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TRAINING FUTURE TEACHERS AND LEADERS IN
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AT TRINITY BAPTIST
CHURCH OF VALDESE, NORTH CAROLINA

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TRAINING FUTURE TEACHERS AND LEADERS IN
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For the glory of God and the edification of his church

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PREFACE

It is a privilege to pastor the congregation at Trinity Baptist Church in Valdese, North Carolina. The opportunity to lead God's people here motivates my heart for this project. I am thankful for the faculty at SBTS. Their love for the advancement of the gospel helped prepare me for my studies. Thank you to Dr. T. J. Betts, my project supervisor, for his wisdom, patience, and guidance throughout this project.

I am thankful for the love of my family. Loree and I have been loved and supported by our parents, family, and friends for many years. I am grateful to God for our church family, Trinity Baptist Church, including those already in heaven. Every member is a vital part of our life. They faithfully pray for me and encourage me as their pastor.

I praise God for my wife, Loree. Her unwavering encouragement and love for me is a precious gift from God. She has always been my biggest supporter and help in life and ministry. We thank God for our two daughters, Lindsey and Laney, who have lovingly and joyfully walked with us on this journey and wherever God has led us. During their college and high school transition years, they willingly traveled with us to Louisville on numerous occasions. Loree, Lindsey, and Laney, you made my days in Louisville a home away from home just by your presence! I love you all!

Finally, I give all glory to our Sovereign Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. The Lord's grace, kindness, and call on my life still amaze me every day. I pray this project will better equip His church and glorify His worthy name.

Tim Hodge

Morganton, North Carolina

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of the local church includes discipleship of younger generations. More specifically, leaders within the church are charged with helping prepare individuals within their influence to follow Christ and train them as future leaders and teachers in the local church. This project intends to provide biblical hermeneutics training for future teachers and leaders at Trinity Baptist Church of Valdese, North Carolina. Scripture continually affirms that doctrinal truth is to be passed from one generation to the next by the faithful teaching of God’s Word. This truth is given explicitly through the pen of the apostle Paul to Timothy. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul writes, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”¹ Likewise, in Psalm 78:6, the psalmist declares the reason for teaching what God has declared: “That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children.”

God’s desire and directive for His church are clear throughout His Word. Church leaders are entrusted with cultivating a biblical foundation for the next generation of leaders and teachers. This foundation includes understanding the sufficiency of Scripture and, thereby, the importance of proper hermeneutics. The impact of this endeavor may very well reach generations yet to be born. That is my prayer.

Context

Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) is a Southern Baptist Church in Valdese, North Carolina. TBC has approximately 220 members, with an average Sunday morning

¹ All Scripture references are from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

attendance of 200. Roughly 25 percent of the congregation is under the age of 25. The church's schedule is more traditional in terms of service times and activities. Weekly services include Sunday morning and evening worship and a mid-week prayer and Bible teaching service on Wednesday nights. During these services, all congregants remain together in the sanctuary. There are no breakouts for young people during the worship service. Prior to the service on Sunday morning, classes are specifically designed for youth (middle and high school) and young adults (high school graduates through marriage), providing a sense of community within their age group. Extra activities and trips are planned to help build and foster biblical relationships between youth and young adults. The church has an intentional focus on caring for the hearts of these age groups, understanding that the future of the church is rapidly falling into their hands. Thankfully and remarkably, with the main attraction being the worship service and exposition of the Word of God, young people are very involved. As young people grow into adulthood and begin to marry, the church has had the blessing of retaining the vast majority after marriage.

I am extremely fortunate to pastor this strong, Bible-centered church. Trinity Baptist Church has a rich history of solid, expository preaching. The previous pastor was a faithful expositor who served the church for nearly twenty years. Likewise, as pastor, I have continued in this vein of biblical exposition. While these things are true about TBC, the church sits in the context of surrounding churches with a traditional and contemporary blended church pattern that has an increasing influence in the local area. In many of these gatherings, biblical preaching has been replaced by a subtle, or not so subtle, move toward emotional entertainment that either diverts from the meaning or, in many cases, is largely void of Scripture.

Many surrounding churches now publish services online, allowing an inside look at how others do church without stepping foot inside the walls of their building. While instances of faithful exposition are encouraging, an alarming number of churches have

veered from that standard. Just the presence of an online community that allows one to go to church without going to church could be a dangerous trend. I have found that young believers desire the deep truth of Scripture. However, there is a need for explaining the biblical urgency of prioritizing the regular, steady, week-after-week hearing, and therefore proclamation, of God’s Word—instead of an emotional, entertaining skim from the top approach to God’s Word. In an article posted at churchplants.com, Carl Trueman states, “The church is losing its young people because the parents never taught their children that it was important. . . . If the sun shines out and their friends are going to the beach, do you decide to skip church and go to the beach? In which case, you send signals to your children that it is not important.”²

The majority of congregants whom I serve have a biblical understanding of the priority of the church. The desire of church leadership is simply to cross this most relevant bridge of teaching biblical authority, faithful study, and instruction under the real meaning of God’s inspired Word. While the church is currently in a very strong and biblical position, church leadership understands that now is the time to ensure the next generation increases knowledge of these fundamental and foundational truths.

Strengths

In the current context of Trinity Baptist Church, several strengths should be noted. First, a great structure of classes has been established, broken out along natural lines. The children’s classes meet within similar age groups. The high school-aged young adults make up their own class as well. The young singles class allows a gathering of those who are out of high school but not yet married. The married class engages married couples ranging in age from young newlyweds to couples in their sixties. For senior adults, they can choose from the senior married couples’ class, the adult men’s, or the

² Carl Trueman, quoted in Micah Anglo, “How Skipping Church Affects Your Children,” churchplants.com, accessed February 15, 2022, churchplants.com/articles/12421-how-skipping-church-affects-your-children-micah-anglo.html.

adult women's class. With this structure in place, there is flexibility to place teachers (both men and women) in areas that allow them to teach the Word of God. The structure of current classes also allows for biblical, age-appropriate application in support and conjunction with the corporate worship service. Second, teachers with a heart for God's Word are already in place. These men and women love the Lord and the Word of God. They possess a desire to live in a way that is pleasing to God, and they love the preaching of God's Word. With qualified teachers already in place within a strong structural class grouping, the church is well-positioned for biblical exposition at all ages. Lastly, church attendance, the young generation included, continues to be a strength. One cannot disciple and teach people who are not present. Currently, attendance is excellent, with steady growth since before the time of COVID. Congregants continue to prioritize the time of worship and possess a God-given hunger for the truth of Scripture.

Weaknesses

While TBC has many strengths as a congregation, it is equally important to understand areas where there is room for growth. The first area to highlight is simply a lack of training in biblical expositional study or hermeneutics. The current teachers have great respect, love, devotion, desire, and ability to share the Word of God. They desire to be effective teachers. They possess abilities that are clearly gifted by God. They have a passionate love for God and the church. In large part, most have been raised under sound doctrinal preaching and teaching. I recall, however, in my own experience when I thought that was all I needed. I had sat under biblical, Spirit-anointed preaching. I was raised in a godly home, and I am a saved child of God. My subconscious conclusion was that, because of my background and new birth, all I needed was a Bible to teach effectively. I recall the season in my life as a young preacher when I received wise counsel from my pastor and other influential pastors regarding the value of biblical training. I am fortunate to have preachers and friends who help biblically sharpen my study to be better used for the glory of God. Scripture affirms that training, whether formal or informal, is necessary

(Prov 1:5; Rom 2:2; 1 Cor 11:1; 2 Tim 2:2; 2 Tim 3:14). After enrolling at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I began to see firsthand the value of systematic study. Specifically, during my Pastoral Ministry course, my heart was burdened to place greater emphasis, in my own preaching, upon the pure meaning of the Word of God. Along with studies in hermeneutics, systematic theology, and other coursework, a conviction continued to grow for my own ministry as well as those under my influence. I have the privilege of teaching at West Lenoir Baptist School of Ministry in North Carolina, where I share this same urgency with young preachers. A couple of years ago, while surveying classes at TBC, the necessity of hermeneutic study for the future teachers of the church weighed upon my heart. The immediate significance for teachers and leaders is not to change them into something they are not already. They are tremendously gifted men and women who love God and His Word. My heart is simply to give them tools that will better equip them to do what they have already been gifted to do.

Another area where there is tremendous opportunity is in training the next generation of church leaders and teachers. In the context where I grew up, as well as where I now serve, the church has historically utilized the “trial by fire approach” for teachers. The church simply allows time to grow young teachers into more seasoned teachers. There are certainly areas that necessitate experience as part of the growth in teaching; however, if church leadership can shorten that curve and bring to light a greater understanding of study and teaching patterns, there will be a direct and eternal impact on the life of Trinity Baptist Church. God is raising up a God-fearing, Christ-exalting, Bible-loving generation of young people at Trinity Baptist Church. God has clearly gifted many of the young people with passion, understanding, and a desire for his Word. Knowing their giftedness, it is the responsibility and privilege of the church to equip them with the tools of biblical study. The combination that Paul commends to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 involves both labor and the ability to rightly divide the Word of God. There is a far-reaching

implication in this text. This process of study is not limited to preachers and pastors. Indeed, all who endeavor to preach or teach are held to this standard.

Rationale

I desire to provide a foundation and structure of learning to equip teachers at Trinity Baptist Church. Because of the authority of Scripture, those who currently teach, as well as a new generation of teachers, must be properly equipped with tools and principles of hermeneutics. These principles will help form a firm foundation in rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

This foundation for teaching is important for several reasons: (1) for the good of the teacher, (2) for the good of the listener, and (3) for the glory of God. The teacher will benefit immensely when utilizing the foundational tools of biblical study. As a teacher/preacher, I know the great satisfaction that comes from knowing you have given proper study to a passage. Providing the historical, contextual, and original meaning of a text and then rightly applying the implied meaning to the current lives of your listeners is a blessing. Second, proper teaching is important because of the listener. After all, endeavoring to teach is to provide biblical exhortation, correction, and instruction. Mishandling this task is dangerous. God uses the proclamation of the Bible to eternally change the lives of those who hear. Lastly, and most importantly, equipping teachers is important because of God's glory. God is made known through the revelation of His Word. If studied and applied in ways that are man-centered, God's glory is diminished in the church context. A subtle shift away from scriptural teaching will eventually erode the very foundation of the church. A strong church, however, is serious about the proper presentation of the teachings of Scripture. It is out of necessity and desire that the church continues to be defined, in the years and decades to come, as a people confident in and desirous of the Word. I am excited about providing this training to both current and future teachers to maximize their gifting as teachers of the Word of God.

God is raising up a God-fearing, Christ-exalting, Bible-loving generation of young people at Trinity Baptist Church. The Lord has gifted many of the young people with passion, understanding, and a desire for His Word. In knowing their giftedness, duty necessitates that the church disciple a new generation of leaders and teachers. Paul writes to Timothy, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). The divine truth that God imparted upon the apostle Paul placed a responsibility upon him to teach Timothy. Paul then tells Timothy that he now holds the responsibility of teaching those within his sphere of influence. A clear implication from this text applies directly to the rationale. The divine truth that God has imparted to me places a responsibility upon my life. That responsibility is that I would teach those within my sphere of influence the things that have been given to me. Certainly, the direct implication is the delightful duty of preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus. My first responsibility as a pastor is to preach the Word. Alongside this pastoral duty is the privilege of discipleship. As God raises up a new generation of Christians at Trinity Baptist Church, we are honored to come alongside them. Just as Paul exhorted Timothy to study, I want to encourage this generation of believers. Paul directly appealed in his call for study that Timothy approach it as a workman. I remember hearing of Alexander MacLaren, the longtime Scottish preacher in the late 1800s and early 1900s, who believed strongly in this work ethic in time of study. It was noted that he would always put on his work boots before going to his study. In fact, his biography reads,

It has been told that in the early days of his ministry, each Sunday service was spoken of as a “woe.” This feeling continued through life, and only those who were with him, when he was anticipating, not only special services, but during his weekly preparation for his own pulpit, can know the tear and wear of spirit which that preparation involved. . . . At such times to an onlooker, the fact that he did not offer to the Lord of that which costs him nothing was constantly present, and in retrospect, it seems

little short of a miracle that his life of strenuous preparation for each sermon preached was continued for nearly sixty years.³

As Paul impressed upon Timothy, so is the necessity placed upon the local church for work in daily study. Care must be applied, however, that this work is not merely pleasing to man. Instead, it is the desire of the church to disciple a generation to be fully devoted to the study of God's Word. Putting in the work to rightly divide the Word of Truth, I pray that the leadership of TBC will all have a singular aim: that God will be pleased to grow His church in truth, and in doing so, God will be glorified!

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to provide biblical training to equip future teachers and leaders at Trinity Baptist Church of Valdese, North Carolina, in biblical hermeneutics and expository teaching.

Goals

During project implementation, I utilized instructional time to teach the principles of biblical hermeneutics. These biblical principles are established and proven means of God-honoring study. Prayerfully, at the conclusion of this project, Trinity Baptist Church will have yielded better-prepared students, teachers, and even listeners of God's Word. The detailed goals of this project are as follows:

1. The first goal was to assess the current understanding of biblical hermeneutics among future leaders and teachers at Trinity Baptist Church.
2. The second goal was to develop an eight-session biblical hermeneutics curriculum to provide training for future leaders and teachers of Trinity Baptist Church.
3. The third goal was to increase knowledge and understanding of biblical hermeneutics among future leaders and teachers of Trinity Baptist Church.

Through the satisfactory measurement and completion of each goal, this generation of teachers will be better positioned to impact the church today and for

³ E. T. McLaren, *Dr. McLaren of Manchester: A Sketch* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 174.

generations to come. A specific research methodology was created to measure the successful completion of the three goals. The following section provides details on the measurability and satisfaction of each goal.

Research Methodology

The first goal was to assess the current understanding of biblical hermeneutics among future leaders and teachers at Trinity Baptist Church. This goal was measured by the Biblical Hermeneutic Knowledge Survey.⁴ The survey was created by the leadership team to gauge participants and their initial level of knowledge, specifically surrounding biblical hermeneutics. Prior to the first session, the survey was given to all those signed up for instruction. This goal was satisfied once at least twenty members completed the Biblical Hermeneutic Knowledge Survey, and the results had been recorded as a benchmark to measure future growth for goal 3.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session biblical hermeneutics curriculum to provide training for future leaders and teachers of Trinity Baptist Church. This training material was reviewed by an expert panel consisting of one TBC board member, a DMin graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Biblical Hermeneutics Professor, and a local pastor who is also the president of West Lenoir Baptist School of Ministry. This panel used a rubric to evaluate the course material and determine biblical fidelity, teaching methodology, and usefulness to ministry training.⁵ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal was to increase knowledge and understanding of biblical hermeneutics among future leaders and teachers of Trinity Baptist Church. This goal was

⁴ See appendix 2. All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁵ See appendix 1.

assessed by readministering the Biblical Hermeneutic Knowledge Survey after the training to measure growth in knowledge and understanding. This survey gauged each individual and their level of knowledge surrounding biblical hermeneutics. A *t*-test was utilized to measure the level of success.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project to help in the reader's understanding.

Biblical hermeneutics. In general terms of definition, *hermeneutics* means to interpret. Robert Plummer's *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible* provides a clear meaning:

To interpret a document is to express its meaning through speaking or writing. To engage in interpretation assumes that there is, in fact, a proper and improper meaning of a text and that care must be taken to not misrepresent the meaning. When dealing with the Scriptures, to properly interpret a text is to faithfully convey the inspired human author's meaning of the text, while not neglecting divine intent.⁶

Sufficiency of Scripture. A prerequisite for right interpretation is understanding the sufficiency of Scripture, as Plummer defines "The Bible is the ultimate authority for the Christian in terms of behavior and belief (Luke 10:26; 24:44–45; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:1–4; 2 Peter 3:16). The correctness of all preaching, creeds, doctrines, or opinions is decisively settled by this question: What does the Bible say?"⁷

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the data gathered from the surveys was only as good as the willingness of attendees to attend and answer, with effort and honesty, the Biblical Hermeneutic Knowledge Survey. To mitigate this limitation, the assessment was given voluntarily with the understanding of the needed transparency and effort. It was also communicated that the survey would be taken again after the training, with both surveys being necessary for correct measurement. Second, the effectiveness of

⁶ Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 2nd ed., 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2021), 79.

⁷ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 20.

the course required faithful attendance. To mitigate this limitation, the growth measurements were based on those who completed both Biblical Hermeneutics Knowledge Surveys and attended more than 75 percent of the training.

Two delimitations applied to this project. First, the course was offered on Wednesday evenings. Those who worked second-shift jobs or had other obligations were unable to attend. Second, the course was geared toward young adults (those between the ages 18 to 35) as well as current class teachers. Others were allowed to participate on a volunteer basis.

Conclusion

The ministry of the local church includes the responsibility of discipleship for those who will be the leaders of tomorrow. This project provided biblical hermeneutics training for future teachers and leaders at Trinity Baptist Church of Valdese, North Carolina. Given the authority of Scripture, proper interpretation in studying to teach is critical. Church leadership must communicate this critical need to younger church members. As the psalmist declares, “That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children” (Ps 78:6).

The Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, the sincere endeavor of the leadership at Trinity Baptist Church is to provide instruction that will strengthen the church through a better understanding of Scripture. It is the prayer of TBC that God may allow the impact of this project to reach into generations that are yet to be born until Christ returns for his church.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION
IN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

Training the next generation of teachers at Trinity Baptist Church is a concept commanded by Scripture. For the church to be faithful to God, it must seek to be faithful to his Word. The thesis of this chapter is found in three passages from Scripture. These verses provide a divine mandate for training the next generation of teachers in biblical hermeneutics due to the sufficiency of God’s Word. The chapter will first review the sufficiency of Scripture. Second, the biblical role of teaching will be reviewed according to Scripture in Ephesians 4. The chapter will conclude by exploring 2 Timothy 2 and the necessity that Scripture places on training the next generation of Bible teachers. This chapter is not exhaustive in nature but is designed to concisely provide biblical clarity and conviction to catapult the church into action. The greatest singular propellant for the church congregation, mandating practices of faithful study of Scripture, should be unanimous. That reason should rest on, “the Bible says.” Therefore, this chapter will seek to answer the question, “What does the Bible say?”

**The Sufficiency of Scripture Is the Foundation
for All Biblical Study (2 Tim 3)**

Second Timothy 3:16 states, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” In this verse, Paul proclaims foundational facts about the Bible unto Timothy and the church. Scripture is given by the “inspiration of God.” Therefore, Paul explains, Scripture is sufficient. The logical sequence and context of the verse provide great confidence and assurance to the church. The Bible is the Word of our sovereign God.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, the Greek word Paul uses is transliterated *theopneustia*, which is utilized only this one time in Scripture. *Theopneustia* is defined as “by inspiration of God.” It is derived from two words, *theos* and *pneo*. *Theos* is best translated as “God.” *Pneo* is translated as “to blow or breathe.” Scripture, Paul writes, is literally “God-breathed.” This truth is critical for the church today and is a doctrine that has been debated throughout the centuries. Theologians have offered differing input into the implied meaning of *theopneustia*. It is vital for the local church to rightly understand the divinely intended meaning of the text. If the Bible is less than the literal breathed-out Word of God, then there is room for doubt, debate, and discouragement in the church. If, however, the Bible is indeed God’s breathed-out manuscript, then there is great encouragement and implication for the church.

One of the main areas of distinction subtly presented by liberals as well as in neo-orthodoxy surrounds this doctrine of biblical inspiration. They question the real meaning of 2 Timothy 3:16. Men such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, William Robertson Smith, and Karl Barth dismissed the historical view of the inspiration of Scripture. D. A. Carson clarifies and comments on Barth’s errant position, stating,

Barth’s construction renders the Scripture as outbreathing the Spirit when in fact the text says that it is God who has outbreathed the Scripture. A significant feature of this passage is that the God-breathed nature of Scripture is something that we may say about the text rather than something we may say about the experience of prophets and apostles or the present-day for the hearers.¹

Schleiermacher did not believe Scripture should even be the foundation of faith in Christ, suggesting that a man can experience God regardless of recognizing the Bible as authoritative.² Gregg Allison highlights the thoughts of William Robertson Smith, where Smith states, “Not on the Bible as an infallible book, but on the historic manifestation of

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 281.

² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (1830, repr., London: T & T Clark, 1999), 592.

God in Christ must our faith rest. And when this is understood, we shall no longer be constantly uneasy at the progress of criticism in Scripture.”³ Allison points out that, in the aftermath of these attacks, “what was left was not a doctrine of the inspiration of the biblical *writings* themselves, but a doctrine of the inspiration of the biblical *writers* instead.”⁴ This seemingly subtle difference is not subtle at all. Thankfully, theologians faithful to the text rightly unpack the verse in a literal sense. They correctly argue that the inspiration of Scripture is foundational to the proclamation of biblical doctrine. These men articulate the plenary inspiration (full inspiration) as well as the verbal inspiration (every single word is inspired) of Scripture.

From the earliest church fathers, faithful theologians have affirmed what Scripture explicitly proclaims. The Bible is fully and verbally inspired by God. Augustine expressed that God is the Author of Scripture in such a powerful way that he utilized the writers “as if they were his own hands.”⁵ In the words of John Calvin, “Credibility of doctrine is not established until we are persuaded beyond doubt that God is its Author. Thus, the highest proof of Scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it.”⁶ Calvin teaches a literal interpretation of *theopneustia*. He said this means every writer wrote, “Freely and honestly what the Holy Spirit dictated.”⁷ This prompts Calvin to express in his commentary on Jeremiah, “The words which God dictated to his servant were called the words of Jeremiah; yet, properly speaking, they were not the

³ Gregg Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 71.

⁴ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 72.

⁵ Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels* 1.35.54, in *Nicene- and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts et al., series 1, vol. 6, *Sermon on the Mount; Harmony of the Gospels; Homilies on the Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 101.

⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 80.

⁷ John Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 127.

words of man, for they did not proceed from a mortal man, but only from God.”⁸ Calvin notes with parallel thought in *Institutes* that “Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their own color, or sweet or bitter things do of their taste . . . those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated.”⁹ Calvin’s words carry such weight and clarity of the self-authentication of Scripture. Thomas Ridgley and James Patriot Wilson state,

To deny that there is such a thing as inspiration, is not only to deny the credibility of scripture history, as well as its divine authority, but it is to deny that which the heathen, by the light of nature, have universally believed to be consonant to reason; for they often represent their gods as conversing with men, and appear, in many of their writings, not to have the least doubt whether there has been such a thing as inspiration.¹⁰

In light of Ridgley and Wilson’s point, it must be highlighted that as the true and living God chooses to move upon the writers, he certainly has the authority and power to ensure that every word written is in accordance with His will. Scripture is the breathed-out product of God’s will. Ridgley and Wilson continued, “It would be almost endless to refer to the many places of scripture, in which God speaks in such a style, as is inimitable by any creature.”¹¹ Such places provide language that is so “great and magnificent; so that if it was not immediately from God, it would be the most bold presumption for any creature to speak in such a way: therefore this . . . evince its divine original.”¹² Ridgley and Wilson spend a great deal of time in this work successfully defending the God-breathed nature of Scripture. They concisely answer critics on many

⁸ John Calvin, *Jeremiah 20–47*, vol. 10 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (1854; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 334.

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 80.

¹⁰ Thomas Ridgley and James Patriot Wilson, *A Body of Divinity: Wherein the Doctrines of the Christian Religion Are Explained and Defended, Being the Substance of Several Lectures on the Assembly’s Larger Catechism* (Philadelphia: William W. Woodward, 1814), 72.

¹¹ Ridgley and Wilson, *A Body of Divinity*, 74.

¹² Ridgley and Wilson, *A Body of Divinity*, 74.

questions posed surrounding inspiration. Liberals suggested that some biblical writers lacked natural wisdom. Ridgley and Wilson reply, “God can make use of what instruments he pleases, and endow them with wisdom in an extraordinary way, to qualify them for the service he calls them to, whereby the glory of his sovereignty more appears.”¹³ This suggestion was, in fact, viewed as another validation of the very point liberals sought to undermine. Since God is the Author and thereby breathing through the pen of the writer His intended purpose, then the natural wisdom of the penmen is a moot point. After all, if God can speak to Balaam in Numbers 22 by opening the mouth of a donkey, then he clearly is not limited to penmen who are wise by worldly standards.

Charles Hodge remarks, “On this subject the common doctrine of the Church is, and ever has been, that inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will. They were in such a sense the organs of God, that what they said *God said*.”¹⁴ In alignment with Ridgley and Wilson, Hodge states what the Bible does: when the Bible speaks, God speaks. Hodge continues,

The very form in which the doctrine of inspiration is taught in the Bible, assumes that the organs of God in the communication of his will were controlled by Him in the words which they used. “I have put my words in thy mouth.” (Jer. 1:9.) “It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” (Matt. 10:20.) They spake “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4.) “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Pet. 1:21.) All these, and similar modes of expression with which the Scriptures abound, imply that the words uttered were the words of God.¹⁵

B. B. Warfield specifies that in Greek terminology *theopneustia* actually says nothing of inspiration. He says that the emphasis of the text is not that the Holy Spirit is “inbreathing” into human authors; rather, Scripture is “God-breathed.” Literally, the

¹³ Ridgley and Wilson, *A Body of Divinity*, 107.

¹⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 1:154, emphasis added.

¹⁵ Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:164.

Bible is the written, transcribed words, from the breath of God.¹⁶ In the words of Warfield, the Bible is “not a book, then, in which one may, by searching, find some word of God, but a book which may be frankly appealed to at any point with assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God.”¹⁷

Gregg Allison outlines that a brief historical overview of theology yields a conclusive agreement that, while the biblical writers moved their pen, they were moved, directed, and “carried along” by the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ What they penned, as Scripture tells, was God-breathed. Therefore, the viewpoint shared by Calvin, Ridgley, Hodge, and Warfield aligns with the viewpoint of honest, faithful, historical, as well as modern-day theologians. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy adds another voice to the chorus, confirming the verbal and plenary inspiration of God’s Word. Article 6 of the Chicago statement reads, “We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration. We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.”¹⁹ The statement concludes by proclaiming, “We affirm that what Scripture says, God says. May he be glorified. Amen and Amen.”²⁰

In theological study of more recent years, an army of faithful theologians affirms the sufficiency of Scripture alone from the biblical text. Joel Beeke and Ray Lanning state, “It is both necessary and comforting for the Christian to know and believe that all Scripture is ‘God-breathed,’ that every word of every sentence is exhaled by the

¹⁶ Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948), 133.

¹⁷ Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 119.

¹⁸ Allison, *Historical Theology*, 59.

¹⁹ International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” Dallas Theological Seminary Library, accessed February 13, 2023, article 6, https://library.dts.edu/Pages/TL/Special/ICBI_1.pdf.

²⁰ International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” article 6.

living God.”²¹ Beeke and Lanning press this necessity for the church, stating, “The believer would have no authority for declaring ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in belief and practice if God had not superintended the entire process of the composition of Scripture. . . . To be trusted wholly, Scripture must be wholly true.”²² J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays add, “God worked through the various human authors, including their background, personality, cultural context, writing style, faith commitments, research, and so on, so that what they wrote was the inspired Word of God. . . . God’s work through human authors resulted in an inspired original text.”²³ Wayne Grudem states in parallel that “the sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained 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 we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”²⁴ R. Albert Mohler explains, “The careful translation of this text reveals that the Bible was not merely ‘inspired’ in the sense that the eventual product was recognized to represent a superior wisdom; the text was specifically breathed out by God.”²⁵ These theologians affirm the words of the psalmist. In Psalm 19:7-8 he writes, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

²¹ Joel R. Beeke and Ray B. Lanning, “The Transforming Power of Scripture,” in *Sola Scriptura: The Protestant Position on the Bible*, ed. Don Kistler (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2009), 111.

²² Beeke and Lanning, “The Transforming Power of Scripture,” 111.

²³ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 25.

²⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

²⁵ R. Albert Mohler Jr., “When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic View of Biblical Inerrancy,” in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. James R. Merrick and Stephen F. Garrett, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 38.

The truth of biblical inspiration is a bedrock doctrine for the foundation of teaching and preaching Scripture in the church. John MacArthur stated, “It’s the Word that makes the man of God and everybody who follow His pattern complete. It prepares them spiritually. That is what we call the sufficiency of Scripture.”²⁶ The evidence of whether a man believes this or not is found in the means he uses. MacArthur concludes, “What else would you use? I cannot fathom why anyone would use anything other than the Word that saves and sanctifies.”²⁷ Faithful biblical exegesis affirms the Bible is the God-breathed manuscript given to the church. God has spoken. The Bible is His Word. Therefore, Scripture is to be treasured, trusted and taught.

The Role of Teaching in the Local Church (Eph 4:11–15)

The conclusion of the previous section calls the church into action. Since the Bible is the Word of God, the only rational response is that it must be treasured, trusted, and taught. Ephesians 4:11–12 fittingly coincides with what Paul has written in 2 Timothy 3:16. Due to the plenary and verbal inspiration of Scripture; Paul tells Timothy that it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction.” Considering this verse, William Mounce comments, “Scripture is the only true source for pastoral and doctrinal teaching.”²⁸ In other words, this doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction come from an individual devoted to the careful study and teaching of what the Bible has to say. This is what Paul describes in Ephesians 4:11–12. Scripture states that the Lord gave “some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” This is the logical conclusion defined by Scripture. Since the Bible is “God-breathed,” God has called pastors and teachers who will

²⁶ John MacArthur, *The Shepherd as Preacher, Delivering God’s Word with Passion and Power* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2015), 20.

²⁷ MacArthur, *The Shepherd as Preacher*, 20.

²⁸ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 570.

teach His Word, thereby perfecting the saints and building up the church.

One question that often arises in the study of Ephesians 4:11 is whether “pastors” and “teachers” refer to one office or two. In his exegetical commentary, S. M. Baugh suggests,

Paul joins “teachers” to the previous list with a simple *καί* (*kai*), giving the list a termination. This is the adjunctive meaning of *καί* (*kai*) (BDAG, 495–96), communicating “along with” or “as well as,” and it has this function in other, similar lists. Teachers, then, should be viewed as an office that can be distinguished from “shepherds” as a special branch of overseers charged particularly with instruction in God’s word (e.g., 1 Tim 5:17). If there is any connection between shepherds and teachers intended, it is most likely that these are the two offices in this list more directly connected to local congregations than the other three.²⁹

Calvin says similarly in *Institutes*, “There is, I believe, this difference between them: teachers are not put in charge of discipline, or administering the sacraments, or warnings and exhortations, but only of Scriptural interpretation—to keep doctrine whole and pure among believers. But the pastoral office includes all these functions within itself.”³⁰

Harold W. Hoehner’s study, on the other hand, concludes by placing the role of pastor and teacher together: “Pastors and teachers are listed together because they are governed by one article (“the” occurs before “pastors” but not before “teachers”) and because the word “and” (*kai*) differs from the other “and’s” (*de*) in the verse.”³¹ Hoehner believes it “may imply that these are two kinds of gifted people whose ministries are among settled congregations (rather than itinerant ministries like those of the apostles and evangelists).”³² He differs from Baugh and Calvin by inserting, “more likely, they refer to two characteristics of the same person who is pastoring believers (by comforting and

²⁹ S. M. Baugh *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2015), 334–35.

³⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, 319.

³¹ Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures, New Testament* ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (London: Victor, 1985), 635.

³² Hoehner, “Ephesians,” 635.

guiding) while at the same time instructing them in God’s ways.”³³ Hodge aligns with Hoehner on this thought. He states, “Pastors and teachers . . . must be taken as a two-fold designation of the same officers, who were at once the guides and instructors of the people.”³⁴ Regardless of this distinction, what is common among all faithful commentaries is that teaching is characteristic of the local church. God has placed pastors and teachers within the context of the church to communicate, exhort, and instruct the doctrine of Scripture.

The preaching and teaching of the Word of God in the context of the local church is, without question, mandated by Scripture. Paul goes on in Ephesians 4 to explain what is accomplished through Bible teaching. This faithful proclamation of Scripture is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12). This perfecting (fullness/completeness) of the saints is realized according to verses 13–15 when three things are established. First, teaching builds unity of faith. Second there is within the church mature knowledge of the Son of God. Then, lastly, biblical teaching yields doctrinal stability characterized by individuals who are no longer prey to every false doctrine.

On the unity of faith, F. F. Bruce comments, “The unity of the faith is effectively the same as the unity of the Spirit which the readers have earlier been exhorted to preserve; it is the unity which binds together those who share the common faith in Christ.”³⁵ Paul exhorts that biblical unity occurs in the church body when the congregation shares in believing and trusting biblical doctrine. This is made possible by faithful teaching of Scripture. A harmonic spiritual sound resonates from such a church. Robert Gundry points out that earlier in Ephesians 4, “the foregoing reference to the ‘unity of the Spirit’

³³ Hoehner, “Ephesians,” 635.

³⁴ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on Ephesians*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2003), 162.

³⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 350.

leads directly to the statement, ‘[there is] one body’ (representing the church as a unity) and ‘one Spirit’ (whose oneness ensures the oneness of the church in that all Christians are ‘in the Spirit.’”³⁶ The unity of the church, Paul elaborates, is not dependent upon passed-down earthly traditions. This oneness and unity of which Paul speaks is anchored in Christ and in the truth of His written Word.

As Paul transitions to the church’s mature knowledge of the Son of God in verse 13, unity is still his focus. In verse 13, Paul envisions a church that is so mature in unity and knowledge of Christ that he calls them a “perfect man.” In this reference, Paul uses the Greek word *teleios*, which places in mind an individual who is grown up, complete, and mature in Christ. This growth process, like unity, is accomplished through understanding and teaching Scripture. This truth negates the possibility that the normative Christian experience would be to trust Christ as Savior without loving his Word or acknowledging him as Lord. Peter O’Brien states, “To live in a manner which mars the unity of the Spirit is to do despite the gracious reconciling work of Christ. It is tantamount to saying that his sacrificial death by which relationships with God and others have been restored, along with the resulting freedom of access to the Father, are of no real consequence to us!”³⁷ Hodge provides more clarity on how the church is united, perfected, and given fullness in Christ: “Therefore when the whole church has come to this perfect knowledge, which excludes all diversity, then it has reached the end; then it will bear the image of the heavenly. The object of faith and knowledge is the Son of God.”³⁸ Scripture describes that these mature followers of Christ are made so via the steady, faithful teaching of God’s Word. Doctrinal diversity is excluded, while unity and maturity grow within the church body.

³⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 768.

³⁷ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 280.

³⁸ Hodge, *Ephesians*, 166.

The world is a place where diversity is championed in almost every imaginable form. There is, however, a heavenly body, the church, where the people of God must strike one note. The congregation must lay aside earthly classifications, opinions, and barriers. As Paul writes in Colossians 3:11, the church is a place “where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” MacArthur comments, “Oneness in fellowship is impossible unless it is built on the foundation of commonly believed truth.”³⁹ He continues by helpfully adding,

God’s truth is not fragmented and divided against itself, and when His people are fragmented and divided it simply means they are to that degree apart from His truth, apart from the faith of right knowledge and understanding. Only a biblically equipped, faithfully serving, and spiritually maturing church can attain to the unity of the faith. Any other unity will be on a purely human level and not only will be apart from but in constant conflict with the unity of the faith. There can never be unity in the church apart from doctrinal integrity.⁴⁰

When doctrinal teaching is rightly prioritized, and unity of faith is realized, the people of God grow into a more spiritually mature body. The teaching of Scripture is clearly imperative for church unity, for Christian growth, and lastly, for the solid foundation of the church.

Bible teaching provides a foundation of truth wherein the church will not be led astray. Paul notes in Ephesians 4:14 that scriptural teaching leads the congregation to “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” Therefore, pure Bible teaching must be at the core of church activity. While the outcome is not guaranteed, Paul presents faithful teaching as the only possible means of developing a people who are unified, mature, and unshakable in the doctrine of God. The enemy schemes to divide, confuse, and lead God’s people astray through subtle means of false doctrine. Paul uses the Greek word *methodia*, which means “scheming.” MacArthur

³⁹ John MacArthur, *Ephesians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 156.

⁴⁰ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 157.

states, “No doubt it has reference to planned, subtle, systematized error.”⁴¹ Paul also uses the Greek word *kybeia*, defined as “craftiness/trickery.” The English derivative is “cube” or “die,” used for playing games of chance. Albert Barnes writes that this warning suggests “anything like casting die, or like opening the Bible at random to determine a point of duty or doctrine.”⁴² This is certainly noteworthy when considering that doctrinal teaching is foundational to the church. Too often, churches allow teachers to fill positions who do not understand the inherent danger spoken here by Paul and highlighted by Barnes. It is not enough to pull a Scripture out of context and prop it up with an out-of-context illustration. Instead, Paul exhorts that the church must guard against this dangerous trend. The remedy is simple. The church will actively employ preaching and teaching of the pure Word of God.

When the pure Word of God is provided throughout the church body, the effect can be transformational. Scripture expresses that when individuals and congregations are divinely changed through faithful teaching, the marks on their lives are notable. The people are united in the faith. They grow in maturity, both individually and collectively. The church body will no longer be content when offered a cheap substitute in place of the gospel. They become a congregation that knows the difference between entertainment and exposition. They are not fooled when offered a story in place of Scripture. Only the pure Word of God, rightly divided, will satisfy.

Training the Next Generation of Teachers in the Church (2 Tim 2:1–2)

Paul articulates, in his second letter to the young preacher Timothy, the final logical link that completes his chain of thought. Scripture has established that the Bible is the Word of God. God has designated, therefore, that His Word be faithfully taught in the

⁴¹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 158.

⁴² Albert Barnes, *Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, Barnes' Notes on the New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 81.

church. The pressing reality that faces the church considering these truths, is plain. The generation that follows must be properly equipped to press on in this marvelous and weighty truth.

Paul addresses the young preacher in 2 Timothy 2:1–2, stating, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” Here, Paul includes very clear instructions to Timothy. Within his exhortation, his words also provide vivid implications for the church today. An exegesis of the text yields a standard within the church that must be practiced. This verse includes an outline to be employed, both now and in generations to come. Scripture illustrates that Paul’s contextual meaning involves discipleship, devotion, and doctrine.

Discipleship: 2 Timothy 2:2a

Paul writes in a way to express that the training and discipleship in the local church is focused and intentional. Robert Picirilli, W. Stanley Outlaw, and Daryl Ellis place emphasis on Paul’s attention to discipleship: “Paul has included four generations in this beautiful statement. They are Paul, Timothy, ‘faithful men,’ and ‘others also.’ Of course, he could go on, but that is unnecessary; his point is established.”⁴³ His point is well established indeed. The responsibility of church leadership today is to train the next generation of teachers and leaders of the church. Scripture, instead of tradition, must be the guide of the faithful church. Paul’s wording underscores the intentional nature of carrying out the call of leadership. The church must recognize that God’s order in the church is discipleship and training from those who are mature in the faith. Paul uses the Greek word *akouō*, which indicates Timothy has heard Paul and his teaching. The word *akouō*, however, carries weightier meaning than having simply heard a voice with the

⁴³ Robert E. Picirilli, W. Stanley Outlaw, and Daryl Ellis, *1 Thessalonians through Philemon* Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville: Randall House, 1990), 319.

natural ear. Paul is pressing the idea that Timothy has perceived and understood Paul's teaching. Timothy has learned from Paul. Timothy has not been given fables and passed down genealogies. The pure doctrine of God's Word is established in Timothy's mind and soul. This reality has involved a purpose and intention on behalf of Paul. He loves this young preacher enough that he invested time, patience, and deliberate effort to disciple him in the deep doctrine of Scripture. In the context of the preceding chapter, Paul has called him "my dearly beloved son." (2 Tim 1:2). He knows his family, calling his mother and grandmother by name in verse 5. He is acquainted with Timothy in ministry and ordination according to verse 6. The point here is clearly made. Ministry and teaching are fundamentally relational. There is an element of time, effort, and care that cannot be rushed or faked. Calvin alludes to verse 1 as evidence of Paul's care for Timothy. There Paul calls him "my son." Calvin states, "This kind appellation, which he employs, tends much to gain the affections, that the doctrine may more effectually obtain admission into the heart."⁴⁴ It is both the responsibility and privilege of pastors and teachers to pattern after this model.

Devotion: 2 Timothy 2:2b

Paul certainly has a divinely appointed regard for Timothy and longs to see him serve the Lord. His intentional pursuit of training Timothy in the doctrine, however, is not primarily anchored in his love for Timothy. Paul's spiritual eye is on the bedrock of Scripture that must be guarded. His focus is upon instructing Timothy so that he may teach others, who will also teach others. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell write, "Paul hopes for a living chain of truth that will extend through the centuries."⁴⁵ The context in which Paul is writing underscores his concern regarding false "profane and vain babblings" (2 Tim

⁴⁴ John Calvin, *Galatians-Philemon, Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 21 (1854; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 208.

⁴⁵ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 193.

2:6). As Louis Berkoff notes, “when the apostles died and heresies arose and increased, the task of those who were called upon to teach became more exacting and demanded special preparation.”⁴⁶ This burden of carrying on the pure doctrine of Scripture is clearly realized from Paul’s writing.

Paul’s heart for teaching the next generation is not in the least hierarchical, but completely doctrinal in nature. Picirilli, Outlaw, and Ellis note that Paul “teaches that there is a proper succession in the church, not an administrative succession of hierarchical bishops, as some teach, but rather a succession of content, of the correct apostolic presentation of the doctrine of Christ. For the church today the test of the accuracy of this presentation is always the word of the apostles as we find it written in the N.T.”⁴⁷ The message to the church is plain, as well as profound. The weighty implication placed upon pastors and leaders today from this text surrounds the stewardship of Scripture. If the pure doctrine of God is to be trusted and treasured for generations to come, then there is work to be done now. The church must train the next generation of teachers. The exegetical thrust of this text demands the intentional training of a new generation of leaders and teachers.

In the current religious age there is a temptation for church leaders to become producers of drama, skits, stories, pep talks, theatre, entertainment, and emotional manipulation. Doctrine has, in many settings, been replaced by vain babbling. The heart of this text illustrates that Paul understood this danger well. He magnifies that the means for correcting error is teaching the doctrine of God. Calvin states, “He saw that it would quickly perish if it were not soon scattered by the ministry of many persons. . . . We need not wonder, therefore, if Paul in order to guard against an evil of such a nature and of such magnitude, earnestly desires that his doctrines shall be committed to all godly ministers,

⁴⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 586.

⁴⁷ Picirilli, Outlaw, and Ellis, *1 Thessalonians through Philemon*, 319.

who shall be qualified to teach it.”⁴⁸ John Stott adds that Paul teaches “a transmission of the apostles’ doctrine handed down unchanged from the apostles to subsequent generations, and passed from hand to hand like the Olympic torch.”⁴⁹ If the church is to therefore, avoid vain babblings in light of Paul’s exhortation, then it should be expressed what matter of teaching should be taught and henceforth passed down to generations that follow. Paul, very fittingly, provides the content.

Doctrine: 2 Timothy 2:2

As Paul considers generations to come, he places bold emphasis on discipleship and devotion to teaching the doctrine of Scripture. His desire is for the content passed down to faithful teachers to be laser-centered upon the Word of God. Paul is consistent and assertive regarding the content of teaching within the church. According to Paul, the Word of God places proper exegesis and application together as the remedy for false doctrine. Paul has too much invested in Timothy and those who are to follow his leadership to be less than dogmatic.

These “things” that Timothy has heard of Paul places a divine pause for him (and the church) to consider Paul’s theology. If Paul instructs Timothy to teach what he taught, then it is only rational that it is important to understand Paul’s teaching. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul was very pointed in the expectation of faithful ministry. He writes, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine” (1 Tim 4:6). Paul’s wording where he speaks of “my gospel” (2 Tim 2:8) both warns and exhorts. He warns against eisegesis (centering the text around oneself) and exhorts exegesis (drawing meaning, context, and application from the text). When Paul speaks of his gospel, he refers to the gospel of Christ, which he preached. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

⁴⁸ Calvin, *Galatians–Philemon*, 208–9.

⁴⁹ John Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 52.

provides an example of eisegesis from the same phrase. He tells of a popular preacher who took the text “my gospel,” using it as “a tirade against traditionalism, orthodoxy, systematic theology, indeed any kind of theology. The one thing that mattered was personal experience ‘my gospel.’”⁵⁰ This is the exact opposite of what Paul was demanding. Paul was clearly stating this gospel was “not something that arose from his experience, but ‘that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead.’”⁵¹ Hughes and Chappell state, “Biblical exposition was the apostolic norm. Therefore, any preaching (or teaching) that does not guide the listener through the Scriptures is an aberration from the apostolic practice.”⁵²

While there is not adequate space here to complete a treatise on Paul’s theological writings, it is imperative to understand that everything Paul believed and taught was anchored in God’s Word, and in the doctrine and Lordship of Christ. Even in his opening salutation of this epistle, Paul writes, “grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2 Tim 1:2). In his commentary on Romans, W. H. Griffith Thomas highlights, “St. Paul’s favorite title for his Master is ‘Jesus Christ our Lord,’ and this keynote is . . . carried on in almost every important section until the very close of this great writing. Every part of his doctrinal teaching is associated with the lordship of Christ.”⁵³ Throughout the Pauline Epistles Paul carries the theme of the Lordship of Christ. One of the loftiest examples is found in Philippians 2:9–11, where Paul states, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that

⁵⁰ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 200.

⁵¹ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 200.

⁵² Hughes and Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 116.

⁵³ W. H. Griffith Thomas, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 460.

Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Through Paul’s writings, Christ’s Lordship in His gospel and the salvation of man is expressed.

Paul writes and teaches in the tension of the “already” and “not yet.” Thomas Schreiner explains, “God’s saving promises have been inaugurated but not yet consummated. Such a theme runs like a thread through all of Paul’s theology. Whether we think of Christology . . . the new life that Christians live, the new people of God, or the new heaven and new earth, eschatological tension characterized Paul’s thought.”⁵⁴ These great truths in Paul’s writings are the “things” he is now exhorting Timothy to teach another generation. Timothy is to tell those under his influence the same scriptural truth. He is to rightly divide the Word, preach the meaning of the text, and preach Christ in all His Beauty from the pages of His Word. The only way to do so is by preaching the entirety of the message of God’s Word. Preachers and teachers must bring before the people the whole counsel of God. Anything short of this woefully misses the high mark characteristic of Paul’s example to Timothy. In the words of R. Albert Mohler,

That tendency to isolate our sermons to one tiny piece of biblical text is a major problem, and it also explains why so much evangelical preaching is moralistic. It is easy to pick out a familiar story, make a few points from it about what people should and should not do, and then be done with it. But that kind of preaching will leave a church weak and starving, because the Christians who sit under it never find themselves in the big story of God’s work in the world. If we as preachers want to see our people growing to maturity in Christ, we must give them more than a diet of wee little morality sermons. We must place every text we preach firmly within the grand, sweeping story of the Bible.⁵⁵

It must be acknowledged doing as Paul instructed is a laborious endeavor. That reality moved Paul to proclaim to Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). The word for “workman” is defined as a toiler. It is work typical of one employed to work in agricultural fields. While it is hard work, it is not confusing; the instruction is clear.

⁵⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 428.

⁵⁵ R. Albert Mohler Jr., *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 90.

The content to be taught is the Word of God. Paul never hides his agenda. He tells Timothy to teach “the things” (2 Tim 2:2) he had heard him teach. He writes, “Preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2). He says to study the “word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). Paul magnifies that Scripture is “inspired” (2 Tim 3:16).

In summary, the “things” Paul exhorts for Timothy to teach is the truth of divine Scripture. By implication, his call for the church is to teach the pure Word of God. Teachers must avoid the temptation of settling for personal storytelling as opposed to bringing the fullness of the text. Lloyd Jones states, “It is sheer carnality, a kind of lust and desire to know personal details about people.”⁵⁶ Teachers must, instead, “enunciate and proclaim the Truth itself.”⁵⁷ When he pressed this thought in 2 Timothy 2:15 he says to “rightly divide” the Scripture. It is the Greek word, “*orthotomeō*,” meaning “to cut it straight.” This Greek word is at the root of the English word “orthodoxy.” Paul tells Timothy to “impart the word of truth without deviation, straight, undiluted.”⁵⁸ John MacArthur speaks of the duty of the preacher in studying a text to deliver it undiluted. This applies to all who seek to teach as well:

Give him a chapter and order him to walk around it, camp on it, sup with it, and come at last to speak it backward and forward, until all he says about it rings with the truth of eternity. And when he’s burned out by the flaming Word, when he’s consumed at last by the fiery grace blazing through him, and when he’s privileged to translate the truth of God to man, finally transferred from earth to heaven, then bear him away gently and blow a muted trumpet and lay him down softly. Place a two-edged sword in his coffin.⁵⁹

The vivid necessity of scriptural study flows from Paul’s pen with both conviction and clarity. The power of the preaching and teaching ministry is found in God’s Word. As affirmed in the *Westminster Confession*: “The whole counsel of God

⁵⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 233.

⁵⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 233.

⁵⁸ Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981), 641.

⁵⁹ John MacArthur, “Frequently Asked Questions about Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word, 1992), 348.

concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.”⁶⁰

Conclusion

The Bible is the plenary and verbally inspired Word of God. Faithful leaders within the church must labor to study and teach the doctrine of God. The church is responsible to intentionally teach another generation of teachers, and they are to teach others as well. It is certainly our duty, and it is also our divine privilege. Hughes and Chapell state, “The implications are far-reaching. It is our duty to guard the deposit, and guarding it involves carefully teaching and training our people, so they can do likewise. Entrusting the apostolic deposit to others is our God-given task and joy.”⁶¹ This brief biblical survey contains concrete exhortation that should catapult the church into action. The church is serious about carrying out mandates where it can be stated, “the Bible says.” Therefore, as the church leans completely upon the bedrock of Scripture in teaching God's perfect Word, may God be pleased to raise another generation to treasure and teach its precious truth.

⁶⁰ Westminster Assembly, “Of the Holy Scripture,” in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* 1646, <https://thewestminsterstandard.org/the-westminster-confession/>.

⁶¹ Hughes and Chapell, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 194.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL
SUPPORT FOR TRAINING TEACHERS IN
BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

The scriptural mandate for training the next generation of teachers at Trinity Baptist Church was explained in the previous chapter. Before unpacking the details of hermeneutics, it is important to understand what makes the detailed interpretation of Scripture vitally important. The current chapter, placed firmly upon the biblical foundation of chapter 2, will seek to provide a historical, theoretical, and practical structure that builds naturally from this presupposition. The theme of this chapter will unfold in three related areas of practical and historical thought which are prerequisites for hermeneutic study. The chapter will first seek to articulate the practical mandate of expositional preaching and teaching in the local church. Second, this duty of biblical exposition yields a necessity of solid understanding in both biblical and systematic theology. Third, the foundation of expositional teaching, biblical theology, and systematic theology naturally leads to the obligation of faithful, hermeneutic study. While reviewing these related areas of study, this chapter will employ theologians, both historical and contemporary, to establish a unified voice of theoretical and practical doctrine. The intended outcome of this section is to produce a practical rationale that demands faithful hermeneutical study while displaying warning signs to guide the reader around obstacles that would undermine the task at hand.

**The Mandate of Expositional Preaching and
Teaching in the Local Church**

Teaching, within the context of the local church today, is an activity that takes on many forms. Thankfully, many faithful expositors in the church who have been gifted

as teachers, understand the inherent value of studying and delivering the message of Scripture. Some churches, however, have placed teachers to fill a spot and handed them a teacher's guide where they read directly from it to awaiting listeners. Others, humble and sincere about the role, serve week after week in churches across America, ill-equipped to teach the Word of God. Without a proper understanding of the urgent mandate to study and teach expositional truth, many fall prey to a model of entertainment that demonstrates biblical eisegesis instead of exegesis. While equipped with great desire and intention, the value of the Bible is diminished and replaced with shallow, motivational stories, void of foundational doctrine. If not corrected, this dangerous trend will erode the foundation of both the teaching and preaching ministries of a local church.

Expositional Bible Teaching Defined

The subject of *expository preaching and teaching* renders nearly as many definitions as quotable sources. Graeme Goldsworthy states, "A cursory glance at the available literature will enable us to ascertain that the term 'expository preaching' is fairly elastic. Most of us who aspire to employ the method believe that it is synonymous with truly biblical preaching, yet pinning down a working definition of it is not so easy."¹ Although a simple definition may not be tenable, faithful study uncovers more clearly both what it means to be expositional in study and delivery, and why it is a vital discipline that closely relates to biblical hermeneutics.

Preaching and teaching must be anchored in two bedrock realities which then lead to the conviction of teaching expositional lessons. First, the Bible is the Word of God; God's written monologue for his church is found in the pages of Scripture. Second, God chose for his monologue to be rightly divided, taught, and proclaimed in the context of his church. Much written material defining biblical exposition unquestionably applies to

¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 119.

both the teaching and preaching of God’s Word. Bryan Chapell states that, when studying and delivering an expository message, the topic as well as the surrounding points of the topic “all come from truths the text itself contains. No significant portion of the text is ignored. In other words, expositors willingly stay within the boundaries of a text (and its relevant context) and do not leave until they have surveyed its entirety with their listeners.”² In *He Is Not Silent*, R. Albert Mohler offers an outline that succinctly summarizes the components which define and mandate teaching that is expository. Mohler first states that expository teaching, or preaching, “takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible.”³ He secondly asserts that “all other issues and concerns are subordinated to the central task of presenting the biblical text.”⁴ Mohler details third that “the text of Scripture has the right to establish both the substance and the structure of the sermon.”⁵ Lastly, Mohler says that the teacher or preacher “must make clear how the Word of God establishes the identity and worldview of the church as the people of God.”⁶

In succinct fashion, John Stott articulates, “To expound Scripture is to bring out of the text what is there and expose it to view. The expositor prizes open what appears to be closed, makes plain what is obscure, unravels what is knotted, and unfolds what is tightly packed.”⁷ Haddon Robinson defines biblical exposition as “the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and

² Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 131.

³ Albert Mohler, *He Is Not Silent: Preaching in a Postmodern World* (Chicago: Moody, 2008), 66.

⁴ Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 66–67.

⁵ Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 67.

⁶ Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 67.

⁷ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 125–26.

literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to the hearers.”⁸ Robinson, Stott, Mohler, and Chappell are all helpful in clarifying what it means to be an expositional teacher. Teaching expositional lessons, simply put, is saying what the Bible says. It is the opposite of imposition, which reads thoughts into the text that are not there. Expositional preaching is the study and delivery which exposes, unfolds, rightly interprets and explains the real meaning of the biblical text, and then makes relevant application within the context of the hearer. This way of study, teaching and preaching must be the heart and desire of the church.

In the Words of J. I. Packer, the Holy Spirit uses biblical exposition as “the activity that brings the Father and the Son down from heaven to dwell with men.”⁹ Considering that reality alone should prioritize expositional teaching. T. J. Betts, in alignment with this thought, states, “The fact that we have both the Old and New Testament from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit shows that God wants us to know him.”¹⁰ This is a humble consideration. God’s desire for his people to know him through Scripture is an amazing and thrilling truth. The triune God has chosen the exposition of his Word to reveal himself to man. This basic understanding propels the idea, conviction, and necessity of expositional teaching. In the words of John MacArthur, “The only logical response to inerrant Scripture . . . is to preach (and teach) it expositionally.”¹¹

⁸ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 21.

⁹ J. I. Packer, “Why Preach,” in *The Preacher and Preaching Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 2.

¹⁰ T. J. Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament to Christians: Discover How to Unpack All of Scripture for Today’s Believers* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2023), 18.

¹¹ John MacArthur Jr., “The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching,” in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word, 1992), 23.

The Path to Expository Bible Teaching

Scripture provides both the pattern and the pathway to being a faithful expositor. To be textually driven as a teacher, one must devote himself to study. The sole aim is to mine the meaning of the text from the vast goldmine of Scripture. Mohler adds, “There are no shortcuts to genuine exposition. The expositor is not an explorer who returns to tell tales of the journey but a guide who leads the people into the text, teaching the arts of Bible study and interpretation even as he demonstrates the same.”¹² Mohler presses the thought by explaining that if the teacher or preacher leaves the people “without accomplishing that primary task, then no matter how much the congregation enjoyed the sermon or felt moved by it, his people will die.”¹³

This convictional pattern of scriptural exposition is not new, but instead was employed by such men as Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones.¹⁴ Faithful expositors today stand upon the shoulders of generations before who deemed it necessary to find and deliver the intended meaning of Scripture. Calvin strongly stated that it is “an audacity, closely allied with sacrilege, rashly to turn Scripture in any way we please, and to indulge our fancies as in sport, which has been done by many in former times.”¹⁵ Even these men stand in a long line that extends all the way back to Old Testament Scripture. The book of Deuteronomy provides details of the preaching of Moses. Deuteronomy 5 reveals that Moses proclaims an expository message of the commandments, originally given by God in Exodus 20. Biblical exposition can be traced throughout the life of Moses in his preaching and teaching. In the earthly ministry of Jesus, Christ exemplifies over and over what it looks like to teach and preach an expository

¹² Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 66.

¹³ Mohler, *He Is Not Silent*, 67.

¹⁴ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 344–98; John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 19 (1854; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), xxvii; D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972).

¹⁵ Calvin, *Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, xxvii.

message. One example is found in Luke 24. While Jesus is traveling with the disciples on the road to Emmaus the Bible reads, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (v. 27). The Greek root word for “expounded” means “to unfold the meaning of, explain, expound.” Jesus literally takes the Old Testament Scripture and unfolds the meaning of the text, teaching the disciples how the textual application refers to himself. This is both an amazing thought and an exemplary lesson in expository teaching and preaching.

Acts 7 introduces Stephen as he preaches an expositional message straight from the Old Testament. The hearers of this biblical exposition were cut to their heart by the message of the text. Rather than obey the Word of God, they rebelled against the messenger, stoning Stephen to his death. In the next chapter, however, Saul, who was present during Stephen’s message, was confronted by God and converted on his way to persecute the church. This same man, Saul, is then set aside by God to become the great apostle Paul. As an apostle, Paul continues in this line of biblical expositors. Repeatedly throughout his epistles, Paul unfolds Scripture for present day application. When expounding God’s sovereignty over salvation in Romans 8 and 9, Paul utilizes the Old Testament example of Jacob and Esau. Every argument that is subsequently brought before Paul he masterfully answers with scriptural text. This is Paul’s exemplary pattern throughout his ministry. He believes so much in the gospel of Scripture, in fact, that he gives strong warning to the Galatians against any other means. He says plainly that no matter who the messenger is, of immense importance is the Word of God, the gospel. He warns, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8). Scripture is literally saturated from beginning to end with expository preaching.

Practical Reasoning for Expository Bible Teaching

Foundational examples in Scripture are certainly enough to put the church to the task of expository teaching and preaching. Though, alongside of the biblical model, practical reasons appeal to Christian logic as well. Derek Thomas articulates six logical advantages that are helpful in explaining the benefits of teaching chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse. Thomas says that expository preaching and teaching “introduces the congregation to the entire Bible.”¹⁶ The class is taught the text as God intended when it was penned, and they are thereby given the mind of God. Second, expository teaching and preaching “ensures that infrequently traveled areas of the Bible are covered.”¹⁷ The difficult passages must be explored. Thomas states third that it guards a teacher or preacher “from unwittingly shaping the way their hearers read their Bibles.”¹⁸ Instead of creating wrong habits within the hearers, expository teaching helps to create sound habits of both study and application within the congregation. It trains those who are listening in the basic tools of study. Fourth, he asserts that expository preaching “is the only preaching method that exposes a congregation to the full range of Scripture’s interests and concerns.”¹⁹ In God’s Word, subjects such as divorce, forgiveness, discipline, and even church polity are covered with clarity and love. Understanding the full range of Scripture is how the church is shaped into the image of Christ. This means of preaching and teaching provides a natural variety, helping sustain focus and engagement from the congregation over time.

The ability to sustain interest in the hearers has direct application to the teacher and class as well. The various styles of Scripture are forced upon the teacher as they are

¹⁶ Derek Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” in *Feed My Sheep: A Passionate Plea for Preaching*, ed. Don Kistler (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2008), 44.

¹⁷ Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” 45.

¹⁸ Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” 45.

¹⁹ Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” 46.

led by the text. The variation of Scripture, therefore, keeps the same text and even different texts from being taught in the same manner and style week after week. Certain passages lead to tears, others demand triumphant rhythm, while yet others dictate a style of conviction or judgment. The variety of the text prescribes variety of style. The drama of the message is determined by the effect within the Scripture. Lastly, in reference to exposition, Thomas explains that expositional study and delivery “better than any method I know, aids preachers in thinking and preparing ahead.”²⁰ The preacher and teacher are not trying to decide week after week what the next text will be, which is helpful to both the teacher and people as they build upon the background and logic of the Scripture from each week. While this list is certainly not exhaustive, it helps to illustrate the practical usage of both the biblical and theological thrust of expository preaching. In view of the definition, biblical pattern, and practical reasoning it becomes clearer that exposition demands hermeneutics and hermeneutics mandates exposition. As Joel Beeke states, “Biblical preaching flows out of the scriptural passage as it is expounded in accord with sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles.”²¹ In summary, expositional teaching helps grow the hearers, as well as teachers, into more mature students of the Word of God.

The Necessity of Biblical, and Systematic Theology Prerequisite for Sound Interpretation

Before one can broach the subject of proper exegesis and biblical hermeneutics, necessary foundations must be in place or at least basically understood. Along with an understanding and conviction of expositional teaching, biblical theology and systematic theology are key components to the foundation of Bible teaching. Both biblical theology and systematic theology are subjects that have produced entire books independently. A

²⁰ Thomas, “Expository Preaching,” 47.

²¹ Joel Beeke, *Reformed Preaching, Proclaiming God’s Word from the Heart of the Preacher to the Heart of His People* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 61.

basic knowledge and distinction of both, however, will help equip the teacher with a more solid foundation, leading to improved expositional and exegetical study.

William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard concur, “Biblical theology relates more closely to the development of theology within the historical development of the Bible itself.”²² They agree that “this presents a decidedly different picture from a ‘systematic’ theology . . . its categories are not necessarily those of the biblical writers but those of the theologian’s making. Traditional categories comprise the doctrinal framework for the presentation of the biblical material.”²³ Biblical and systematic theology are invaluable in building expositional understanding and help to set the stage for proper hermeneutics.

Biblical Theology

Goldsworthy states that biblical theology “follows the progress of revelation from the first word of God to man through to the unveiling of the full glory of Christ. . . . It thus provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of the Bible relate to all other texts.”²⁴ The Bible, a book, comprised of sixty-six smaller books, is the revelation of God written to humanity. The Old Testament and the New Testament both comprise the Word of God. Thirty-nine Old Testament books contain the creation, fall, covenant promises of God to his chosen people, Israel, and a clear look forward to the coming Messiah. Betts explains, “This truth that the Old Testament is the Word of God lays the groundwork for understanding that the New Testament books are also Scripture.”²⁵

²² William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 579.

²³ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 580–81.

²⁴ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2002), 32.

²⁵ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 12.

These twenty-seven New Testament books continue the story of the Old Testament by unveiling, in more detail, the chosen people of God. Old Testament promises are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. The complexity with which the Bible has been divinely constructed necessitates laborious work in studying Scripture. Proper study that rightly connects the parts, in view of the whole Bible, is termed “biblical theology.” Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, provide helpful insight into why biblical theology is so important in their introduction section to *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*: “Because all Scripture is from God and progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ—as Christians throughout the ages have confessed—the Bible demands we read it in a certain way.”²⁶ They go on to clarify what they mean by submitting, “In other words, it is God’s word from beginning to end, from Genesis to Revelation, and therefore we must receive and read it accordingly. This reception and reading is the task of biblical theology.”²⁷

It is not the intention of this small section to wholly articulate the full unfolding of biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation. It is necessary, however, to give an overview of how biblical theology fits so vitally within the hermeneutic discussion and process. Packer writes, “The Bible, a book thrown up by the revelatory process in history, was no accidental by-product of that process, but an integral and indispensable part of it; for without a record of God’s earlier revelations, His later words and, most of all, His last Word, could not be fully understood.”²⁸ Old Testament promises are in view as Matthew’s Gospel begins. In the opening verses, the key to the unfinished storyline of Scripture is placed right over the entrance to the New Testament door.

²⁶ Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, introduction to *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 20.

²⁷ DeRouchie, Martin, and Naselli, introduction to *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 20.

²⁸ J. I. Packer, *God Has Spoken* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 87.

Over four hundred years of silence is broken by the announced genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. While redemption details are yet to unfold, R. Kent Hughes dramatically asserts, “The prophetic eastern sky had assumed a pre-dawn glow, and in a moment, messianic fulfillment would light the Jewish landscape.”²⁹ Betts provides a clear and succinct outline of how the Old Testament laid the foundation for everything in the New. Beginning in the New Testament book of Matthew, Betts states, “Possibly the reason Matthew is placed first in the New Testament canon is because of its clear and frequent links to the Old Testament.”³⁰ Jesus here is presented as the “Messiah,” which is transliterated from the Hebrew word *mashiach*. This word is found thirty-nine times throughout the Old Testament. *Mashiach* means “anointed one.” In Matthew’s record of his genealogy, Christ is also described as a descendant of David and Abraham. Davidic and Abrahamic descent, a Messiah, and a coming kingdom were all part of Old Testament promise.³¹ Within the opening verses of the New Testament comes the introduction of the fulfilled promise of all Old Testament writings. Thomas Schreiner provides a detailed description that is also helpful:

The kingdom has come because the king has come. Since Jesus is the true offspring of Abraham and David, his connection to David receives particular emphasis in the genealogy (1:6,17). . . . The title “Christ” is used quite often in the birth narratives (1:1, 16, 17, 18; 2:4), so that the reader knows from the outset that Jesus is Christ the king. The most important text is 16:13–20, where Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ, though subsequent events reveal that Peter did not understand the nature of Jesus’ messianic ministry. Peter’s declaration functions as one of the climaxes in Matthew’s narrative, demonstrating that Jesus’ disciples are finally beginning to grasp his identity. The kingship of Jesus is apparent also in texts where he is identified as the son of David. What is striking is the social status of those who identify him as such: blind persons (9:27; 20:30–31), a Canaanite woman (15:22), crowds of common people (21:9), and children (21:15). The religious leaders did not understand how Jesus could be both the son of David and David’s lord (22:41–

²⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *That You May Know the Truth*, ESV ed. (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2014), 1:24.

³⁰ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 41.

³¹ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 41.

46). . . . Those who had the lowest social status recognized that Jesus was the king, and that the kingdom was becoming a reality through him.³²

This reference to Old Testament fulfillment is not unique to Matthew's Gospel. It is a threaded truth that permeates the entire New Testament. Betts offers helpful insight into this truth when noting that Mark's Gospel has "at least sixty-nine Old Testament references."³³ Luke, with roughly thirty direct quotes, appears to reference the Old Testament numbering in the hundreds. John's Gospel, while directly quoting the Old Testament fourteen times, writes that Christ is in the beginning with God and declares that he is God. Acts, with over thirty direct quotations, alludes to and references the Old Testament on many other occasions. Hebrews is filled with Old Testament quotations and references from the Psalms, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. James frequently utilizes language of the Old Testament. Peter draws from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings as well, and alludes to the Old Testament in both letters. In the thirteen letters of the apostle Paul, he consistently utilizes the Old Testament. Romans alone has nearly sixty direct quotations from the Old Testament.³⁴

These references to the Old Testament writings all carry with them a theme of significance. Christ came as the fulfillment of every promise of God. Betts states, "New Testament writers and Jesus himself recognized that the Old Testament speaks of and anticipates the coming of the Savior."³⁵ Christ is indeed this promised Savior. He is the fulfillment of King and Kingdom. In the words of John Frame, "The most concise, and arguably most fundamental, summary of Old Testament teaching is 'Yahweh is Lord.' But the New Testament, over and over again, represents Jesus as Lord in the same way that the Old Testament represents Yahweh as Lord (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil

³² Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 434.

³³ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 43.

³⁴ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 40–50.

³⁵ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 39.

2:11).”³⁶ Paul emphatically states in Colossians 2:9: “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God head bodily.” John Calvin concludes, “Scripture throughout calls him *Lord*, the Father having appointed him over us for the express purpose of exercising his government through him . . . his reason for assuming the office of Mediator was, that descending from the bosom and incomprehensible glory of the Father, he might draw near to us.”³⁷ While only touching the brink of the study here, further exploration of biblical theology seeks to unfold the fulfillment of covenant promises, in Christ, in the New Testament. Biblical theology is, therefore, a blessed and vital part of faithful interpretation.

Systematic Theology

Henry Virkler explains that the theological analysis required for faithful hermeneutics is two parts. The first, as the prior section suggests, deals with biblical theology. It looks at the historical line of the unfolding story of biblical, redemptive history. Virkler notes, “The second addresses the analogy of faith and the field of systematic theology.”³⁸ Systematic theology, Virkler argues, compels one to “explore how each part is in continuity with, is consistent with, and must be interpreted by the whole of biblical teaching.”³⁹ While Virkler states that the hermeneutical circle demands proper biblical and systematic theology, he explains that “what becomes apparent is that interpretation cannot take place in a theological vacuum.”⁴⁰ Virkler concludes that from a systematic “theological standpoint, the meaning and principles derived from a story must

³⁶ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, vol. 2 of *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 650.

³⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 430–31.

³⁸ Henry Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 122.

³⁹ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 122.

⁴⁰ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 122.

be consistent with all other teachings of Scripture.”⁴¹ Wayne Grudem adds, “Systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic.”⁴² A good example of what Virkler and Grudem have defined comes from Louis Berkhof and his writing regarding the subject of the sovereign will of God. He states,

The importance of the divine will appears in many ways in Scripture. It is represented as the final cause of all things. Everything is derived from it; creation and preservation, Ps. 135:6; Jer. 18:6; Rev. 4:11, government, Prov. 21:1; Dan. 4:35, election and reprobation, Rom. 9:15, 16; Eph. 1:11, the sufferings of Christ, Luke 22:42; Acts 2:23, regeneration, Jas. 1:18, sanctification, Phil. 2:13, the sufferings of believers, 1 Pet. 3:17, man’s life and destiny, Acts 18:21; Rom. 15:32; Jas. 4:15, and even the smallest things of life, Matt. 10:29.⁴³

A distinction between biblical theology and systematic theology gains clarity with this statement. Systematic theology focuses on summarizing doctrinal topics.

Grudem offers clearer understanding and distinction when he states,

Biblical theology traces the historical development of a doctrine. . . . Systematic theology, on the other hand, makes use of the material of biblical theology and often builds on the results of biblical theology. . . . But the focus of systematic theology remains different: its focus is on the collection and then the summary of the teaching of all the biblical passages on a particular subject.⁴⁴

This summary is most often articulated, as evidenced by Berkhof, in a formulated statement that offers a concise, clear thought on a doctrinal area. In a project on biblical hermeneutics, it is imperative to understand the relationships between these areas of study. Exegesis is dependent, in part, upon good biblical theology and systematic theology, and solid biblical theology and systematic theology depend on proper exegesis. They are mutually dependent.

⁴¹ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 122.

⁴² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 21.

⁴³ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 76.

⁴⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 23.

Biblical theology is important in outlining the historical lineage of biblical doctrine when approaching the interpretation of any passage in the Old or New Testament. For example, understanding the storyline of Adam in the Genesis account unfolds a proper biblical theology of sin, the fall, and the necessity of a Savior to bruise the head of the enemy. From the earliest Scripture in Genesis, and throughout the Old Testament, Scripture begins building on the theology of the coming Savior. As Betts states, “The Holy Scriptures communicate God’s intention to save sinners through the person and work of the Messiah.”⁴⁵ Biblical theology helps unfold this historical storyline of thought throughout the Bible.

While built upon this historical line of study, systematic theology helps filter the storyline or text of a given passage through the lens of the Bible as a whole. If the teacher desires to understand what the Bible says about a specific topic, systematic theology seeks the overall summary of that topic from all related biblical passages. Grudem helps to clarify: “A helpful analogy at this point is that of a jigsaw puzzle. . . . Systematic theology would be like filling in the border and some of the major items pictured in the puzzle.”⁴⁶ When Grudem summarizes the process of systematic theology, he gives three basic steps. Those include, first, researching and finding all associated and relevant verses. Second, it summarizes the thoughts and points of those verses. Finally, systematic theology compartmentalizes thoughts affirming what the Bible says about the subject. At a minimum, a basic understanding of systematic theology is important prior to hermeneutic study. It sets a passage within the context of an overall summarized doctrine. For example, on the topic of the Scripture, systematic theology summarizes related subjects such as the authority, inerrancy, necessity, and sufficiency of Scripture. One’s systematic theology regarding any of these basic truths regarding Scripture will heavily determine how every portion of Scripture is studied, believed, taught, and obeyed. Bringing together

⁴⁵ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 53.

⁴⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 23.

passages such as Numbers 23:19, Psalm 12:6, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21, John 10:35, and Hebrews 1:1–2 reveals that Scripture speaks with a unified voice. Grudem, for example, provides summarized statements on each area regarding Scripture. On the subject of the authority of Scripture he states that it means “all the words in Scripture are God’s words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.”⁴⁷

Gregg Allison explains that history also validates this systematic thought: “From its beginning on the day of Pentecost, the church considered the Hebrew Bible to be the Word of God (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21). The writings . . . now called the Old Testament, were fixed and had been so for several centuries prior to the coming of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁸ Once the study summarizes that the Bible is God’s authoritative, inerrant, and sufficient Word—it becomes clear that the Bible is necessary for knowledge of salvation, God’s will, God’s character, the Christian life, and every aspect of God’s redemptive work. Systematic theology, therefore, guards the reader from isolating verses of Scripture to make a doctrinal statement, and guides by balancing a biblical passage, or even a general thought, within the entire framework of the Bible. It will also aid to safeguard against eisegesis by continually placing every passage within the overall summary of biblical thought.

The Obligation of Faithful Hermeneutic Study

Hermeneutics, the science and art of biblical interpretation, is a subject which now unfolds naturally, almost out of compulsion and obligation. Prior sections and chapters all merge into a conclusive unified voice, demanding faithful hermeneutics. Scripture, as defined in chapter 2, has mandated a responsibility of the church. That requirement is for leadership to study, teach, and train a new generation to faithfully teach God’s Word. This

⁴⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73.

⁴⁸ Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology, An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 37.

biblical imperative sits the faithful teacher down as a student, making exposition the standard practice for study and delivery as articulated earlier in this chapter. Proper expositional study yields further necessary discipline in the areas of both biblical and systematic theology. Logical reasoning brings about the following conclusion.

Hermeneutics, the science and art of biblical interpretation, is therefore the obligation of any serious and faithful teacher of the Bible. Bernard Ramm expresses, “Hermeneutics is considered a science because it has rules, and these rules can be classified in an orderly system. It is considered an art because communication is flexible, and therefore a mechanical and rigid application of rules will sometimes distort the true meaning of communication.”⁴⁹ The teaching of these rules and foundations that demand such faithfulness falls upon the shoulders of those leading the church. Anything less would be to abdicate the responsibility God has placed upon the church. These detailed rules and explanation will be articulated in later chapters.

A cursory glance at this subject of interpretation may seem like the priority of hermeneutics is being dramatically over emphasized. The duty and privilege of faithful interpretation of Scripture, however, could not be overstated. Hermeneutics comes between the faithful student of Scripture and the danger of exegetical fallacies. Regarding false or incorrect interpretation, D. A Carson articulates,

Christians who have a high view of Scripture, a commitment to truth because they serve a God who knows all truth perfectly, and who recognize that although in our finiteness and sinfulness we may not know truth absolutely or perfectly but nevertheless truly, will not want to go down such paths. . . . [Instead] they will be interested in discovering how the Bible fits together. For fit together it does, tracing its way along a story-line from the creation and fall, through great redemptive-historical appointments to the consummation in a new heaven and a new earth.⁵⁰

Carson highlights the difference in those dedicated to becoming faithful expositors and those playing dangerously loose with the doctrine of God. The result is that congregants

1. ⁴⁹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970),

⁵⁰ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 130.

placed under the influence of teachers of God’s Word will be shaped according to the level of the teacher’s commitment to faithful exposition and interpretation. In short, solid hermeneutics is necessary for good Bible teaching. Robert Plummer illustrates by explaining, “A number of years ago, I read a report of a strange practice developing among some young Christians in China. These new believers felt that it was a sign of true faith to carry with them a small wooden cross.”⁵¹ Plummer makes it clear that Jesus’s words in Luke 9:23, “take up his cross daily,” were incorrectly interpreted in that instance, leading to errant application. While this example may seem far-fetched and somewhat amusing, a closer examination reveals that a subtle mishandling of Scripture in the context of the church can lead to similar outcomes. It is important to understand the need for faithful hermeneutics.

In America, many churches possess strong, deeply rooted beliefs that may or may not have their foundation in Scripture. Therefore, it is possible, and even likely for some, for tradition and cultural norms to carry more weight within the church than the biblical text. Dress codes, music styles, leadership, polity, and even church discipline are just a few areas that, in many settings, at best, are only loosely tied to Scripture.

Virkler writes, “When we hear someone recite or read a text, our understanding of what we hear or read is usually spontaneous—the rules by which we interpret meaning occur automatically and unconsciously.”⁵² Virkler also highlights, however, that “the more obstacles to spontaneous understanding, the more aware we must become of the process of interpretation and the need for hermeneutics.”⁵³ Various writers on the subject of biblical interpretation point out voids and barriers that arise naturally in spontaneous understanding. There are gaps in biblical understanding regarding historical settings, cultural differences, philosophies, and even languages. These barriers of

⁵¹ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 81.

⁵² Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 18.

⁵³ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 19.

understanding are areas that necessitate hermeneutic principles and study. Regarding language barriers, even the smallest phrases can cause wrong interpretation and application. Exaggeration, hyperbole, idiom, or other linguistic nuances can be misleading. Virkler writes, “Consider the distortion in meaning that resulted, for example when Kentucky Fried Chicken attempted to translate its ad campaign for a Chinese market. Without recognizing the presence of idioms, the translators rendered ‘Finger lickin’ good’ as ‘Eat your fingers off.’”⁵⁴ This humorous example highlights a real need for right interpretation.

Plummer places this burden of interpretation firmly upon the expositor by writing the following:

Appealing to the same Bible, Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah’s Witnesses can reach amazingly divergent conclusions. Christians, for example, believe there is only one God, a triune Being (Father, Son, and Spirit) who has existed and will exist forever. Mormons cite verses to assert that the God of the Bible is just one among countless deities and that we ourselves, if male, can also become gods. Jehovah’s Witnesses claim it is blasphemy to say that Jesus of the Spirit is a divine person. Even people who claim the name of Christian disagree vehemently as to whether the Bible condemns homosexual behavior. On another level, believing Christians can be puzzled after reading an Old Testament text regulating infectious skin diseases or land redistribution in ancient Israel. How are such texts applicable today? Clearly it is not enough to simply say, “I believe the Bible.” Proper interpretation of the Bible is essential.⁵⁵

To experience the full weight of the burden of faithful hermeneutics there must be a genuine desire to say what the Bible says. As Virkler states, “No one likes to have his or her words taken out of context and portrayed in a manner that misunderstands one’s intentions. Such is the stuff of slander and lawsuits.”⁵⁶ Most would readily admit that statement rings true in everyday life, yet churches remain filled with teachers unprepared to portray the correct meaning of the text as intended by both the human author and divine author. Millard Erickson summarizes the burden of biblical hermeneutics with simple profundity: “In the ultimate sense, if there is a supreme being higher than humans or

⁵⁴ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 20.

⁵⁵ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 81.

⁵⁶ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 75.

anything else in the created order, he has the right to determine what we are to believe and how we are to live. From the Christian standpoint, God is the authority in these matters because of who he is.”⁵⁷ God has spoken through his Word. The faithful expositor has the obligation, mandate, duty, and privilege, therefore, to interpret Scripture correctly.

Conclusion

Theologians of past and present generations have exemplified the practical mandate of expositional preaching and teaching in the local church. The connected disciplines of biblical and systematic theology naturally lead to the necessary duty of faithful, hermeneutic study. These disciplines are not burdensome. Instead, they become markers and guides that enhance the beauty of the journey. The faithful expositor must always keep an eye on the divine privilege of studying God’s Holy Word. Karl Barth calls this privilege of theological study a “peculiarly beautiful science”: “To find the sciences distasteful is the mark of the Philistine. It is an extreme form of Philistinism to find, or to be able to find, theology distasteful. . . . But we must know, of course, that it is only God who can keep us from it.”⁵⁸ In parallel to Barth, Grudem succinctly and rightly concludes, “The study of theology is not merely a theoretical exercise of the intellect. It is a study of the living God and of the wonders of all his works in creation and redemption. We cannot study this subject dispassionately!”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 270.

⁵⁸ Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*, vol. 2 of *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 656.

⁵⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 23.

CHAPTER 4

TRAINING IN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

The implementation of biblical hermeneutics training at Trinity Baptist Church in the first quarter of 2024 involved two integrated processes. The first step was developing and approving training materials, spanning from late 2023 through the end of January 2024. This time was utilized to review and organize my own knowledge of biblical hermeneutics in a manner that could be presented to a group with varying levels of exposure to the overall topic. The second phase was the implementation of training in February and March of 2024, including the surveys given before the training and at the conclusion of the eight-week sessions. This phase ensured that the designed timing of both training and data collection accurately captured a snapshot of knowledge before and after the teaching sessions.

Training Materials

After compiling a thirty-eight-page hermeneutic training manuscript between October 2023 and January 2024, it was sent to an expert panel for review and approval. The review panel comprised Michael Perry, Eric James, Stacey Layne, and Rick Safriet. Michael Perry is part of the leadership of Trinity Baptist Church, serving as a deacon. Eric James is a Doctor of Ministry graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, teacher of New Testament at West Lenoir Baptist School of Ministry, and pastor of Mt. Hebron Baptist Church in Connelly Springs, North Carolina. Stacey Layne teaches biblical hermeneutics at West Lenoir Baptist School of Ministry and is the pastor of Solid Rock Baptist Church in Morganton, North Carolina. Rick Safriet is the president of the West Lenoir Baptist School of Ministry and pastor of West Lenoir Baptist Church

in Lenoir, North Carolina. Each of these men offered helpful insight and feedback during training material development. Each reviewed and discussed the training handouts and teaching notes manuscript. Following review, they individually completed the curriculum evaluation rubric in gracious and enthusiastic affirmation of the content of instruction.¹

Training Implementation

The implementation of the approved curriculum was scheduled for eight sessions to be taught weekly on Wednesday evenings spanning from February 7, 2024, through March 27, 2024. During the last two weeks of January 2024, I communicated these plans and timing to the church. I explained the overall goal of the eight-week training—to help us grow collectively and individually in studying the Bible to teach. I also provided a write-up in the monthly newsletter in January to communicate these planned goals. I clearly conveyed that participation in the surveys to be utilized in data analysis would be voluntary. Each week the training sessions were designed to build upon the information from the prior week, furnishing a foundational understanding of the vital need for biblical hermeneutics in the church. In addition to the teaching provided each week, congregants were also equipped with notes to assist in guiding them throughout each lesson.² Church members were also equipped with resources during the study to help both solidify an understanding now and ensure a comfort level utilizing these hermeneutic principles moving forward.

Training Session 1

The first night of the training session on February 7, 2024, began with the pre-training survey.³ The survey was completed voluntarily, and participants were also given the option to complete the form and decline inclusion in the data analysis phase. There

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 3.

³ See appendix 2.

was excellent attendance for the first night and all nights, and outstanding participation in the surveys, which will be further explained in the final chapter.

The initial training session spanned a lot of material. I covered the topics of the purpose and authority of Scripture and attempted to provide high-level answers to the following questions: “What is biblical hermeneutics”, “Why does someone other than a preacher need to know it”, and “What are the basic elements of biblical hermeneutics that we will study?”

Regarding the authority and purpose of Scripture, I communicated it is imperative to understand that our Sovereign God communicates to his people. To quote T. J. Betts, “Clearly the Old Testament authors understood that their writings and their words they contain are the inerrant Word of God, that their writings would continue to achieve God’s purposes for which they were given, and therefore they would never cease to be the Word of God.”⁴ That last phrase explaining the never ceasing nature of the Bible as God’s Word carries such powerful emphasis. The Bible is and always will be the Word of God. Robert Plummer adds, “The Bible itself is evidence of one of its main claims—that is, that the God who made the heavens, earth, and sea, and everything in them is a communicator who delights to reveal himself to wayward humans.”⁵ The authority of Scripture is inherent to the fact that it is the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul declares that Scripture is, in the Greek, *theopneustia*, literally meaning it is God breathed. John Calvin said this means every writer wrote “freely and honestly what the Holy Spirit dictated.”⁶ To explain dual authorship, I quoted again from Plummer during the training, who states,

⁴ T. J. Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament to Christians: Discover How to Unpack All of Scripture for Today’s Believers* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2023), 8.

⁵ Robert Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 2nd ed., 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 18.

⁶ John Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists* (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 127.

When writing a letter to the Corinthians, Paul did not enter an ecstatic state, recite the letter to a secretary, and then, when finished, pick up the completed composition and say, “Let’s see what God wrote!” Yet, as an apostle, Paul expected his teaching to be fully obeyed and believed—received, in fact, as the very Word of God (1 Cor 7:40; 14:36–37; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; Col. 1:25; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 3:14). . . . Each word in the Bible is the word of a conscious human author and at the same time the exact word that God intends for the revelation of himself.⁷

The authority and purpose of the Bible is foundational to understanding the necessity of hermeneutics. The authority and sufficiency of Scripture is prerequisite for right interpretation. The best summary of this is where Plummer writes, “The Bible is the ultimate authority for the Christian in terms of behavior and belief (Luke 10:26; 24:44–45; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 4:1–4; 2 Peter 3:16). The correctness of all preaching, creeds, doctrines, or opinions is decisively settled by this question: What does the Bible say?”⁸

Biblical hermeneutics is the process by which we answer the question, “What does the Bible say?” Henry Virkler explains,

Hermeneutics is often defined as the science and art of biblical interpretation. It is considered a science because it has rules and these rules can be classified into an orderly system. It is considered an art because communication is flexible, and therefore a mechanical and rigid application of rules will sometimes distort the true meaning of a communication. To be a good interpreter of scripture one must learn the rules of hermeneutics as well as the art of applying those rules.⁹

Virkler was succinct and helped the participants understand the basic reason all Christians, not just preachers, need to understand the foundation of hermeneutic study. The following quote was read back to me by several members after the first night. Virkler states, “Hermeneutics is needed, then, because of the historical, cultural, philosophical, and linguistic gaps that block a spontaneous, accurate understanding of God’s word.”¹⁰

I explained two words that are important regarding hermeneutic study: exegesis and eisegesis. First, proper hermeneutics is necessary because of the vital need for exegesis.

⁷ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 32.

⁸ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 20.

⁹ Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 16.

¹⁰ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 20.

“Exegesis” comes from a Greek word meaning “to lead out.” Proper exegesis, leading the intended meaning out from the text, requires application of the principles of hermeneutics while studying a verse of Scripture. Hermeneutics serves not only to support exegesis but also guards against eisegesis. The word “eisegesis” comes from a Greek word that is defined “to lead into.” Eisegesis refers to what is often witnessed, where the reader has already decided what they want the Scripture to say and therefore take that view and “lead into” the text the preconceived meaning even though it was not intended by the biblical author. This dangerous practice of eisegesis has permeated church pulpits, Sunday school rooms, and home Bible studies. The remedy is correct application of the principles of hermeneutics.

Session 1 concluded by listing the basic outline of the hermeneutic study that the class would follow in the coming weeks. While an eight-week course is not adequate time to fully plunge into the depth of hermeneutics, the basic tenets required to be a faithful student of Scripture are imperative. The study outline will include authorial intent, context, application, current implication, and genre. To be a faithful student, in other words, it will require work. Grant Osborne explains that lack of work is the main contributing factor to bad exposition. Many believe Bible study should be easy. I love the following quote from Grant Osborne and concluded the first session with these thoughts: “We study recipes for quality meals, how-to books for all kinds of things—carpentry, plumbing, automobile maintenance and so on—and read vociferously for our hobbies. Why do we think the Bible is the only subject we should not have to study?! Let me challenge you—make the Bible your hobby.”¹¹

¹¹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 25.

Training Session 2

Session 2 was a study on authorial intent. This area of hermeneutic study simply says that the author determines the meaning of what has been written. With dual authorship in mind, one is reminded that what Paul wrote to the church at Corinth had an intended meaning that ultimately aligns and communicates the mind of our Sovereign God. With that said, it must first be noted the danger associated with the opposing approach. When the reader gets to determine their own meaning, the authority of Scripture is undermined. Unfortunately, the dominant approach in many settings leaves the reader to declare, “This is what it means to me.” To paraphrase Plummer, with this approach, even if the author said, “That’s not what I meant,” the reader would respond, “Who cares, this is how it makes me feel, and therefore it is the meaning to me.” In society today, even among churches, it is perceived as arrogance to say there is only one interpretation of Scripture, and that interpretation is determined by the author.¹²

Students of the Bible learn through hermeneutic principles the vital need to find out the author’s intent when the Scripture was written. The only way to arrive at the correct application and implication for today is to understand the original meaning. Scripture cannot mean something that the author never intended it to mean when written. Allowing subjectivism to drive biblical study undermines the entire process of interpretation. Anxious for application, many fall prey to eisegesis by disregarding the work required to find the meaning of the original text. If the reader is free to determine his or her meaning apart from the original intent, then there is no actual meaning. The reader approach is the foundation of all liberal theology. The only remedy for this approach is to spread understanding and conviction of the principle of authorial intent. Walter Kaiser expresses the need to maintain these hermeneutic principles, which begin with authorial intent:

The current crisis regarding the doctrine of Scripture is directly linked to poor procedures and methods of handling Scripture. . . . As a partial corrective for this

¹² Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 127–28.

astonishing situation, I urge that talk about the Bible be modified to this extent: that evangelicals in particular get equally busy identifying the meaning of the text itself—the meaning the original writer of Scripture intended—before we go on to name the relationships between that meaning and ourselves, our country, our day, and our conception of things; that is, before we consider the significance of the text for us. . . . Only by maintaining these definitions and distinctions will Scripture be delivered from the hands of its enemies. . . . All our own notions of truth and principle must be set aside in favor of those the sacred writers taught if we are to be valid interpreters.¹³

If the intent of the author is that important, and it is, then the obvious need is to understand how the student of Scripture can find this meaning. The remainder of the training sessions drive deeper into providing help to do this very thing.

The section on author intent concluded by looking at examples from Scripture. I will explain one of those examples here. In 2 Peter 3:8, Peter writes, “A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day.” This scriptural text provides a good example of how many individuals attempt to read such passages and apply a formula to the verse and go in a direction Peter did not intend from the text. D. A. Carson calls these incorrect applications *exegetical fallacies*. One example of so many is that some fallacies “spring from poor research, perhaps dependence on others without checking the primary sources; others spring from the desire to make a certain interpretation work out.”¹⁴ Regardless of how well-meaning one is, these fallacies are, at a minimal unhelpful, and most often extremely dangerous. Peter writes in 2 Peter 3 proclaiming the last days and the coming day of the Lord. Verse 8 is not given as a formula for the reader to figure out the timing of the day (Matt 24:36). It is not for the reader to apply “a thousand years” every time they see the word “day” or vice versa. Rather, Peter is magnifying that the Sovereign God, the creator of time, is not bound by time as is humanity. This is not given for calculation, but for adoration and rest in God, while stirring a desire in God’s people to worship him in one’s daily life. Betts provides a helpful summary statement for this section:

¹³ Walter Kaiser, “Legitimate Hermeneutics,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: 1980), 147.

¹⁴ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 38.

Proper interpretation calls for proper exegesis—the process of lifting the meaning of the text from the actual meaning of the words in their original context. It emphasizes the determination to understand the author’s intent. Accordingly, exposition is drawing out what the text means along with its implications and applications. Teachers of the Word must avoid eisegesis and focus instead on exegesis and exposition to uphold the integrity of the text and faithfully communicate its meaning.¹⁵

It is essential to unpack the intent of the author. Finding the author’s intent will mean the difference between exegesis and eisegesis. This ultimately determines whether man’s opinion is communicated or the pure Word of God.

Training Session 3

Having established the duty of the Bible student to find the author’s intent, it was the goal in the remaining sessions to provide tools to help unpack this intent by understanding several things about the Scripture studied. The first key considered was context. The study of context was broken into two related areas: historical and literary.

Historical context seeks to answer four basic questions, “Who wrote the book”, “When was the book written” “Who was the book written to” and “What is the purpose or theme of the book?” Historical context helps the reader understand the overall setting of the text. The book of Romans serves as an excellent example. First, Paul identifies himself, in the very first chapter and verse, as the human author of the letter. In verse 7 of the opening chapter, he identifies the recipients of the epistle. Paul writes to the saints who are in Rome. There is much background in the letter that places Paul in Corinth at the time it is penned at the end of his third missionary journey, dating the letter around AD 56. Paul’s purpose in writing the letter of Romans is to instruct them in the doctrine of God’s grace. He magnifies the golden chain of God’s redemption that culminates with the final glorification of those God predestinated in eternity past. Paul’s purpose is to preach God’s grace upon the sinner by imparting faith in the merits of Christ alone. This foundation of doctrinal truth then propels Paul to turn to practice in chapters 12–16.

¹⁵ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 68–69.

A right understanding of historical context is critical to biblical study. It is helpful to understand the cultural references Paul makes in all of his epistles. It almost goes without saying that in any given verse of Scripture the author assumes an understanding of the overall historical context of the text. Plummer comments, “To familiarize one’s self with the setting of any book in the Bible takes time-consuming study. Yet, in interpreting individual sections of a letter, there is no greater aid than a good understanding of the whole work.”¹⁶ There are times that it will be helpful to be “aided by consulting the introductory comments on a New Testament letter in a study Bible . . . it might be advisable to read an overview of it in a New Testament survey text, such as *An Introduction to the New Testament*, by D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo.”¹⁷

Another important area to consider in terms of context is literary context. In simple terms, understanding the literary context requires one to study what comes before and after the passage being studied. The closer a portion of Scripture is to whatever is being studied, the more important it is to interpret the passage. When reading a verse, for example, one should look at the entire chapter, grasp an understanding of the major section in view of the historical context of the book, and seek to understand the intended meaning of the verse by understanding what the paragraph or section of Scripture is saying around the verse. John Piper sheds direct light on what is required to understand context:

Most people read half asleep. We read the Bible pretty much like we watch television—passively. What I mean by passively is that we expect the TV program to affect us, entertain us, inform us, or teach us. Our minds are almost entirely in the passive mode as impulses come into our minds. The opposite is when our minds go on alert and watch carefully. We become aggressively observant. When we see TV or the world actively, we see layers and dimensions and aspects of reality that before were totally unnoticed. The difference is that now the mind is engaged. You have issued a command to the brain: Look! Listen! Think about what you are seeing. Spot clues. Be aggressively observant. Be unremitting in your attentiveness. Be unwaveringly watchful. Make connections. Notice patterns. Ask questions.¹⁸

¹⁶ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 286.

¹⁷ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 286.

¹⁸ John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 327.

Understanding the literary context of a passage requires active reading. It demands looking around in the text for clues before and after the verse and passage at hand. Then, it necessitates honesty in reporting the observed findings of the journey. This prevents a doctrine from being built based upon a stand-alone verse. Scripture is the key to interpreting other Scripture. Clear passages must be utilized to shed light and clarity on those that are unclear. Betts highlights, “Approaching the text this way is essential because the biblical authors wrote their books with a particular overarching message in mind, and each chapter, section, paragraph, sentence, and word contributes to communicating that message.”¹⁹ Betts helps immensely in this area, specifically within Old Testament context by explaining that one must seek the who, when, where, how, what, why, and so what that results from this contextual study.²⁰ Answering these questions yields information that helps to shape the context and uncover intended meaning. First, finding out who the author is helps clarify the passage. Combining that with when the specific text was written as well as when the referenced events happened begins to bring a natural meaning into focus. Psalm 51 illustrates this well. Knowing that David is the human author, and that it was written after he had sinned and was visited by Nathan the prophet, sheds great light on the Psalm. Understanding where the events of Scripture unfold can also be helpful. Knowing geographical location, as well as more details can show important context. When asking the question of “how” it is simply a challenge placed before the reader to investigate the surrounding context of the biblical story. The answer to “what” brings the reader into the details of word studies, understanding the exact wording and original language and meaning of the writing. Betts articulates that as one seeks to answer the why of the text the reader knows that “all the Scriptures, taken together, lead to the person and work of Jesus Christ. This does not mean every single passage speaks specifically about the Messiah, but it means that every passage is part of the story that

¹⁹ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 87.

²⁰ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, v.

Jesus completes.”²¹ This is a tremendous distinction as one studies the author intent and biblical context. Biblical exposition, in terms of teaching and preaching, has not fully been accomplished until lastly answering “so what?” The answer to this question will be more clearly outlined in the section of the application and implication of biblical text. It is simply the process of applying the implied meaning of the textual study into the lives of individual hearers today.

While working through this idea of historical and literary context several biblical passages were observed that illustrate why this is a great need. I will list two of those examples. In Matthew 18:20, one finds the words of our Lord Jesus: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” In my experience I have heard this verse quoted most often when referring to a small numerical gathering. While it is true that God delights to meet with small gatherings where his Word is preached or studied, that is not the implication of Matthew 18, and is therefore an improper handling of interpretation. To properly exegete this verse, it is imperative to read it in the context of the verses ahead of it. When going back only a few verses, verse 15 begins this small section on church discipline. In these verses, instructions are given on how to handle a brother who has sinned. First, instruction is given, by Christ, to go to him in a one-on-one conversation. Then, go with one or two witnesses. Lastly, if neither of these are effective, the matter is to be brought before the church. Within this context of church discipline, Jesus states, “There am I in the midst of them.” The comforting words of the presence of Christ are to a church that takes sin and the purity of the church seriously. While it is true to say with confidence that the Lord meets with his church when they gather for worship, pulling out Matthew 18:20 to make that claim is incorrect if one cares about literary context.

²¹ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 115.

Jeremiah 29:11 is another example that offers helpful insight for literary context. This verse has long been one of my favorites in all of Scripture. The verse reads, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” This verse as a stand-alone thought is helpful. However, without understanding the context, one could come to an incorrect conclusion. One possible outcome of the verse if read independently would be to take “thoughts of peace” as a direct indication of health, wealth, or a smooth and easy road. It could lead to the casual, dangerous idea, that the people of God will have their best life now. Instead, reading the verses before verse 11, once again adds support to the study. Just one verse prior, in fact, completely changes the understanding of verse 11. Jeremiah 29:10 explains that there will be seventy years of captivity at Babylon, after which the Lord will visit. Jeremiah 29:11 is a declaration that although the next seventy years will bring trial, captivity, and painful experience for God’s people, the Lord in his sovereignty is working amid the pain to bring about an expected and glorious end. The implication from the context, therefore, is not that the people of God will live a life of ease; instead, it magnifies, that whether it is the Babylonian captivity, the events leading to the Cross of Christ, or awaiting the return of Christ, the plan of God is running according to schedule. This passage declares that God sees his people despite the pain. God has his people on his mind in such a way that the future is certain. In time to come, when the captivity is over, the Lord is bringing all things to culmination in a way that is completely in his hands. Now that is a reason to rest in God.

Literary context liberates from the skim-the-surface fluff that dominates nominal Christianity. It forces investigation of the entire passage. Once this is done, the student of Scripture finds richness and depth in the Word of God that is desperately needed in these dark days.

Training Session 4

During the fourth session the topic was centered around literary genre at a summary level. Valuable time was then spent looking more detailed at the genres of Law and Historical Narrative. Genre is a way of classifying a writing based upon the style, context, and literary techniques employed by the author. For the sake of training the books of the Bible were categorized into certain genre that will assist in joint study. The study over the coming weeks will first cover Historical, Law, and Narrative, which includes the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah. The Wisdom literature books include Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes. Psalms, Song of Solomon, Lamentations will be categorized as Poetry. The Prophecy books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Daniel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Revelation. The next section includes the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the book of Acts. Concluding the study of genre will be a brief look into the Epistles; Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, and Jude.

Literary genre is a way of identifying sections of Scripture and placing them in categories based upon the style and content that the author has chosen to use. Once genre is identified the reader can apply general rules for reading and interpretation based upon the genre. Plummer notes, “In choosing to express his or her ideas through a particular literary genre, the author submits to a number of shared assumptions associated with that genre. For example, if I were to begin a story, ‘Once upon a time,’ I immediately cue my readers that I am going to tell a fairy tale.”²² Plummer continues by noting the general rules of a fairy tale: “Such a story likely will have fantastical creatures (e.g., dragons, unicorns), a challenge to be overcome, and a happy ending. Readers will expect the story to be

²² Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 185.

directed at young children, primarily for the sake of entertainment, but possibly also for moral instruction.”²³ Virkler provides a short summary that is helpful:

In the past thirty years there has been significant elaboration of the genres identified in Scripture. William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard’s *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* discusses many of these. For example, narrative sections have been differentiated to include reports, anecdotes, battle reports, construction reports, dream reports, epiphany reports . . . heroic narratives, ancestral epics, prophet stories, comedy, farewell speeches, popular proverbs, riddles, fables, parables, songs, and list. The law sections of Scripture have been differentiated into case law, absolute law, legal series, legal instruction, criminal law, family law, civil law, religious law, and charitable law. Poetry has been subdivided into complaints, imprecatory psalms, funeral laments, thanksgiving songs, songs of praise, coronation hymns, love songs, wedding songs, worship songs, and wisdom psalms. Wisdom literature has been subdivided into proverbs, instruction, example stories, and disputation speeches (speeches that attempt to persuade the audience of some truth). In the New Testament, the Gospels are viewed as theological biographies, written in the style of the times and not necessarily in the same ways as modern biographies. . . . The Gospels contain various genres, including parables, miracle stories, pronouncement stories, legal maxims, beatitudes and woes, announcement and nativity stories, calling and recognition scenes, and farewell discourses. Many of these genres are used in Acts. The Epistles include exhortational letters, diatribes (instructional letters in which objection and answers to those objections are presented), letters of self-recommendation, family letters, creeds or hymns, domestic codes, slogans, and vice and virtue lists. Many of the above genre or form differentiations are self-evident and require little explanation.²⁴

While the quote is lengthy, it is included due to the vast summary clearly articulated therein. In the handout for week 4, I provided a table that covered this overview in a succinct and helpful manner. A basic understanding of genre is a foundational piece that will assist in grasping the proper study of Scripture. A quick reading of the short excerpt above reveals how one’s approach to study, in finding the intent of the author, is largely dependent upon knowing the basic guidelines of studying the genre that was used. The overall study of genre during week 4 set forth a clear objective. The genre of a passage is critical to understanding the author. The faithful student of Scripture cannot read the books of the Law with the same approach as the book of Proverbs. Likewise, the book of Psalms has principles of interpretation that differ from studies of the epistles written by

²³ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 185.

²⁴ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 188–89.

Paul. When one understands this as a baseline for study, it will change the approach to study as one seeks to be a more faithful student of Scripture and servant of Christ. The last fifteen minutes of study transitioned to cover the basic tenets of genre regarding law and historical narrative.

The genre of Law is broken out into areas of apodictic and case law. Studying this genre highlighted the necessity of looking back through the lens of Christ and his fulfillment. Only through the lens of Christ in the New Testament can the Old Testament law be fully understood and applied. Galatians 3:24 states, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” There are many things the law expresses clearly. It reveals the character of God, reveals sin, gives parameters for carrying out God’s justice, executes correction, produces joy, leads in instruction, encourages obedience, becomes etched on hearts, and points to the kingdom of God. All of this is accomplished only through Jesus Christ.²⁵

I concluded this section by discussing a basic overview of historical narrative. There was review of narratives found throughout the Old Testament and how they are part of the larger narrative. Betts, again, is helpful here when he clarifies,

The short narratives are the numerous stories within the Old Testament. Extended narrative refers to the numerous short narratives that are connected to one another to reveal God’s dealings with his covenant people, Israel. . . . The grand narrative is the story of the entire Bible that begins in Genesis 1:1 and concludes with Revelation 22:21. . . . Every short narrative is part of the grand narrative. Consequently, it’s essential to look at how each of these types of narratives is connected to the other two or else we will not do justice to any of them.²⁶

During the study, it was also acknowledged that the Gospels could be classified as historical narrative. The Gospel narratives all center around Christ with the intent of explaining the theological significance of his deity, advent, life, teaching, death, and resurrection.

²⁵ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 92–97.

²⁶ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 89.

While narratives point to doctrinal realities, they are not set forth as doctrinal statements within themselves. They are short explanations of what occurred and are not necessarily an indication of what the individuals within the stories should have done. Most often, instead of setting the characters out as heroes, the reader is shown their weakness and sinfulness. Therefore, the danger in historical narrative is the practice of taking the actions as a direct prescription for today. In the study, 1 Samuel was utilized to apply an understanding of this thought. First Samuel 1 has often been used to highlight Hannah and her prayer as a prescription for how to get what one wants. The proposed idea becomes that if there is something one really wants, just make a vow according to the model of Hannah, and the Lord will grant it. The problem with that thought process is that it propagates a prosperity gospel wherein the Sovereign Lord is diminished to reacting to requests, only when one figures out the right formula of asking. For those who have been granted their requests, in this application they would be able to boast somewhat that they prayed like Hannah. Those who prayed without ever seeing the answer they had hoped for are left to wonder what they have done wrong. First Samuel becomes very man-centered in this approach.

Instead, 1 Samuel is about our Sovereign Lord. It is not a prescription for how to get requests fulfilled at all. Instead, the key statements from Hannah are found in chapter 2. In 1 Samuel 2:6–8 she proclaims, “The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up . . . for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.” It really is not about Hannah and her works at all. Hannah has been brought to a Romans 8 and 9 understanding of the Sovereignty of God. It is God doing the working. When she prayed and remained childless, God was on the throne. When her request was granted, God was on the throne. If she had never been given Samuel, God was still right and in control. It is the only way this small story, viewed considering the grand story, can be rightly understood. The God of the universe is not a genie in a bottle. Instead, this

study brings to mind the words from the pen of Paul in Romans 11:35, “Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

Training Session 5

During the fifth session the topic was Poetry and Wisdom literature. Poetry is found in both the Old and New Testaments and is most often utilized to make a statement memorable for the reader. Summarizing from Betts I explained that Hebrew poetry does not normally rhyme. In instances where it does, it does so in the original language and therefore is not noticeable in the English translation. Likewise, the biblical writers of poetry do not employ regular rhythm. In artistic literary fashion there is no single rule that applies.²⁷ This study session yielded clear instruction on poetry and looked at examples of various forms within the genre. Synonymous Parallelism (Ps 52:8), Antithetical Parallelism (Ps 90:6), Synthetic Parallelism (Ps 25:9), “X, X+1” Poetic Form (Mic 5:5), Repetition of Similar Sounds (Jas 1:1–2), Acrostic (Prov 31:10–31; Ps 119), and Chiasm (Ps 51:4) are forms that helped guide the discussion.²⁸ Each of these forms were defined and examples were provided to show the biblical application. The principle noted throughout was that the individual authors utilized these various forms for the same underlying reason. Poetry is used to magnify the nature of God and to record it in a way that is memorable. The instruction time also reviewed the different classifications of the psalms in Scripture. Plummer notes, “Although part of the broader genre of poetry, the book of Psalms (150 individual songs) makes up a distinct and well-known portion of Scripture that deserves special attention. In this section, we will see how the Psalms can be organized into subgroupings based on common characteristics.”²⁹

²⁷ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 104.

²⁸ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 245–47.

²⁹ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 249.

Betts and Plummer were both helpful guides through these characteristics. Betts explains, “Laments are cries for help and expressions of grief from those who have put their hope in God. They are the cries of his trusting children.”³⁰ Clear examples were traced in Psalm 3, Psalm 9, and Psalm 139. Betts continues, “Imprecatory psalms express the people’s desire for God to uphold justice for his covenant people, to vindicate his righteousness, and to put an end to wickedness. They should not be understood as expressions of personal vendetta. Instead, they anticipate God’s final judgment on the nations.”³¹ Psalm 137 served as an illustration for an imprecatory psalm. Betts states,

Psalms of thanksgiving reflect on a past distress and on God’s deliverance. . . . There are wisdom psalms, which are instructional or revolve around a motif that comes from the Wisdom literature. The people sang Psalms of ascent as they made their pilgrimages to the Temple to worship. Messianic or royal psalms emphasize the anointed king. . . . To communicate their messages, the psalmists employ several artistic literary forms of expression, such as personification, metaphor, simile, detailed imagery, hyperbole, wordplays, analogy, and irony.³²

Plummer adds,

If one were to survey a number of commentaries on the psalms, one would find more . . . types of psalms discussed. Also, one would find varying terminology and sometimes the same psalm classified differently. . . . Part of the reason for the variation in classification is the mixed forms of psalms. That is, what one person might classify as an impassioned lament, another would label as an imprecatory psalm.³³

The general categories of the Psalms are not so much for applying a dogmatic rule as they are for providing an overall framework to help clearly portray the nature of God and do so in a memorable way.

Wisdom literature was an interesting and helpful study as well. I am thankful for the quote from Derek Kidner that has guided the study of Wisdom literature. Kidner says that the purpose and function of Wisdom literature “is to put godliness into working

³⁰ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 107.

³¹ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 107.

³² Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 108.

³³ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 253.

clothes; to name business and society as spheres in which we are to acquit ourselves with credit to our Lord, and in which we are to look for his training.”³⁴ Betts adds, “Wisdom Literature should be understood as a guide to how God intends for his people to live, keeping him at the center of their lives, in a fallen world. Lasting satisfaction in life is enjoyed only by those who live according to these precepts.”³⁵ While studying Wisdom literature it is necessary to keep in mind that in the short statements of wisdom, they are not normally meant to be promises, but rather principles for living. Plummer notes, “Most Proverbs are general truths that assume exceptions.”³⁶ A good example of this was illustrated in the study from Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This statement of wisdom is a general biblical principle, however, is not meant to be applied as a promise. There are a multitude of examples of those, raised in a godly home, who have rebelled against Scripture in their older age. If this verse is taken without exception, it can have only two possible outcomes. First, the parent can take credit for children who live for the Lord once they are grown. Second, parents live in constant discouragement over children who have strayed. Understanding that Wisdom literature provides principles for living, encourages individuals to live according to Scripture, while also delivering from the pride of performance. While there are times when the Proverbs express truth with no exceptions (6:16–19), it is most often expressed as principle instead of precept. This session was helpful and generated a lot of discussion lasting through the following days.

Training Session 6

Session 6 covered the genre of prophecy. Summarizing from Plummer’s work, and gleaning from Betts and Virkler as well, this session explored the basic guidelines of

³⁴ Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1964), 33.

³⁵ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 110.

³⁶ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 235.

studying prophecy. Those guidelines include first the investigation of the context of the prophecy. The background, author, and date of the writing must be considered. The second guideline helpfully points out that the student of Scripture should expect and look for figurative language.³⁷ Plummer notes, “Most modern Americans are prone to read all language literally. Undoubtedly, the Hebrew language of the Scriptures is much more likely to contain hyperbole and figurative language than the type of literature most modern Americans read regularly.”³⁸ Plummer also delineates prophecy that is conditional or unconditional. A good example is in the circumstance of Jonah and Nineveh. The prophecy of Jonah declares that Nineveh will be overturned. This is a conditional statement which assumes that repentance will allow for this judgement to be abated. The reader also seeks to understand what the author desires to convey to the audience, specifically about the nature of God. Betts helps provide clarity here. Using the example of Jonah again, Betts explains, “A woe oracle may reveal God’s anger toward people for their wickedness, but the fact that he sends his prophetic messenger to pronounce judgment demonstrates his desire to give them another opportunity to repent and turn back to him.”³⁹ The study of prophecy is not only to look for events of foretelling and forthtelling, and of promise and fulfillment. It is also an exercise that reveals the very heart of God. The story of Jonah is not only a story of a prophet and a people, but surrounding and foundation to this text is the story of a God of anger, forgiveness, and love.

Studying prophecy is better understood, depending on Old Testament or New Testament prophecy, once the reader determines if the promises are fulfilled or unfulfilled. Whether fulfilled or unfulfilled, prophecies teach that God is faithful to his promises. Fulfilled

³⁷ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 199.

³⁸ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 200.

³⁹ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 101.

promises teach that God is faithful, and therefore those promises yet to be fulfilled certainly shall be. Betts states,

God is faithful to keep the promises he has made to his people Israel, both for ill and good. In Deuteronomy 28:14–68 and 29:15–29, God warns the people of the consequences of their unfaithfulness to his covenant with them. The prophets remind the people of these warning and proclaim that God is about to do all he promised to do, including banishing them from their land, if they disobey his commandments and worship other gods. However, in Deuteronomy 30:1–10, God promises he will restore his people from exile and bless them. With regard to the Abrahamic covenant in particular, God promised he would curse those who mistreat God’s covenant people. Several of the prophets, like Nahum and Obadiah for example, demonstrate that God is faithful to keep his promise.⁴⁰

The prophecy of Scripture offers rest to the child of God. Any study of prophecy is a reminder of God and his covenant love, and the fact that he always upholds his promise. Betts explains, “Interpreting prophetic literature may seem daunting, but there are some basic questions to help us discover the meaning of the text.”⁴¹ First, the reader must seek to understand what God desires to reveal about himself in the message of prophecy. Then, what was the central focus of the prophet? There is often a main theme or attribute of God being communicated. Third, Prophetic literature has a fallen condition that often has the focus. The reader of these passage should, where possible, place themselves in the scriptural context to grasp the meaning communicated to the original audience. Lastly is the highlighted need to answer the “So what?” It is a two-fold exercise. There must always be a concerted effort to answer the difficulty in the immediate context of Scripture. It must also include viewing the prophecy within the lens of Christ and New Testament fulfillment.⁴²

Many who read prophecy might attempt to look for keys to typology and often reach errant application as a result. I enlisted the help of Virkler to provide principles for interpretation, specifically regarding typology. Virkler suggests a historical-cultural and

⁴⁰ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 102.

⁴¹ Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 100.

⁴² Betts, *How to Teach the Old Testament*, 103.

contextual analysis, lexical-syntactical analysis, theological analysis, and literary analysis. Historical-cultural contextual study “provides an understanding of the author’s reason for including a certain event.”⁴³ Regarding theological analysis, Virkler states, “The proper interpretation and understanding of types often lead to an increased appreciation of the unity of Scripture and the consistency with which God has dealt with humankind throughout salvation history.”⁴⁴ Literary analysis of prophecy texts causes the reader to study with awareness that the style is often expressed in symbolism and figurative language. Instead of placing emphasis upon the differences in type and antitype, analysis of these texts calls the reader to look for the places that correspond between the two. As with any comparison, the writers of biblical texts do not intend for the reader to press and place meaning that is not originally intended by the author. It is not necessary or wise to attempt to correspond every point of the type and antitype. These principles protect the reader from inserting a meaning into the text that the author did not originally intend.

When it comes to Bible teachers who have pressed allegories and types into applications outside of the authorial intent, examples abound. Virkler names just a few. He states that some “commentators have found in the acacia wood and gold of the tabernacle a type of the humanity and deity of Christ, and other types and symbols have been found in the boards, the sockets of silver, the heights of the doors, the linens, and the coloring or lack of coloring of the draperies, and so on.”⁴⁵ Just this one statement exemplifies why extending typology outside of the clear intent of the author can be a dangerous practice. Specifically, within the genre of prophecy, taking liberty with typology and allegory yields results as varied as the reader. While viewing everything through the lens of Christ, caution must be exercised in corresponding every Old Testament detail to a New Testament detail of Christ where Scripture does not make the connection. Plummer

⁴³ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 185–86.

⁴⁴ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 186.

⁴⁵ Virkler, *Hermeneutics*, 186.

says, “In other words, we should keep the surface-level meaning of the text the primary focus of our exposition and give appropriate interpretive caveats when suggesting a Christological application not found explicitly in the Bible. Obscure symbolic interpretations of Old Testament laws should be avoided.”⁴⁶ Keeping this surface-level meaning of authorial intent guards against adopting interpretations that would cause the reader to be out of harmony with the overall thrust of Scripture.

In summary, there are two critical takeaways when studying prophecy in the Old and New Testaments. First, every Old Testament prophecy that pointed to events of history, and ultimately to Christ and his coming, were fulfilled in precise detail. Second, in light of the testimony of Old Testament promises fulfilled, every prophecy currently unfulfilled shall assuredly be fulfilled in time. Reading every New Testament prophetic passage carries with it an assurance that Christ is coming, and he brings with him judgement, wrath, peace, and eternal salvation for the redeemed, where the people of God will worship him forever.

Training Session 7

The seventh training session covered the genre of Epistles. At Trinity Baptist Church, the expositional preaching on Sunday mornings is currently in Paul’s letters, so this study proved especially edifying. The truth contained within the New Testament letters contains doctrine that is directly relevant for the church today. Twenty-one out of the twenty-seven New Testament books are letters.⁴⁷ Those included are the thirteen letters of Paul (Rom; 1 Cor; 2 Cor; Gal; Eph; Phil; Col; 1 Thess; 2 Thess; 1 Tim; 2 Tim; Titus; Phil), James, Jude, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and the letter to Hebrews.

When studying the Epistles Plummer suggests, “There is no substitute for carefully reading a letter multiple times so as to reconstruct the historical situation behind

⁴⁶ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 209.

⁴⁷ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 253.

its writing.”⁴⁸ A couple of important facts are noteworthy when beginning this study. All twenty-one New Testament letters were written after the life, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that, they provide a tremendous theological foundation for understanding the gospel of Christ. Permeated with Old Testament references, the letters also give valuable insight into many ways in which Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of biblical theology.

Once a section of biblical text is chosen for study there are a few ways to ensure correct interpretation of these epistles and apply the text in a way that is helpful for modern day application. Plummer states it is necessary for the reader to “understand the organization within a literary unit.”⁴⁹ He explains the importance of asking, “Is the author appealing to his readers’ experiences, to the Old Testament, or to his own authority?”⁵⁰ It is often helpful to visually analyze a passage by writing down the logical flow of the letter.⁵¹

Plummer expresses next that it is vital to “determine the meaning of individual words.”⁵² I highlighted this need to the congregation. In English translations it is easy to miss the entire thrust of a sentence by neglecting to do word studies. By doing a word study to unpack the meaning of the word in the original language, the student of Scripture gives attention to what the author intended when the words were penned. Several online and physical resources were provided to the participants to assist in this area of study.

The last key for interpreting epistles is to make application to hearers today. While the word meaning, historical context, and direct application are vital, the job is not complete until the implication to the audience has been communicated. Plummer

⁴⁸ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 253.

⁴⁹ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 287.

⁵⁰ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 287.

⁵¹ Thomas Schreiner, *Interpreting the Pauline Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 77–126.

⁵² Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 287.

highlights, “We do not study the letters of the New Testament for the ultimate purpose of arriving at the most convincing and accurate historical reconstruction. Rather, we do such historical and exegetical study to understand the inspired author’s original message so that we might faithfully apply that message in analogous situations today.”⁵³ In reading the epistles, especially those penned by the apostle Paul, there is often a pattern. Paul seems to constantly move from doctrine to duty. He proclaims the doctrinal truth of the sinful depravity of man just as clearly as he magnifies the sovereign grace of God in his plan and activity of redemption. He then moves to the duty of man in light of what God has done.

One example of many is found in the book of Romans. Paul spends the first eleven chapters explaining who man is and who God is. For example, in Romans 3:10 Paul writes, “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.” Then in verse 20 he notes, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” In verse 23 he plainly adds, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” He explains in the very next verse that we are justified freely by the grace of God. In Romans 5:8 he writes, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” There is a clear pattern recognized throughout the early chapters of Paul’s letter. Without God, man is in a helpless and hopeless condition. Doctrinally speaking, man is utterly lost and totally depraved. While in that condition, Paul explains, Christ came to the sinner. He continues this message through the coming chapters. Romans 8:1 explains that, positionally, “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” As Paul continues to describe the golden chain of redemption that begins in past eternity, he explains that it will, without fail, culminate in eternity to come. Those who are redeemed will not be separated from the love of Christ. These are the

⁵³ Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 288.

vessels of mercy spoken of in Romans 9. The redeemed are those who have heard, called upon God, and are saved in Romans 10. These are the ones who have been grafted in, in Romans 11. Paul's summary of the doctrinal section culminates by emphatically expressing that all glory belongs to God. The spiritually dead sinner could not and would not go to God. So, as vessels of his mercy, Christ came to the sinner. Paul then proclaims clearly in Romans 11:36, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen." Through eleven chapters, the only clear thing about humanity is that all are sinners. Pointedly, Scripture affirms that by nature mankind is made up of vile, corrupt, alienated, dead, sinners who deserve the outpouring of the wrath of God. The sovereign God has had mercy and grace upon the lost. In Romans 8:29–30, Paul says of the redeemed, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Doctrinally, Paul's message is that vile, corrupt, sinners were foreknown and predestinated by God to be conformed to Christ. The redeemed have therefore been called, justified, and glorified in the unfolding, sovereign plan of God. The book of Romans is front loaded with all this doctrine. Then finally, Paul moves to practice.

Practically, Romans 1–11 must be understood before Romans 12 can be comprehended and applied. Paul begins the chapter, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Paul, standing upon the doctrine of earlier chapters, exhorts God's people to a life of sacrifice and holy living for the glory of God. With chapters 1–11 fresh in view he calls this "reasonable service." Doing a word study on "reasonable" yields the meaning of "following reason, reasonable, logical." Paul is saying that while gazing upon the doctrine of Romans 1–11, look at what God has done. Then, considering this reality, living according to Romans 12:1 is just logical. It follows

reason. It makes sense. It is the least that a redeemed sinner could do. Paul continues to call for a transformed life that is not conformed to this world.

Just this one example of the Romans epistle gives ample explanation of the pattern spoken of earlier. It is also exemplary of the principles of study noted previously. Once the smaller unit of study is understood (Rom 12) within the larger unit (after the doctrinal section), then and only then can a right application be applied for both the original audience and for today. This excellent section on epistles proved to be extremely helpful through studying examples in Romans, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 Corinthians, and 1 John.

Training Session 8

The concluding training session was held on Wednesday, March 27, 2024. This lesson was an attempt to tie everything together. I provided a template designed to help every individual understand the full picture of hermeneutics at a very basic level. I split it up into three words for simplicity: observation, interpretation, and application.

First, the observation step includes identifying the author, audience, historical setting, context, and genre. Second, during interpretation, the reader needs to understand the immediate context in light of the surrounding verses and chapters. Has the event already occurred? Where does it fit in the biblical storyline of Christ? Lastly, once these other steps have been taken, the application can be considered. How would the original audience have responded? Was the original audience called to do something because of the text whether it be to submit, repent, cast, rest, or trust? Based on what it meant for them, how does it apply now? How does it point to the gospel, and does it require something of me? Several different passages were used as examples to explain how to utilize the template for different portions of scriptural study.

This section concluded by reviewing commentaries in our church library as well as online resources that will prove helpful in filling in historical and literary contextual gaps. For example, blueletterbible.org is an excellent resource for book introductions that

provides background information to set the context. It also lists chapter and verse drill down capabilities that allows for immediate word studies. By utilizing this tool, teachers can find the root word in the original language and thereby see the meaning of that word within the contextual study. This can help immensely in leading to a more faithful interpretation of a passage. Attendees were also equipped with the online resource of gtty.org, the work of John MacArthur, Pastor of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California. MacArthur provides sermons and commentary that can prove helpful for a Sunday school teacher that may need insight into a specific passage they are studying. I encourage the teachers to read after faithful men such as MacArthur, John Gill, John Calvin, Charles Spurgeon, A. W. Pink, and J. C. Ryle from our church library as well to help guide them in the daily and weekly study. This concluding study and review was extremely beneficial to the entire congregation, and their pastor.

Conclusion

These eight-week sessions proved to be pivotal for both me and the church. These official training sessions, which were setup for the project, have led into further study. The church continues to spend Wednesday nights exploring more about these wonderful truths and the inexhaustible treasure of the Word of God. The next chapter will provide an overview of the quantitative growth that was measured from the beginning until the end of the study. These numbers provide data for what has been sensed and stated by so many individuals throughout the church. The basic structure of hermeneutic study is life altering for a serious student of Scripture. This structure of study fundamentally changes the way the Bible is read, studied, and comprehended.

CHAPTER 5

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS PROJECT EVALUATION

The biblical hermeneutics project was meant to grow the knowledge of the congregation at Trinity Baptist Church, helping to make more faithful stewards of the Word of God. The steps of the project included data collection before and after the training for the purpose of data analytics. The participants in the congregation, who voluntarily completed both the pre- and post-training survey, included all current Sunday school teachers, as well as a number of young people passionate about growing in the Word of God. Average mid-week attendance during the eight-week training was ninety, which is roughly one-third of church attendance on Sundays. Of those in attendance, thirty voluntarily completed a pre- and post-training survey with matching identification numbers or names.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to provide biblical training to equip future teachers and leaders at Trinity Baptist Church of Valdese, North Carolina, in biblical hermeneutics and expository teaching. In the planning stages of the project when the purpose was defined, it seemed to be a vague target, as the outline and details were still being developed. As the plans, outlines, and details began to take shape and come to fruition, the stated purpose became the theme of everything surrounding the implementation of the project. Through weeks and months of study, the stated purpose grew into a conviction, which was foundational to meeting the project goals.

The statistical data will show a marked growth in every measured area of the project. That fact alone is encouraging. In addition to measured growth, however, direct

feedback and resulting conversation have been an overwhelming blessing. The majority of attendees have expressed how the weeks of study changed the way they read the Bible. Others added that it greatly influenced how they hear preaching. These basic guidelines of biblical hermeneutics helped shape and increase the overall trust in the pure Word of God. The following evaluation of the project will provide more clarity to this reality.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

As stated in the opening section of the project, instructional time was utilized to teach the principles of biblical hermeneutics. These biblical principles are established and proven means of God honoring study. To measure the effectiveness of the project, three goals were set.

The first goal was to assess the current understanding of biblical hermeneutics among future leaders and teachers at Trinity Baptist Church. This goal was measured by the Biblical Hermeneutic Knowledge Survey.¹ The survey was created by the leadership team to gauge participants in their initial level of knowledge specifically surrounding biblical hermeneutics. Prior to the first session, the survey was given to all those who signed up for instruction. This goal was satisfied once at least twenty members completed the survey and the results had been recorded as a benchmark to measure future growth for goal 3. The initial assessment yielded forty-five completed forms. Some of those who completed the survey requested to be omitted from the official data, and others did not remember the initial identification number to match it to a post-training survey, however, the number of completed surveys more than doubled that required to meet the first goal.

The second goal was to develop an eight-session biblical hermeneutics curriculum to provide training for future leaders and teachers of Trinity Baptist Church. This training material was reviewed by an expert panel consisting of one TBC leadership member, a doctoral graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a biblical

¹ See appendix 2.

hermeneutics professor, and a local pastor who is also the President of West Lenoir Baptist School of Ministry. This panel used a rubric to evaluate the course material and determine biblical fidelity, teaching methodology, and usefulness to ministry training.² This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criteria met or exceeded the sufficient level. All of those on the panel responded with gracious and enthusiastic support of the material, with 100 percent approval of the evaluation criteria being met or exceeded. One expert panel member specifically noted the seminary quality of the material and its usefulness for the setting of the local church.

The third goal was to increase knowledge and understanding of biblical hermeneutics among future leaders and teachers of Trinity Baptist Church. This goal was assessed by readministering the Biblical Hermeneutic Knowledge Survey after the training to measure growth in knowledge and understanding. This survey gauged each individual and their level of knowledge surrounding biblical hermeneutics. A *t*-test was utilized to measure the level of success. The data collected from the pre- and post-training survey was analyzed and considered met when a *t*-test for dependent samples yielded a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post- survey scores: $t_{(29)} = -12.81, p < .0001$.

Weaknesses of the Project

Although the overall implementation was successful and met every goal set at the beginning of the project there are places of improvement to be noted. Specifically, there are two focus areas to be highlighted. While other areas certainly could be improved upon, these would have improved the overall effectiveness of the project. The first area of weakness is communication prior to the project. The other is presentation of the information throughout the project.

² See appendix 1.

Prior to project implementation the congregation was made aware of the eight-week study that would occur on Wednesday evenings. There were verbal announcements as well as a writeup in the monthly publication during the month preceding the training. While this was effective, it felt somewhat lacking as the first week approached. In general, the congregation knew the project was coming, but communication could have identified the biblical necessity of hermeneutics study with greater urgency and clarity. When the project began to unfold, the sense of urgency among the participants regarding the biblical mandate of the topic increased every week. In retrospect, proper communication prior to week 1 would have helped set this urgent tone earlier in the project.

Second, the presentation of the information could have been improved. While the data and conversation certainly illustrate successful implementation of the project, some areas of presentation could be enhanced. The church auditorium where the sessions were taught does not have multimedia capability, and visuals would have proven helpful while doing word studies, context cross references, and working through charts which expressed genre and other categorical groupings. While the training material and presentation of such was fruitful, some methods could have been employed to make it easier to disseminate across the larger audience.

Time constraints would have likewise been more limited if the sessions had been in the fellowship building where a projector and screen could be used. Instead, handouts were provided where charts and other reference materials were discussed together. With only an hour per night, every minute was precious, and therefore should have been redeemed in the best possible way. As with any project, these areas of improvement have been noted and would be implemented on any additional study opportunity in the days ahead.

Strengths of the Project

The implementation of the biblical hermeneutic study demonstrated a significant positive change in both formal data analytics and conversations throughout the church

body. It has already been noted that data was analyzed and considered met when a *t*-test for dependent samples yielded a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post- survey scores: $t_{(29)} = -12.81, p < .0001$. Many strengths could be noted quantitatively, but first a few general observations should be communicated.

First, the pace of the project proved instrumental. By limiting the sessions to one hour, the discussion remained fast paced and engaging. The first twenty minutes were filled with definitions, quotes, and explanations. The next twenty minutes were saturated with biblical examples. The final twenty minutes of each evening attempted to unpack the reason the subject matter from that night was of vital importance. Some nights ended with engaging questions and answers, and others culminated with thoughtful reflection. The pace seemed to always leave the congregation anticipating what is next.

Second, the material, namely the Bible, is powerful. The pace and anticipation of what comes next was only a strength because of the topic. When the people of God are provided tools to better read and understand the Word of God in a thoughtful way, the result is powerful. What was witnessed in every session could only be described as awe. Not awe of the great teaching, dynamics, tools, definitions, or methods, but rather, the Bible, and even more so, awe of the divine author, God. Every night, whether looking at historical narrative, poetry, or epistles, there was a growing awareness of what everyone in attendance already knew—God really has spoken and is speaking. These rules of hermeneutics, and indeed this whole study, is just an effort on the part of the church to understand more clearly what God has and is saying. Once that conclusion has been reached, the response is unanimous. The church stands in awe, reverence, and worship of the God of the Bible.

Third, and lastly, the content of this study can be repeated as often as desired. The handouts offer succinct definitions and scriptural examples of the study. The study sessions were audio recorded as well and are provided through the church private webpage for all who are interested within the church membership. Prayerfully, because of the audio

and printed notes, the effects of the project will continue to spread in the months and years to come. With a few months having now passed between the project and this writing, there remains a heightened awareness of hermeneutic principles that are a regular part of conversations after the sermon has been preached or when a specific passage is being studied.

The overall results of the *t*-test demonstrate growth for the overall project. When looking at the data more closely it is even more encouraging. The pre- and post-surveys utilized a Likert six-point scale, with a total of ten survey statements.³ Reviewing the Likert scale results places emphasis on the strength and success of the training.

If the survey participants were to fill out the survey with the highest level of confidence in every area of hermeneutics, 60 is the highest the total score could be. The average overall score during the pre-training survey was 30.73. The post-training survey, by contrast, yielded a mean overall score of 54.9. Across the 30 matching surveys there was a growth in the average overall perceived understanding of hermeneutics of 24.17 points, or just over 78 percent increase across all areas. When looking at the data for all ten questions individually, there is another positive fact to note—the increase is uniform across all survey statements. The reason this is valuable and noteworthy is that the survey was designed to span material covered in all eight sessions of the training. There appears to be growth in understanding equally distributed among all areas of the training material.

Theological Reflections

This project has rekindled a love of Scripture across the congregation of Trinity Baptist Church. Unmistakably, the love was already there. This study simply fanned the flames of theological understanding. It has been a weighty reminder that God, through the Bible, has spoken and continues to speak. Hendrik Krabbendam well states, “Scripture displays the unmistakable imprint of the divine in its unity, inerrancy, trustworthiness,

³ See appendix 2.

perspicuity, and authority. Scripture in its totality and in its parts is God’s truth, which originates with Him, takes shape under His superintendence, and is designed to accomplish His purpose.”⁴ This succinct yet powerful statement highlights the weighty joy placed upon every faithful student of Scripture. Likewise, the church bears the joyful responsibility of training the next generation on the veracity and power of the Bible. It is a wonderful theological reminder that scriptural study and teaching is the chosen method of God for the communication of his Word. To the extent that the Bible is rightly divided in study and communication, God is speaking.

Personal Reflections

My heart is stirred as I reflect on these last three years of preparing and implementing this project. The ramifications of the past months have far outreached the originally defined goals. The Lord has allowed me to be renewed in my own love and reverence of his Word, which has in turn drawn me closer to God. The Word of God outshines every philosophy, parishioner, and preacher. It holds authority over every tradition, church covenant, and theologian. It transcends every religious yet godless stronghold. These months and years of preparing for this project have cut away those areas that seek to gain prominence in the life of ministry and have laid bare the very foundation of the church. God has given his Word as the sole guide for church activity. The knowledge and belief in the inerrant message of the gospel of Scripture is the bedrock of true salvation, the propellant of spiritual growth, and the framework that transforms the people of God into the likeness of Christ. This study of hermeneutics, from beginning to culmination, reaffirmed this convicting truth of Scripture. The Word of God does not need to be propped up or defended. It does not need to be packaged in a way that makes it more palatable or pleasing to the world. It must not be hidden somewhere in

⁴ Hendrick Krabbendam, “Hermeneutics and Preaching,” in *The Preacher and Preaching Reviving the Art*, ed. Samuel T. Logan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2011), 213–14.

entertainment or theatrics. God's Word simply calls for the people of God to rightly divide the Word in its purity, and let it speak. John Piper said the main reason some

doubt the abiding value of God-centered preaching is because they have never heard any. J. I. Packer tells about how he heard the preaching of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones every Sunday evening at Westminster Chapel during 1948 and 1949. He said that he had never heard such preaching. It came to him with the force and surprise of electric shock.⁵

The reason for this force and shock, according to Packer, was that Lloyd-Jones simply let the Bible say what it says.

Reading recently of how God used the life of George Whitefield it was interesting to note that he, like Wycliffe, Lloyd-Jones, and others, set the foundation of ministry and preaching upon the Word of God. Whitefield was a man who based his preaching and ministry squarely upon the tenets of the Bible. Arnold Dallimore tells of Whitefield that many late nights the only light visible in town shined through his study window while he immersed himself in God's Word. Dallimore expressed that after diligent study Whitefield would prayerfully contemplate each word of the text "in both the English and Greek, feasting his mind and his heart upon it till its essential meaning became a part of his very person."⁶ A tremendous illustration of the power of the Word in Whitefield's ministry is provided by Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon writes regarding the preaching of Whitefield, a group of sinners in Bristol known as the "Hell Fire Club," and one of their members named Mr. Thorpe. Spurgeon states,

Among their amusements was that of holding imitations of religious services and exhibiting mimicries of popular ministers. Young Thorpe went to hear Mr. Whitfield, that he might mimic him before his profane associates. He heard him so carefully that he caught his tones and his manner, and somewhat of his doctrines. When the club met to see his caricature of the great preacher, Thorpe opened a big Bible that he might take a text to preach from it extempore after the manner of Mr. Whitfield. His eye fell on the passage, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise

⁵ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1990), 21.

⁶ Arnold Dallimore, *The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the 18th Century Revival* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1970), 1, 268

perish.” As he spoke upon that text he was carried beyond himself, lost all thought of mockery, spoke as one in earnest, and was the means of his own conversion!⁷

This illustrates that effective power of Scripture. John MacArthur likewise asserts, “The Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* has to do with the sufficiency of Scripture as your supreme authority in all spiritual matters. *Sola Scriptura* simply means that all truth necessary for our salvation and spiritual life is taught either explicitly or implicitly in Scripture.”⁸ The Word of God is pure and powerful. To the degree the Word is communicated in the manner which God intended, God is speaking. Therefore, it is imperative to suspend any activity that would hinder that which is most significant—the clear and accurate distribution of the Word of God. This is both my personal conviction and the desire for Trinity Baptist Church.

Lastly, this project has been used of God to apply a more stringent prioritization upon my life. Time constraints are a natural part ministry, and even more so in doctoral seminary work. Since the beginning of my time as a pastor I have attempted to give my mornings to the Lord through the church and study. I have endeavored to give my afternoons and evenings to the Lord through my family. While I have followed this somewhat loosely through the years, I have become more structured during the intense months of project preparation, implementation, and writing. This process stretched and molded me to be more rigorous in protecting the prioritized areas of life.

Conclusion

This project surpassed every expectation set forth during those earliest days of planning. God, in his grace, used the study of Scripture to both convict and comfort the pastor and congregation of Trinity Baptist Church. The church is convicted to teach and

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim, 1977), 16:474

⁸ John MacArthur, “The Sufficiency of the Written Word,” in *Sola Scriptura* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2009), 79.

preach the pure Word of God, and they are comforted in knowing that the Word of God is sufficient for the task at hand.

In this present day, society and religious organizations alike are becoming increasing hostile toward those claiming the veracity and relevance of the Bible. Amid this hostility, the leadership and membership of Trinity Baptist Church reaffirm their conviction that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. The Word of God is powerful. The Word of God is relevant for every family and reaches into every area of this generation. The Word of God is enough!

APPENDIX 1
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by an expert panel to evaluate material covered throughout the teaching course. The details of the hermeneutic instruction were reviewed and marked according to the curriculum evaluation tool.

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 sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a lesson to teach the Bible.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better teach others the Bible.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 2

BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

The following instrument was utilized as the Hermeneutics Knowledge survey for the pre-training assessment as well as the post-training assessment. This survey measured the growth in knowledge of the basic tenets of biblical hermeneutics through the training provided through the project implementation at TBC.

Biblical Hermeneutic Pre- and Post-Training Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research you are about to engage in is designed to assess the current understanding of biblical interpretation and biblical hermeneutics. Tim Hodge is conducting this research as data collection to be utilized in a Doctoral project. This research will utilize the same survey prior to training as well as after the training has been completed. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential and will not be reported at any time.

Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may request to be removed at any time. By completing this survey, you are giving permission to use the data in data analytics. If you wish to be anonymous, please use a matching 4-digit code for both the pre and post assessment which will simply allow responses to be included data analysis.

Name (or 4 digits code)_____

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate.

Please select your age group: < 14 15-25 25-35 36-45 46-55 > 56

Have you ever taught Sunday school or Vacation Bible School: YES NO

Directions: Respond to the following statement by placing a check mark in the box that most closely represents your current practices or beliefs.

The scale is as follows:

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Somewhat

AS = Agree Somewhat

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

Statement	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
1. I am confident in knowing how to find the true meaning of the Scripture when I study.						
2. I am confident in applying an explanation of the interpretation of the true meaning of the text.						
3. I could list the main elements of biblical hermeneutics.						
4. I understand how to apply context to my study of the Bible.						
5. I am confident in my ability to know the historical setting of a text.						
6. I understand foundational methods of interpretation regarding authorial intent.						
7. I am confident in knowing how genre impacts applied study for books in both the Old and New Testament.						
8. I am confident in my ability to find out the literary style of a passage.						
9. I have a good understanding of the best tools for word study.						
10. I am confident in utilizing commentaries/lexicon to assist with proper understanding of words and application in the original language.						

APPENDIX 3
T-TEST RESULTS

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	Pre-Test Total	Post-Test Total
Mean	30.75	54.64285714
Variance	114.787037	28.38624339
Observations	30.75	28
Pearson Correlation	114.787037	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	30.75	
df	114.787037	
t stat	-11.92932287	
P(T<=t) one-tail	1.42027E-12	
t Critical one-tail	1.703288446	
P(T<=t) two-tail	2.84054E-12	
t Critical two-tail	2.051830516	

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLE STUDY HANDOUT (WEEK 2: AUTHOR INTENT)

SECTION 2 - AUTHOR INTENT

In any act of communication (a speech, conversation, handwritten letter, or email), there are three elements: a writer or speaker, a text or spoken words, and a reader or listener. Who decides what a speech, conversation, handwritten letter, or email really means?

Authorial Intent – Biblical Hermeneutics argues that the **meaning of the text of Scripture** resides in what the **author** intended by the passage, as opposed to what later readers might take it to mean. Discussion of two approaches – (Reader Determined or Author Determined).

❖ **The Reader Approach (*Danger to avoid) – The Reader instead of Author as Determiner of Meaning:** Even if the author were to stand up and say, “That’s not what I meant,” the reader would respond, “Who cares what you meant? This is the meaning for me.” In a pluralistic and multicultural society, it is seen as arrogant/narrow-minded to claim legitimacy for only one interpretation of Scripture. (Adapted from Robert Plummer)¹

- This approach, since every person can state precisely what it means to them, presents countless possible meanings.

¹ Robert Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*, 2nd ed., 40 Questions (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 127–28.

- Even if the author was to disagree with an individual’s interpretation, it still is not seen as a wrong or inferior view because it is the reader’s interpretation & application is variable.
- ❖ **The Author Intent Approach** - holds that the original author is the only one who determines the meaning of the text.
 - It is the task of the reader to uncover what exactly that meaning is.
 - Issues arise when the reader is allowed to determine the meaning of what the author penned without considering what was intended when it was written.
 - If meaning can be something other than the Divine Author’s (and therefore human author’s) intent, then the meaning of a given text can be whatever an individual chooses for it to be.
- ❖ Walt Kaiser, “Only by maintaining these definitions and distinctions will Scripture be delivered from the hands of its enemies – and its friends (some are doing it not meaning to do so). In fact, the basic teaching of all of sacred theology is inseparably connected with the results of our hermeneutics, for what is theology except what Scripture teaches? And the way to ascertain what Scripture teaches is to apply the rules and principles of interpretation”²

Hermeneutics desires to uncover the message intended by the author as expressed in the text. The original readers of the sacred text read (or heard) the words and understood them in a normal, plain manner. Allowing every individual to decide their own meaning, which may or may not align with the author’s intent, destroys the only foundational principle that can lead to a right understanding of Truth. The text cannot mean something contrary to the author’s intended meaning. There are implications that arise from the original meaning, but those always align with the author’s intent. John Piper writes,

² Walter Kaiser, “Legitimate Hermeneutics,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 119.

You will never go to the Bible again simply to see if you can feel inspired by whatever comes to your mind. You will never be content in a group Bible study where the aim is for everyone to say “what the text means to you.” You will not be excited about a pastor who tells you interesting stories . . . but never shows you what the biblical authors intended to communicate in particular texts. Instead, you will make every effort to read the Bible in a way that opens the intentions of the authors and inspires you with that. You will seek to see and savor God through that . . . you will give God thanks for every sermon that shows you what the biblical authors actually meant.³

Examples of Word / Phrase study to determine Author Intent - 2 Peter 3:8

What was the intent of the author when he wrote, “A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day”? Many individuals attempt to read such passages, apply a formula to the verse, and go in a direction that Peter did not intend from the text. D.A. Carson calls these incorrect applications *Exegetical Fallacies*. Just one example of so many is that some fallacies “spring from poor research, perhaps dependence on others without checking the primary sources; others spring from the desire to make a certain interpretation work out.”⁴

Regardless of how well-meaning one is, these fallacies are at a minimal unhelpful and most often extremely dangerous. Peter writes in 2 Peter 3 proclaiming the last days and the coming day of the Lord. Verse 8 is not given as a formula for us to figure out the timing of the day (Matthew 24:36). It is not for us to apply “a thousand years” every time we see the word “day” or vice versa. Rather, Peter is magnifying that our Sovereign God, the Creator of time, is not bound by time as are we. This is not given for our calculation but for our adoration and rest in God while stirring a desire in God’s people to worship him in our daily lives.

³ John Piper, *Reading the Bible Supernaturally: Seeing and Savoring the Glory of God in Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 327.

⁴ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 38.

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ABSTRACT

TRAINING FUTURE TEACHERS AND LEADERS IN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS AT TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH OF VALDESE, NORTH CAROLINA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2024
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This project was designed to train future teachers and leaders of Trinity Baptist Church of Valdese, North Carolina in biblical hermeneutics. The training process involved assessing and increasing the knowledge of current and potential teachers in hermeneutics foundations and principles. Chapter 1 introduces the ministry context of Trinity Baptist, along with the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, definitions, limitations, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides the biblical and theological basis for training future teachers. Cultural and even religious norms have diminished the relevancy of Scripture in today's young people. It is the biblical duty of church leadership to train future teachers in the basics of Bible instruction and biblical hermeneutics. Chapter 3 underscores the foundation of the sufficiency of Scripture through practical examples. Chapter 4 details the curriculum and lesson plans for the eight-week study. Chapter 5 concludes with an overall evaluation of the project and suggestions for improvement and further development.

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