examples, it is clear the instrument of teaching about God is to be the Bible and the teacher is to be faithful to its proper use when delivering biblical truth. This does not mean the speaker is not able to assert their own personality or illustrations during teaching opportunities, but

the source of theological truth is to be drawn out from the Bible.

To assist project participants in their final teaching opportunity from the Pauline Epistles, I encouraged them to interact and utilize a teaching template. Figure 3 was crafted from previous sessions to assist them.

Literary Genre – Describe what genre the writing is in?
Writer / Audience – Who is the intended audience?
Purpose / Context – What is being said and why?
Revelation to Jesus Christ – How does this lesson relate to Jesus Christ?
Acceptable Applications – How does this passage apply today?

Figure 3. Teaching template

After the final class session, each participant was assigned a section of Scripture from the Pauline Epistles to teach on a later date. Participants were given two weeks to prepare a sermon or teaching lesson to deliver back to me in a classroom, office, or the sanctuary. Participants delivered their final teaching opportunity to complete their commitment to this project.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the organization, preparation, and completion of the participant interaction portion of the project. The course curriculum was drafted and reviewed for usage, the program participants each completed their pre- and post-course surveys and then attended the seven-week course. At the end of the course, participants were assigned a Scripture passage from the Pauline Epistles and given two weeks to prepare to deliver their final teaching lesson. Chapter 5 will provide an evaluation of the project as it relates to the participants involvement.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter contains an evaluation of the project. It includes an evaluation of the projects purpose, goals, strengths and weaknesses, and reflections. The purpose of the project is identified as the greatest need within the church at the time of project origination. The goals for the project are sufficient and measurable to accomplish the purpose of the project. Through surveys and teaching opportunities project participants are evaluated to determine if a positive, statistically significant difference was achieved during the project. The strengths and weaknesses of the project are also discussed to assist in improving the project if delivered again in the future. Lastly, a summation of the project is provided with a collection of theological and personal reflections.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church in Grass Lake, Michigan, to study the Pauline Epistles by training them in biblical hermeneutics. This purpose was specific enough to isolate the greatest need within GLBC. During the pre-course teaching assignments for the participants, it became clear the purpose of the project, and the project itself for that matter, was rightfully aligned to address the greatest and immediate need in the church. Since starting this project there has been notable spiritual and numerical growth within the church and an additional church building has been erected and opened. The number of ministries in the church has greatly increased as well as the need for lay leaders to engage in formal teaching opportunities.

The identification of the Pauline Epistles was stated in the purpose and this genre was given appropriate time as the class worked through the sessions. Each assignment given to the participants had a nexus to the Pauline Epistles.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Three goals determined the success of the project. The first goal was to assess the knowledge and application of biblical hermeneutics amongst the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church. Seven program participants made up of men and women teachers in the church (including those desiring to be) when the project was in its formation process. All seven were asked to participate in the project and all agreed to participate.

After finalizing the written survey questions, I selected a passage of Scripture from the Pauline Epistles to assign to each participant. They were given two weeks to study and deliver either a sermon or a Sunday school lesson one-on-one with me depending on where they were serving or going to serve within the church. Participants made appointments to arrive at the church and complete the tasks.

To be efficient with the participants' time, when they individually came to the church, they completed the written survey first and then delivered their biblical teaching on their assigned passage of Scripture from the Pauline Epistles. I utilized a teaching rubric to evaluate their performance in applying selected biblical hermeneutical principles to their teaching. This was completed for all seven of the program participants. This goal was considered successfully met as the program participants completed the pre-course survey and their pre-course biblical teaching on a passage from the Pauline Epistles. Their survey responses were recorded and entered into a spreadsheet; their biblical teachings were scored on the rubric and also entered into a spreadsheet.

The second goal of this project was to develop a seven-week curriculum focused on biblical hermeneutics, concentrating on the Pauline Epistles. After drafting the curriculum that adequately covered the projects topic and scope, I utilized three local doctoral level experts in the field of biblical preaching and hermeneutics to provide

feedback on the curriculum. I met with each of the three experts to have the curriculum reviewed. If any of the course material did not successfully achieve a sufficient level, then the curriculum was amended until a successful level was achieved by all three of the panelists. The second goal was considered successfully met as the final course curriculum met or exceeded the level of sufficient on the rubric.

The third goal was to increase the knowledge and application of biblical hermeneutics amongst the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church. The class met on Wednesday nights in lieu of the normal Bible study service. Each session was at least one hour in length and participants were expected to attend all sessions of the instruction. The Wednesday night service at GLBC was typically a time of classroom style learning and prayer meeting, so the class sessions fit well with the regular Wednesday night attendees who were permitted to participate and audit the class sessions of the project. I utilized fill in the blank handouts for the participants and A/V slides to teach through each lesson. There was a significant amount of class interaction as different topics were discussed in the learning. Each participant was called on to read an applicable passage of Scripture that was relevant to the teaching.

When a participant missed a session, they planned to meet with me one-on-one to receive the instruction on the material before the next class. For the entirety of the project, no participants missed more than one class session.

Before each class I chose a student to lead a review on the previous week's teaching, and at the end of each session I provided a summary to prepare them for the next week's lesson. After the session 6 was complete I began scheduling a date and time for project participants to complete their post-survey and post-course biblical teaching on a Scripture passage from the Pauline Epistles. I provided each participant with an assigned passage of Scripture at the end last class. Each student was able to complete the post-survey and post-course biblical teaching within a few weeks after the last class session.

To measure the increase in knowledge, a *t*-test was utilized to measure the change in responses from the pre-course survey and the post-course survey. This measurable goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre-course and post-course survey scores: $t_{(6)} = 7.865, p < .0001$.

To measure the increase in *application*, a *t*-test was utilized to measure the change in performance from the pre-course biblical teaching and post-course biblical teaching. With the use of the rubric in the pre- and post-biblical teaching I was able to evaluate five areas of performance in their teachings and measured how they appropriately addressed the following categories in their teaching: literary genre, writer identification, purpose, revelation of Jesus Christ, and acceptable applications. Within each of the five categories there was a possibility of scoring between (1) insufficient, (2) requires attention, (3) sufficient, (4) exemplary.

The second measurable goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre and post-biblical teaching scores: $t_{(6)} = 10.408, p < .0001$.

All goals of this project were met.

Strengths of the Project

As stated previously, this project filled a large need in the church. There has been a noticeable change amongst the project participants in their commitment to the rightful handling and teaching of the Scriptures since the class sessions were completed. I have also noted additional confidence in how the lay leaders are teaching or speaking with others about the Scriptures and consistently utilizing terms like literary genre, author intent, and reason for writing.

Another strength of the program was the small amount of project participants. This low number led to a large amount of one-on-one time between me and each participant, which provided the opportunity to work individually through all areas of the

project and where each program participant had strengths and weaknesses. The structure of the project included a time of mentoring each participant away from the rest of the group. These mentoring sessions turned out to be profitable and trust building between me and the participants. After all the project classes were completed and after the final teach-back, I had a significant amount of time with each participant to provide feedback through the entire program. I provided clarifying and thought-provoking questions that were noted during their teaching portions and surveys and also gave feedback on areas they improved in and also opportunities for improvement.

Additionally, the project helped to provide more unity amongst the church. Since the project sessions were held on Wednesday nights and open to the rest of the congregation, it provided opportunity for everyone in the church to attend. The Wednesday night instruction was well-received by the congregation and provided greater opportunity for unity in the church as all who were actively attending the church were invited to attend the sessions. What has been encouraging is that members of the church who could not participate in all aspects of the formal project have expressed interest in participating in the teaching portions of the program and desire for mentorship in a one-on-one setting.

Lastly, the project dealt with two aspects of each program participant—the knowledge they possessed in biblical hermeneutics and their ability to apply it through biblical teaching opportunities. It helped to increase understanding of both as the project dealt with both the intellectual aspect of studying Scripture and the organization and delivery of a sermon or Bible lesson. Having a diverse makeup of project participants in age, gender, and number of years they have trusted and followed Jesus Christ provided unique perspectives and edifying group and individual conversations.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project was fulfilling but did have its challenges and areas for improvement. One of the main weaknesses was that the project was initiated and completed during the summer months. This created additional challenges and caused additional one-on-one

work to get program participants caught up with some previous weeks' material as some were gone on summer vacation.

Another weakness was that the project at times felt like it was trying to accomplish too much in a short period of time. To arrive at fulfilling all aspects of the project each person had to first concentrate heavily on biblical hermeneutics, but also need to demonstrate some basic understanding on exegesis and homiletics with minimal curriculum inputs. To accomplish this in seven weeks was a daunting task for some participants, not only in assimilating a large amount of information in a short period of time but also turning from active listening in a classroom style format to formulating and delivering their own their learning outcomes and applications in biblical lessons.

An additional weakness of the project was the lack of time needed to thoroughly discuss different Bible translations, theological systems, and types of theology. Additional time to instruct on these matters would have provided the participants a more thorough background on how they addressed their assigned Scriptures and those they interact with in the future.

Though there were positive elements to having a small group of seven participants, it would be helpful to have a larger sampling pool from whom to draw data. Having a larger sampling pool would add some structure and logistical changes but having a sampling pool of twenty or more would be more impactful for the congregation and the church.

What I Would Do Differently

Since completing the project, an additional group of participants at GLBC have come forward that would like to go through the project from start to finish. In fact, some neighboring churches with similar theological convictions as GLBC have asked about attending a future course. When I offer another session, there are some things I would do differently. First, I would not schedule the course in the summer. Even though each

person was committed to the course, there were particular challenges for me and the program participants on getting them caught up and prepared before the next class.

With the large amount of new information given to the participants, perhaps a stronger foundation would have been in order. A foundational class that is more advanced than that of the membership classes would provide an opportunity to solidify this foundation. Specifically, a couple sessions in this project could have been instructed in a foundational class and allowed for greater breadth and depth into core subject areas related to the project.

Having some foundational training opportunities before the project classes would have allowed for more in-depth material to be presented. Perhaps an additional foundational class would have been appropriate before the project began, which could have provided more time to spend on non-introductory matters related to biblical hermeneutics. Though this project was concerned primarily with utilizing the Pauline Epistles, several assigned passages had Old Testament connotations and considerations for the project participants. These prior foundational classes would have provided greater insight to the students as they prepared and delivered their teaching assignments.

I would also seek out an opportunity for at least a few weeks of sabbatical while organizing and delivering this project in the future. In addition to the regular pastoral ministry work completed throughout a regular work week, the addition of the project was a large lift for around nine weeks of execution, not including preparation time. As the only current elder in the church, there could have been conversations with other trusted local pastors to ascertain if a few weeks of assistance in the preaching duties could have been secured. This would have provided additional time for me to focus more intently on the project and further foster mentorship opportunities with the project participants.

Theological Reflections

While narrowing down the list of topics to approach for this project it became clear that hermeneutics training for lay leaders was the greatest need in the church. One of the considerations for the final selection was a stance I have consistently held for the church: everything is theology, and everything we do must bring glory to God or it is not worth doing. Every other item on the list did not have such an immediate connection to the Word than that of faithful biblical hermeneutics for its lay leaders.

A confession of GLBC is to be logocentric, centered on the Word of God, throughout all of its ministries. This confession was voiced and reinforced through all class sessions, in the surveys, and also spoken of during each discussion. I was genuinely surprised that during the application sections of the teach-backs there was significant divergence between participants' first and second teach-backs. The applications provided by the participants changed from anthropocentric on the first teach-back to fully Christocentric on the final. I reflected on how this outcome alone would change the teaching throughout the church and also in the personal studies of the congregation. With consistent biblical hermeneutical principles in place at GLBC the lay leaders will be able to demonstrate a careful and deliberate handling of Scripture that can be emulated by their hearers in the church. The benefits and theological implications of having consistency in the teaching and preaching of Scripture throughout the church cannot be overstated.

Jude says he found it necessary to write to fellow believers of the shared faith and to encourage them to "contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). The primary method to accomplish Jude's charge comes directly through contending for the truth of Scriptures and not a maligned or watered-down version of it. It is encouraging and challenging to know the work of biblical hermeneutics is constant and ongoing. With the primary teachers of the Word at GLBC being outfitted with the basic art and science of the discipline they too can contend for the faith from a rightful interaction with the Scriptures.

Personal Reflections

As I reflect over the last three years of my life in pastoral ministry and through the completion of this project, I realize how much I did not know about the historical and practical aspects of biblical hermeneutics. I learned about it and its importance to the point of conviction that each service and even personal study I partake in needs to employ solid biblical hermeneutical principles. I learned the things I strive for each week in the pulpit are the things people gave their lives for hundreds of years ago. With a very real and palpable call on today's churches and leaders to alter their culture to think of Scripture in a post-modern framework, I am reminded of faithful theologians like John Wycliff of the fourteenth century and Jan Hus of the fifteenth century who refused to go along with the culture of their times and paid the price with their lives over convictions of how Scripture was being instructed and interpreted.

I feel personally honored to have spent this time learning as much as I could about biblical hermeneutics, knowing that in doing so I would honor the Lord and secondly honor the faithful saints who marched to their deaths while holding on to such moral convictions. With that recollection, I think back on my youth to how many times in my life, without any true investigation of Scriptures, I accepted a teaching or catch phrase used in society as biblical truth and normative for me and my walk as a Christian. It is now the joy of my heart to seek out truth from Scripture and my recognition of its beauty and power has increased going through this project. Desiring his daily nurturing bounty, I am evermore intrigued after this project with the harmony and beauty of Scripture. To observe his Word transforming my life and the lives of the congregation and participants is humbling as I teach and preach weekly from the everlasting vine of truth that shall never run dry.

My wife and our four children have endured the challenges of this project with me. I am forever in their debt for their grace, additional study space and time, and the sacrifice of cherished family time for the kingdom of God. Without their sacrifices this

project would not have come to fruition. I am most grateful to them for their love of the Savior and the joy it is to call them my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Conclusion

This project was the most challenging academic endeavor I have ever taken on. It realigned my priorities, stretched the capabilities of my professional and personal life, and greatly strengthened the resolve of the church for rightful biblical preaching and teaching. This project is only the beginning of this work at GLBC, as there are many more theological considerations to address in the area of biblical hermeneutics. However, this project provided an introductory course that was sufficient in producing best practices and strategies in which the teachers of the church can work from. The positive significance of this project was indeed measured by statistical analysis but there is also a prevalent and positive change in how Scripture is being handled each week by GLBC teachers. An additional class has been scheduled for current or prospective teachers who could not participate in the first course, and congregation members have expressed an interest in completing all aspects of the course as well.

Whether for individual edification or formal instruction in the church, the Word is the cornerstone of personal and corporate ministry efforts. It is the sole means of bringing true glory, honor, and praise to a triune God.

APPENDIX 1

HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCY SURVEY

This instrument was administered to project participants before and after the seven-week training session. The purpose of this instrument was to assess the competency level of each participant before and after the training sessions.

HERMENEUTICAL COMPETENCY SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

This research is being conducted by Kevin Caldwell for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. While your participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project. 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.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to your response.

Date _____

Personal Identification Number _____
Last 4 of Soc. Sec.

Part 1

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 believer and 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 primarily 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 the statements by circling your agreement, 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 for my spiritual growth.
 SD D DS AS A SA
7. I can describe what the Pauline Epistles are
 SD D DS AS A SA
8. I feel confident studying the Pauline Epistles on my own.
 SD D DS AS A SA
9. I could teach someone else how to study the Pauline Epistles.
 SD D DS AS A SA
10. I understand what the Bible means when it says it is, "God-breathed."
 SD D DS AS A SA
11. I understand the context of the Pauline Epistles.
 SD D DS AS A SA
12. I understand what literary genre the Pauline Epistles are in.
 SD D DS AS A SA

13. The Pauline Epistles should always be interpreted literally.
SD D DS AS A SA
14. It is possible to interpret the Pauline Epistles without bias.
SD D DS AS A SA
15. From creation to Jesus' second coming, I could give a brief overview of the story of the Bible.
SD D DS AS A SA
16. When I read a passage from the Pauline Epistles, I normally consider who the intended audience of the writer was.
SD D DS AS A SA
17. When I read the Pauline Epistles, I know where it fits into the entire redemption of mankind story of the Bible.
SD D DS AS A SA
18. Knowledge is the goal of studying the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA
19. I understand what the progressive revelation of God is in the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA
20. I feel comfortable using commentaries to help me understand the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA
21. I understand what the following phrase means: Scripture defines Scripture.
SD D DS AS A SA
22. I can identify the different genres of the Bible.
SD D DS AS A SA
23. I feel confident reading the book of Romans in its context.
SD D DS AS A SA
24. I feel confident teaching prophecy in the Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.).
SD D DS AS A SA
25. I know what proof texting is.
SD D DS AS A SA
26. I feel confident teaching the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA
27. I feel confident reading the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
SD D DS AS A SA
28. I understand the intent of the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA
29. I understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
SD D DS AS A SA

30. I can explain five biblical doctrines with support from the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA

31. I can study the Bible alone and apply it correctly to my life.
SD D DS AS A SA

32. I know who Paul received his education from.
SD D DS AS A SA

33. I understand what a pericope of the Pauline Epistles is.
SD D DS AS A SA

34. Without help from a commentary or someone else, I feel confident making my own application from the Pauline Epistles.
SD D DS AS A SA

35. I know when the Pauline Epistles were written.
SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2

BIBLICAL TEACHING RUBRIC

The below instrument was utilized to evaluate the performance of program participants as they taught through a passage of Scripture in the Pauline Epistles. The rubric evaluated the participants' ability to clearly identify the literary genre, intended audience, context, progressive revelation of Jesus Christ, and acceptable applications.

Teaching Evaluation Rubric					
Name of Participant:					
Date:					
Assigned Scripture:					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Genre					
The literary genre was identified.					
Audience					
The intended audience of the writing was identified in the teaching.					
Context					
The context of the lesson was identified in the teaching.					
Revelation of Jesus Christ					
The teaching sufficiently addresses the progressive revelation of Jesus Christ.					
Acceptable Applications					
The range of applications in the teaching were normative and acceptable.					

APPENDIX 3

TEACHING SERIES RUBRIC

The below instrument was utilized by reviewers of the curriculum to evaluate the seven-week teaching series. The committee evaluated the teaching series for biblical and theological faithfulness, clarity, relevance, and thoroughness.

TEACHING SERIES RUBRIC

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Clarity					
The content of the curriculum clearly covers each issue it is designed to address.					
Relevance					
Each lesson contains lessons that are practical in application					
Thoroughness					
The curriculum is sufficiently thorough for the scope of the project.					

Other Comments:

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING THE LAY LEADERS OF GRASS LAKE BAPTIST CHURCH IN GRASS LAKE, MICHIGAN, TO EMPLOY BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This project equipped the lay leaders of Grass Lake Baptist Church in Grass Lake, Michigan, to employ biblical hermeneutics. The first chapter discusses the context of Grass Lake Baptist Church, the purpose, rationale, goals, and limitation/delimitation of the project. The second chapter presents three passages of Scripture (2 Tim 3:14-18; 2 Pet 3:15-18; 1 Cor 1:28-31) to provide justification for the application of biblical hermeneutics when reading the Word. Chapter 3 discusses the importance of modern believers to learn biblical hermeneutical principles from the Early Church, Middle Ages, and the Reformation. Chapter 4 provides the logistics, curriculum, measurement tools, and evaluation of the project. Chapter 5 evaluates if the program was successful based on the project goals outlined in chapter 1. This project equipped lay leaders with the confidence and skills to read and teach the Scriptures with assurance and joy in their Savior Jesus Christ.

VITA

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