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DESIGNING A CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING
HERMENEUTICS TO EXILED CHRISTIAN
LEADERS IN ARMENIA

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

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

by
Keith Michael Doyle
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APPROVAL SHEET

DESIGNING A CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING
HERMENEUTICS TO EXILED CHRISTIAN
LEADERS IN ARMENIA

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To the love of my life—my wife, Kerry

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PREFACE

Serving these past eight years as Lead Pastor of Winnetka Bible Church (WBC) has been a privilege and delight. It is my love for missions that first drew me to the pastorate of this missions-loving church, and it was with amazement that I was immediately introduced to the remarkable WBC mission initiative called Armenia Relief Mission (ARM).

But I see a great need. Following teaching trips to Turkey and Armenia in 2014 and 2016 as well as a survey trip in 2018, I have experienced first-hand the true condition of the leaders of the persecuted church. With a tremendous sense of gratitude for the opportunities to travel with our church mission program, the unique connections with persecuted church leaders, and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's openness to this project, I hope to have designed a curriculum that effectively equips under-resourced church leaders from persecuted nations in the basic principles of hermeneutics.

Thank you, Dr. Foster for being a constant encouragement to me during this journey.

Keith Michael Doyle

Winnetka, Illinois

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This project focuses on one of Winnetka Bible Church's (WBC's) key historical mission partnerships. WBC was founded in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1904. Winnetka is an affluent northern Chicago village of twelve thousand residents. The Mission was established by Winnetka Bible Church in 1996 in response to a need and opportunity. The church has partnered with and supported this ministry for over twenty years by working on various projects in Armenia and neighboring countries of the Middle East.

The goal for this project was to discover the strengths and weaknesses of Winnetka Bible Church's Armenia Relief Mission (ARM). The project evaluated these strengths and weaknesses with observations from recent visits to Armenia in 2016 and 2018, interviews with the founders and pastors of the mission, and pre-conference quizzes. Then, a new curriculum was designed called "Promised Beforehand." The curriculum offers a biblical and practical method for teaching the Scriptures in the context of the persecuted exiled church in Armenia.

Context

Situated along the ancient trade routes of the Great Silk Road, Armenia is a small landlocked country that boasts a storied history longer than most other European nations. It is here at Mount Ararat where the Bible indicates Noah's Ark came to rest. In AD 301, Gregory the Illuminator established one of the earliest Christian civilizations here. Armenia prides itself on being the first nation to embrace Christianity as a state religion, and today, the former Soviet Republic remains defined by its many religious sites. The rich cultural heritage of Armenia is its treasure, and through its people, the

country has survived centuries of political strife. It has endured the tragedies of war and genocide and recovered from a devastating earthquake that killed seventy-five thousand people and left many more homeless.

On December 7, 1988, a 6.9 magnitude earthquake struck northwest Armenia, followed only a few minutes later by second shockwave. The town of Spitak, at the epicenter of the disaster, was virtually leveled within thirty seconds, and four principal towns and fifty-eight villages—40 percent of Armenia’s total territory—were severely damaged. At the time, Armenia was at war with Azerbaijan, and with many hospitals, electrical systems, and water supply systems destroyed, the scale of devastation was far greater than the tiny country’s ability to respond.¹

Four years later, with medical relief and rebuilding efforts still ongoing, WBC responded by sending a medical relief team. God powerfully moved in hearts of those who traveled on this initial trip, and the ministry of Armenia Relief Mission—initially as a free medical center—was born. The people of Armenia responded and began to visit the clinic in large numbers. Very quickly, the clinic began to run out of medication and simply could not keep up with the demand.

In subsequent trips, teams helped establish a storefront pharmacy in Vanadzor, and by 1995, they had built a medical clinic. Now, thirty years after the 1988 earthquake, this clinic continues to provide patient care, pharmaceuticals, and diagnostic services to the people of Vanadzor. The staff estimates that the clinic provides medical care for six-thousand patients each year free of charge. They have three physicians; a pharmacist; a lab technician; X-ray, mammogram, and ultrasound technologies; and a diabetic and hemophiliac clinic. According to reports, ARM has done a great job of caring for the poor of Armenia, especially the children.²

¹ Vahan M. Kirkjian, *A History of Armenia* (London: Book Depository International, 2014).

² Steve Kashian and Rozik Kashian, personal interview by author, June 15, 2018.

A strength of ARM's ministry is the commitment of a loving and dedicated Christian staff of fourteen local people. They are not only impacting lives physically but also providing intentional spiritual care. Through the ministry of summer Bible camps for about two hundred children, multiple pastoral training conferences for hundreds of area pastors, and partnerships with local churches in various outreach ministries, ARM serves as a bright light for Christ and his kingdom in Armenia. All of these ministries have been happening at ARM's training center in Yerevan, Armenia's capital city, and at ARM's free clinic in Vanadzor.

A second strength is ARM's strategic connection and proximity to the persecuted Christian community from Iran and Syria. The newest group of people who have come into ARM's care are Syrian refugees who have escaped the atrocities of their homeland. Many of these refugees are believers escaping religious persecution or war. The network ARM has established with key Syrian church leaders offers a unique opportunity to impact, train, and strengthen the entire exiled Syrian church in Armenia.

A third strength of ARM's ministry is the cost-effective nature of ministry in Armenia. ARM already owns the retreat center and the clinic, which gives the ministry the ability to reduce the overhead cost for future conferences and training. However, the retreat center is presently inadequate for the hosting of the envisioned need.

For all the positives of ARM, there are some weaknesses that need to be addressed. First, there is a weak connection between the churches near the clinic and the conference center. There is a healthy variety of gospel-centered local ministries in the country of Armenia, but I have observed extraordinarily little cooperation and alignment of these ministries to the clinic and conference center.

A second weakness is a lack of quality training for pastors and church leaders in the country of Armenia, specifically for the immigrant and exiled population. This group has limited resources, and when coupled with burgeoning numbers of followers, pastors are often overwhelmed by leadership and shepherding issues.

A third weakness is the deficient infrastructure and accessibility needed to accomplish this training. The ARM center in Yerevan does not have the capacity to host the envisioned training conference. There are many church leaders in Armenia who are eager for biblical training, but there is insufficient space to accommodate this desire and need. Thus, the training ministry itself is currently limited by the facilities. In addition, the location is difficult to access. There are no direct flights from the United States, and very few European airlines service Yerevan's airport. The country is surrounded by hostility and war, with disputed and closed borders with neighboring Turkey to the east and Azerbaijan to the west. In contrast, the location is easily accessible to expatriated Iranians and Syrians.

A weakness of greatest concern is the lack of opportunity for high-quality theological education. This is especially true for exiled church leaders from Iran and Syria. These leaders are desperate for training resources. The problem is that although they have had many conferences with teachers from the West, these leaders have poor knowledge of Scripture. While certain doctrines have been emphasized (e.g., the work of the Holy Spirit in the church), others (e.g., faithful and committed exegesis of Scripture) have been neglected.

Rationale

Due to this neglect, a new curriculum in biblical hermeneutics must be developed to resource these leaders in how to faithfully interpret the Scriptures. Since most of the ministers have had little or no theological training, this approach would greatly strengthen the teaching and preaching ministries of the exiled church in Armenia. Further, such training would encourage a church that has confusion over basic Christian doctrine. This confusion is especially true among newer believers. Many have questions about miracles, healings, visions, and tongues but have no framework for gaining biblical

answers. Given these shortfalls, it is imperative that local pastors are resourced with the tools needed to ground their teaching ministries and strengthen their people.

This project proposes an initial approach to this challenge by introducing the exiled leaders to the principles of biblical training as encouraged by the Scriptures themselves. In a moment of great biblical transparency, Paul reminds Timothy of his own powerful mentoring journey. Ever since the beginning of his church, God has established in-person Scripture training. Paul says to Timothy, “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).³ The plan God has for the theological development of Christian leaders is a simple one. According to Paul, Christian leaders are to “entrust” biblical teaching to faithful men who will be empowered in their own ministries and then mobilized and equipped in the training of others.

The biggest present obstacle to this happening among the exiled pastors was partly overcome by the development of a new curriculum, called “Promised Beforehand.” The radically simple approach of life-on-life training in the Scriptures progresses in two steps. The first step is to develop and teach a course on the principles of faithful exegesis and exposition of Scripture. Aspects of this first part include an introduction to the main themes of the Bible followed by the principles of observation, interpretation, and application of Scripture.

The second step requires the identifying and coaching of a teaching team who would take two trips to the ARM center to fulfill the goal of training exiled pastors in biblical theology and hermeneutics. After the completion of the pilot conference, with all feedback gathered, the team will write a second course in a method of expository preaching. Once the refugee pastors have been taught the basic principles of hermeneutics this second course will strengthen their skills in the exposition and delivery

³ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the *English Standard Version*.

of biblical messages. This current project, however, focuses on the first of these two goals.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to design a curriculum to increase biblical knowledge in the basic principles of hermeneutics for exiled church leaders in Armenia.

Goals

The training of persecuted church leaders from the Syrian and Iranian exiled community in Armenia will be governed by four goals. The first goal was to formulate the pre-conference quiz (APPCQ) through the process of a peer review of the questions. The second goal was to develop a nine-session (three-day) curriculum in basic hermeneutics called “Promised Beforehand.” The third goal was to improve the participants knowledge of and confidence in the Scriptures by delivering the three-day pilot conference in Armenia. This was a virtual conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a civil war in Armenia. The fourth goal was to administer the post-conference quiz (APPCQ) to measure participants’ growth as well as an interview to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the conference and curriculum. The fifth goal was to create a future ministry plan to continue to increase the quality of training in Bible-rich curricula for Iranian and Syrian pastors in Armenia.

The implementation of each goal was dependent on a specific measurement of success. A definitive research methodology measured when each of these four goals were accomplished. The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal will be detailed in the following section.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included a pre-series survey trip and an initial visit (completed in July 2018) as well as the development of an evaluation

rubric and a pre- and post-conference quiz to be used in the summer of 2020. Included along with the post-conference quiz will be an interview regarding the overall effectiveness of the conference. These processes will provide an objective means of testing the effectiveness of the project.

The first goal will be to assess each of the participating pastor's current level of mastery and engagement in the Scriptures through a pre-conference quiz (APPCQ; see appendix 1). Two independent reviewers from the ARM Board of Directors will assess the results of these quizzes in a written report. These quizzes will be translated into Farsi, Armenian, and Arabic to allow wide participation. ARM board members fluent in these languages will assist in translation and scoring completed quizzes. These same ARM board members will accompany the teaching team to Armenia to observe the pilot conference and assist in the evaluation process. This goal will be considered successfully met when each participating conference attendee able to complete the APPCQ has done so and the results have been analyzed by the designated ARM directors. The board members will write a summary of this analysis yielding a clearer picture of the current level of doctrinal knowledge among the conference attendees.

The second goal is to develop nine-session (three-day) curriculum in basic hermeneutics called "Promised Beforehand." This course will include an overview of the grand themes of Scripture, followed by lessons in the basic principles of hermeneutics. The course will begin with an introductory overview of the Bible's message of redemption centered on the person and work of Christ. Then, three hermeneutical principles will be presented. Consideration will be given to the principles of observation, interpretation, and application of Scripture. Each section will begin with a set of key questions that will engage each conference attendee on each given topic. An expert panel will utilize a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum (see appendix 2). This panel will consist of one current seminary professor in the United States and two indigenous pastors in Armenia.

The goal will be considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion meet or exceed the level. If the 90 percent benchmark is not initially met, then the material will be revised until it meets the standard.

The third goal is to identify and equip at least one co-teacher to travel with the author to Armenia for the purpose of co-teaching the pilot conference. The goal will be realized when at least one teacher is identified to travel to Armenia in the summer of 2020 for this purpose. A panel of three ARM board members will select a co-trainer and will evaluate the character, competency, and chemistry of the teaching candidate for the trip. Teachers with significant pastoral experience and the ability to teach in a cross-cultural setting will be most valued.

The fourth goal is to improve participants' mastery of and engagement with the Scriptures by delivering the pilot conference in Armenia. This goal will be realized when the curriculum, "Promised Beforehand," is taught in Armenia at two separate conferences with Iranian and Syrian refugee pastors present. This goal will be measured by administering a post-conference quiz and comparing the results to those of the pre-conference quiz in order to measure the change of knowledge. It will be necessary for the APPCQ to be translated into Arabic, Farsi, and Armenian three months before the summer of 2020. This goal will be considered successful when a *t*-test for dependent samples compares the means from each group of scores and focuses on the pre- and post-conference results with a positive, statistically significant difference.⁴

The fifth goal is to create a ministry plan to continue to increase the quality of training in Bible-rich teaching methods available to Iranian and Syrian pastors in Armenia. This ministry plan will be initiated through the establishment of a panel of three designated refugee pastors on the ground in Armenia. The same three-member panel will

⁴ Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who Think They Hate Statistics* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 189-91.

conduct a large group interview with the group of pastors from the Iranian and Syrian refugee community. An interview protocol with specific questions will be given in advance to the three-member panel (see appendix 3). It will be necessary for the panel to translate the questions prior to the interview. The results of this interview will be used to determine the functionality of the plan and its various training elements. The plan will be measured by ARM board members' approval of these results. This goal will be considered successfully met when the results of the interview harmonize the themes and summarize the results offering additional insights into the specific elements of the conference that had the greatest impact.⁵

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following key term will be used in this ministry project:

persecuted pastors. “The primary Hebrew word for persecution, *radap*, and the Greek words, *dioko/diognos*, both emphasize the concept of pursue (Gen. 44:4; Luke 17:23); their meanings can be extended to include pursuing or pressing on, to oppress, harass, and also to bring to judgment or punishment.”⁶ Many pastors from Iran and Syria have been beaten, imprisoned, and censured for belief in Christ and fidelity to the Christian gospel.

There are two delimitations in this project. First, this project will be limited to twenty weeks, which will include the development and administration of the pre- and post-conference quiz, the development of the curriculum, the equipping of a teaching-team, the executing of the pilot conference, and the gathering of feedback for a future ministry plan. The process for further conferences, after the initial pilot project, will

⁵ 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 this project.

⁶ Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 1996), 599.

extend beyond the twenty-week limit of this project. Second, the project will be conducted in English with the aid of an interpreter and will be designed around hermeneutical foundations.

Conclusion

Winnetka Bible Church's Armenia Relief Mission has a heritage of gospel witness and relief ministry in Armenia. There is, however, a need to realign these historical resources around a new training curriculum in basic hermeneutical principles in order to respond to the primary spiritual needs of persecuted pastors. Many of these pastors, displaced by persecution or war in Armenia, are in desperate need of said training. The main goal of this project is to develop a robust curriculum in hermeneutics to strengthen the teaching capacity of these exiled leaders. I propose that ARM realign its historical assets in Yerevan and Vanadzor to facilitate the proposed pilot conference. The key elements of this project will be the writing of a new curriculum in basic hermeneutical principles, the identifying and training of a teaching team, and the implementing of a ministry plan to further increase the biblical knowledge of the displaced pastors in Armenia.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE TRAINING OF PERSECUTED PASTORS

The character, conduct, and competency of pastors shapes their preaching and teaching ministries. In chapter 1, I described the various ways that ARM has historically pursued and impacted pastoral ministry in Armenia as well as ARM's present resources and strategy that inform this project's rationale. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the biblical and theological basis for the training of persecuted pastors. The thesis of this chapter is that God's Word, which is the primary source for the training and resourcing of church leaders, contains all that is necessary to equip persecuted pastors in their teaching and shepherding ministries. After I completed four survey visits to Turkey and Armenia from May 2014 to June 2018, it became clear to me that the persecuted and exiled leaders of the global church have a desperate need for equipping in ministry through training in the Christian Scriptures. This chapter will examine one introductory passage (Acts 2:42) and three additional biblical texts (1 Tim 4:11-16; 1 Pet 5:1-4; 1 Cor 2:1-5) that create a foundation for training persecuted and exiled church leaders in the principles of hermeneutics and their influence on each of the leader's ministries. First, a discussion of 1 Timothy 4:11-16 will show that ministers must center their teaching on Scripture. Second, an examination of 1 Peter 5:1-4 will show that ministers' character and motivation shape their teaching ministry among their people. Third, an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 will show that ministers must depend on the Spirit's power for effective teaching ministry. However, before exploring why ministers should center their teaching on Scripture and why their character and motivation inform this teaching ministry and are dependent on the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to discover why the teaching of the Word was so central to the ministry of the early church. A brief

exploration of Acts 2:42 will demonstrate the primacy of God’s people’s gathering around four key activities, of which the Word of God is central.

The Values of the Early Church in Acts

The early church gathered around and were devoted to “the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). It is interesting to observe that many modern books about the church rarely define what the church is and what a church should be doing. Those things are often assumed. Authors tend to focus on the practices or “best activities or practices” of churches that lead to successful ministry—with success usually being defined by attenders, buildings, and budgets. The church is not just about successful formulas or growing attendances. When one observes the New Testament, specifically the early church’s first gathering as depicted in Acts 2:42, it seems that the believers have distinct characteristics that mark authentic local church gatherings. The early leaders of this infant church appear committed to something quite different than modern methods and ideas. After a careful examination of the key elements of this passage, the following summation will be offered:

The church is a Holy-Spirit-regenerated community of believers who assemble because of their shared confession of and commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They gather for instruction in God’s Word, fellowship, the observance of the ordinances, and prayer in order to be built up in love. They scatter for evangelism and mission in the fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

Much of this summation comes from Acts 2, specifically verse 42. A careful reading of this verse in the context of Acts 2 reveals the core values that dominated the activities of the early local church in Jerusalem, which visibly manifests the true “body of Christ,” or the universal church. The early church frequently gathered in unity and love, opening God’s Word and practicing the ordinances, and they were given to prayer as exemplified in Acts 4:24-30. Because I desire to train leaders who will in turn cultivate

biblical communities of faith, it is essential that they understand and embrace these New Testament distinctives.

First, the church gathered regularly to hear the reading, explanation, and teaching of God’s Word (1 Tim 4:13). A Spirit-regenerated people will recognize the authority of Scripture and respond sincerely to the faithful proclamation of the apostles’ teaching with a desire to obey it. They will be eager to learn the Word, grow in their love for it, and serve one another because they embrace truth. Disciples are also aware that they must learn the Word not simply for information but for transformation in their lives—individually and corporately. They will be eager to share the truths of Christ’s gospel to those who are lost, believing in the power and authority of the Scripture to produce the miracle of faith in the human heart (Rom 10:17). The early church was a Scripture-saturated people, the material evidence of which is a mutual desire for and commitment to the teaching of the apostles’ doctrine.

Second, the true church of Jesus is committed to fellowship, or *koinonia*—the word used in Acts 2:42. The Jerusalem church as portrayed in Acts 2 and 4 sought to care for the wellbeing of one another in a loving and sharing community. *Koinonia* means “sharing life,”¹ with all of its various facets (spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational). The early church shared life together in the deepest sense of community and love. *Koinonia*, for the early church, meant not only a loving of one another intentionally but also a sharing of one another’s goods. This would have included the radical decision to distribute their possessions among one another, as Luke notes in Acts 2:45: “And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

¹ W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 17th ed. (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1966), s.v. “*koinonia*” (p. 90).

Because of their shared participation in the life and mission of Jesus, the believers lived out this fellowship with generous goodwill toward each other as needs arose. The early church was bound together in love as they practically met one another's needs. In response to this sharing of goods within the gathered community, the church was "praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). God was glorified through the *koinonia* of the early church. The significance of this is that the sharing of possessions of the new believers resulted not only in the support and spread of the gospel in Judea but also in the carrying of the gospel to the Gentiles.

Third, the true church of Jesus observes the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper and performs them regularly. Acts 2:42 uses the language of "the breaking of bread." F. F. Bruce argues that this "breaking of bread" was more than the regular taking of food together; it was "a significant element of their celebration and gathering."² In addition, I. Howard Marshall calls this Luke's term for what Paul names "the Lord's Table" (or "the table of the Lord"; see 1 Cor 10:21), referring to the act by which a Jewish meal opened and one that had gained added significance through Jesus's action at the Last Supper with his disciples.³ There is little doubt that the modern church has diminished the significance and frequency of Jesus's remembrance meal and admonishment to his disciples (Luke 22:19). The breaking of bread seemed central to early church worship gatherings as it refreshed God's people in the rhythm set by Jesus at the Last Supper. Justin Martyr writes,

And this food is called among us the Eucharist of which no one can partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do,

² F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 73.

³ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 88.

we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God.⁴

A careful reading of Acts 2 reveals more than a reminder of the importance of Communion in the life of the early church. In verse 41, Luke says, “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.” The response of the early believers on the day of Pentecost was immediate obedience in baptism on the part of those “who received his word” (v. 41). The book of Acts puts forward baptism as an outward testimony of an inward faith in Jesus and an identification with him in his life, death, and resurrection. Gathering for Communion is the ongoing sign and practice of the baptized community and is in obedience to his Word.

Fourth, the true church of Jesus is a prayer-driven spiritual home for God’s people. Before the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, the believers were gathered, “devoting themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14; see also v. 24). The believers were not only discerning who the new disciple would be to replace Judas but also seeking direction from God for what to do next. Pentecost, the promised moment when the Holy Spirit descended in power, was birthed in a prayer meeting in the upper room. As it was back then, so it is today, the Holy Spirit powerfully breathes spiritual life through the Word of God and unity into the gathered community of God’s people, and the currency of their collective response is prayer and worship. Prayer and worship are elevated to one of the core tests of authenticity in a true Christian church, and the early believers model this in Acts 1, 2, and 4. Bruce notes that these corporate prayer times would have followed the “appointed seasons” of the Jewish prayer service order, but their content would have been distinctly Christian in focus and content.⁵ Regardless of form or rhythm, the early church was passionately and purposefully committed to prayer, which lead to the forward thrust

⁴ Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 66, in *The First and Second Apologies*, ed. Leslie William Barnard (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).

⁵ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 73.

and vitality of the church as seen in Acts 2:47: “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”⁶ Therefore, a brief observation of the four key characteristics of a true church, centered on the gathering of the people of God around the teaching of Scripture, informs us that the gathered community of early believers in Acts would meet frequently for the reading, explanation, and teaching of Scripture; fellowship; participation in the ordinances; and prayer. As observed in Acts 2:42, the early church prioritized these core activities, and their practice of them marked them as authentic Christian gatherings. These core activities, when rightly practiced, aid the church in being the gospel-centered, disciple-making communities of faith that Jesus intended—and all of this is shaped through the faithful study and teaching of the Christian Scriptures by those who are called upon to lead the people of God. How does a commitment to these four core activities influence and inform persecuted pastors’ ministry in their local assemblies? And what biblical texts can form a foundation for training persecuted and exiled church leaders in the principles of hermeneutics and their influence on their teaching ministries? First, an analysis of 1 Timothy 4:11-16 will show that ministers must center their teaching on Scripture. Second, an examination of 1 Peter 5:1-4 will show that ministers’ character and motivation shape their teaching ministry among the people. Finally, an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 will show that ministers must depend on the Spirit’s power for effective teaching ministry.

An Analysis of 1 Timothy 4:11-16 Will Show That Ministers Must Center Their Teaching on Scripture

The first core activity of the early church is that “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). The apostle Paul instructed Timothy to do the same: “Command and teach these things” (1 Tim 4:11). To what “things” was Paul referring? It

⁶ David J. Williams, *Acts*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 61-62.

seems clear that the early church in Acts as well as Paul in his training of Timothy centered their teaching ministries primarily on the apostles' teaching—what we know now as the New Testament Christian Scriptures. This teaching became the foundation for the work of discipleship and the training of leaders in the infant church. Timothy had also been trained in the Scriptures. Paul admonished Timothy to “command and teach,” and the basis of this admonition was formed as Timothy himself was “trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine” (1 Tim 4:6). Now, he was to pass it on to others. John MacArthur notes that Timothy’s training in biblical knowledge was clearly a sign that he had been a student of Scripture. It is to that study of Scripture that Paul calls Timothy to be trained in and to train others in. This continual training in the treasure of God’s Word would be essential for Timothy to further serve as a faithful minister of the gospel. He needed to be “constantly nourished” (v. 6 NASB) in the life-giving Word. This model of Scripture training for ministers finds its foundation in the ministry of Christ. As Matthew 4:17 reads, “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” As much as it is true that Jesus’s ministry involved the healing of the sick, loving the overlooked, and raising the dead, it is also true that his earthly ministry began with preaching. In many ways, his other ministries validated and supported his primary ministry of teaching. Jesus’s preaching and teaching ministry varied in scope and audience. Whether it was engaging in one-on-one conversations like the one with the women at the well (John 4); retreating away from crowds to train Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17); or preaching a discourse to a large crowd (Luke 8), Jesus announced his kingdom through a stunning ministry of teaching. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), Matthew describes the response to Jesus’s teaching ministry: “And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (7:28-29). The opening of the book of Acts features Jesus’s final commission to his small band of disciples. He told them to wait and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit before trying to preach the

gospel to others (1:4-8). After Jesus ascended into heaven (1:9), the Holy Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost and anointed Peter and the other leaders to preach the Word with boldness (2:1-47). The result was that many new people were brought to faith in Christ, baptized, and added to the church. This infant church began to grow as the message of the good news spread throughout Jerusalem and the surrounding villages and towns in a large part through the preaching about Jesus. The church in Jerusalem was birthed through the preaching ministry of Peter and the other apostles. Virtually every chapter in Acts contains these messages.⁷ Thus, when Paul tells Timothy to “command and teach these things” (1 Tim 4:11), Timothy would have been acquainted with these and other accounts of the explosive work of the early church through the teaching ministry of Jesus and his apostles. Paul commissions Timothy to follow the same pattern (1 Tim. 4)—to be filled with the same Holy Spirit that initially empowered the early teaching ministry of Jesus and the apostles. With this backdrop, Paul issues some expectations for and exhortations to Timothy, four qualities that ought to mark a biblical teaching ministry: (1) Timothy’s speaking and living must match (v. 12); (2) Scripture must saturate his ministry (v. 13); (3) he should boldly use his confirmed gifts (vv. 14-15); and (4) he is to persevere in and observe his own teaching (v. 16).

First, Timothy’s speaking and living must match (v. 12). Paul lets Timothy in on a pastoral leadership secret: he would need to live out in faithfulness what he has taught to others because this is how the message of the gospel—which Timothy was to “command and teach”—would be validated. A pastor’s life pattern is his most powerful message; hence, Timothy was to “set the believers an example in speech, in conduct” (v. 12). This has the idea that Timothy’s speaking and living were to be one of harmony with no guile or hypocrisy. The man of God is to avoid speech and conduct that upends his

⁷ John MacArthur, *Acts 1-12, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1994), 58-68.

teaching ministry.⁸ Therefore, by this life testimony of faithful teaching, Paul encourages Timothy to not let anyone “despise his youth” (v. 12). Paul acknowledges Timothy’s age (which was probably around thirty years old) as being around thirty years younger than himself. The word *neotes*, which is translated “youth,” would have been used to describe someone under forty years old.⁹ Paul encourages Timothy to not let his young age count against him in ministry. Although he had no established track record, he would earn the respect of the believers through consistency in his teaching and living. This would begin with Timothy’s “speech.” God calls his preachers to refrain from all forms of sinful speech. If lying, anger, and impure language are strongly discouraged for the Holy-Spirit-filled believers in Ephesus (Eph 4:26-31), how much more is this an expectation of the preacher. His daily conversation faithfully strengthens the validity of his teaching. Just as the preacher savors the Word of God, so also his mouth must speak them without guile.¹⁰ His speech as exemplified in his life will flow out “in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim 4:12).

Second, the Scriptures must saturate Timothy’s ministry (v. 13). Paul tells Timothy to follow a set pattern in his public ministry, which should involve three elements: the reading the Scripture, the application of Scripture, and a systematic teaching of Scripture. Timothy was to “give attention to” (NASB; Grk. *prosecho*) these three elements. The word *prosecho* is in a present active indicative form, showing a continuity in attending.¹¹ Timothy was to continue in his studies in faithful preparation for his teaching, endeavoring to allow the Scriptures to continually penetrate and inform

⁸ Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 Timothy* (Dallas: SIL International, 2009), 254-5.

⁹ MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 173.

¹⁰ Blight, *1 Timothy*, 256.

¹¹ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 109.

every facet of his ministry to the believers in Ephesus. In addition to the encouragement to be devoted to the public *reading* of Scripture, Paul admonishes Timothy to *explain* Scripture. William Barclay says, “The Christian message must always end in Christian action.”¹² The truth being read must be explained and acted upon by the believers. Paul had been devoted to explaining the Scriptures, often at his own peril. As depicted in Acts 14:19-23, for example, Paul was stoned by an angry mob and left for dead simply for preaching. Further, according to Acts 28, Paul spent his final years under house arrest—but even in that setting, Paul’s preaching ministry continued. In his letters to his protégé, Paul is commissioning Timothy to hold preaching in the same regard. He summarizes his last message to Timothy by telling his young prodigy to “preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2). In the face of obvious opposition, Timothy was to see Paul as a model of a ministry grounded and guided by Scripture alone that he was to emulate.

Third, Timothy should boldly use his confirmed gifts (1 Tim 4:14-15). Paul admonishes Timothy in these verses not to abandon the ministry. Timothy would face cultural and theological headwinds, and Paul knew firsthand the errors of the Ephesians. *Ameleo*, the word Paul uses to exhort his student, means to “not be careless, make light of or neglect”;¹³ Timothy is to not neglect what he had been taught. Instead, he must hold fast to his reading and teaching of Scripture because it had been given to him “when the council of elders laid their hands” (v. 14) on him. This admonition seems necessary as Timothy’s struggles are common to pastoral ministry, namely, wilting under the internal pressures of sin and external pressures of Satan and his lies. Timothy’s ministry could fail. In 2 Timothy 1:6-7, Paul tells Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God . . . for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” Timothy faces not only his own proclivity of being “timid” but also powerful enemies in the Ephesian false

¹² William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 113.

¹³ Vine, *Dictionary of New Testament Words*, s.v. “*ameleo*” (p. 107).

teachers (with whom Paul was acquainted during his three years living in the city), so Paul is continually committed to being in prayer for him (2 Tim 1:3).

Fourth, Timothy must persevere in and observe his own teaching (1 Tim 4:15-16). Ministers need to be constantly refreshed by the Word of God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that even believers “see in a mirror dimly” in this life. The Christian Scriptures lift this “dimness” and refresh God’s minister in the glories of the person of Christ and the promises of Scripture. As John Owen says, “There is no glory, no peace, no joy, no satisfaction in this world, to be compared with what we receive by that weak and imperfect view which we have of the glory of Christ by faith.”¹⁴ The act of giving attention to reading Scripture, exhorting, and teaching must be ongoing and “practiced” (v. 15) out of a deep sense of helplessness and trust in God’s Word. Every passage read and every opportunity to teach is to be coupled with an ongoing sense of need before God. Timothy is to personally and corporately “immerse himself” and “persist in” (vv. 15, 16) the Scriptures with a hope-filled reliance on God’s powerful assistance. If Timothy is to continue in effective pastoral ministry and continue to see the lives of his people transformed by God’s power, it will not happen apart from a full, continual immersion in the Christian Scriptures. All is at stake in this holy endeavor, as Paul concludes that Timothy’s resolve to these matters would bring about salvation for those who hear it (v. 16).

We have considered Paul’s expectations and exhortations to his young pastoral mentee in 1 Timothy 4:11-16 and the four qualities that ought to mark a biblical teaching ministry that is grounded in the practices of the early church—a fundamental first practice being a commitment to “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42).

¹⁴ John Owen, “Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ,” in vol. 1 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1850), 415.

**An Examination of 1 Peter 5:1-4 Will Show That
Ministers' Character and Motivation
Shape Their Teaching Ministry
among the People**

Just as Paul instructs to Timothy that his life and ministry should be saturated with Scripture (i.e., “the apostles’ teaching”; Acts 2:42), Peter issues complementary summons about the character, work, and motivation of God’s under-shepherds (elders). In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter encourages elders to embrace the serious and sobering call to shepherd their persecuted flocks. Peter’s shared responsibility as a “fellow elder” (v. 1) who has also suffered for Christ forms the basis for this exhortation. Peter structures his instruction to the elders around two main ideas. First, he discusses the character and duties of faithful elders. Second, he motivates pastors with the promise of eternal reward. Peter “exhorts” (v. 1) the elders by reminding them of the nature and privilege intrinsic to the office (i.e., the shepherding of God’s people). This call, *parakaleo* (“to come alongside”),¹⁵ captures the very heart of the anticipated work of teaching and shepherding. Peter builds on the case for the duties of elders from the first mention of them in Acts 11:30. In this text, Luke assigns the responsibility for the leadership and shepherding of the Jerusalem church to elders. Through the recounting of events in the early church, Luke reveals how elders function as leaders and shepherds who exercise authority in spiritual matters (Acts 14:23; 16:4). This truth is consistently taught throughout the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament and finds foundation and emphasis in Jesus’s ministry while on earth. In Matthew 9, the description of Jesus’s sending out his disciples includes references to shepherding. Prior to this, Matthew states, “When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were . . . like sheep without a shepherd” (9:36).¹⁶ Shortly after this moment of vulnerability, Jesus sends out the disciples to go and gather “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5). It is

¹⁵ MacArthur, *Acts 1-12*, 262.

¹⁶ Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Shepherding God’s Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 37.

evident in Matthew’s telling of the parable of the lost sheep (18:10-14) that Jesus is emphasizing the significance of each of the twelve disciples’ commissioning to “leave the ninety-nine” and go in search of the one—to shepherd them as “lost sheep” and return them home. The fitting conclusion of Matthew 18:11 is that “the Son of Man has come to save and that which was lost” (NASB).

Paul describes the work of the elders as “laboring” (1 Tim 5:17) or gifted, spiritually mature teachers in the ministry of Scripture and care for God’s people. In his letter to Titus, Paul says elders should be established in every city for the purpose of guarding, leading, and feeding God’s flock (Titus 1:5). Peter states that the elders are to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (1 Pet 5:2). Ultimately, this seems to teach two complementary points. The first is that the elders are to take their “tending of the flock” with a sense of purpose and vigor. Wayne Grudem notes that both “shepherd” and “flock” come from the same root word; thus, Peter’s exhortation could be translated as “shepherd the sheep of God.”¹⁷ This conveys the ideas of caring and exercising oversight. According to Peter H. Davids, the apostle Peter, concerning the ownership of God’s precious flock, “by noting that it is the flock of God he shows that they (the elders) have no proprietary rights.”¹⁸ This act of shepherding and “exercising oversight” summarizes an elder’s other responsibilities. Peter then develops a series of contrasts to better illustrate this biblical mandate. His first contrast is that elders, as they “exercise oversight,” are to lead “willingly” and not “under compulsion.” This means that elders do not carry out their responsibilities out of a feeling of liability or obligation but freely and willingly. Peter’s second contrast is that elders are to fulfill their responsibilities “not for shameful gain, but eagerly.” Elders are to inspire their respective flocks not only with

¹⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 194.

¹⁸ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 178.

faithful spiritual care but also by living out a consistent personal example.¹⁹ Although they may be compensated for their work, they are to heed the warnings about material motivations. Every motivation must be filtered through their love, enjoyment, and pursuit of God’s kingdom and God’s people. If they enjoy the compensated benefits of their work for God more than their love for God and his people, then they will be at a risk of losing their entire ministries.

Thus, Peter compels elders to be diligent, motivated by love and the privilege of the work, and passionate about their duties. Peter expresses a third contrast: elders are not to be “domineering . . . but examples” (v. 3). This contrast creates a juxtaposition between an autocratic and domineering leader and one who serves his people. Such domineering behavior is unhelpful and unwelcome in Christ’s church and poses a threat to the reputation and testimony of the church and its leaders. John shares an example of this in his third letter concerning Diotrephes, “who likes to put himself first” (3 John 9). In addition, Jesus chastises his disciples for the same desire in Mark 10:42-43: “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them But it shall not be so among you.”²⁰ Peter calls elders to actively reject this same “lording over” attitude by being “examples” to the allotted flock that God has entrusted to their care (1 Pet 5:3).²¹ Peter urges the elders to lead through example and not domination. Leaders’ “being examples” to the people means they are not above anything. Instead, they are actively living out Jesus’s kingdom and teaching before his people. They are looking among the people for those gifted for ministry and desiring to train and unleash gifted laborers into the local church’s gospel work. Part of this example comes as faithful

¹⁹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 179.

²⁰ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 180.

²¹ Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 181.

ministers challenge and employ God's people to use their gifts for the building up of Christ's body.

Peter concludes with a wonderfully fitting and refreshing statement to the elders in verse 4: there is an indestructible reward for those who faithfully exercise this office. Peter commends men who by God's Spirit and work, sever the root of sin and selfishness while pursuing the high and noble call of faithfully pastoring God's people. At Christ's appearing, there will be a "crown of glory" for those faithful to this work. God's way of motivating his ministers for this incredible task is through future reward. God's under-shepherds are privileged to find ultimate joy in their present work in the hope of Jesus's return.²² Paul expresses this desire in Philippians 3:7-11: "But, whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ . . . that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." The "crown of glory" that Peter mentions in 1 Peter 5:4 marks the pinnacle of shepherding work, and nothing can tarnish or destroy it. The future reward for joy-filled faithfulness is a uniquely Christian doctrine and is proportionate to the individual under-shepherd's faithful service. The word "glory" carries an outwardly visible evidence of honor and marks the special place given to God's choice servants who have been accepted by God.²³ These truths of motivation and reward undergird elders in the most difficult circumstances. It is for this reason that Paul encourages Timothy to have "complete patience and teaching" (2 Tim 4:2) as he leads God's people. Paul knows that Timothy would face resistance and difficulty in ministry as he waits for God to work in his people. The promise of future reward enables the young preacher to persevere under hardship "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2:3).

²² Grudem, *1 Peter*, 97.

²³ Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 263.

Having contemplated Paul's instruction to Timothy that his life and ministry be saturated with Scripture (i.e., "the apostles' teaching"; Acts 2:42) in the spirit of the early church (1 Tim 4:11-16) and Peter's complementary exhortation about the character, work, and motivation of God's under-shepherds (1 Pet 5:1-4), we will now explore the necessity of the Holy Spirit's role in empowering ministers for effective teaching (1 Cor 2:1-5).

**An Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Will Show That
Ministers Must Depend on the Spirit's Power
for Effective Teaching Ministry**

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, the apostle Paul recounts a previous visit to the Corinthians. In doing so, he reminds the Corinthian believers of three vital impulses behind his teaching ministry. Paul says that material evidence validating the Holy Spirit's presence and authenticity in teaching will be marked by the simplicity, gravity, and authority of a Spirit-enabled teacher. Paul begins by talking about the values of his teaching ministry, the first of which is simplicity. He presents a case for a singular focus and obsession in his teaching. One would sense from this text that the Corinthians looked at Paul's ministry as unlearned and childish. Perhaps he lacked the charisma of the elite teaching class in Corinth, or perhaps his words lacked charm. Regardless of the Corinthians' disregard for his teaching, Paul makes it explicit that when he came to Corinth, it was not "with lofty speech or wisdom" (v. 1). Paul did not come to them by employing oratory embellishments and drawing attention to the style of his message or delivery. Paul looks to correct this error by claiming that he was committed to the "testimony of God."²⁴ Paul reminds the Corinthians that it was through this simple message and method that they heard and believed the gospel. He came to them with a simple, straightforward method of preaching: he proclaimed nothing but "Jesus Christ

²⁴ Robert B. Hughes, *First Corinthians*, Everyman's Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 32.

and him crucified” (v. 2). So, the principle seems clear: Christian ministers are never to unnecessarily embellish the gospel message with clever words of human wisdom. Faithful Christian preachers must not simply look for the range of emotion in response to their messages. Paul puts an emphasis on the substance, not the style, of his teaching ministry. The apostle was obsessed with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and because of this, the gospel message of Jesus informed and motivated every facet of Paul’s preaching and teaching ministry. Quite simply, he had one obsession: Jesus must be at the center of all his preaching. Jesus alone must be seen, savored, and served in Spirit-filled preachers’ messages.

In verse 3, Paul turns his attention to the gravity of the task of preaching. He describes the attitude with which he came to Corinth as follows: “I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.” Paul seems to own his limitations in this verse with a threefold description: weakness, fear, and trembling.²⁵ Scripture indicates that Paul suffered from some sort of physical affliction (2 Cor 12:7-10) and had been persecuted for his ministry (Acts 18:9-10). There is a profound sense of desperation in his words in 1 Corinthians 2:3. In a counter-intuitive way, Paul admits his utter inability to teach the gospel. Thus, rather than fleeing from his weakness or pretending to be strong, Paul owns his brokenness. But his weakness and trembling may have been caused as much by the seriousness of his message of true wisdom as by his physical and emotional state (1 Cor 1:25). Perhaps this idea is like the struggle in spiritual warfare described in Ephesians 6:18: “praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.” Paul was resting on divine strength for his preaching ministry and not his own abilities of a polished and persuasive style.²⁶ The Corinthians did not like the gravity and focus of his

²⁵ John MacArthur, *1 Corinthians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 56.

²⁶ Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians, New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 54.

message, which was solely centered on Jesus's death and resurrection and empowered by a prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit "in weakness and in fear" (1 Cor 2:3).

In verses 4-5, Paul describes the necessity of the Holy Spirit's presence and power as the authoritative source for his teaching ministry. Paul contends that the source of this charge was not rooted in himself or even his apostleship "but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (v. 4). Paul reminds the Corinthians that the real power does not lie in the person or the presentation of the minister but in the work of the Spirit.²⁷ He seems to deliberately counter the very thing that the Corinthians looked up to (i.e., "the plausible words of wisdom") by showing the results of his preaching (i.e., transformed lives).

In verse 5, Paul gives the most stringent possible proof for radical Spirit-driven preaching: the self-evident proof of a transformed life and community. Even though his teaching may have lacked human wisdom and appeared to be simple, it was full of the Spirit's power as evidenced by changed lives. Paul had witnessed the conversion of sinners through the preaching of the gospel, and the Corinthians themselves had seen and experienced the transforming power of God in their own lives. This message of the cross shows that Paul's argument, which began in 1 Corinthians 1:18, has come full circle. The message of the cross, which is foolishness to human thinking, is the saving power of God to those who believe it. Thus, the goal of Paul's preaching was to disarm the wisdom of men with the powerful evidence of God's Spirit.

Conclusion

A brief consideration to the four key gathering marks of a true church, centered on the people of God's submitting to the Christian Scriptures, informs us that the first believers in Acts would meet often for the reading, explanation, and teaching of

²⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1987), 94.

Scripture; fellowship; participation in the ordinances; and prayer. As observed in Acts 2:42, the early church prioritized these core activities, and their practice of them marked their gatherings as authentic. These core practices, when rightly observed, help the church become the gospel-centered, disciple-making communities that Jesus's intended—that is, communities that are influenced by a careful study, preparation, and delivery of messages from the Christian Scriptures as well as taught by godly men who are called upon to shepherd the people of God. But many people miss half the point. Getting the outer activities renewed is not the only thing that matters. As examined, 1 Timothy 4:11-16, 1 Peter 5:1-4, and 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 reveal that the Bible has character, conduct, and competency expectations for those who would lead these activities. Pastors' lives will bring shape and support to the validity of their preaching and teaching ministries. These truths reveal God's glorious purposes in the writing and transmission of the Christian Scriptures: he will transform his ministers from the inside out through their respective ministries. This heart experience precedes all public ministry of the Word and will bring validity and authenticity to the messages of ministers as they serve God's people. This is the way God ordained the Bible to work.

CHAPTER 3

REFUGEE CHRISTIAN PASTORS IN THE MIDDLE EAST NEED BIBLE-RICH TRAINING FOR LEADING AND TEACHING THEIR CHURCHES

Many Global Pastors in the Developing World Lack Access to High-Quality Theological Training for Teaching the Bible Effectively

Weymann Lee, of the global resourcing ministry Training Leaders International, says that “75% of all believers today live outside the U.S. in the Majority World, where most of the world’s population resides—in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Many refer to this area as the 10/40 window.”¹ Why is it that the “majority world’s”² leadership is so severely under-resourced in teaching and shepherding their respective flocks in Bible-rich ministry? How can the “resource-rich” church in the developed world leverage its blessings to meet the “theological famine” in the region of the world that Philip Jenkins calls “The Christian Revolution”?³ Why is it that many in the West are disinterested in engaging the training of indigenous leaders? Why are so few Christian churches and ministries aligning their mission resources for indigenous-equipping missions? The answer to these questions will support an alarming trend that must be addressed if pastors in the Global South are to be trained in a redemptive-centered, Bible-rich, and theologically informed shepherding ministry. This

¹ Nick Moore, “Theological Famine in the Majority World,” B&H Academic (blog), July 28, 2016, <https://www.bhacademicblog.com/theological-famine-majority-world/>.

² Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

³ Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 5-7.

chapter will argue for a training team of intentional, Bible-rich, well-trained, spiritually gifted, and culturally sensitive shepherding pastors and professors who will share their shepherding skills in the training of under-resourced church leaders in the Middle East.⁴ A few unique contextual barriers restrain pastors from accessing Bible-rich training but before exploring what those are, consideration must be given to the aim of high-quality theological training. If we hope to train indigenous leaders to be Bible-rich pastors, we must first grasp what it is we are attempting to train.

The Biblical Call to Shepherding and Teaching

The storyline of the Bible significantly involves the development of leadership. God's work of grace throughout redemptive history in calling people to himself and advancing his kingdom hangs upon those whom God calls to lead. Chapter 2 of this project provided the biblical warrant in Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 5:1-4 for elders to pursue a Bible-rich shepherding ministry. Peter urges elders to embrace the serious and sobering task of shepherding their respective flocks with the admonition to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight" (v. 2). Peter says that his shared responsibility as a "fellow elder" who has also suffered for Christ forms the basis for this call. In verse 1, Peter "exhorts" the elders by refreshing them in the privilege of this office, namely, the profound work of shepherding God's people in the Christian Scriptures.

Peter's admonishment to elders seems an appropriate summary text when a brief survey of the history of God's people in the Old Testament is considered. Scripture reveals that God relates to his people as "Shepherd" (Ps 77:20; 78:52). The scriptural motif of God as Shepherd to his people is significant when one considers the

⁴ K. P. Yohannan, *Revolution in World Missions* (Carrollton, TX: Gospel for Asia, 1986), 77.

commonality of the occupation for those in the Near East.⁵ In Genesis 48:15, as Jacob recounts his life, he professes that God “has been my shepherd all my life long to this day.” In Revelation 7:17, as the believers are gathered around God’s throne, the apostle John describes the powerful scene by declaring, “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” From the earliest times, God related to his covenant people as Shepherd—a truth that captivated the imagination of King David when he penned the words “The LORD is my shepherd” in Psalm 23:1. As such, many of the references to “shepherd” in the Scriptures carry some type of Messianic overtone, which are either directly or indirectly fulfilled in Christ’s first or second advent. Peter boldly announces Jesus as “the chief Shepherd” (1 Pet 5:4). Thus, all “under-shepherds” of God’s flock are called to emulate their Master. Herein lies the challenge: most pastors in the Near East have not received the necessary biblical training in the basic “shepherding” skills of serving their people through a Bible-rich teaching ministry. Learning how to lovingly lead their people with biblical integrity, scriptural veracity, and spiritual vitality is the greatest need expressed by pastors in the region.⁶ But how does Jesus “shepherd” his people? Specifically, what parts of Jesus’s ministry are the pastors to strive to duplicate?

In Israel, the shepherd was supposed to act in every way as a leader. The shepherd would lead the sheep to food and water as well as protect the sheep from harmful elements and their enemies. But Ezekiel 34:1-10 describes the “bad shepherds” in the nation of Israel. By the list of things God says these bad shepherds did not do, Ezekiel presents a contrasting picture of what faithful shepherds were meant to do. The faithful shepherd heals the sick, searches for the lost, delivers the captive sheep, and

⁵ John D. David, *Dictionary of the Bible* (Ann Arbor: Baker Book House, 1954), 705-7.

⁶ Keith M. Doyle, “Turkey Conference Personal Journal 2016,” May 2016, Balikeshir, Turkey.

feeds his flock. A good shepherd places the needs of his flock ahead of his own. This ministry of “shepherding” was modeled by Jesus in his earthly ministry.

As Jesus’s ministry dawned, spiritual leadership in Israel was in a crisis.⁷ Charles Quarles describes it this way: “False teachers disguise themselves as Jesus’ disciples to live undetected among the sheep of the flock and thus devour the sheep with great ease.”⁸ In Matthew 7:15, Jesus calls false shepherds in Israel wolves in sheep’s clothing. Just as it matters which moral path is followed as disciples of Jesus, it also matters which spiritual teachers disciples listen to. Jesus tells his people that in order to discern whom to follow, they must watch how leaders act and examine the fruit of their teaching. Jesus’s summary point is that bad shepherds produce bad fruit and that the “wolves” need not succeed when they are detected—rotten fruit will expose a rotten teacher (Matt 7:16-18). Disciples of Jesus must practice spiritual discernment, testing every teaching by the gospel of Jesus and fidelity to the Word of God.

Therefore, throughout redemptive history, God has set apart spiritual leaders to teach and shepherd his people. But there was a problem. Time and again, those whom God set apart to lead proved themselves unfaithful. Similar to, “Hymenaeus and Philetus” described by Paul to Timothy who, “swerved from the truth” (2 Tim 2:17,18). This “falling away” may or may not have been a result of their own doing. But, one clear reason is a lack of Bible-rich, theologically robust, shepherding-focused, and culturally sensitive hermeneutical training and access to biblical resources. According to Nate Dreesmann, this need is certainly true in most developing nations, particularly in the Middle East and especially in Iran.⁹

⁷ Bruce Snavely, *Indigenous: Missions Aimed at Training National Pastors Globally* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 21-27.

⁸ Charles L. Quarles, *Sermon on the Mount: Restoring Christ’s Message to the Modern Church* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 330-331.

⁹ Nate Dreesmann, “God Is Transforming the Muslim World, and ECO Churches Can Be Part of This Story,” ECO, December 4, 2017, <https://eco-pres.org/god-is-transforming-the-muslim-world-and-eco-churches-can-be-part-of-this-story/>.

The Training Deficit of the Global South

Wayne Grudem makes the case that just as the economic realities of the developing world will not be solved by redistributing economic wealth, so also the theological deficits in biblical training will not be solved simply by redistributing spiritual resources.¹⁰ Without minimizing the social and material needs of persecuted pastors in the Middle East, I would argue that the greatest needs in the region are spiritual. Specifically, the need is for comprehensive gospel-centered spiritual training in the interpretation of the Christian Scriptures and spiritual shepherding. Bruce Snavely distinguishes between short-term service and training teams by highlighting the differences between them: “Service, when it coincides with mission, therefore, cannot just be doing good in Jesus’ name. True mission is gospel-centered and focuses on making disciples, planting churches, and training them to reproduce themselves.”¹¹ Under-resourced church leaders in the Near East have limited access to this type of theologically rich training that emphasizes the faithful interpretation of Scripture and a biblical approach to spiritual shepherding care. What they do have is an abundance of access to elements of the social gospel or what has become known as the “health, wealth and prosperity gospel.”¹² As Snavely correctly observes, “These ministries are not gospel-rooted and make no attempt to preach the true gospel in addition to feeding the poor and digging wells.”¹³

Reading the situation among Near East church leaders must be influenced by how recently many of these leaders have come to faith. Most of those in pastoral

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem and Barry Asmus, *The Poverty of Nations: A Sustainable Solution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 76-78.

¹¹ Snavely, *Indigenous*, 7.

¹² Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 38-41.

¹³ Snavely, *Indigenous*, 8.

leadership in the Middle East are first-generation Christians.¹⁴ Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Seminary revealed that over two million in the Global South lack formal theological training.¹⁵ This represents 90 percent of church leaders in this part of the developing world. Because of these factors, church leaders in the developing world have a variety of worldviews that shape their approach to Scripture, often leading to faulty interpretations of the biblical text. In addition, many of these pastors come from impoverished communities where there is little access to or emphasis on basic education. This training deficit intensifies when one considers the reality that this region of the Majority World is where the church is growing rapidly. Many church leaders in these burgeoning church movements do not have the basic skills in reading and writing needed to embark on formal theological training. That is why a new model for achieving this training ought to be considered. This new model can be described as a non-formal oral-based approach that accommodates the unique needs of global leaders through culturally adaptable materials, and it is the preferred method over established formal training systems and traditional seminaries. Ashish Chrispal calls it “re-envisioning theological education as discipling the disciples” and says that this non-formal approach is the transformative shift most needed to enable missional and ministerial formation.¹⁶ Without this type of intentional pivot in approach, many global pastors will remain untrained. The opportunity is ripe for redesigning the traditional model for new ways to serve these fast-growing church movements in an ever-changing world.

¹⁴ David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2005), chap. 1.

¹⁵ Kirsteen Kim, “Unlocking Theological Resource Sharing between North and South: The Need for Missional Theological Education That Values the Whole Church,” *Lausanne Global Analysis* 6, no. 6 (November 2017), <https://lausanne.org/content/lga/2017-11/unlocking-theological-resource-sharing-north-south>.

¹⁶ Ashish Chrispal, “Restoring Missional Vision in Theological Training: The Need for Transformative Pastoral Training in the Majority World,” *Lausanne Global Analysis*, 8, no. 5 (September 2019), <https://lausanne.org/content/lga/2019-09/restoring-missional-vision-theological-education>.

Numerous Political and Economic Barriers Restrain Pastors from Bible-Rich Training

Having established the Bible's call to the biblical, spiritual mandate of Word-focused shepherding leadership and having briefly explored the realities of the training deficit in the Majority World, I hope it has become clear that local church pastors in the Middle East have few resourcing opportunities. This section is not intended to show the necessity of the call to Bible-rich non-formal training for indigenous pastors but to examine some of the barriers that hinder this training from happening effectively. Consideration will be given to one common political barrier and one present economic issue—both of which present significant hardship in providing Bible-rich training to indigenous church leaders.

Tragically, many Iranian church leaders have been and are being imprisoned for their faith due to political and religious persecution. Since the advent of the “Islamic Revolution” in 1979 and the rise of the Islamic Republic in Iran, Christians have been persecuted and imprisoned for their faith. The country experienced a dramatic transformation from a pro-Western authoritarian Monarchy in the 1970s to an anti-Western theocratic republic.¹⁷ Amazingly, however, in recent years, the Iranian church has experienced explosive growth.¹⁸ One story of this remarkable growth in an environment of persecution is the staggering account of two Iranian refugee women living in the city of Balikeshir, Turkey, in 2016.¹⁹ Seventy-five Iranian church leaders from across Turkey, Europe, and the Middle East had gathered for a conference for training in biblical hermeneutics. The aim of the gathering was to show the seventy-five Iranian participants the centrality of God in the gospel through Scripture and how this

¹⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5.

¹⁸ Jason Casper, “Researchers Find Christians in Iran Approaching One Million,” *Christianity Today*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/september/iran-christian-conversions-gamaan-religion-survey.html>.

¹⁹ Doyle, “Turkey Conference Personal Journal.”

approach to the Bible informs faithful interpretation. An overview of Scripture was presented with an emphasis on showing God's glory and God's worth through Christ as the supreme treasure of his people. Specifically, this was applied contextually to the dispersed Persian people.

The attendees gave rapt attention to the training, and the two refugee women sat mesmerized by these truths as they absorbed the biblical content over the course of three days. At the conclusion of the week, the women shared a most remarkable story. They had recently been released from a prison in Iran. The reason for the incarceration was simply that they would not reveal the location of their house-church pastor. The Iranian secret police subsequently arrested them, threatened them, beat them, and finally imprisoned them for their lack of compliance. This entire ordeal of imprisonment lasted for a little over eighteen months. While in prison, they discovered a small group of believers and church leaders who began to mentor and disciple them. Two weeks prior to the training conference in Balikeshir, the ladies' pastor was discovered, taken in custody, and imprisoned. The authorities chose to release both women from prison. In response to this, the two women believed they had no choice but to escape Iran and seek asylum at a refugee camp in Turkey. When these remarkable women were interviewed after the conference, they expressed a deep devotion to Christ and the Scriptures, which had been forged through intensive mentoring during their imprisonment. They were stunned that God would condescend in bringing his revelation to them through the person of Christ in the Scriptures and do so in a language they could understand. They were amazed that God spoke through human authors, using the language of the common people. They were especially drawn to the truth that God would speak in clear and compelling language about who he was and what he had done through Christ and that this applied to the Persian people. This truth captured the imagination of the two women as they were inspired at the conference to go further in their study of Scripture as students of the Word and as bold witnesses for Christ. This stunning story provides an example of a powerful

response to oppressive political and religious persecution. It shows the staggering adaptability and creativity of the Iranian pastors and church leaders who, with limited resources and the authorities against them, used the opportunity to disciple those imprisoned. The women recounted the breadth and depth of the robust biblical, theological knowledge and courage of the imprisoned pastors who so faithfully trained them.²⁰ The two women testified to the surprising and creative ways these imprisoned pastors approached the training of their people. With little theological training or resources, the imprisoned pastors faithfully taught the aim of the Bible's message: God's glory as seen and displayed in creation and in God's Son through the gospel. These women showed a remarkable ability to place the themes of the Bible together in context, had a depth of biblical knowledge seldom observed in the average Christian church in America, and connected the truth of Scripture to their lives. However, they lacked some basic hermeneutical skills and were deficient in piecing together certain theological concepts.

A second (economic) issue is that these same Iranian pastors most often lack the financial resources needed to attend Bible-rich training seminars that must be held outside of Iran due to in-country persecution. Chrispal notes that formalized theological training makes a "critical contribution" to the long-term sustenance of the church in a region or country.²¹ The problem is that this type of training paradigm is either non-existent in many parts of the Middle East or is out of the financial reach of most Global South pastors. In much of the Middle East, there is a desperate shortage of the institutions (colleges and seminaries) of training and available well-trained faculty. If the gravity of this issue is to be addressed, it must be done by reconsidering the historical formalized educational models and methods. These formal theological training models are the

²⁰ Doyle, "Turkey Conference Personal Journal."

²¹ Chrispal, "Restoring Missional Vision in Theological Training."

product of the eighteen-century Enlightenment. In most cases, they simply follow the paradigm of the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, who proposed that church ministry degrees receive acceptance at higher educational institutions and universities.²² The acceptance of Christian theology at institutes of higher learning led to academia's creating silos of Old Testament, New Testament, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology.²³ Schleiermacher's philosophy followed the academic model of higher literary criticism of Scripture and models established by secularists. These long-established models, and the methods they support, continue to keep most Christian leaders in the Majority World from being able to access the theological training opportunities afforded to those in the West. The unfortunate and unintentional result of this approach restricts pastors and church leaders from the critically needed theological educational opportunities and support. The net result is a training deficit in the very part of the world where it is most needed.

Therefore, I can hardly think of a better way in which believers in the developed world, missionary agencies, or globally aware churches might respond to these opportunities than through an aggressive attentiveness to the raising up of "training funds" to facilitate the travel, accommodation, and materials related to church-leader training. Through the development of a stipend or scholarship program, native Majority World pastors and church leaders receive access to Bible-rich training that they otherwise would not be able to afford. The strength of providing this contextually sensitive training to these leaders in their various cultural and geographical contexts has enormous potential. This is the opportunity being presented to the well-resourced church in the developed world—an unprecedented opportunity for the Western church to advance the gospel through the training of indigenous leaders, along with a biblical responsibility to

²² Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 55-67.

²³ Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 75.

navigate the stated complex political and economic challenges. Indigenous leaders in the Global South face the harsh realities of political and economic hardship. There are more implications than the ones observed as the teaching team considers this unique cross-cultural setting.

The Teaching Team Must Consider a Unique Cross-Cultural Setting When Teaching Biblical Interpretation to Global Leaders

Having considered the current plight of the Majority World's church leaders (i.e., their lack of access to Bible-rich training) and two unique political and economic barriers they experience, I must now give attention to the cultural setting the teaching team will face. In dealing with the realities of educational ministry for persecuted Middle Eastern pastors, the teaching team must consider various factors when training pastors in biblical interpretation.

First, the teaching team must consider the contribution of cultural history, of which education is one part. Every community has a heritage or memory that shapes its practice. Robust Christian education that will prove effective for global leader development must seek to identify both cultural and transcultural universals to inform the practices chosen.²⁴ By exploring historical foundations, the teaching team will be better suited to adjust their approach for differing places, settings, and times. Martin Luther regarded history as a narrative of "Divine Providence" as well as a functional guide to life.²⁵ He lauded historians who pursued an understanding of world events as ways to discover the acts of God.²⁶ It will be a priority for the training team to learn the principles

²⁴ Robert W. Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), 123-25.

²⁵ Harold J. Grimm, "Martin Luther," in *A History of Religious Educators*, ed. Elmer L. Towns (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 114.

²⁶ Grimm, "Martin Luther," 114-16.

and practices of the past when adapting a strategy for present opportunities. The team needs to avoid an ahistorical mindset.²⁷ Having historical knowledge and sensitivity means considering the cultural uniqueness of each setting, and a measured understanding of each historical context provides a window into the possibilities and complexities of the educational process. It can help inform and discern what the teaching team should and should not carry into the present training approach and practice—specifically, how each leader’s development of faith is related to a particular social, economic, political, and theological context. Robert Pazmiño says, “It is possible for the Christian to appropriate history with a sense of appreciation and inspiration Through it Christians can appreciate God’s transcendent intervention in the world and God’s immanent working through persons.”²⁸ This approach will prove essential when ministering in a Near Eastern culture.

Second, the teaching team must approach teaching biblical interpretation through the transcultural lens of a Reformed, Christo-centric theological framework: creation, fall, and redemption. A Christo-centric framework provides the transcultural universal discussed earlier in this chapter. Reformed educators observe from Scripture that all people are created in God’s image and for his glory. As such, they seek to inform and invite all people to fulfill their God-given calling to serve and worship their Creator.²⁹ In doing so, believers are to consider the common elements of culture in humanity as they seek to advance God’s kingdom (i.e., the rule of God on earth). Therefore, this reign of God’s coming kingdom goes beyond the spiritual realm to include the created world and society at large. This Reformed framework looks to grapple

²⁷ Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 127.

²⁸ Pazmiño, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education*, 128.

²⁹ Cornelius Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977), 77-78.

with the implications of biblical truth for all the spheres of human life by applying the principle of God's creation of all peoples, cultures, and nations.

Next, a Reformed theological framework that is used when approaching the interpretation and teaching of Scripture is the aspect of the universal fall of mankind. All people have dishonored God and have rebelled against his rightful rule.³⁰ In so doing, they destroyed the earth and victimized others, bringing chaos and destruction to the world and human life. This tenet challenges the educational view of personal autonomy. It annihilates independence from God. It recognizes the tragic results and extent of sin as all pervasive in society. It warns of divine judgment to come upon a broken, lost world.

The final aspect of a Reformed framework of the world as an approach to teaching Scripture transculturally is the biblical theme of redemption. This approach to Scripture gives hope to humanity and creation through God's blessing of sending his Son, Jesus Christ. Out of love, God acted to bring renewal and recreation so that all peoples might joyfully live at peace with God and their neighbors. Through the Holy Spirit's power, believers in Christ look to make positive contributions in society as they anticipate the coming of God's kingdom.³¹ The task before the teaching team is to equip Near Eastern leaders in the multifaceted cultural task of bringing God's kingdom to fullness in their world.³² These persecuted pastors will find fresh motivation in declaring the Bible-rich theme of Christ's saving gospel when they are seeing the Bible's central message.

Each of these aspects—creation, fall, and redemption—is a necessary focus for the cross-cultural teaching team, as it provides biblical breadth to the discipline of

³⁰ Van Til, *Essays on Christian Education*, 83.

³¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Responsible Action* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 33.

³² Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 12.

interpreting Scripture.³³ This big-story-of-the-Bible approach will encourage the pastors that God is still actively working in the world among their people and in their lives, using their teaching ministry to save and restore what has been broken in the fall. Our God still brings deliverance from sin and death and healing to the nations through the faithful interpretation and proclamation of biblical truth.

Third, the teaching team must instruct the Near Eastern pastors in how the Bible fits together. Two techniques are essential. One is to encourage them to go directly to the text and discover the wonderful truths of Scripture for themselves. In teaching the pastors the discipline of biblical exegesis, it is important to train them in examining the text and discerning how it reveals the author's intent.³⁴ Any insight into or understanding of the biblical text must be the product of intensive meditation and reflection. This kind of interrogating of biblical texts is provoked by learning to ask hard questions of the text.³⁵ Enhancing each Middle Eastern pastor's skills in probing the text, pausing to go deeper into the text, and seeing how each passage connects to the big story of the Bible will prove to be a helpful discipline in the hermeneutical process. A second technique is training pastors in the skill of harmonizing and unifying each text by consideration of the big message of Scripture. If God's Word is a God-breathed book, and if the mind of God is coherent and not duplicitous, then a faithful hermeneutical process should aim to support that unity.

Fourth, a blend of biblical competence and character ought to be openly and consistently modeled in the lives of the teaching team and integrated into the instructional

³³ Jim Harries, "Biblical Hermeneutics in Relation to Conventions of Language Use in Africa," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 30, no. 1 (January 2006): 49-59.

³⁴ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 77.

³⁵ Werner Kahl, "Intercultural Hermeneutics – Contextual Exegesis: A Model for 21st-Century Exegesis." *International Review of Mission* 89, no. 354 (July 2000): 421.

ministry.³⁶ The teaching team is to pursue not only the training of Middle Eastern pastors in the task of exploring and discovering the meaning of Scripture but also the demonstrating of how that very truth is to be lived out. David Starling says, “When we approach the Scriptures . . . , we are not only learning the theoretical doctrine of Scripture’s perfections but also, being trained in the sort of practices and dispositions that are to characterize our use of the text.”³⁷ The personal application of the Christian Scriptures in the lives of those bearing its message will bring authenticity and validation to the teaching of biblical truth. What we can conclude from this observation in living out hermeneutical theory is the idea of teaching the gospel and living the good news of Jesus in life and ministry, particularly in the teaching team’s respective teaching ministries. Starling again is helpful when he talks about this hermeneutical interplay applied to real life: “both the gospel’s role in interpretation of Scripture and Scripture’s role in our comprehension of the gospel . . . , which we need for life and salvation.”³⁸ The gospel, when rightly understood, is more than a repository of facts; it is an invitation, a calling, and a declaration to the teachers and readers of Scripture alike. When carefully and purposefully applied, it bears fruit in the lives of those who attempt to teach it. Paul says in Colossians 1:5-6, “Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing.”

Conclusion

What can be concluded from these observations about the Bible-rich-training needs of refugee pastors in the Middle East? First, and importantly, it was established that they lack access to high-quality biblically focused training in hermeneutics, without

³⁶ Joel R. Beeke, *Walking as He Walked* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007), 22.

³⁷ David I. Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 32.

³⁸ David I. Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship*, 107.

which they will continue struggle as faithful shepherds of their respective flocks. Second, one specific political barrier and an economic issue were observed, highlighting the obstacles that need to be addressed if Bible-rich, multifaceted gospel training for indigenous leaders is to happen. Third, the method with which the teaching team addresses issues of cultural sensitivity and historical foundations in order to bring effective resourcing to indigenous pastors hungry for training in biblical interpretation was discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY PROJECT

Most pastors in the Middle East have had little or no theological training. They have limited access to the educational resources necessary for Bible-rich ministry. Considering this, many of these pastors and church leaders are unaware of basic Bible interpretation skills and lack confidence when teaching the Scriptures to their people. When this lack of training is coupled with the explosive growth of the church in this part of the world, many of these leaders are so consumed with leadership and shepherding issues related to their burgeoning congregations that they lack the tools needed to train the many young believers in their churches in basic biblical doctrine. This chapter will provide the research strategy for the project and will outline the continuing development and design of the curriculum and the implementation of the conference in hermeneutics specifically developed to help improve knowledge and increase confidence in basic biblical hermeneutics for exiled church leaders in Armenia. The goal of the training is to build confidence in an understanding of the big story of Scripture and to improve an accurate interpretation of Scripture in order to assist each leader's confidence when teaching God's Word.

To better understand the challenges of this issue, it is essential that the present receptivity of exiled leadership be observed. A survey trip in May of 2018 revealed the dire present biblical and theological drought that many of these leaders live with. Most of the current exiled church leadership in Armenia, or those who visit Armenia from Iran, have had little theological training and have no prospect of accessing the Bible-rich resources that they need. As previously discussed, they are prone to embrace elements of

the prosperity gospel and false doctrine. Each of these trends and issues will be probed in the research, along with the reasons for them, in order to use the results to enhance the curriculum development, scope, and sequence.

This chapter describes the project preparation actions and follows with a discussion of the project goals and implementation strategy. The purpose of this project is to design a curriculum to increase biblical knowledge in the basic principles of hermeneutics for exiled church leaders in Armenia. The first goal is to formulate a pre-conference quiz (APPCQ) through the process of a peer review of the questions in order to assess each of the participating pastor's current level of comfort with and confidence in the Scriptures. The second goal is to develop a nine-session (three-day) curriculum in basic hermeneutics, called "Promised Beforehand," that is reviewed by a three-person expert panel. The third goal is to improve participants' knowledge of and confidence in the Scriptures by delivering the three-day pilot conference in Armenia. The conference will be virtual due to an ongoing war and COVID-19 travel restrictions for Americans desiring to visit Armenia. The fourth goal is to administer a post-conference quiz (APPCQ) in order to measure participants' growth and an interview to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the conference and curriculum. The fifth goal is to create a future ministry plan to continue to increase the quality of training in Bible-rich curricula for Iranian and Syrian pastors in Armenia—this goal will be addressed and evaluated in chapter 5. The successful implementation of each goal will be dependent on a specific measurement. A definitive research methodology will measure when each of these five goals has been accomplished. The research methodology and instruments used to measure the success of each goal will be detailed below.

Goal 1: Pre-Conference Quiz

The purpose of the pre-conference quiz is to probe the receptivity of exiled church leaders in Armenia as well as their confidence in the basic principles of

hermeneutics. The proposed research will use a survey instrument (“Armenian Pastors Pre- and Post-Conference Quiz; APPCQ) to probe the present practices and opinions of exiled church leaders in Armenia.¹ The survey will be administered through an interpreter the day before the “Promised Beforehand” conference begins. Participation in the survey has the intent of harnessing information. The survey will gather four points of categorical data and ten points of quantitative data using a six-point Likert scale (from (1) “Strongly Disagree” to (6) “Strongly Agree”).

The reason for compressing the timeline between the survey and the start of the conference is twofold. First, this method is preferred as a simplistic approach to minimize loss in participation over time. Compressing the timeline is especially necessary in such a volatile part of the world where circumstances can change quickly. Participant availability may be greatly reduced if any extended amount of time passes. Second, this method allows for the immediate collection of accurate, up-to-date data.

Research Instrumentation: Agreement to Participate

The purpose of this research is to probe the receptivity of exiled church leaders in Armenia in the basic principles of hermeneutics to increase their confidence. This assessment will follow a twofold approach. First, a quantitative method of administering a pre- and post-conference quiz (APPCQ) will measure the current capacity and confidence of exiled pastors in Armenia with the intent to redesign a curriculum that will endeavor to increase pastors’ confidence in biblical hermeneutics. Second, a qualitative method of using a post-conference interview led by three indigenous pastors in an open discussion to determine the success of the project. I believe this interview will further inform curriculum content that will serve as a tool in training and strengthening the

¹ John W. Creswell and David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 12.

ability of exiled pastors in teaching Bible-rich messages. The content of the agreement to participate can be found in appendix 1.

Armenian Pastors Pre- and Post-Conference Quiz (APPCQ)

The purpose of this research was to probe the receptivity of exiled church leaders in Armenia via a pre-conference quiz in order to increase confidence in the basic principles of hermeneutics (see appendix 1). This research helped to assess the current level of confidence of exiled Iranian pastors with the intent to strengthen their ability and tenacity in their teaching ministries. This same quiz was re-administered after the conference.

Goal 2: Pre-Conference Curriculum Development

The “Promised Beforehand” curriculum was developed and written after gathering significant feedback from prior conferences in Turkey and Armenia in 2016-2018. It was completed in the spring of 2021. The outline for this course was shared with and reviewed by an expert panel of three volunteers. Each volunteer has significant cross-cultural teaching experience and theological training. One participant is a US seminary professor and two indigenous Armenian pastors. The reason for the engagement of Armenian pastor’s is their unique access to the region and familiarity with Iranian culture. The expert panel offered feedback that was gathered using a curriculum evaluation tool (see appendix 2).

Goal 3: Implementing the Virtual Conference

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the present travel restrictions, the “Promised Beforehand” conference was scheduled in an online format for October 7-11 2021. A network of exiled pastors in Armenia helped recruit participants for the conference. Twelve leaders signed up for the three-day conference.

Goal 4: Interview Protocol

Questions

The following questions were administered in a large group interview at the completion of the “Promised Beforehand” church leaders’ conference in Armenia in the summer of 2021. A panel of three indigenous pastors lead the discussion to facilitate the question-and-answer time at the conclusion of the final session. They kept to the scripted questions only. Notes were taken in Farsi through an interpreter and translated into English.

1. Was there anything in the training this week that you had never heard before?
2. What did you find to be most helpful to your ministry?
3. What did you find least helpful?
4. What parts of the teaching were the hardest to understand? What made it hard?
5. Were there any parts of the training that made you feel uncomfortable?
6. Would you be interested in a future conference? If so, what topics or themes would you like to see covered?

These open-ended interview questions will assist in gathering data for the purposes of plotting the success of each of the goals for the three-day conference. The post-conference interview results will also inform curriculum enhancements for future conferences in Armenia.

Instrumentation Feedback

Peer review and feedback of the original APPCQ revealed that some of the questions were ambiguous and did not provide opportunities for clear answers on the measurement scale. A sliding scale was recommended and implemented, and some of the questions were rewritten for clarity. The peer reviewers felt that there was a good logical flow to the questions that matched the specific audience for which the questions were intended. They noted the simplicity and fittingness of the questions when considering the

cross-cultural context of the intended audience. It was felt that a few more questions could be asked; therefore, two additional questions were added to the quiz.

Considering the feedback from the review served to considerably strengthen the assessment instrument. The peer critique helped bridge the connection between the survey and those participating in it. It was humbling to read the corrections and accept the feedback thereby recognizing, in hindsight, the weaknesses of my material. Those weaknesses were not immediately apparent but the insights, although corrective, proved useful to improving the survey.

Data Collection Plan

Over the past few years, various mission agencies have developed a network of contacts for exiled pastors who are presently displaced in the Middle East. I contacted several of these agencies within this network of pastors digitally, outlining the details of the project and extending an invitation to the “Promised Beforehand” conference. The “Promised Beforehand” conference was scheduled for three days in October of 2021. Conference attendees were assigned a paper-based quiz (APPCQ) along with an individualized anonymous number one day prior to the start of the conference. The APPCQ needs to be paper-based in order to accommodate an accurate translation and computing of the responses.

Data was collected in person and translated from Farsi into English with a team of three local interpreters, and the results were transcribed into a Microsoft Excel document for further analysis and review.

A second step in the data collection process was to schedule and administer the post-conference quiz and the interview questions. The interview questions were administered in a large group interview at the completion of the “Promised Beforehand” conference. A panel of three indigenous pastors lead the discussion and facilitate the question-and-answer time at the conclusion of the final session. They kept to the scripted

questions only. Notes were taken in Farsi through an interpreter and translated into English and digitally sent to the researcher.

Data Analysis Plan

The group observed for this research study were exiled pastors and church leaders who came together for the three-day conference in Armenia in October of 2021. The mixed-methods approach described above was followed. The pastors received the APPCQ survey one day before the beginning of the conference. The survey collected categorical and quantitative data.² The categorical data served to describe the uniqueness of the group. The quantitative data assessed the participants' understanding of and confidence in biblical interpretation and teaching. Each part of this data was analyzed. The same APPCQ was administered at the conclusion of the conference. The pre- and post-quiz responses were compared through an analysis and description of the data. A *t*-test for dependent samples was computed within a time frame of a week to analyze the data and determine whether there was any positive statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-conference quiz results.³

A second step in this mixed-method approach was to gather the feedback from the post-conference interview. The discussion and answers to those questions was harmonized by the three indigenous pastors and translated into Farsi. These summaries as well as a thorough review of the goals and results were included in the conference and curriculum evaluation in chapter 5.

² Andres Lesley, *Designing and Doing Survey Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 62-70.

³ Timothy C. Urdan, *Statistics in Plain English* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 94.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to design a curriculum to increase biblical knowledge in the basic principles of hermeneutics for exiled church leaders in Armenia. The “Promised Beforehand” conference was designed to introduce exiled church leaders in the Middle East to the basic principles of hermeneutics as foundational for teaching Scripture in their churches. The idea behind this was to explore any deficiencies among current church leadership concerning how well they know or understand the grand story of Scripture in order to increase their knowledge and confidence in interpreting and teaching Scripture. The project was also developed to help future teaching teams engage the persecuted Iranian and Syrian church at a comfortable and appropriate level. My intent throughout was to communicate a Christ-centered hermeneutic so that each leader would apply this interpretive grid and solid hermeneutical process in the context of their own teaching ministries.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the participating pastors’ current level of comfort and confidence in the Scriptures. The initial step in this process was for each participant to take the pre-conference quiz (APPCQ). In the initial quiz administered, there were ten questions that asked participants to state their level of agreement along a six-point Likert scale (see appendix 1). Under Part 2, question 6 states, “How confident are you in teaching a Bible lesson from the Old Testament?” An average answer of 3.5 on the six-point Likert scale responded positively to this statement before the project. However, after the project, this number increased to 4.17 of participants who

either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This demonstrates an increase in line with the project's purpose and one of the primary goals. It was the participants' response to question 3 that was the most surprising. Question 3 states, "Do you believe the Bible is sufficient and authoritative to address the everyday issues in your ministry?" In the pre-conference quiz, only 44 percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This question revealed in the participants not only a lack of connection between the teaching of Scripture and its application to real life but also a deeply concerning lack of confidence in the authority of Scripture.

The goal was considered successfully accomplished if the participants demonstrated growth in knowledge from one test to the other. Present practices and opinions were probed in the quiz. The *t*-test of dependent sample results from the pre- and post-conference quiz (APPCQ) can be viewed in appendix 4. In order to evaluate growth in knowledge, the quiz asked ten questions related to the participants' knowledge of, familiarity with, and confidence in the Scriptures using a six-point Likert scale. The results captured in appendix 4 show a mean score increase from 4.33 (pre-conference) to 4.63 (post-conference), with a one-tail "*p*" value of 0.039701551.¹

The rest of the goals were set to move the project toward accomplishing its purpose. I will briefly review the rest of the goals and how they related to the implementation of the project in order to review how successful it was.

Goal 2

The second goal was to develop a nine-session curriculum covering basic hermeneutics and biblical theology, called "Promised Beforehand," and then to have a three-person expert panel review the material. Three members of an expert panel were given a copy of the curriculum draft, the course outline, and the intended learning

¹ "*p*" value less than 0.05.

outcomes, along with a curriculum evaluation rubric in April 2021 (see appendix 2). The curriculum for the conference was designed to introduce exiled church leaders in the Middle East to the basic principles of biblical theology and hermeneutics as foundational for teaching Scripture in their churches. There were four curriculum goals for each participant:

1. Become aware of an overview of the grand themes of Scripture through a Christocentric lens.
2. Develop a better grasp of the creation, fall, redemption, and consummation themes in Scripture through an understanding of the created image, the cracked image, the covenant community, the Christ image, and the completed image.
3. Become aware of the principles necessary for the faithful literal interpretation of Scripture.
4. Learn the basic principles of observation, interpretation, and application of Scripture and how they relate to the teaching/preaching process.

An eight-question four-point scale rubric was used to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum (from 1 = insufficient to 4 = exemplary). The curriculum's average score out of a possible 32 was 28, an 87-percent positivity rate on the rubric as scored by the three-member expert panel (see appendix 2). The panel commented that the individual lessons would be of great value for the particular context for which they were designed.

Goal 3

The third goal was to improve participants' knowledge of and confidence in the Scriptures by delivering the nine-lesson pilot curriculum in a video-conference format with a live facilitating host. The notes were translated into Farsi, and each host provided real-time translation while the videos were being viewed by the participants. The conference was held as a video conference due to COVID-19 travel restrictions for Americans desiring to visit both Turkey and Armenia and the difficulty of gathering Iranian expatriates under these travel restrictions. The first conference was hosted with

seven participants at a church in Kayseri, Turkey, on October 8, 2021. The second conference was hosted with five participants in Yerevan, Armenia, on October 11, 2021. The “Promised Beforehand” curriculum video and translated notes were used at both conferences. Each conference was hosted by an Iranian pastor as a facilitator. Both pastors have attended previous conferences in 2014, 2016, and 2018 with me. Both host pastors are fluent in English and Farsi. Because of the necessity of having the conference in a virtual format, I spoke with each facilitator by telephone the day before each of their respective conferences. Doing so allowed them to ask questions about and respond to issues related to the curriculum, the administration of quizzes, technology, and conducting the post-conference interview. The process to determine whether this goal was successful was to compare the results of the pre- and post-conference quiz. The goal was considered a success if the participants demonstrated growth in knowledge from one quiz to the other. Those results were shown under goal 1. Another way the growth in knowledge could be measured in order to assess the impact of the conference is through an evaluation of the goals and learning outcomes of each lesson. The learning objectives and outcomes for each of the nine lessons are detailed below.

Lesson 1: The Created Image (Gen 1, 2)

Participants were introduced to an understanding of the grand story of Scripture—the story God is writing and how each person is called to be a part of it. The Bible’s story of redemptive history begins with creation: the created image. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of this lesson, the students were able to explain their place in God’s story and the meaning of the created image.

Lesson 2: The Cracked Image (Gen 3-11)

Students were introduced to the devastating effect of sin: the cracked image. Consideration was given to the depths of human brokenness and its impact of mankind’s

relationship to God. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of this lesson, the students were able to relate to their shared experience to the cracked image.

Lesson 3: The Covenant Community Image (Gen 12-Mal 4)

The students explored the call of Abraham and the establishment of an elected covenant community to reveal God’s redemptive plan for all nations (in Christ) through the promise to Abraham and the nation of Israel. This covenant of God is secure even in the repeated failure of Israel. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of this lesson, the students saw how the elected community of Israel by God forecasts the New Testament call of the gospel for all peoples.

Lesson 4: The Christ Image (Col 1:15; Matt 1-Rev 20)

The story of Scripture climaxes in the first advent of Christ, who is the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). Jesus came as the sinless Son of God, and through his death and resurrection, restores the cracked image. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of the lesson, the students learned to apply the gospel as the primary filter through which to interpret Scripture.

Lesson 5: The Completed Image (Consummation: Rev 21-22)

God’s redemptive plan to renew and restore will be accomplished through God’s mission in Christ to the church and for his people (2 Cor 5). The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of the lesson, the students knew how to teach God’s grand story to others.

Lesson 6: Deepening Your Walk in the Word

This lesson explored how reading God’s Word as a story aids and informs the approach to Scripture through the principles of the observation, interpretation, and

application of Scripture. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of the lesson, the students had the starter tools to work toward a process of faithfully interpreting Scripture through story.

Lesson 7: The Principles of Observation (Ps 119:18)

The students walked through six basic types of literature found in Scripture with consideration given to how each should be observed through asking the right questions. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of the lesson, the students had identified various genres of Scripture and how genre influences interpretation.

Lesson 8: The Principles of Interpretation (Ps 119:34)

This lesson surveyed the art of understanding Scripture with particular attention to various approaches to the connection between the context and culture of the biblical text. This lesson concluded with an overview of the biblical story. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of the lesson, the students were able to differentiate between the Bible's grand story and alternative approaches to Scripture.

Lesson 9: The Principles of Application (Jas 1:21, 22)

Participants were challenged to consider the key questions of applying Scripture to themselves—with the goal of life transformation. The learning outcome was as follows: by the end of the lesson, the students were made aware of a series of questions for application.

Final Thoughts

Based on the results of the APPCQ discussed above under goal 1, the listed learning objectives and outcomes, and the post-conference interview question responses,

I believe each learning outcome was successfully achieved as noted, with documented measurable success.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to administer a post-conference interview to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the conference and curriculum (see appendix 3). The interviews were conducted at the conclusion of both conferences in both Kayseri, Turkey, and Yerevan, Armenia. The conference in Kayseri had seven participants, and the conference in Yerevan had five. Each facilitator led the interviews in Farsi, took notes, translated the notes, and emailed them to me here in the United States. The original goal for participation was to have between fifty to seventy attendees, the size of previous conferences in this region of the world. The results of the interviews were a mixed bag when it came to the participants' responses to the interview questions about the significance of the conference. I will mention one high and one low from the summary notes. There were several answers to the question "What did you find to be most helpful to your ministry?" The answers to this question were the most thorough and significant.

Statements dealing specifically with understanding the main themes of the Old Testament were very positive. The overwhelming consensus of the twelve participants was that the conference material had a significant impact on their understanding of Scripture's main story. One person said, "The messages helped me put the many pieces of the Bible together." Another said, "I think Jesus is clearly evident in the Old Testament in many different ways." Under the question "What did you find least helpful?" a variety of responses showed continuing confusion. For example, one participant in Kayseri, Turkey, said, "I just have so many more questions about how to really know what the Bible is saying!" Another said, "As Pastor Keith was speaking about Israel, I became more confused about how Israel fits into God's work in bringing Jesus to the world."

Goal 5

The fifth goal was to create a future ministry plan to continue to increase the quality of training in Bible-rich curricula for Iranian pastors in or visiting Armenia. Due to the pandemic and travel restrictions, the project was changed to video formatting. Hence, this goal will have to reassessed at a later date once the exiled pastors are free to travel to an in-person conference again.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

The project was concluded with the completion of two conferences over the weekend of October 8-11, 2021, in Kayseri, Turkey, and Yerevan, Armenia. At the conclusion of the project, each facilitator administered the post-conference quiz and the group interview questions. Additionally, the feedback from the expert panel who evaluated the “Promised Beforehand” curriculum proved helpful as it served to evaluate the areas of strength and weakness of the curriculum and larger project.

The results of the post-conference quiz and interviews revealed that the participants benefited in showing growth in the knowledge of and confidence in understanding and interpreting the Bible. These results were discussed under goal 3 above and showed that there was an increase in knowledge in a variety of answers to the questions and specifically in how the Old Testament connects to the grand story of Scripture in biblical interpretation. The result was a better grasp of how the various portions of Scripture fit together as a grand story. This was a common refrain from the majority of those attending the conferences. This strength of the project is really encouraging as it was one of the main reasons for initiating the project.

An additional strength was how the “Promised Beforehand” videos came together.² The lessons flowed well and the video production team at our church did a

² Keith M. Doyle, “Introduction (Promised Beforehand),” Promised Beforehand, October 5, 2021, YouTube video, 15:16, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7xpMq3uQKQ&list=PLrargGG_Zi cHpUjeQmh073xIySpHbH16&index=1.

great job in recording, editing, and posting the videos on YouTube for easy access by the exiled church leaders in both Turkey and Armenia. Both groups expressed appreciation for the easy access to and quality of the video materials and translated notes. Also, the participants engaged the teaching videos over a two-day period and grasped a good amount of material in a relatively short space of time. I believe that focusing on the meta-narrative of Scripture, along with simple guidance and questions, kept the content of the project focused. The simple structure of the lessons, with built-in breaks for translation and catch up, allowed for small teaching moments in each group and helped the in-person facilitators to engage group discussion on the issues at hand.

There were a few glaring weaknesses of the project. First, the challenge of finding a way to implement the project caused me to settle for a less-than-ideal solution. With the advent of COVID-19 last year, it became increasingly apparent that an in-person conference would not be a possibility. A variety of alternatives were explored with my project advisor, Anthony Foster. We concluded in July that a video conference streamed on YouTube would be the best. I proceeded to shoot, edit, and post the video content for the “Promised Beforehand” conference material in early October 2021. The videos were accessed by two Iranian groups on October 8 and 11, 2021, with a total of twelve participants. If there was any way I could go back and change the path we took, I would. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the attended conferences of my previous five trips to Armenia and Turkey yielded an average attendance of seventy-five leaders. It was therefore deeply disappointing to settle for two virtual conferences with twelve total participants.

Second, one of the local facilitators told me that a few of the questions on the quiz did not translate well into Farsi. This made the post-conference group interview and discussion time more difficult as too much time was devoted to understanding the questions rather than allowing for free-flowing discussion. An oversight on my part was

that I did not review the interview questions with any Farsi speakers before publishing them.

In conclusion, this project had several strengths and weaknesses. Reading through the post conference notes from the discussions and hearing feedback was invaluable. The vast majority of the feedback was of a positive nature, so I believe the project attained its stated purpose and goals.

Theological Reflection

The project offered various opportunities for deeper theological insight, a deeper understanding of expatriate Iranian church culture, and opportunities for the personal growth of the participants and the teacher. The theological work for this project is captured in chapters 2 and 3. However, two final thoughts surfaced during project implementation that are worthy of mention.

First, the feedback from the pre- and post-conferences quizzes, the post-conference interviews, and conversations with the two facilitators revealed a low present level of understanding of the Old Testament among the Iranian leadership community. This feedback confirmed my suspicion. Perhaps this is due to a lack of teaching on the Old Testament in the Iranian church culture or just general confusion over how the Old Testament fits into the grand story of Scripture through a Christ-centered hermeneutic. Another factor might be socio-political and economic policies of the current Iranian government toward the state of Israel, which may affect the lens through which Iranians engage Old Testament Scripture. Some of the most valuable feedback from the questions and interviews pointed to the lack of understanding in Old Testament texts and renewed a vision to enhance this element of the curriculum even further.

Second, the project introduced me to a large number of new theological resources on the subjects of hermeneutics and Christ in the Old Testament. These helped me to better understand the discipline of a faithful application of hermeneutics in my own

Bible-teaching ministry. I was exposed to the various views about a Christ-centered hermeneutic and resources to help understand and teach a Christ-centered hermeneutic. Several of the resources will serve as ongoing equipping materials as I continue to develop curricula for the future. These resources will continue to serve my ministry to the local and global church in the training of pastors and teachers for Christ's kingdom.

Personal Reflection

As I was thinking through the feedback of the participants and my own reflections on the project, I would have included more practical applications of the principles in each of the nine lessons. According to the two facilitators, there was more time and opportunity than I anticipated for group interaction, real-time feedback, and applying the lesson learned in each session. In hindsight, I would have used that time more effectively for practical assignments and group interaction. Finally, this project has been extremely helpful to me pastorally. My church has noticed improvements in my weekly preaching and teaching ministry as a result of this project. First, making and editing the "Promised Beforehand" videos forced me out of my comfort zone and stretched me. Second, seeing the faces of the two Iranian facilitators on a FaceTime call after they had previewed the material and were preparing for their respective conferences was a huge pastoral encouragement to me.

APPENDIX 1

ARMENIA PASTORS PRE- AND POST- CONFERENCE QUIZ (APPCQ)

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to assess your current understanding and competency in hermeneutics. Keith Doyle is conducting the research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions at the beginning and conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of the quiz, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

I agree to participate ID#_____

I do not agree to participate

APPCQ

Part 1

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

1. Do you consider yourself a Christian?

___ A. Yes

___ B. No

2. Have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation?

___ A. Yes

___ B. No

3. Are you married?

A. Yes

B. No

4. Are you the pastor of a church?

A. Yes

B. No

5. What is your age in years?

A. 18-24

B. 25-34

C. 35-44

D. 45-54

E. 55-64

F. 65 and over

6. Have you had any formal theological training?

A. Yes

B. No

Part 2

Directions: The following questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Please circle the appropriate answer.

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. Do you have sufficient knowledge for your teaching ministry? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. Do you read and/or study your Bible frequently? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Do you believe the Bible is sufficient and authoritative to address the every day issues in your ministry? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. How confident are you in providing spiritual care for the people in your ministry? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 5. If someone asked you to explain the gospel, how comfortable would you be? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. How confident are you in teaching a Bible lesson from the Old Testament? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. How much does your lack of training and resource affect your ability to teach the Bible? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. How consistently do you apply the truth you learn from Scripture in your own life? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. Are there other leaders in your church who might benefit from this training? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. Are you willing to commit to three, eight-hour days of training in biblical hermeneutics? | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

APPENDIX 2
CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

ARM Conference Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
“Promised Beforehand” Evaluation					
1 = insufficient 2 =requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum is relevant to matters of biblical interpretation.					
The material is faithful to the Bible’s teaching and is theologically sound.					
The teaching method is logical and clear.					
The questions at the beginning of each lesson are clearly stated and are answered later in the material.					
The main points in each of the three sections: principles of observation, interpretation and application of Scripture are clear and support the main thesis.					
The lessons contain appropriate points of practical application.					
The material is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					
Overall, the curriculum is clearly presented and is presented at a level appropriate for most participants.					

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Questions: The following questions will be administered in a large group interview at the completion of the “Promised Beforehand” church leaders conference in Armenia in the Summer of 2020. A panel of three indigenous pastors will lead the discussion and facilitate the question-and-answer time at the conclusion of the final session. They will keep to the scripted questions only.

1. Was there anything in the training this week that you had never heard before?
2. What did you find to be most helpful to your ministry?
3. What did you find least helpful?
4. What parts of the teaching were the hardest to understand? What made it hard?
5. Were there any parts of the training that made you feel uncomfortable?
6. Would you be interested in a future conference? If so, what topics or themes would you like to see covered?

APPENDIX 4
APPCQ RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-Conference Quiz Results

Pre-Conference Quiz Results										
Part. #	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7	Q. 8	Q. 9	Q. 10
1	3	5	3	2	3	2	2	3	6	6
2	5	6	4	4	4	4	4	6	6	6
3	2	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	6	6
4	2	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6
5	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	6	6
6	1	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	6	6
7	5	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	6	6
8	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	6
9	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	6	6
10	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5
11	3	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	6	6
12	4	5	5	4	4	2	3	4	5	6
Q. Avg.	3.25	4.83	4.17	3.83	4	3.5	3.83	4.17	5.75	5.92
Avg. of Avg.	4.33									

Table A2. Post-Conference Quiz Results

Post-Conference Quiz Results										
Part. #	Q. 1	Q. 2	Q. 3	Q. 4	Q. 5	Q. 6	Q. 7	Q. 8	Q. 9	Q. 10
1	3	5	4	3	4	3	3	4	6	6
2	5	6	5	5	4	5	5	6	6	6
3	2	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	6	6
4	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
5	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	4	6	6
6	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	6	6
7	5	6	5	5	6	5	5	4	6	6
8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	6
9	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
10	5	6	6	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
11	3	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	6	6
12	3	3	2	3	4	2	3	3	6	6
Q. Avg.	3.67	4.75	4.33	4.17	4.5	4.17	4.5	4.42	5.83	5.92
Avg. of Avg.	4.63									

APPENDIX 5
CONFERENCE CURRICULUM

“PROMISED BEFOREHAND”

Introduction to the Grand Story of Scripture

UNDERSTANDING THE STORY WE ARE IN

Lesson 1

The power of story for our lives: In J.R.R. Tolkien’s sensational series *The Lord of the Rings*, there is a poignant scene toward the end with the two hobbits Frodo and Sam, the fellowship of the ring has fallen apart; their friends are long gone on another part of the journey. And it’s into the shadow of Mordor these two little hobbits come-on a journey to save the world, when suddenly Sam says to Frodo, **“I wonder what sort of tale this is that we’ve fallen into?”** Samwise Gamgee’s question is a good one for Frodo-but it is also a good question for us. What sort of tale have WE fallen into?

“If we want to know who we are and what we are to do, we must first determine the story to which we belong.” Alasdair MacIntyre

“Our contemporary unbiblical preference, both inside and outside the church, is for information over story.” Eugene Peterson

The stories we have been told and the stories we tell ourselves have tremendous power to shape our identity.

- Let’s say you have certain ideas about God:
 - That God is cruel-angry-intolerant-impatient.
 - Or you have been told the story that the gospel is about trying harder.
 - Or that Jesus saves, but it’s up to you to do the rest!

It's not only important to ask: **WHAT'S YOUR STORY?**

But to ask: **WHAT STORY ARE YOU LIVING BY?**

And: **IS THE STORY YOU ARE LIVING BY, THE STORY YOU WANT TO LIVE BY?**

Any story worth giving power to shape our lives must pass a simple test:

- Is it beautiful?
- Is it good?
- Is it true?

Of all the stories I find most compelling is God's story. This is the story that has the greatest power to shape our lives and experiences. But many people find the Bible intimidating or complicated.

- The more we read it, the more we realize how little we understand it.
- **Many approach the Bible as if it is a string of graduated pearls without the string.** We know the various stories, the characters-but what we do not know is how they all relate and connect to each other.
- Think about the Der. Of the Eng. Word "Gospel."
 - Come from middle English word, "Godspell"
 - Compound of god (good) and spell (news of account)
 - Formerly "to tell a story was to "cast a spell"

Point: Whenever we read God's story through the lens of our 'bias', or brokenness – we are actually self-editing the story.

What does God say about who we are? Who are we in his story?

1. The Created Image – Genesis 1-2

"Let us make man, Adam" (human beings) in our own image (Greek. Eikon)." Gen. 1:26-27

- **We have to be aware of the biases we bring to Genesis 1-2.**
 - BIAS: These chapters address the question of human origin.
 - BIAS: Old SS, flannel graphs, cute quaint, hopelessly idealistic
 - BIAS: Merely introductory/preface material in order to get to the real stuff. Our starting point often goes wide of mark. Many times

we begin our discussion of the Bible in the wrong place. Genesis 3 rather than Genesis 1.

- **Everything was GOOD (31). He blessed them...**

POINT: Whenever we read God's story through the lens of our "bias", or brokenness- we are actually self-editing the story.

- **Gen 1-2 intended to elicit a Godward response on our part toward God.**
 - Awe & wonder over His majesty
 - Awareness of his holiness
 - Appreciate for his exquisite beauty
 - Delight in his redemptive plans and purposes.

POINT: If we do not understand the significance of what God was seeking to arrange in the Garden of Eden, we will miss the rest of the story God is writing...

- **Where are we? The goodness of creation**
 - This material and earthy stuff is not evil-the world as God created it is not an evil place.
 - The natural world as more than just nature-more than just molecular structure-it is good (7x)
 - Good because it is charged with the glory and grandeur of God.
 - The Bible begins/ends with CREATION.
 - Gospel does not begin with Jesus' birth.
 - It begins with the good earth that God made through Jesus Christ.
 - Large part of our story is celebrating that creation in all its richness is the wonderful gift of God.
- **Who Are We? – the goodness of humanity**
 - We have to recognize when we read these opening chapters, they require us to:
 - Go to a **place** we've never been
 - To an **experience** we've never had
 - To a **status** we've never enjoyed
 - For a **purpose** we've never realized
 - On day 6 of God's creative project-God presents his crowning achievement - man!
 - Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and

over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:26-28

- “Let us make man in our image” – creation of mankind in a class by itself.
- Not used of any other creation.
- Trinity involved in creation of man - something not said of anything else.

Quote by Christopher J.H. Wright:

“It may be easy to forget, but we were human beings before we became Christians, and we don’t stop being human beings when we do become Christians (though some Christians make you wonder...). And God will hold us accountable for our humanity as much as our Christianity.”

○ **Why Are We? – the Purpose of Life**

- 2 things stand out regarding man:
 - Human beings are to image God-vs. 26-27
 - God designed human beings with a purpose. That purpose is to “image” God or “reflect” God. Reflect God back to God through worship. Reflect God to others through stewardship.
 - **Human beings are to exercise dominion or rule within creation-vs. 26, 28**
 - Background: Heb. *radah*, a strong word meaning, “the imposing of one’s will on another.” Not in the sense of violence or abuse, but rather the responsibility of exercising dominion.
 - Exercising dominion is not what constitutes the image of God.
 - Exercising dominion is what being created in God’s image entitles/authorizes us to do.
 - In ancient times Kings would set up “images of themselves”-reminders of their authority.

- Similarly, God has installed the human species within creation and authorizes us to exercise a “kingly authority.”
 - **This represents God’s first mission mandate to human beings and as far as I can tell reading the rest of Scripture, God has not repealed that mission mandate.**
 -
 - **Whose Are We? – The Meaning of our Existence**
 - Two very prominent words for God in Gen 1-2
 - Elohim-used 32x and 14x respectively
 - One true God, all powerful, infinite, omniscience, transcendent.
 - Jehovah – not used in Gen. 1. Does not appear until 2:4.
 - One who is righteousness, holiness and love.
 - This is The God who is to be enjoyed.
 - No accident that the writers use this word to introduce section on creation of man.
 - Man is to enjoy God in a way the rest of creation cannot.
 - God’s message to humankind in opening chapters.
 - God is CREATOR & LORD of all
 - God OWNS all
 - Whom human beings will ultimately ANSWER for all.
 - Consider this:

Some people resist and resent the notion that mankind is accountable or answerable for anything or to anyone for the choices they make. But consider this: does not the fact that I have to ultimately account for my choices and decisions invest my choices with greater significance? Could it be that God is actually paying humanity a compliment by requiring him to be responsible for his choices? Holding humanity accountable does not mean

God is cruel; it means that God intrinsically values human beings and takes our choices very seriously.

- **Conclusion:**
 - By considering these four questions, we are in a much better position to properly understand our need for salvation & redemption.
 - One is the corollary of the other.
 - Consider this insight from Dallas Willard:

“What ‘salvation’ is depends upon what is being saved. Before something can be saved it must face the risk of being lost. And essentially, it is the nature of what is being saved that determines how it can be at risk and at loss.... If we want to know what it is to save a human being, to redeem the human soul or personality, we cannot find a better way to begin than by asking: what did God make me when he made us, and how could creatures such as we be at risk and at loss?” Dallas Willard in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

Or as Cornelius Plantinga says,

“The only way we can detect when something is not supposed to be this way is by familiarizing ourselves with the way “things ought to be.”

Lesson 2

The Cracked (corrupted)...Image-Genesis 3-11

- The old-fashioned signpost has now fallen over and is pointing downward.
- Or using a different analogy – think of a mirror.
- Then think of a cracked mirror.
- Image is not eliminated or obliterated.
- The “image” has collapsed in on itself rendering human beings incapable of loving and relating to God.
- Simply a distorted and misshapen image of what once was.

“Sin is an unpopular subject, and Christians are often criticized for going on about it too much. But they only do so because they are realists. Sin is not a convenient invention of church ministers to keep them in their job; it is a fact of human experience.” John Stott, in *Basic Christianity*

- *Sin brings disastrous consequences: Genesis 3-11*
 - **Physically and Environmentally**
 - Human beings subject to death and decay.

- Live in a physical environment that is under the curse.
- *“The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”* Rom. 8:22
- **Psychologically**
 - Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect mental health in the Garden.
 - When sin entered, shame, guilt and self-deception came along with it. (3:7)
 - Many psychologists would argue that the source of much mental illness today can be traced to unresolved guilt and self-deception.

- **Intellectually**
 - Humans have become adept at using our powers of rationality to explain, deny, excuse and normalize our sinful behaviors.

- **Relationally & Socially**
 - Every social relationship has been fractured
 - Marital, parental, personal, familial, societal, international, ethnic tensions, gender wars-you name it, there is no relationship that has not experienced disharmony.
- **Spiritually**
 - Sin causes man and woman to succumb to the tempter’s bait-to doubt the validity and authority of God’s good word. Gen 3:1
 - Sin alienates us from God-we go into hiding – Gen. 3:8, 10 (9twice we are told they hid)
 - The first promise of the Gospel (3:15)-a gospel that will address every problem that sin has created-along with the final destruction of all that is evil.
 - Consequence: Metaphor scriptures uses “exiles” in Gen. 3:23-“So the Lord banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground.”
 - We became exiles-fugitives from God!
 - In creation-god’s designs was for human beings to become like God with god.
 - In the fall, human beings desire to become like God without God. Climaxing in Gen. 11
 - **By the time we reach Gen. 11 there are two enormous problems:**
 - The sinfulness of every heart.

- The fracturing of the nations
- Error was not the tower of Babel
- Error was the attempt to unite and live in one place
- God destroys the bond of language & disperses the people
- Gen 3-11 Moral deterioration-darkness-depravity-dispersal

- **Sin is a universal reality.**
 - We did not lose the image of God-the image of God collapsed in upon us.
- **Traces of God's Image**
 - The longing for justice
 - The quest for spirituality
 - The hunger for relationships
 - The delight in beauty

Taken from N.T. Wright's Simply Christian

Lesson 3

The Covenant Community- Genesis 12-Malachi

- Key text: Gen. 12-Malachi
- God does not abandon his creation project.
- He will choose to redeem it...
 - Within history
 - Through people
- The whole OT is the account of this community.
- Key text is Genesis 12
 - **Election of Abraham was for the blessing of all nations.**

(Blessing promised to Adam)...

 - Words *bless* and *blessing* shine through like golden thread
 - 12:1-3 five times the word "bless" or "blessing" occur.

Same word used in Gen. 1:28-Heb. Barak

 - God will not forget the human race nor that he still desires to "bless" the human race.
 - **Could be called the first Great Commission**
 - **LINEAR VIEW OF REDEMPTION**

- The blessing spoken of here was within a covenant relationship in which Abraham responded in faith and obedience.
- Blessing was not mechanical or automatic.
- Blessing would flow only as Abraham and Israel responded in obedience to God.
- **IMPORTANT: Obedience was not the means of earning or deserving the blessing-it was the means of living within the blessing.**
- **Later when God gave his community laws-these laws were not a ladder by which the unsaved climbed to get into God's good books.**
- **Rather his laws provided a pattern for the life of obedience, so that those already in God's good books, by redemption, may live according to God's will and experience his covenant blessings.**
- **God's Universal Mission-the blessing of all nations.**
 - If humanity as a whole is subject to curse of sin-then humanity as a whole must be reached by God's blessing.
 - God chooses one nation, but all nations benefit
 - One nation represented by One Man-Jesus Christ.
- Through one Man redemptive blessing available to all
- **Announcement of the Gospel:**

“The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations will be blessed through you.’ So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham.” Galatians 3:8, 9

- **Election and Mission**
 - Tend to think of this doctrine as it relates to salvation
 - Understand doctrine thru the lens of the NT ONLY!
 - For 1st time God choosing and electing a nation-
 - Not so that his family would be saved but so that his family would be a blessing to others.
 - Here election is seen as a doctrine for Mission-not as a calculator for who is saved and who is not!
- **Here's the problem-God's people do not get the job done.**
 - Something terribly wrong-they fail to get the job done.

Fail to achieve ONENESS.
- **Woven into the story of OT Israel is a deep thread of failure.**
 - Abraham chosen to Father a nation-lies about wife.
 - Moses murders a man, leads people out-gives law, sins in the desert.

- Joshua leads people PL, but can't shake off idolatry
- David becomes king, cannot control his sexual desires.
- Sol builds a temple, but succumbs to compromise & in one generation one nation has a civil war and divides
- "This is the story of the Lord's people. They are the vineyard of the Lord Almighty. Israel and Judah are his pleasant garden. He expected them to yield a crop of justice BUT INSTEAD HE FOUND BLOODSHED. He expected to find righteousness, but instead heard the cries of oppression." Isaiah 4:7 (NLT)
- One nation deported to Assyria & other to Babylon.
- God leads people out of exile back to Promised Land, rebuild the temple...and whole thing starts over again.
- Even though God's people fail time and time again, God remains committed to his covenant promises to Abraham **and David...**
 - Ex: Psalm 106
 - All of these episodes are instances of the people of God being unfaithful, yet God continues to be faithful to them and to foster the conditions among them in which godliness can flourish.
- Lesson: Israel will not get the job done UNTIL the job is done for them.

Lesson 4

The Christ Image-(Redemption) – Matthew-Revelation 20

- Bible's whole story heading in direction of a PERSON.
- Image broken/shattered in Garden, perfectly lived out in Jesus Christ.
 - Col. 1:15, "**Image of the invisible God**"
 - Heb. 1:3
 - John 1:14
 - John 14:9
- What God designed ORIGINALLY in the Garden of Eden, he NOW makes possible through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead!
- Christ's death and His resurrection were not only meant to save us *from* something-our sin-but his death and **resurrection were intended to save us to something.**
- Christ's death and resurrection is not the END or even the GOAL of the story.
- The ultimate goal is **restoration and renewal**-it is the new creation. It is God's desire to see His original project in Eden begin to take place right here, right now.
- What is the chief end of man?

HOW WE REDUCE THE GOSPEL

- **EXERCISE:** *Turn to your neighbor: How would you go about sharing the gospel w/someone who has never heard it?*
- Though we use the term Gospel freely, we are often unclear about its content.
- We present PROPOSITIONS/3-4 KEY PRINCIPLES instead of STORY
- We think PAST w/a FUTURE implication (Gospel is all about delivering me from SIN and SECURING HEAVEN)

Instead of

- PRESENT w/implications here and now. “HELPS ME TO DEAL W/SIN RIGHT NOW).
- SO much more
- AWARENESS produces APPRECIATION:
 - AWARENESS of seeing God as He actually is (Holy)-Isaiah 55:8-9
 - AWARENESS of seeing myself as I really am (sinful)-Jer. 17:9-10
 - AWARENESS PRODUCES APPRECIATION
 - Jesus’ perfection-his sacrifice-his love-his grace-his forgiveness
- #1 way we reduce Cross is PRETEND-we minimize our sinfulness by making myself out to be something I am not. Six ways to minimize:
 1. We defend-when we are confronted about our sin we have a tendency to explain it away, talk about our successes or justify
 2. We fake it-we strive to keep up appearances
 3. We hide-different from faking it (about appearances). We hide sin because we are filled w/Shame.
 4. We exaggerate it-such a terrible person, which places more focus on us than the cross.
 5. We blame-we refuse to take ownership of our sin.
 6. We downplay it-we do not give ‘weight’ to what we have done.
- #2 way we reduce Cross is PERFORM-we minimize God’s holiness by reducing His standard to something I can meet. We lower God’s standards.
- Pretending and performing reflect our sinful attempts to secure our own righteousness & identity apart from Jesus.
- EXERCISE: Name some ways we attempt to secure acceptance, approval, security and significance apart from Jesus?
- God is always pleased with us, because He is pleased with Jesus.

The Three-Dimensional Chief End of Man

- ROMANS 8:29

- 2 COR. 3:18
- 1 JOHN 3:2

Lesson 5

The Completed Image- (Consummation) Rev. 21-22

- If it is true that in the Fall the signpost has been bent over and faces the ground where it is planted. And if in Jesus, the signpost has now been stood up again. Then, what are we to do about that?
- We are to go forward towards God's ultimate purpose for the creation.
- Everything that God dreamed of for us in the Garden is not restored all at once.
- We still see "through a glass dimly," but one day "we shall see face to face."
- God promises us that the complete restoration of all things is yet to come. It has not arrived yet.
- We live between Easter and the ultimate restoration of all creation. That final restoration occurs when Christ comes a second time to establish the new heavens and the new earth.
- As real as the Day of Judgment is, the Bible does not end with this day.
- Bible ends with a NEW DAY-a day that will usher in the new heavens and the new earth.
- "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God, He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, "I am making all things new." And he also said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Rev. 21:3-4
- Some Christians view the faith experience exclusively as god's "Rescue Operation."
 - God rescues us from a big, bad, evil world and then we wait around until it is time to be whisked off to a better place.
- But what if we began to see God's work-not as a RESCUE but as true RENEWAL & RESTORATION.
 - God's ultimate plan is to bring us back to Eden and fulfill the project He started in the Garden.
 - If the gospel RENEWS you inwardly-the Gospel also SENDS you outwardly.

- The gospel not only works ON us and IN us, it also works THROUGH us.
 - If the Gospel of Jesus Christ has renewed your heart-it will also renew your desire to reach beyond yourself
 - We are not just listeners of that story-but we have a starring role in it?
 - What if instead of sitting around waiting to be whisked off to a better place, I began to view my role in this story as a glad participant and co-laborer with God in his work of RESTORATION?
 - What if my place in the story is as God's partner breathing truth, justice, mercy, compassion, beauty, and peace into the broken places in my world?
 - What if I dared to believe that the space between my two feet is the same space I declare, "This belongs to God!"
 - What if for a brief moment I can actually turn back the hands of time and give the world a glimpse of what life was like *before* sin entered the world?
 - What effect might this mindset have on the world around me and on my place in that story?
 - My desire for people to be restored in the name of Christ overcomes any urge I have to be offended by their sin.
 - Give up the role of being a cultural critic and become a cultural restorer and in this way I echo God's voice in the Garden-the Creator is in love with His creation.
- STORIES WITHIN A STORY
- **God's mission:** the glory and fame of God Almighty will be the national anthem of all nations.
 - **Israel's mission:** not only to sing that anthem but to teach to other nations.
 - **Jesus' mission:** two fold; to bring back the preserved of Israel & to make them a light so that his salvation might reach the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6)
 - **Church's mission:** What they had freely received from Jesus they were to transmit it and multiply-so that all nations would Know Him.
 - **My mission:** a changed heart-a changed perspective about the world-a changed understanding of my mission in this world.

How do I continually keep the STORYLINE of the Bible before me?

- Follow a plan but vary the plan year by year.
 - Old parable: how do you eat an elephant-one bite at a time.
 - Read through the Bible in a year
 - Read a Psalm in the morning and one in evening-you will read through the book of Psalms 5 times in a year.
 - Read through the Book of Esther once a day for 7 days.
 - Read one Proverb each day of the month. Read book 12 times in a year.
 - Concentrate on one book of the Bible for a month
- Keep the *Five Themes* in mind as you read.

Examples:

- How does Genesis 3:15 point ahead to Jesus Christ?
- In what ways does the book of Jonah relate to the call of Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3?
- How does Paul's sermon in Athens recorded in Acts 17 reflect the creation account in Genesis 1-2?

REMEMBER...

The goal of Bible Study is not information – it is transformation or life change.

Lesson 6

DEEPENING MY WALK IN THE WORD

The Principles of Observation, Interpretation and Application of Scripture

Many believers are *under* the word – but they are not *in* the Word for themselves. *Like a person who listens to someone else read a menu and never ordering a meal from it for themselves.*

- *The Bible is a book that will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book.*
- I'm either in the word and the Word is conforming me to the image of Jesus Christ-or I'm in the world and the world is squeezing me into its mold (read, consider Rom. 12:1,2)

WHY MANY PASTORS/PEOPLE DO NOT READ THE BIBLE

1. **It is not very relevant to my circumstances.** Bible is old, outdated and out-of-touch. I need something that works.
2. **I do not know how to study the Bible.** To this person, it is about technique or know-how. Like me plumbing or electricity.

3. **I just do not have time to study the Bible.** I get this one. We are all busy. But especially for pastors, study of the Word is not an option-it's essential!
4. **I cannot seem to make it interesting.** Hard to get people interested in your insights about the Bible.

THE BENEFITS OF READING AND STUDYING THE BIBLE

1. Bible study is essential for personal growth.

“Life newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation’ (1 Peter 2:2)

Three thoughts from this verse:

- **Attitude** – uses expressive figure of speech-like newborn infants. Baby has to have milk to sustain itself physically. Likewise, scripture sustains spiritual life.
 - **Appetite** – long for it, insatiable appetite.
 - **Aim** – in order that I might grow. Notice that it does not say: in order that I might know. Bible was not written to satisfy my intellectual curiosity, but to conform me to Christ.
2. Bible study is essential to your spiritual maturity
 Hebrews 5:11-14 – *About this we have much to say, and it is **hard to explain**, since you have become **dull of this hearing**. For though by this time you ought to become teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the Word of Righteousness, since he is a child. But **solid food** is for the mature...*”
 - Writer says he has “a lot to say” and it’s “hard to explain”
 - Is the problem revelation or reception?
 - Writer seems to lay the issue at the feet of those who have “a learning disability” – “dull of this hearing” –slow to learn.
 - The issue is time. Underline it.
 - Ought to be learning college subjects – got to go back to the ABCs
 - Should be communicating this to others – need to go back and learn it for yourselves.
 - Should be ready for the full meal-instead you have to be spoon-fed
 - All of these are hallmarks of immaturity
 - What are hallmarks of a mature person?
 - They have finely tuned ability to discern good from evil
 - They have trained themselves through constant practice to allow the Word to shape their way of thinking.
 3. Bible study is essential for spiritual effectiveness.

“All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- If you get into the Word with regularity, it will do 4 things for you:
 - It will structure the way you think – “teaching”
 - It will tell you when you are out-of-bounds. It will help you straighten what is crooked or purify what is unclean.
 - It will provide positive guidelines to follow
 - In short-this is what it means to be fully prepared
 - Learning to study the Bible prepares you as a servant of Jesus Christ.

3 Steps of our process: Getting into the Bible and getting the Bible into you!

The goal of Bible study is not information – it is transformation and life change.

Three Steps:

1. Observation – what do I see in the Bible?
2. Interpretation – what does it mean?
3. Application – how does it work in everyday life?

LEARNING TO READ THE BIBLE AS A STORY

1. We live in a storied universe. Stories compel us.
2. God’s story should compel us the most...
3. Illus.: Nesting dolls to illustrate the way the bible functions simultaneously as story on many different levels – or stories within stories
 - a. The biggest story
 - b. The bigger story
 - c. The big story
 - d. The church’s story
 - e. Your story
4. Every story has characters, plots, themes
5. The biggest story is God’s plan for redemptive history
6. **“Five Themes”**: 5 key themes in the Biblical story

The Created Image – Genesis 1-2

Let us make Adam (human beings) in our own image (Greek: eikon)”

Genesis 1:26-27

Our starting point often goes wide of mark. Many times we begin our discussion of the Bible in the wrong place. Genesis 3, rather than Genesis 1.

- That this material and earthy stuff is not evil – the world as God created it is not an evil place!
- The natural world as more than just nature-it is in fact charged with the glory and grandeur of God.
- **Human beings are to image God** (v. 26-27)
- God designed human beings with a purpose. That purpose is to “image” God or “reflect” god. Reflect God back to God through worship. Reflect God to others through stewardship.
- **Human beings are to rule** (vs. 26, 28)
- Background: Hebrew *radah*, a strong word meaning “the imposing of one’s will on another”. Not in the sense of violence or abuse, but rather the responsibility of exercising dominion.
- This represents God’s first mission mandate to human beings and as far as I can tell reading the rest of scripture, God has not repealed that mission mandate.
 - The Cracked Image – Genesis 3-11
 - The Covenant Community – Genesis 12-Malachi
 - The Christ Image – Matthew – Revelation 20
 - The Completed Image – Revelation 21-22
- Follow a plan but vary the plan year by year.
 - Old parable: how do you eat an elephant-one bite at a time.
 - Read through the Bible in a year

How do I continually keep the storyline of the Bible before me?

- Read a Psalm in the morning and one in evening-you will read through the book of Psalms 5 times in a year.
- Read through the Book of Esther once a day for 7 days.
- Read one Proverb each day of the month. Read book 12 times in a year.
- Read Epistles in one sitting (as a letter was intended)
- Keep the ***Five Themes*** in mind as you read.

Examples:

- How does Genesis 3:15 point ahead to Jesus Christ?
- In what ways does the book of Jonah relate to the call of Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3?
- How does Paul’s sermon in Athens recorded in Acts 17 reflect the creation account in Genesis 1-2?
- Mark it down: when you make a connection, write it down in a journal or notebook.

Lesson 7

Step #1 OBSERVATION – What do I see?

“Open my eyes, that I might behold wonderful things from your law.” (Psalm 119:18)
Understanding the Bible begins with the practice of noticing.

1. **What type of literature are you reading?** - There are six basic types of literature found in the Bible. Each type must be handled differently. What are they?
 - **Exposition:** usually a logical argument or explanation of a body of objective truth. Usually presented using tight structure and lots of appeal to the mind.
 - **Narrative or biography:** Stories...captivate our interest – Narrative makes up almost 60% of our bible.
 - **Parables:** Brief tales or stories that are used to illustrate a spiritual truth.
 - **Poetry:** creative writings with a broad appeal to human emotion.
 - **Wisdom:** Short, powerful nuggets of truth that are very practical and often concerned with the consequences of one’s behavior.
 - **Prophesy and Apocalyptic:** Usually includes warnings, judgments and the use of a formula to express direct words from God.

2. What lures are you using?

- Illus. My family used to take vacation to the NC coast....
- Questions to use – will prove useful in ‘Catching the truth’ of God’s Word:

- **WHO?**

Who are the people in the passage? Who or what is being said about these people? Take note and observe carefully the details of those people. Eg: Luke 19:1-10 – The story of Zacchaeus. What details do you learn about Zacchaeus in the passage?

- **WHAT?**

What is happening in the passage? What events are taking place? Notice what happens that is not supposed to be happening.

Eg: When Saul makes war on the Amelekites in 1 Samuel 15.

- **WHERE?**

- Notice where the events being described took place. For instance:

- Is Jericho important in Luke 19:1-10?
- Is the fact that Jesus “had to go through Samaria” (John 4:4) significant?
- **WHEN**
 - When did the events being described occur?
 - Eg: ‘Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up and went off to a lonely place where he prayed’ (Mark 1:35)
 - We know it was in the morning, but what morning? If you read carefully it is after the busiest day of Jesus’ life.
- **WHY?**
 - Why is the question that digs for the meanings. There are a host of why questions:
 - Why does the book of Acts abruptly end? Why does Psalm 139 conclude with David calling for the death of the wicked?
 - Why does John open his epistle appealing to our senses-the sense of hearing, the sense of seeing, the sense of touch? (1 John 1:1)
- **WHEREFORE?**
 - This is the ‘so what’ question. What difference does this passage make to me?

3. Look for ‘Road Signs’ in the Passage.

- Words that are identical or repeated. (Eg. Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Eph. 1:3-14)
- Comparisons and contrasts. (Eg. Luke 15; Acts 4:36-37, 5:1-11)
- Cause and effect relationship. (Eg. Acts 1:8 – “*You shall receive power and you shall be my witnesses*” are both predicated on the coming of the Holy Spirit. One is the cause, the other is the effect).
- What are the verbs and tenses of the verbs? (Eg. Eph. 5:18-21)
- An Exercise...
 - Arrange a group of objects on a table... Ask the participants to describe what they observed/make a list of the observations.
 - Pull the sheet off again. You will be amazed at what was and was not observed.

Lesson 8

Step #2: INTERPRETATION – What does it mean?

“Give me understanding so that I may keep your law and observe it with all my heart”

– Psalm 119:34

If we do not have proper understanding of the word of God it becomes very difficult to obey or apply it.

1. **Eg:** Story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)
 - Philip hears a man reading Isaiah
 - *‘Do you understand what you are reading?’* (vs. 30)
 - *‘How can I unless someone explains it to me’* (vs. 31)
 - The eunuch invites Philip to give understanding
 - As soon as the eunuch understands, the eunuch applies his understanding: *‘Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?’* (vs. 36)
 - This man had a copy of the scriptures but needed help in understanding it.
Example of interpretation

2. **Definition:** Interpretation is simply the art of understanding and giving meaning to a subject.

Paul instructed Timothy:

‘All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness...’ (2 Tim. 3:16)

- Information that is confusing or difficult to understand is useless.
 - God not only inspired the writers to write the Bible, he took great pains to insure that it was written in such a way that it could be understood by ordinary people.
 - God does not play hide-and-seek with the human race. He does not want us to live in perpetual confusion and puzzlement about what he says.
- A fundamental premise: Meaning is not our subjective thoughts read into the text but God’s objective truth read out of the text.

3. How Does Interpretation Relate to Observation?

- Observation is like excavating or laying a foundation for a large building. The stronger the foundation the better the structure. In observation we excavate.
- In interpretation we erect. We build the superstructure.
- The quality of our interpretation will always depend on the quality of our observation.
- Observation is never an end in itself. It is always for the purpose of helping to give meaning to a passage.
- You can never properly apply what a biblical author *means today*, until you understand what the biblical author *meant in his own day*.

4. Why Do We Interpret?

- There is a lot of distance between the world of the Bible and the world today.
- There are many barriers between us and the writers of the Bible.
 - Cultural barriers
 - Language barriers – learning the vocabulary of a language is never enough. Even the best translations do not perfectly represent the Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic writings of Scripture. This is why we have to check our interpretations using Bible dictionaries or other sources.
 - Literary barriers – already looked at this in considering the type of literature we are studying or reading. **Illus.:** A preacher at a restaurant...

5. CONTEXT: What is the surrounding context of this passage?

- What is context? It is the environment in which something dwells or the setting in which something occurs.
- Context has to do with the time and the culture of the original author and his readers.
 - What are the geographical, political and historical factors that are true of the author's situation?
 - What was the occasion or purpose of the book?
 - What is the author talking about?
 - What is the author saying about what he is talking about?
- “A text without a context becomes a proof-text for a pretext.”
 - Eg: Story of depressed woman who went to Scripture for answers:

And Judas went out and hung himself – Matt. 27:5

Go thou and do likewise – Luke 10:37

What you must do, do quickly – John 13:27

- Every passage has a context that surrounds what is being said. If you ignore the surrounding context, you can make the Bible say whatever you want it to say.
 - Eg: Atheist who said the Bible confirms atheism (Ps. 14:1)
 - Eg: Phil. 2:12 read without Phil. 2:13
 - Every passage of Scripture ‘lives in a neighborhood’. You must always get to know your neighbors.
6. **COMPARE**: Always Compare Scripture with Scripture.
- You don’t have to go outside the Bible to explain something in the Bible
 - The more you compare Scripture with Scripture, the more the Bible makes sense.
 - We should also read the words and sentences of the biblical text and look first and foremost for their *obvious* and *natural* meaning.
 - The aim of all interpretation is NOT uniqueness – we are NOT trying to discover what nobody else has discovered.
 - The aim is to get at the plain meaning of a passage.
 - Eg: Compare and contrast Romans 3:28 and James 2:24;
 - Paul uses Abraham as an example in Rom. 4:1-3 and James also uses Abraham as an example in James 2:21-23
 - Paul was addressing legalists who believed in salvation by works. James was addressing religious people who believed in salvation by mere belief.
7. **CULTURE**: Seeing a Passage Against the Right Background
- Illus.: Whenever you buy a diamond from a jewelry store...
 - Examine: Leonardo di Vinci’s The Last Supper
 - If we are not careful we can easily impose our own cultural meanings on a passage instead of what the author intended.
8. **CONSULT**: : Using the Tools of Your Trade
- A good study Bible-NIV or ESV, or best Armenian translation.
 - An exhaustive concordance of the Bible – Strong’s or Young’s are good!
 - A one-volume Bible Dictionary – The New Bible Dictionary by D.R. Wood and I. Howard Marshall
 - Commentaries- Bible Speaks Today Series edited by John R. W. Stott
 - Commentaries should always be used as secondary sources, not primary sources.

9. CONFIDENCE:

- **Not arrogance, but confidence** – When you have studied a passage and its surrounding context, compared Scripture with Scripture, considered the cultural elements and consulted good secondary sources you gain confidence.
 - Many pastors suffer from a loss of confidence about their preaching, teaching, counsel and leadership. Paul to young Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12-16.
- **Growing in confidence:**
 - The way to grow in confidence, especially as a younger person, you must safeguard your personal life and your teaching.
 - As you grow in your ability to handle the Word of God accurately and effectively through careful study, a benefit of doing so is that you also grow in your confidence to teach that word and uphold God's commands.

Step #3: APPLICATION – How does it work?

*“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the Word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.**” (James 1:21-22)*

- **The Bible was written to change us:** When we are teaching the Word of God to people, it's easy to get so wrapped up in the wonder of the Truth we have studying, we forget that the Bible was written to change us!
- Many Christians have studied the Bible over many hours but their study has not produced any discernible change in their attitudes, behaviors, lifestyles or choices. This is grievous to God!
- Constant replenishment of the Word is needed to sustain a healthy Christian life

REMEMBER: You will always find two sides to Christian living:

- We all need food.
- We all need exercise.
- *Too much food and too little exercise leads to obesity. Too much exercise and too little food leads to anemia.*
- When food is digested it turns into energy, and energy enables you to do what God wants you to do.

The Mathematics of Bible Study: Observation + interpretation – Application =

Abortion

1. Every time you observe and interpret Scripture but you fail to apply it, you perform an abortion on the Bible in terms of its purpose. The ultimate goal of all Bible study is to allow the Bible to do something to you.
 2. Quote: ‘Many Christians are like poor photographs: over-exposed and under-developed.’ –Howard Hendricks
 3. Studying the Bible teaches us how to live our lives in a way that reflects the values, principles, and truths of the Bible. Spiritual maturity is always gauged by application, not contemplation.
 4. When I finish studying my Bible, I need to answer two very important questions:
 - a. So What?
 - b. Now What?
 5. The ultimate goal of studying my Bible = learning to trust God with every area of my life.
- Some application questions to think about as you read/study:
 - Is there: sin to confess? Promise to claim? Attitude to change? Command to obey? Example to follow? Prayer to pray? Error to avoid? Truth to believe?
 - One point of application is better than many
 - Challenge yourself or other people to try one point of application for a week, even a day, or possibly a month.
 - Usually life-altering decisions are a combination of smaller decisions that when faithfully carried through and acted upon result in changed lifestyles.
 - Make your one point clear
 - If people actually do something with truth, they remember the truth
 - Do not blame people for never doing anything after your message, if you have never given them something to do.
 - Knowing something is not the point. It is what you do with what you know that counts.
 - Relate the Word to your relationships
 - Christianity is best understood as a series of new relationships – ‘*Old things have passed away. Behold, new things have come.*’ 2 Cor. 5:17)
 - Jesus Christ deeply affects our relationships:
 - Our new relationship with God – new salvation, new identity, new acceptance, new love, new freedom
 - Our new relationship with ourselves – new significance, new purpose, new self-esteem, new values, new priorities, new standards

- Our new relationship with others – in my home, in my church, in my village, in my work, in the world
- Our new relationship with our enemies – Once you place your faith and trust in Christ, you change sides in the battle. A.W. Tozer quote.

APPENDIX 6

FARSI TRANSLATION OF CONFERENCE CURRICULUM

«از پیش وعده داده شده»

مقدمه‌ای به داستان بزرگ کتاب مقدس

درک داستانی که در آن هستیم

درس ۱

قدرت داستان برای زندگی‌های ما: در اواخر سری داستان‌های مهیج ارباب حلقه‌ها که توسط جی. آر. آر. تالکین نوشته شده‌اند، صحنه تکان دهنده‌ای با حضور دو هابیت به نام‌های فرودو و سم هست که در آن رفاقت حلقه از هم پاشیده است؛ و دوستانشان هم در قسمت دیگری از این سفر از بین رفته‌اند. پس این دو هابیت کوچک در سایه موردور سفر خود را برای نجات دنیا شروع میکنند، و ناگهان سم به فرودو میگوید «دارم به این فکر میکنم که ما در چه نوع داستانی افتاده‌ایم؟» سوال سم وایز گمگی نه تنها برای فرودو، بلکه برا ما هم سوال خوبیست. ما در چه نوع داستانی افتاده‌ایم؟

«اگر میخواهیم بدانیم که هستیم و چه کاری باید بکنیم، ابتدا باید مشخص کنیم به چه داستانی تعلق

داریم.» آلاسدر مک اینتایر

«در زمان معاصر، چه در داخل و چه خارج از کلیسا، ما اطلاعات را به داستان ترجیح میدهیم.»

یوجین پیترسن

داستان‌هایی که شنیده‌ایم و داستان‌هایی که برای دیگران میگوییم قدرت بسیاری در شکل دادن هویت

ما دارند.

• فرض کنیم که شما در مورد خداوند ایده‌های خاصی دارید:

* اینکه خداوند بی‌رحم، عصبانی، بی‌تحمل، و بی‌تاب است

* یا اینکه کسی به شما گفته که داستان کتاب مقدس در مورد تلاش بیشتر است

* یا اینکه کار مسیح تنها نجات است و بقیه کارها بر عهده شماست!

تنها سوال مهم این نیست که برسید «داستان شما چیست؟»

بلکه این را هم باید پرسید که «شما بر اساس چه داستان زندگی می‌کنید؟»
و «آیا داستانی که بر اساس آن زندگی می‌کنید، واقعا داستانی است که می‌خواهید بر اساس آن زندگی کنید؟»

اگر قرار باشد داستانی قدرت شکل دادن به زندگی‌های ما را داشته باشد، باید به این سوالات جواب

مثبت دهد:

- آیا زیباست؟
- آیا خوب است؟
- آیا حقیقت دارد؟

از بین همه داستان‌ها، متقاعد کننده ترین داستان از نظر من، داستان خداوند است. این داستان بیشترین قدرت برای شکل دادن به زندگی‌های ما و تجارب ما را دارد. اما خیلی از افراد کتاب مقدس را پیچیده یا ترسناک می‌بینند.

• هر چه بیشتر خواندیم، بیشتر فهمیدیم که درکمان از کتاب مقدس کم است.

* **خیلی از افراد کتاب مقدس را مثل یک گردنبند مروارید می‌بینند، بدون اینکه به نخ این گردنبند توجه کنند.** ما داستان‌های مختلف و شخصیت‌های آنها را می‌شناسیم، اما چیزی که میدانیم این است که این اشخاص و داستان‌ها چطور به هم مربوط و متصل اند.

* به ریشه کلمه انگلیسی "Gospel" «انجیل» فکر کنید:

- گرفته شده از کلمه "Godspell" در انگلیسی میانه به معنی «خبر خوش»
 - ترکیبی از god به معنی خوش و spell به معنی خیر
 - در گذشته «داستان گفتن» هم معنی با «طلسم کردن» یا «متحیر کردن» بوده
- نکته: هرگاه که ما داستان خدا را از منظر «جانبداری» یا شکستگی خود می‌خوانیم، در واقع داریم آن را به دست خود ویرایش می‌کنیم.

خدا در مورد اینکه ما چه کسی هستیم چه می‌گوید؟ ما در داستان او چه کسی هستیم؟

۱. تصویر خلق شده - پیدایش ۱-۲

آنگاه خدا گفت: «انسان را به صورت خود و شبیه خودمان بسازیم، و او بر ماهیان دریا و بر پرندگان آسمان و بر چارپایان و بر همه زمین و همه خزندگانی که بر زمین می‌خزند، فرمان براند. «پس خدا انسان را به صورت خود آفرید، او را به صورت خدا آفرید؛ ایشان را مرد و زن آفرید. - پیدایش باب ۱، آیات ۲۶ و ۲۷

- ما باید به جانبداری‌هایی که با خود به پیدایش ۱ و ۲ می‌آوریم آگاه باشیم.
- * جانبداری: این دو سوالات ما در مورد پیدایش انسان را پاسخ می‌دهند
- * جانبداری: ...
- * جانبداری: این قسمت فقط شامل مقدمه‌ای به مطالب اصلی کتاب مقدس است. نقطه شروع ما معمولاً از

جایگاه صحیح فاصله میگیرد. اکثر اوقات، ما بحث در مورد کتاب مقدس را از جای اشتباهی شروع میکنیم. فصل سوم پیدایش، به جای فصل اول آن.

* ۳۱ و خدا هر آنچه را که ساخته بود دید، و اینک بسیار نیکو بود. او ایشان را برکت داد...

نکته: هرگاه که ما داستان خدا را از منظر «جانبداری» یا شکستگی خود میخوانیم، در واقع داریم آن

را به دست خود ویرایش میکنیم.

• باب‌های ۱ و ۲ پیدایش در نظر دارند که از طرف ما پاسخی خدا پسند به خدا بدهند

* هیبت و تعجب از عظمت او

* آگاهی از تقدس او

* شکرگزاری برای زیبایی نفیس او

* لذت و شوق برای نقشه‌ها و اهداف نجات بخش او

نکته: اگر اهمیت هدفی که خداوند برای باغ عدن داشت را نفهمیم، ادامه داستانی که او مینویسد را

درک نخواهیم کرد...

• ما کجاییم؟ نیکویی خلقت

* این مواد زمینی شرور نیست - دنیایی که خداوند آفرید مکان شروری نیست.

* دنیای طبیعی ما چیزی فرا تر از طبیعت است - چیزی فرا تر از تنها ساختارهای مولکولی - دنیای ما نیکوست (۷ دفعه)

* نیکوست چون از عظمت و شکوه خداوند نیرو گرفته

* کتاب مقدس با خلقت شروع و تمام میشود

* انجیل با تولد عیسی شروع نمیشود

* انجیل با دنیای زیبایی که خدا از طریق عیسی ساخت شروع میشود

* قسمت بزرگی از داستان ما جشن گرفتن این خلقت نیکو است، که هدیه‌ای بینظیر از طرف خداست

• ما که هستیم؟ نیکویی بشریت

* در حین خواندن این باب‌های آغازین، باید متوجه شویم که این ابواب از ما میخواهند که:

- به جایی برویم که قبلاً نرفته‌ایم

- چیزی را تجربه کنیم که تا به حال نکرده‌ایم

- از مقامی لذت ببریم که تا به حال نبرده‌ایم

- برای هدفی که تا به حال متوجه آن نشده‌ایم

* در روز ششم پروژه خلقت، خداوند از مهم‌ترین دستاورد خود رونمایی میکند؛ انسان!

* ۲۶ آنگاه خدا گفت: «انسان را به صورت خود و شبیه خودمان بسازیم، و او بر ماهیان دریا و بر پرندگان

آسمان و بر چارپایان و بر همه زمین و همه خزندگانی که بر زمین می‌خزند، فرمان براند. «۲۷ پس خدا

انسان را به صورت خود آفرید، او را به صورت خدا آفرید؛ ایشان را مرد و زن آفرید. ۲۸ خدا ایشان را

برکت داد، و خدا بدیشان فرمود: «بارور و کثیر شوید و زمین را پر سازید و بر آن تسلط یابید. بر ماهیان

دریا و بر پرندگان آسمان و بر هر جاننداری که بر زمین حرکت می‌کند، فرمان برانید.» - پیدایش، باب ۱

- * «انسان را به صورت خود و شبیه خودمان بسازیم» - خلقت انسان در سطحی مخصوص صورت میگیرد
- * این سطح برای خلقت هیچ چیز دیگری استفاده نشده
- * تثلیث در خلقت انسان دخیل بوده - این در مورد خلقت دیگر چیزها صدق نمیکند

نقل قولی از کریستوفر جی اچ رایت:

«شاید فراموش کردن این موضوع آسان باشد، ولی ما قبل از اینکه مسیحی شویم، انسان بودیم، و وقتی همه که مسیحی میشویم، کماکان انسان هستیم (هر چند رفتار برخی از مسیحیان ما را به فکر وا میدارد...) و خداوند همانقدر که ما را برای مسیحی بودنمان پاسخگو میداند، برای انسان بودن ما هم ما را پاسخگو میداند.»

• ما چرا هستیم؟ هدف زندگی

* ۲ چیز متمایز در مورد بشریت:

- انسان‌ها باید انعکاس‌گر خداوند باشند - آیات ۲۶ و ۲۷

«خداوند بشریت را با یک هدف طراحی کرد. این هدف «تصویر» خدا بودن یا «منعکس‌کننده» خدا بودن است. منعکس کردن خدا به خود خدا از طریق پرستش. منعکس کردن خدا به دیگران از طریق مباشرت.

- انسان‌ها باید در خلقت سلطه داشته باشند - آیات ۲۶ و ۲۸

«پیش زمینه: لغت عبری «رداه - radah» معنای پر قدرتی دارد، «تحمیل کردن اراده شخصی بر دیگری». البته این تحمیل از نوع خشونت و سوء استفاده نیست، بلکه مسئولیت ما در سلطه داشتن است. «سلطه داشتن چیزی نیست که تصویر خداوند را تشکیل میدهد. «سلطه داشتن چیزی است که ما بر حسب آفریده شدن به شکل خداوند اجازه و حق آن را داریم «در زمان‌های کهن، پادشاهان از خود «تصاویر و شمایل» بر پا میکردند. - نشان دهنده اقتدارشان «خداوند هم به همین صورت، نسل بشر را در خلقت خود بر پا کرده و به ما اقتدار «سلطه پادشاهانه» میدهد.

«این اولین مأموریت خداوند برای بشریت است و تا جایی که من از مطالعه کتاب مقدس مطلعم، خداوند هیچگاه این مأموریت را لغو نکرده.

• ما متعلق به چه هستیم؟ معنای موجودیت ما

* دو نام خیلی برجسته برای خدا در ابواب ۱ و ۲ کتاب پیدایش

* الوهیم - ۳۲ دفعه در باب ۱ و ۱۴ دفعه در باب ۲

- تنها خدای راستین، قدرتمندترین، بی‌نهایت، دانای کل، متعالی

* یهوه - در باب ۱ استفاده نشده و تا آیه ۴ از باب ۲ دیده نمیشود.

- شخصی که عدالت، قداست و محبت است.

- این خداییست که از او لذت میبریم.

- این تصادفی نیست که نویسندگان از این کلمه برای نوشتن قسمت خلقت انسان استفاده کرده‌اند.
- انسان باید از خداوند به نحوی لذت ببرد که بقیه خلقت نمیتواند.
- * پیام خداوند به بشریت در فصول اول.
- خدا خالق و خداوند همه چیز است
- خدا مالک همه چیز است
- خدا کسی است که انسان‌ها در نهایت به او پاسخگو خواهند بود

* در نظر بگیرید:

برخی افراد نسبت به این عقیده که انسان‌ها باید برای هر تصمیمی که میگیرند باید به چیزی و یا کسی پاسخگو باشند، مقاومت نشان میدهند. اما این را در نظر بگیرید: آیا این حقیقت که من باید در نهایت برای انتخاب‌ها و تصمیمات خودم پاسخگو باشم، انتخاب‌های مرا مهم تر نمیکند؟ آیا میشود بگوییم که خداوند در واقع با مسئول دانستن انسان‌ها برای تصمیماتشان، از آنها تمجید میکند؟ پاسخگو نگه داشتن بشریت به این معنی نیست که خداوند ظالم است؛ بلکه به این معنیست که خداوند به طور ذاتی برای انسان‌ها ارزش قائل است و تصمیمات ما را جدی میگیرد.

• نتیجه گیری:

- * با در نظر گرفتن این چهار سوال، ما در جایگاه خیلی بهتری برای درک مناسب از نیاز خودمان به نجات و بازخرید شدن قرار خواهیم گرفت.
- * هر یک از این سوال‌ها نتیجه فرعی سوال دیگر است
- * این گفته از دالاس ویلارد را در نشر بگیرید:

«معنی -نجات- بستگی به آنچه نجات می‌یابد دارد. قبل از اینکه چیزی نجات یابد، باید با ریسک گم شدن روبرو شود. و اساساً، این طبیعت آنچه نجات می‌یابد است که تعیین میکند که چطور میتواند در معرض ریسک و گم شدن باشد... اگر ما میخواهیم بدانیم که نجات یک انسان و یا باز خرید روح یا شخصیت او چیستند و چطور صورت میگیرند، بهترین راه شروع برای ما این است که بپرسیم: خدا وقتی که ما را آفرید، من را چه ساخت، و چگونه است که موجوداتی مثل ما در معرض خطر گم شدن هستند؟» دالاس ویلارد در کتاب روح نظم

یا آنگونه که کرنلیوس پلانینگا میگوید،

«تنها راه برای تشخیص اینکه چیزی نباید به طرزی که هست باشد، این است که خودمان را با آن - طرزی که آن چیز باید باشد- آشنا کنیم.»

درس ۲

تصویر... ترک خورده (خراب شده) - پیدایش باب ۳ تا ۱۱

- * تابلوی جهت دار قدیمی حالا افتاده و رو به زمین اشاره میکند.
- * یا با یک قیاس دیگر - به آینه فکر کنید.
- * حالا به یک آینه ترک خورده فکر کنید.
- * تصویر آینه حذف و یا محو نشده.
- * این «تصویر» بر خودش افتاده و انسان‌هایی را نشان میدهد قادر به دوست داشتن و ارتباط داشتن با خدا نیستند.
- * به زبان ساده، یک تصویر بد شکل و مخدوش شده از آنچه زمانی بود.

«گناه یک موضوع غیر محبوب است، و مسیحیان اغلب برای اینکه زیاد در موردش صحبت میکنند مورد انتقاد قرار میگیرند. اما دلیل این زیاد صحبت کردن ایمانداران در مورد گناه این است که آنان واقع نگزند. گناه یک اختراع راحت برای خادمین نیست که به وسیله آن کار خود را ننگه دارند. گناه یک حقیقت تجربی برای انسان است» - جان استات، در کتاب مسیحیت به زبان ساده

- گناه پیامد های فاجعه باری به همراه دارد: پیدایش باب ۳ تا ۱۱

* فیزیکی و محیطی

- « انسان ها به سمت مرگ و نابودی می‌روند.
 - « ما در محیط فیزیکی‌ای زندگی میکنیم که نفرین شده است.
 - « ما می‌دانیم که تمام خلقت تا هم‌اکنون از دردی همچون درد زایمان می‌نالند. - رومیان باب ۸ آیه ۲۲
- ### * از نظر روانی
- « آدم و حوا در باغ عدن از سلامت روان کامل لذت میبردند.
 - « وقتی که گناه وارد شد، احساس گناه و خود فریبی را با خود آورد (باب ۳ آیه ۷)
 - « تعداد زیادی از روانشناسان معتقدند که ریشه خیلی از بیماری‌های روانی، در احساس گناه و خود فریبی‌های حل نشده پیدا میشود.

* از نظر فکری

- « انسان ها نسبت به استفاده از قدرت‌های فکری خود برای توضیح دادن، رد کردن، توجیه کردن و طبیعی جلوه دادن رفتارهای گناهکارانه خود عادت کرده‌اند.

* از نظر ارتباطی و اجتماعی

- « تمام روابط اجتماعی ترک خورده‌اند
- « ازدواج، والدین، شخصی، خانوادگی، اجتماعی، بین‌المللی، تنش‌های قومی، جنگ‌های جنسیتی - و بیشتر. رابطه‌ای وجود ندارد که از عدم هماهنگی رنج نبرد.

* روحانی

- « گناه باعث میشود مرد و زن در دام اغوا کننده بیافتند و به اعتبار و اقتدار کلام نیکوی خدا شک کنند.

- پیدایش باب ۳ آیه ۱

« گناه ما را از خدا دور میکند. ما پنهان می‌شویم. - پیدایش باب ۳ آیه ۸، ۹ و ۱۰ (۲ دفعه میخوانیم که آنها پنهان شدند)»

« اولین وعده انجیل (باب ۳ آیه ۱۵) - انجیلی که راه حلی برای تمام گناهان بوجود آمده ارائه میدهد - و همچنین خبر از نابودی نهایی هر چیز شریر میدهد.»

« پیامد: کتاب مقدس در باب ۳ و آیه ۲۳ از پیدایش، از استعاره «تبعیدی‌ها» استفاده میکند. «پس

یهوه خدا آدم را از باغ عدن بیرون راند تا بر زمین که از آن گرفته شده بود زراعت کند.»

« ما تبعیدی‌ها و فراری‌ها از خدا شدیم!»

« در خلقت، طراحی خدا با این هدف بود که انسان‌ها با خدا و شبیه به خدا باشند

« در سقوط، انسان‌ها می‌خواهند بدون خدا شبیه به او شوند. اوج این موضوع در پیدایش باب ۱۱ است.

*** وقتی به باب ۱۱ پیدایش میرسیم، دو مشکل بزرگ وجود دارد:**

- گناهکار بودن تمامی قلب‌ها

- شکستگی اقوام

- مشکل برج بابل نبود

- مشکل متحد شدن و زندگی در یک نقطه نبود

- خدا یگانگی زبان را از بین میبرد و مردم را متفرق میکند

- باب ۳ آیه ۱۱ - زوال اخلاقیات، تاریکی، تباهی، پراکندگی

« گناه یک حقیقت جهانی است

* ما تصویر خدا را از دست ندادیم. تصویر خدا در ما شکست

« نشانه‌هایی از تصویر خدا

* اشتیاق برای عدالت

* جستجو برای معنویت

* تشنگی برای رابطه

* لذت از زیبایی

بر گرفته از کتاب «مسیحیت به زبان ساده» به قلم ان تی رایت.

درس ۳

جامعه عهد - پیدایش باب ۱۲ - ملاکی

- نوشته اصلی: پیدایش باب ۱۲ و ملاکی

- خداوند پروژه خلقت خود را ترک نمی‌کند

- در عوض، او پروژه خلقت خود را باز خرید میکند...
 - * در تاریخ
 - * توسط افراد
- تمامی عهد عتیق وصف این جامعه است
- نوشته کلیدی باب ۱۲ پیدایش
 - * انتخاب ابراهیم برای برکت بخشیدن به همه اقوام بود.
 - (برکت به ابراهیم و عده داده شد)...
 - * کلمات «برکت دادن» و «برکت» مثل نخهای طلایی میدرخشند
 - * باب ۱۲ آیات ۱ تا ۳: پنج دفعه کلمات «برکت دادن» و «برکت» دیده میشوند
 - کلمه مشابهی در باب ۱ پیدایش آیه ۲۸ استفاده شده که به عبری Barak است
 - * خدا نسل بشر را فراموش نخواهد کرد چون که هنوز میخواد نسل بشر را «برکت» دهد
 - * میتوانیم نام «اولین کمیسیون بزرگ» را برایش انتخاب کنیم
 - * نمودار خطی باز خرید
 - * اما برکتی که در اینجا میخوانیم در درون یک رابطه و پیمان نهفته بود که ابراهیم پاسخ آن را با ایمان و اطاعت داد.
 - * برکت مکانیکی و خودکار نبود.
 - * برکت تنها به شرطی جاری میشد که ابراهیم و اسرائیل با اطاعت به خدا جواب میدادند.
 - * مهم: اطاعت ابزار به دست آوردن و یا لایق بودن برای برکت نبود. اطاعت ابزار زندگی در برکت بود.
 - * بعد از آن وقتی که خدا قوانین اجتماعی خود را اعلام کرد - این قوانین مانند نردبانی نبودند که نجات نیافتگان از آن بالا روند تا در کتاب نیکان خدا وارد شوند.
 - * بلکه، قوانین خداوند یک الگو برای زندگی در اطاعت ارائه میدهند، تا آنهایی که در حال حاضر در کتاب نیکان خدا هستند، از طریق باز خرید، بتوانند بر اساس خواست خدا زندگی کنند و عهد و برکات او را تجربه کنند.
- مأموریت جهانی خداوند - برکت دادن تمامی اقوام
 - * اگر تمامی بشر محکوم به لعنت گناه است، پس تمامی بشر هم باید توسط برکت خداوند در بر گرفته شود
 - * خدا یک قوم را انتخاب میکند، اما همه اقوام بهره میبرند
 - * یک مرد نماینده این یک قوم است. عیسی مسیح.
- از طریق یک مرد، برکت باز خرید شده در اختیار همه قرار میگیرد

- **بیانیه انجیل:**

«و کتاب چون پیشتر دید که خدا غیریهودیان را بر پایه ایمان پارسا خواهد شمرد، از این رو، پیشاپیش به ابراهیم بشارت داد که «همه قومها به واسطه تو برکت خواهند یافت.» پس آنها که به ایمان اتکا دارند، با ابراهیم ایماندار برکت می‌یابند.» غلاطیان باب ۳ آیات ۸ و ۹

- **انتخاب و مأموریت**

* در مورد این آموزه فکر کنید چون مربوط به آزادی است
* این آموزه را تنها از دیدگاه عهد جدید درک کنید
* برای اولین بار خداوند یک قوم را انتخاب میکند
* نه برای اینکه خانواده این قوم نجات پیدا کنند، بلکه دیگران از آنان برکت بگیرند
* در اینجا انتخاب به عنوان آموزه‌ای برای مأموریت دیده میشود - نه به عنوان ماشین حسابی برای محاسبه آزاد شده و نشده‌ها!

- **مشکل این است - قوم خدا کار را انجام نمیدهند**

* یک مشکل جدی وجود دارد - آنها کار را تمام نمیکنند
شکست در یکی شدن

- **اسرائیل یک رشته نخ از جنس شکست است که در داستان عهد عتیق تنیده است**

* ابراهیم انتخاب میشود تا پدر قومی باشد - درباره زنش دروغ میگوید
* موسی مردی را به قتل میرساند، مردم را به بیرون رهبری میکند، قوانین را عنوان میکند، در صحرا گناه میکند.
* یوشع مردم را رهبری میکند، اما نمیتوانی بت پرستی را ترک کند.
* داوود پادشاه میشود، اما نمیتوانی خواسته‌های جنسی خود را کنترل کند.
* سلیمان معبدی میسازد، اما تسلیم به مصالحه میشود و در یک نسل و یک قوم جنگ داخلی و جدایی صورت میگیرد
* «آری، تاکستان خداوند لشکرها خاندان اسرائیل است، و مردمان یهودا نهال دلپذیر اویند. او برای انصاف انتظار کشید، و اینک خونریزی بود؛ و برای عدالت، و اینک ناله و فریاد بود!» اشعیا باب ۵ آیه ۷
* یک قوم استرداد شده به آشور و دیگری به بابل
* خدا قوم را از تبعید خارج میکند و به سرزمین موعود میبرد، معبد باز سازی میشود... همه چیز از نو شروع میشود
* با اینکه قوم خدا پشت سر هم شکست میخورند، خدا به عهد خود به ابراهیم و داوود وفادار میماند...

« مزمور ۱۰۶

« تمامی این قسمت‌ها داستانهایی از قوم خدا هستند که بی وفایی میکنند، اما خداوند به آنان وفادار است و

شرایطی را در بین آنان درست میکند که در آن خدایی بودن رشد کند.

- درس: قوم اسرائیل تا زمانی که کسی کار را برایشان تمام کند، کار را تمام نمیکنند.

درس ۴

تصویر مسیح (باز خرید) - متی، مکاشفه باب ۲۰

- * تمام داستان کتاب مقدس به سمت یک شخص میرود.
- * تصویری که در باغ عدن شکست، در مسیح در کمال زنده میشود.
- کولسیان باب ۱ آیه ۱۵ «صورت خدای نادیده»
- عبرانیان باب ۱ آیه ۳
- یوحنا باب ۱ آیه ۱۴
- یوحنا باب ۱۴ آیه ۹
- * چیزی که خدا در ابتدا در باغ عدن طراحی کرد، حالا توسط قیام مسیح از مردگان ممکن میشود!
- * مرگ و قیام مسیح تنها برای نجات ما از گناهان نبود، بلکه مرگ و قیام او برای نجات ما به چیزی هم بودند.
- * مرگ و قیام مسیح پایان و حتی هدف داستان نیست.
- * هدف غایی مرمت و نوسازی است. یک خلقت نو. هدف این است که خدا ببیند پروژه اصلی خودش در باغ عدن، در این زمان و مکان میتواند عملی شود.
- * هدف غایی انسان چیست؟

چطور انجیل را کم ارزش میکنیم

- * تمرین: از همسایه خود بپرسید: چطور به کسی که تا به حال در مورد انجیل نشنیده، پیام انجیل را میگویید؟
- * با اینکه ما آزادانه از واژه انجیل استفاده میکنیم، اغلب در مورد محتوی آن اطلاعات کامل نداریم.
- * ما به جای اینکه داستان انجیل را به اشتراک بگذاریم، از آن پیشنهادات و یا ۳ یا ۴ اصل را به نمایش میگذاریم.
- * ما به گذشته با مفهومی برای آینده مینگریم (انجیل در مورد آزادی من از گناه و رفتن به بهشت است) به جای اینکه
- * انجیل در مورد حال با مفهومی برای حال است (انجیل به من کم میکند که در حال با گناه برخورد کنم)
- * و موارد بیشتر
- * آگاهی، قدردانی می‌آفریند:
- آگاهی از دیدن خدا، همانطور که هست (قدوس) - اشعیا باب ۵۵ آیات ۸ و ۹
- آگاهی از دیدن خودم، همانطور که هستم (گناهکار) - ارمیا باب ۱۷ آیات ۹ و ۱۰
- آگاهی، قدردانی به همراه می‌آورد

- کمال عیسی، قربانی او، عشق او، فیض او، بخشش او

- * اولین راه کم ارزش کردن صلیب این است که وانمود کنیم. ما با نشان دادن چیزی که نیستیم، گناهکار بودن خود را کوچک میکنیم. ۶ روش کوچک کردن:
 - ما دفاع میکنیم: وقتی که با گناهان مواجه میشویم، میل ما بر توضیح دادن و صحبت در مورد موفقیت های خودمان است و یا اینکه توجیه میکنیم.
 - ما جعل میکنیم: تلاش میکنیم که حفظ ظاهر کنیم
 - ما مخفی میشویم: متفاوت با جعل کردن (در مورد ظواهر). ما گناه را مخفی میکنیم چون از شرم پریم.
 - ما اغراق میکنیم: چه فرد بدی، که این کار تمرکز بیشتری رو ما میگذارد، تا صلیب
 - ما سرزنش میکنیم: ما مالکیت گناه خود را گردن نمیگیریم
 - ما کم رنگ میکنیم: ما به کاری که کرده ایم «وزن» نمیدهیم
- * دومین راه کم ارزش کردن صلیب عملکرد ماست: ما با پایین آوردن معیار های خدایی، قداست خدا را کم میکنیم. ما معیار های خدا را پایین می آوریم.
- * وانمود کردن و عملکرد منعکس کننده تلاش های گناهکارانه ما برای حفظ عدالت و هویت خود جدا از عیسی هستند.
- * تمرین: برخی از راه هایی را که سعی می کنیم با آنها پذیرش، تأیید، امنیت و اهمیت را جدا از عیسی تضمین کنیم، نام ببرید.
- * خدا همیشه از ما راضی است، چون که از عیسی راضی است.

اهداف غایی سه بعدی انسان

* رومیان باب ۸ آیه ۲۹

* دوم قرن تیان باب ۳ آیه ۱۸

* اول یوحنا باب ۳ آیه ۲

درس ۵

تصویر کامل شده (کمال) - مکاشفه باب ۲۱ و ۲۲

- * اگر این موضوع صحیح است که تابلوی جهت دار ما شکسته بود و رو به زمین بود، و اگر در عیسی مسیح این تابلو سر پا شده، حال ما باید با آن چه کنیم؟
- * ما باید مستقیم به سمت هدف غایی خدا برای خلقت حرکت کنیم.
- * تمام آنچه خدا برای ما در باغ عدن آرزو داشت، یکجا مرمت نمیشود.
- * ما هنوز در حال تماشا «از پس یک شیشه نیمه نورا» هستیم، اما روزی «رو در رو» خواهیم دید.
- * خدا به ما وعده میدهد که مرمت کامل و نهایی خواهد آمد. پس هنوز نیامده.

- * ما در بین عید پاک و مرمت نهایی و کامل زندگی میکنیم. این مرمت نهایی زمانی رخ خواهد داد که مسیح برای بار دوم می‌آید تا آسمان‌ها و زمینی نو بر پا کند.
- * با اینکه روز داوری واقعی است و محقق خواهد شد، کتاب مقدس با این روز تمام نمیشود.
- * کتاب مقدس با روز نو شروع میشود. روزی که در آسمانها و زمین جدید رخ خواهد داد.
- * و از تخت، صدای بلندی شنیدم که گفت: «اینک، مسکن در یونانی: ”خیمه“. خدا با آدمیان است، و او با آنها ساکن خواهد شد؛ و ایشان قوم او خواهند بود، و خود خدا با ایشان خواهد بود و خدای ایشان خواهد بود. 4 او هر اشکی را از چشمان آنها پاک خواهد کرد. و دیگر مرگ نخواهد بود؛ و ماتم و شیون و درد وجود نخواهد داشت، زیرا چیزهای اول سپری شد. - «مکاشفه باب ۲۱ آیات ۳ و ۴، او همچنان گفت: «اینها را بنویس زیرا این سخنان درخور اعتماد است و راست است.»
- * برخی مسیحیان تجربه ایمانی را صرفاً تحت عنوان «مأموریت نجات» خدا میبینند.
- خدا ما را از جهانی بزرگ، بد و شرور نجات میدهد و بعد از آن، ما منتظر مینشینیم تا به جایی بهتر برویم.
- * اما چه میشود اگر به کار خدا نه به عنوان یک نجات، بلکه به عنوان مرمت و نوسازی نگاه کنیم؟
- هدف غایی خدا این است که ما را به عدن باز گرداند و پروژه‌ای که در باغ شروع کرده بود کامل کند.
- اگر انجیل شما را از داخل نو میسازد، انجیل همچنین شما را به سمت بیرون میفرستد.
- « انجیل نه تنها روی ما و در ما کار میکند، بلکه از طریق ما هم کار میکند.
- اگر انجیل عیسی مسیح قبل شما رو نو ساخته، میل شما به رساندن مژده به دیگران را هم نو میسازد.
- ما فقط شنوندگان داستان نیستیم، بلکه ما نقش اول را در آن داریم؟
- چه میشود اگر به جای منتظر نشستن برای رفتن به جایی بهتر، من شروع به دیدن خودم به عنوان ایفا کننده نقش شرکت کننده و کمک کار خدا در داستان او و کار مرمت او ببینم؟
- آیا ممکن است جای من در داستان، شریک خدا برای دیدن حقیقت، عدالت، رحم، شفقت، زیبایی و صلح در نقاط شکسته دنیای خودم باشد؟
- چه میشود اگر جرأت کنم بگویم که فضای بین دو پای من همان فضایی است که آن را «متعلق به خدا» اعلام میکنم؟
- چه میشد اگر برای لحظه‌ای میتوانستم زمان را به عقب بازگردانم و به جهانیان نشان میدادم که زندگی قبل از ورود گناه به جهان چگونه بود؟
- این طرز فکر میتواند چه تأثیری روی دنیای پیرامون من و جایگاه من در داستان داشته باشد؟
- اشتیاق من برای مرمت شدن انسان‌ها در نام مسیح بر هر خواسته‌ای که مرا نسبت به گناه آنان منزجر میکند، برتری دارد.
- از نقش خود به عنوان یک منتقد فرهنگی بیرون آمده و به نقش خود به عنوان یک مرمت گر فرهنگی وارد شوید و توسط این کار صدای خدا را در باغ عدن را در جهان پژواک دهید. خالق عاشق مخلوق خود است.
- * داستان‌هایی در درون داستان
- مأموریت خدا: جلال و جبروت خدای قادر سرود ملی تمام اقوام خواهد شد.
- مأموریت اسرائیل: نه تنها خواندن این سرود ملی، بلکه آموزش آن به اقوام دیگر است.

- **مأموریت عیسی:** دو چیز. «اسرائیلیانی را که محفوظ داشته‌ام، بازآوری؛ بلکه تو را نوری برای ملت‌ها خواهم ساخت تا نجات مرا به کرانه‌های زمین برسانی.» - اشعیا باب ۴۹ آیه ۶
- **مأموریت کلیسا:** چیزی که به رایگان از عیسی گرفته‌اند را منتقل و چند برابر کنند، تا همه اقوام او را بشناسند.
- **مأموریت من:** یک قلب دگرگون شده، یک دید متفاوت به دنیا، یک درک متفاوت از مأموریت من در دنیا

چطور میتوانم دائما خط داستانی کتاب مقدس را در برابر خود داشته باشم؟

- * یک برنامه را دنبال کنید، اما سال به سال آن را تغییر دهید.
- مثل قدیمی: چطور میشود یک فیل را خورد؟ لقمه به لقمه.
- سالی یک بار کل کتاب مقدس را بخوانید
- هر صبح و هر شب یک مزمور بخوانید و به این شکل، شما کتاب مزامیر را ۵ بار در سال میخوانید.
- کتاب استر را روزی یک بار برای یک هفته بخوانید.
- یک مثل را هر روز از هر ماه بخوانید و به این شکل، کتاب امثال را ۱۲ بار در سال میخوانید.
- برای یک ماه، روی یک کتاب از کتاب مقدس تمرکز کنید.
- * **پنج موضوع** را موقع خواندن در ذهن داشته باشید.

مثال‌ها:

- پیدایش باب ۳ آیه ۱۵ چطور به عیسی مسیح اشاره میکند؟
- کتاب یونا چطور به دعوت ابراهیم در پیدایش باب ۱۲ آیات ۱ تا ۳ مربوط است؟
- موعظه پولس در آتن که در باب ۱۷ اعمال رسولان آمده چطور مراحل خلقت در ابواب ۱ و ۲ پیدایش را بازتاب میدهد؟

به یاد داشته باشید...

هدف از مطالعه کتاب مقدس اطلاعات نیست - هدف تغییر زندگی یا دگرگونی است.

درس ۶

دفاع از زندگی خودم در کلام

اصول مشاهده، تفسیر و به کار گیری کتاب مقدس

- خیلی از ایمانداران زیر کلام هستند - به جای اینکه برای خودشان در کلام باشند. همچون شخصی که به فرد دیگر گوش میکند در حالی که او از روی منوی غذایی میخواند، اما هیچ گاه غذایی برای خود سفارش نمیدهد.
- * کتاب مقدس کتابی است که شما را در برابر گناه حفظ میکند، یا اینکه گناه شما را از کتاب او دور نگاه میدارد.
- * یا من در کلام هستم و کلام مرا به شکل عیسی مسیح تغییر میدهد، یا من در دنیا هستم و دنیا مرا شبیه به خود میکند. (رومیان باب ۱۲ آیات ۱ و ۲ را بخوانید و در نظر بگیرید)

چرا خیلی از شبانان/مردم کتاب مقدس را نمیخوانند

۱. **خیلی به شرایط من مربوط نیست.** کتاب مقدس قدیمی است، و با حال سازگار نیست. من به چیزی نیاز دارم که کار کند.
۲. **نمیدانم چطور کتاب مقدس را بخوانم.** برای این اشخاص مشکل تکنیک و چگونگی مهم است. مثل اینکه من لوله کشی یا برق کاری کنم.
۳. **من وقت خواندن کتاب مقدس را ندارم.** این را درک میکنم. همه ما گرفتاریم. ولی مخصوصا برای شبانان، مطالعه کتاب مقدس یک گزینه نیست، بلکه یک ملزومه است!
۴. **نمیتوانم برای خودم جالبش کنم.** سخت است که مردم را جذب دیدگاه خود در مورد کتاب مقدس کنید.

فواید خواندن و مطالعه کتاب مقدس

۱. کتاب مقدس برای رشد شخصی الزامیست.
«و همچون نوزادگان، مشتاق شیر خالص روحانی باشید تا به مدد آن برای نجات نمو کنید» اول پطرس باب ۲ آیه ۲
سه نظر در مورد این آیه:
* **رفتار** - از لحن تمثیلی استفاده میکند - همچون نوزادان. بچه باید با نوشیدن شیر خود را از نظر فیزیکی حفظ کند. همینطور کتاب مقدس زندگی روحانی ما را حفظ میکند.
* **اشتها** - مشتاق باشید، اشتهای تمامی ناپذیر.
* **هدف** - تا نمو کنیم. توجه کنید که متن نمیگوید: تا اینکه بدانم. کتاب مقدس برای تغذیه کنجکاوای ذهنی ما نوشته نشده. کتاب مقدس برای تغییر شل ما به مسیح نوشته شده.

۲. مطالعه کتاب مقدس برای بلوغ روحانی ما الزامیست

عبرانیان باب ۵ آیات ۱۱ تا ۱۴ - «در این باره، مطالب بسیار برای گفتن داریم، اما شرح آنها دشوار است، چرا که گوشهای شما سنگین شده است. برآستی که پس از گذشت این همه وقت، خود می‌بایست معلم باشید. و با این حال نیاز دارید کسی اصول ابتدایی کلام خدا را دیگر بار از آغاز به شما بیاموزاند. شما محتاج شیرید، نه غذای سنگین! هر که شیرخوار است، با تعالیم پارسایی چندان آشنا نیست، زیرا هنوز کودک است. اما غذای سنگین از آن بالغان است که با تمرین مداوم، خود را تربیت کرده‌اند که خوب را از بد تشخیص دهند...»

- * نویسنده میگوید که «مطلب برای گفتن» بسیار دارد و اینکه «شرح آنها دشوار است»
- * آیا مشکل مکاشفه است یا دریافت آن؟
- * گویا نویسنده مشکل را از آنهایی میداند که در یادگیری مشکل دارند (گوشهای شما سنگین شده است). کند در یادگیری.

* مشکل زمان است.

- باید دروس دانشگاهی بخوانیم، اما مجبوریم به الفبا برگردیم
 - باید دروس را به دیگران آموزش دهیم، اما مجبوریم خود آنها را یاد بگیریم
 - باید آماده غذای سنگین باشیم، اما مجبوریم شیر بخوریم
- * همه اینها نشان دهنده عدم بلوغ هستند
- * نشانه های یک شخص بالغ چه هستند؟
- آنها بالاخره میتوانند خوب را از بد تشخیص دهند
 - آنها از طریق تمرین اجازه میدهند که کلام خدا طرز فکر آنان را شکل دهد.

۳. کتاب مقدس برای تأثیر گذاری روحانی ما الزامیست.

- «تمامی کتب مقدس الهام خداست و برای تعلیم و تأدیب و اصلاح و تربیت در پارسایی سودمند است، تا مرد خدا به کمال برای هر کار نیکو تجهیز گردد.» دوم تیموتائوس باب ۳ آیات ۱۶ و ۱۷
- * اگر شما دائماً به مطالعه کتاب مقدس بپردازید، ۴ چیز برای شما اتفاق می افتد:
- طرز فکر شما را ساختار میبخشد - «آموزش»
 - به شما میگوید که چه موقع از مرزها بیرون میروید. به شما کمک میکند آنچه ناصاف است صاف و آنچه ناپاک است پاک شود.
 - راهکارهایی مثبت برای مسائل زیر ارائه میدهد:
- « به طور خلاصه - این معنی آماده بودن است
- « مطالعه کتاب مقدس شما را به عنوان خادم مسیح آماده میسازد

۳ قدم از پروسه ما: ورود به کتاب مقدس و جذب کردن کتاب مقدس درون خود!

هدف از مطالعه کتاب مقدس اطلاعات نیست، بلکه تغییر زندگی و دگرگونی است.

سه قدم:

۱. مشاهده - در کتاب مقدس چه میبینم؟
۲. درک و تفسیر - معنی اش چیست؟
۳. به کار گیری - چطور در زندگی روزمره کار میکند؟

یادگیری مطالعه کتاب مقدس به عنوان یک داستان

۱. ما در جهانی مملو در داستان زندگی میکنیم. داستان ها ما را ملزم میکنند.
 ۲. داستان خدا باید بیشتر از هر داستانی ما را ملزم کند...
 ۳. عروسک های ماتریوشکا مثال خوبی برای درک این موضوع هستند که کتاب مقدس همزمان چند داستان در سطوح مختلف دارد - یا داستان در داستان
- الف. بزرگ ترین داستان
- ب. داستان بزرگ تر

پ. داستان بزرگ

ت. داستان کلیسا

ث. داستان شما

۴. هر داستان شخصیت ها، طرح ها و موضوع ها دارد

۵. بزرگترین داستان، داستان برنامه نجات تاریخی خداست

۶. «پنج موضوع»: ۵ موضوع کلی در داستان کتاب مقدس

تصویر خلق شده - پیدایش ابواب ۱ و ۲

«آنگاه خدا گفت: «آدم (انسان) را به صورت خود و شبیه خودمان (یونانی: eikon) بسازیم»

پیدایش باب ۱ آیات ۲۶ و ۲۷

نقطه شروع ما معمولاً از جای صحیح دور میشود. اکثر مواقع ما بحث در مورد کتاب مقدس را از

جای اشتباه درست میکنیم. باب ۳ پیدایش به جای باب ۱ پیدایش.

* این دنیای فانی و این زمین شرور نیست - جهانی که خدا آفرید جای شروری نیست!

* جهان طبیعی بیشتر از فقط طبیعت است. این جهان مملو از عظمت و جلال خداست.

* انسان ها باید شبیه به خدا باشند (آیات ۲۶ و ۲۷)

* خدا انسان ها را با هدفی خلق کرد. این هدف «شبیه» به خدا بودن و «منعکس» کردن خداست. خدا را از

طریق پرستش به خدا منعکس کنیم. خدا را از طریق شاگردی به دیگران منعکس کنیم.

* انسان ها باید سلطه کنند (آیات ۲۶ و ۲۸)

* پیش زمینه: لغت عبری «رداه» radah - معنای پر قدرتی دارد، «تحمیل کردن اراده شخصی بر دیگری». البته

این تحمیل از نوع خشونت و سوء استفاده نیست، بلکه مسئولیت ما در سلطه داشتن است.

* این اولین مأموریت خداوند برای بشریت است و تا جایی که من از مطالعه کتاب مقدس مطلعم، خداوند هیچگاه

این مأموریت را لغو نکرده.

- تصویر ترک خورده - پیدایش باب ۳ تا ۱۱

- جامعه عهد - پیدایش باب ۱۲ - ملاکی

- تصویر مسیح - متی، مکاشفه باب ۲۰

- تصویر کامل شده - مکاشفه باب ۲۱ و ۲۲

* یک برنامه را دنبال کنید، اما سال به سال آن را تغییر دهید.

- مثل قدیمی: چطور میشود یک فیل را خورد؟ لقمه به لقمه.

- سالی یک بار کل کتاب مقدس را بخوانید

* چطور میتوانم دائماً خط داستانی کتاب مقدس را در برابر خود داشته باشم؟

- هر صبح و هر شب یک مزمور بخوانید و به این شکل، شما کتاب مزامیر را ۵ بار در سال میخوانید.

- کتاب استر را روزی یک بار برای یک هفته بخوانید.

- یک مثل را هر روز از هر ماه بخوانید و به این شکل، کتاب امثال را ۱۲ بار در سال میخوانید.

- یک رساله را در یک نشست بخوانید (همانطور که نامه باید خوانده شود)

* پنج موضوع را موقع خواندن در ذهن داشته باشید.

مثال ها:

- پیدایش باب ۳ آیه ۱۵ چطور به عیسی مسیح اشاره میکند؟
 - کتاب یونا چطور به دعوت ابراهیم در پیدایش باب ۱۲ آیات ۱ تا ۳ مربوط است؟
 - موعظه پولس در آتن که در باب ۱۷ اعمال رسولان آمده چطور مراحل خلقت در ابواب ۱ و ۲ پیدایش را بازتاب میدهد؟
- * بنویسید: وقتی که ارتباطی میگیرید، در دفتر و یا ژورنال خود بنویسید.

درس ۷

قدم اول - مشاهده - من چه میبینم؟

چشمانم را بگشا تا از شریعت تو شگفتیها ببینم. (مزمور ۱۱۹ آیه ۱۸)
درک کتاب مقدس با متوجه شدن شروع میشود

۱. شما در حال مطالعه چه نوع ادبیاتی هستید؟ - ما ۶ نوع ادبیات ساده در کتاب مقدس داریم. هر نوع از این ادبیات باید به طرز خاصی مورد بررسی قرار گیرد. آنها چه هستند؟
- تفسیری: معمولا یک بحث منطقی و یا توضیحی از یک حقیقت. معمولا با ساختاری مستحکم و رضایت زیاد برای ذهن همراه است.
- بیوگرافی و یا روایتی: داستان ها... توجه ما را جلب میکنند - این نوع ادبیات تقریبا ۶۰٪ کتاب مقدس را تشکیل میدهد.
- تمثیل ها: مثل های کوتاه و یا داستان هایی که برای به تصویر کشیدن یک حقیقت روحانی استفاده میشوند.
- شعر: نوشته های خلاقانه که احساسات انسان را لمس میکنند.
- حکمت: لقمه های کوچک و پر از قدرت حقیقت که خیلی کارآمد هستند و معمولا در مورد عواقب رفتار افراد نوشته میشوند.
- نبوت و آخر الزمانی: معمولا شامل هشدار ها، قضاوت ها و استفاده از فرمول هایی برای منتقل کردن کلام خدا هستند.

۲. شما از چه فریب هایی استفاده میکنید؟

- خانواده من همیشه برای تعطیلات به ساحل کارولینای شمالی میرفتند...
- سوالاتی که باید استفاده کنیم - این سوالات در «صید حقیقت» کلام خدا به کمک ما می آیند:

* چه کسی؟

چه افرادی در این قسمت از کلام هستند؟ چه چیزی در مورد آنها گفته میشود؟ یادداشت برداری کنید و جزییات این افراد را با دقت مشاهده کنید. برای مثال لوقا باب ۱۹ آیات ۱ تا ۱۰ - داستان زکا. با مطالعه این قسمت، چه جزییاتی را در مورد زکا میفهمیم؟

* چه چیزی؟

در این قسمت از کلام چه چیزی اتفاق می‌افتد؟ چه رویداد هایی رخ میدهند؟ چه چیزی اتفاق می‌افتد که نباید اتفاق بیافتد؟ برای مثال: وقتی که شائول در اول سمونیل باب ۱۵ علیه عمالیقیان اعلان جنگ میکند.

* کجا؟

- توجه کنید که اتفاقات در کجا روی میدهند. برای مثال

- آیا اریحا در لوقا باب ۱۹ آیات ۱ تا ۱۰ مهم است؟

- آیا این حقیقت که «مسیح باید به سامره میرفت» (یوحنا باب ۴ آیه ۴) مهم است؟

* چه وقتی؟

- این اتفاقات چه زمانی روی دادند؟

- برای مثال: «بامدادان که هوا هنوز تاریک بود، عیسی برخاست و خانه را ترک کرده، به خلوتگاهی رفت

و در آنجا به دعا مشغول شد.» (مرقس باب ۱ آیه ۳۵)

- میدانیم که بامدادان بود، اما کدام بامدادان؟ اگر با دقت مطالعه کنید میبینید بامدادان بعد از شلوغ ترین روز

زندگی عیسی بود.

* چرا؟

- چرا سوالی است که با آن به عمق مطلب میرویم. سوالات چرا دار زیادی داریم:

- چرا کتاب اعمال رسولان ناگهان تمام میشود؟ چرا مزمو ۱۳۹ با دستور داوود به مرگ گناهکاران ختم میشود؟

- چرا یوحنا رساله خود را با اشاره به حواس ما شروع میکند؟ حس شنوایی، حس بینایی، حس لامسه؟ (اول

یوحنا باب ۱ آیه ۱)

* به چه دلیل؟

- این سوال را میتوان «که چه» معنی کرد. این قسمت از کلام چه تغییری در من ایجاد میکند؟

۳. دنبال «تابلو های راهنما» در متن باشید

* کلماتی که شبیه اند و یا تکرار شده‌اند: (مثال: متی باب ۴ آیه ۲۳، باب ۹ آیه ۳۵، افسسیان باب ۱ آیات ۳ تا ۱۴)

* مقایسه ها و تفاوت ها: (مثال: لوقا باب ۱۵، اعمال باب ۴ آیه ۳۶ و ۳۷، باب ۵ آیات ۱ تا ۱۱)

* رابطه علت و معلولی: (مثال: اعمال باب ۱ آیه ۸ «اما چون روح القدس بر شما آید، قدرت خواهید یافت و

شاهدان من خواهید بود، در اورشلیم و تمامی یهودیه و سامره و تا دورترین نقاط جهان.» هر دو سخن از آمدن

روح القدس میکنند. یکی علت است و دیگری معلول)

* افعال و زمان افعال چه هستند؟ (مثال: افسسیان باب ۵ آیات ۱۸ تا ۲۱)

* یک تمرین...

- تعدادی شیء را روی یک میز بچینید... از شرکت کنندگان بپرسید که چه میبینند و مشاهدات خودشان را لیست

کنند.

- نوشته ها را بررسی کنید. شگفت زده خواهید شد که چه چیز هایی مشاهده شده اند و چه چیز هایی نه.

قدم دوم - تفسیر - معنی آن چیست؟

«مرا فهم عطا فرما تا شریعت تو را نگاه دارم، و آن را به تمامی دل حفظ کنم.»

- مزمو ۱۱۹ آیه ۳۴

اگر ما درک درستی از کلام خدا نداشته باشیم، اطاعت از آن و اعمال آن بسیار سخت میشود.

۱. مثال: داستان فیلیپس و خواجهسرای حبشی (اعمال باب ۸ آیات ۲۶ تا ۴۰)

* فیلیپس صدای مردی را میشنود که اشعیا را میخواند

* «آیا آنچه می‌خوانی، می‌فهمی؟» (آیه ۳۰)

* «چگونه می‌توانم بفهمم، اگر کسی رهنمایی‌ام نکند؟» (آیه ۳۱)

* خواجهسرا فیلیپس را دعوت به ارائه فهم میکند

* به محض اینکه خواجه سرا میفهمد، خواجه سرا چیزی که درک کرده را اعمال میکند: «بنگر، اینک آب

مهیاست! آیا تعمید گرفتن مرا مانعی است؟» (آیه ۳۶)

* این مرد نسخه‌ای از کلام خدا را داشت اما در فهمیدن آن نیاز به کمک داشت. این مثالی از تفسیر است.

۲. تعریف: به زبان ساده، تفسیر، هنر درک و معنا بخشیدن به یک موضوع است.

پولس به تیموتائوس اینگونه آموخت:

«تمامی کتب مقدس الهام خداست و برای تعلیم و تأدیب و اصلاح و تربیت در پارسایی سودمند

است»

(دوم تیموتائوس باب ۳ آیه ۱۶)

* اطلاعاتی که گیج کننده است و یا درک آن سخت است، به درد نخور است.

- خداوند نه تنها الهام بخش نویسندگان کتاب مقدس الهام بخش برای نگارش آن بود، بلکه دردهای زیادی را متحمل شد تا مطمئن شود که این کتاب به طرز خوبی نوشته میشود که مردم عادی آن را درک کنند.

- خداوند با بشریت قایم‌موشک بازی نمیکند. او نمی‌خواهد که ما در سردرگمی و گیجی دائمی درباره آنچه می‌گوید زندگی کنیم.

* یک فرض اساسی: مفهوم افکار ذهنی ما نیست که در متن خوانده می‌شود، بلکه حقیقت عینی خداوند است که از متن خوانده می‌شود.

۳. تفسیر چگونه به مشاهده مربوط میشود؟

- * مشاهده مانند حفاری یا پی ریزی یک ساختمان بزرگ است. هرچه فونداسیون قوی تر باشد ساختار بهتر است. در مشاهده ما حفاری می کنیم.
- * در تفسیر ما برپا می کنیم. ما روبنا را می سازیم.
- * کیفیت تفسیر ما همیشه به کیفیت مشاهده ما بستگی دارد.
- * مشاهده هرگز به خودی خود هدف نیست. همیشه به منظور کمک به معنا بخشیدن به یک قسمت از کلام است.
- * شما هرگز نمی توانید معنای امروزی یک نویسنده کتاب مقدس را به درستی به کار ببرید، تا زمانی که منظور نویسنده کتاب مقدس در زمان خودش را درک نکنید.

۴. ما چرا تفسیر می کنیم؟

- * بین دنیای کتاب مقدس و دنیای امروز فاصله زیادی وجود دارد.
- * موانع زیادی بین ما و نویسندگان کتاب مقدس وجود دارد.
 - موانع فرهنگی
 - موانع زبانی - یادگیری واژگان یک زبان هرگز کافی نیست. حتی بهترین ترجمه ها به طور کامل نشان دهنده نوشته های عبری، یونانی یا آرامی کتاب مقدس نیستند. به همین دلیل است که باید تفاسیر خود را با استفاده از لغت نامه های کتاب مقدس یا منابع دیگر بررسی کنیم.
 - موانع ادبیاتی - قبلاً با توجه به نوع ادبیاتی که مطالعه می کنیم یا می خوانیم به این موضوع نگاه کرده ایم. تصویر: یک واعظ در یک رستوران ...

۵. زمینه: زمینه پیرامونی این قسمت از کلام چیست؟

- * زمینه چیست؟ محیطی است که چیزی در آن ساکن است یا محیطی که در آن چیزی اتفاق می افتد.
- * زمینه با زمان و فرهنگ نویسنده اصلی و خوانندگانش ارتباط دارد.
 - عوامل جغرافیایی، سیاسی و تاریخی که در مورد موقعیت نویسنده صادق اند کدامند؟
 - مناسبت یا هدف کتاب چه بود؟
 - نویسنده درباره چه چیزی صحبت می کند؟
 - نویسنده در مورد آنچه در مورد او صحبت می کند چه می گوید؟
- * «متن بدون زمینه تبدیل به متن اثباتی برای بهانه می شود»
- مثال: داستان زن افسرده ای که برای پاسخ به کتاب مقدس رفت:
 - آنگاه پهودا سکه ها را در معبد بر زمین ریخت و بیرون رفته، خود را حلق آویز کرد. (متی باب ۲۷ آیه ۵)
 - «برو و تو نیز چنین کن.» (لوقا باب ۱۰ آیه ۳۷)
 - «آنچه در پی انجام آنی، زودتر به انجام رسان.» (یوحنا باب ۱۳ آیه ۲۷)
- * هر قسمت از کلام زمینه ای دارد که آنچه گفته می شود را احاطه می کند. اگر زمینه اطراف را نادیده بگیرید، می توانید کاری کنید که کتاب مقدس هر چه می خواهید بگوید.

- مثال: آنتیستی که گفت کتاب مقدس بیخدایی را تایید می کند (مزمور ۱۴ آیه ۱)
- مثال: فلیپیان باب ۲ آیه ۱۲ را بدون لحاظ کردن آیه ۱۳ بخوانید
- * هر قسمت از کتاب مقدس "در یک محله زندگی می کند." همیشه باید همسایه های خود را بشناسید.

۶. مقایسه: همیشه کتاب مقدس را با کتاب مقدس مقایسه کنید.

- * برای توضیح چیزی در کتاب مقدس لازم نیست خارج از کتاب مقدس بروید
- * هر چه بیشتر کتاب مقدس را با کتاب مقدس مقایسه کنید، کتاب مقدس بیشتر معنا پیدا می کند.
- * همچنین باید کلمات و جملات متن کتاب مقدس را بخوانیم و قبل از هر چیز به دنبال معنای واضح و طبیعی آنها باشیم.
- * هدف همه تفاسیر منحصر به فرد بودن نیست - ما سعی نمی کنیم چیزی را کشف کنیم که هیچ کس دیگری کشف نکرده است.

* هدف دستیابی به معنای ساده یک قطعه است.

مثال: رومیان باب ۳ آیه ۲۸ را به یعقوب باب ۲ آیه ۲۴ مقایسه کنید و تفاوت ها را دریابید.

پولس در رومیان باب ۴ آیات ۱ تا ۳ ابراهیم را به عنوان مثال نام میبرد و یعقوب هم همین کار را در باب ۲ آیات ۲۱ تا ۲۳ میکند.

پولس قانون‌گرایان را خطاب می‌کرد که به نجات با اعمال اعتقاد داشتند. یعقوب افراد مذهبی را مورد خطاب قرار می‌داد که صرفاً به نجات اعتقاد داشتند.

۷. فرهنگ: دیدن یک قسمت از کلام در مقابل پس زمینه مناسب

- * تصویر: هر وقت الماسی را از جواهر فروشی می خرید...
- * بررسی کنید: شام آخر لئوناردو داوینچی
- اگر مراقب نباشیم، به راحتی می‌توانیم معانی فرهنگی خود را به جای آنچه نویسنده مدنظر داشته، بر یک قسمت از کلام تحمیل کنیم.

۸. مشورت: استفاده از ابزارهای در دست

- * یک کتاب مقدس مطالعه‌ای خوب مثل ترجمه NIV یا ESV یا بهترین ترجمه ارمنی
- * یک کشف اللغات کامل از کتاب مقدس - استرانگ (Strong) یا یانگ (Young) خوب است!
- * فرهنگ لغات کتاب مقدس یک جلدی - فرهنگ لغت جدید کتاب مقدس توسط دی آر وود و آی هوارد مارشال
- * تفسیرها - مجموعه کتاب مقدس امروز صحبت می کند ویرایش شده توسط جان آر دلبلیو استات
- * تفسیرها باید همیشه به عنوان منابع ثانویه استفاده شوند، نه منابع اولیه.

۹. اعتماد به نفس:

* **نه تکبر، بلکه اعتماد به نفس** - هنگامی که یک متن و زمینه اطراف آن را مطالعه می کنید، کتاب مقدس را با کتاب مقدس مقایسه می کنید، عناصر فرهنگی را در نظر می گیرید و از منابع ثانویه خوبی استفاده می کنید، اعتماد به نفس پیدا می کنید.

- بسیاری از شبانان از دست دادن اعتماد به نفس در مورد موعظه، آموزش، مشاوره و رهبری خود رنج می برند. پولس به تیموتائوس جوان در اول تیموتائوس باب ۴ آیات ۱۲ تا ۱۶.

* **رشد در اعتماد به نفس:**

- برای افزایش اعتماد به نفس، به ویژه به عنوان یک فرد جوان، باید از زندگی شخصی و آموزش خود محافظت کنید.

- همانطور که در توانایی خود برای مدیریت دقیق و مؤثر کلام خدا از طریق مطالعه دقیق رشد می کنید، یک مزیت انجام این کار این است که اعتماد به نفس خود را برای آموزش آن کلمه و اجرای دستورات خدا نیز افزایش می دهید.

قدم سوم: به کار گیری - چطور عملی میشود؟

«پس هر گونه پلیدی و هر فزونی بدخواهی 1:21:یا: ”هر اثری از بدخواهی“. را از خود دور کنید و با حلم، کلامی را که در شما نشانده شده و می تواند جانهای شما را نجات بخشد، بپذیرید. به جای آورنده کلام باشید، نه فقط شنونده آن؛ خود را فریب مدهید!» (یعقوب باب ۱ آیات ۲۱ و ۲۲)

* **کتاب مقدس برای تغییر ما نوشته شده است:** وقتی ما کلام خدا را به مردم آموزش می دهیم، آسان است که در شگفتی حقیقتی که مطالعه می کنیم غرق شویم، فراموش کنیم که کتاب مقدس برای تغییر ما نوشته شده است!

* بسیاری از مسیحیان چندین ساعت کتاب مقدس را مطالعه کرده اند، اما مطالعه آنها هیچ تغییر قابل تشخیصی در نگرش، رفتار، شیوه زندگی یا انتخاب آنها ایجاد نکرده است. این برای خدا دردناک است!

* برای حفظ یک زندگی سالم مسیحی، پر شدن دائمی از کلام مورد نیاز است به خاطر داشته باشید: شما همیشه دو جنبه برای زندگی مسیحی خواهید یافت:

- همه ما به غذا نیاز داریم
- همه ما به ورزش نیاز داریم
- غذای زیاد و ورزش کم به چاقی ختم میشود. غذای کم و ورزش زیاد به کم خونی ختم میشود.
- وقتی که غذا هضم میشود به انرژی تبدیل میشود و انرژی به شما کمک میکند کاری که خداوند از شما میخواهد انجام دهید.

ریاضیات مطالعه کتاب مقدس: مشاهده - تفسیر - کاربرد = سقط

۱. هر بار که کتاب مقدس را مشاهده و تفسیر می کنید، اما در اجرای آن شکست می خورید، از نظر هدف کتاب مقدس را سقط می کنید. هدف نهایی همه مطالعه کتاب مقدس این است که به کتاب مقدس اجازه دهیم کاری با شما انجام دهد.

۲. نقل قول: "بسیاری از مسیحیان مانند عکاسی ضعیف هستند: نوردهی بیش از حد و توسعه نیافته." هاوارد هندریکس

۳. مطالعه کتاب مقدس به ما می آموزد که چگونه زندگی خود را به گونه ای انجام دهیم که منعکس کننده ارزش ها، اصول و حقایق کتاب مقدس باشد. بلوغ معنوی همیشه با کاربرد سنجیده می شود، نه تفکر.

۴. وقتی مطالعه کتاب مقدس را تمام کردم، باید به دو سوال بسیار مهم پاسخ دهم:

الف. پس چی؟

ب. حالا چی؟

۵. هدف نهایی از مطالعه کتاب مقدس من = یادگیری اعتماد به خدا در تمام زمینه های زندگی ام.

* برخی از سوالات کاربردی که هنگام خواندن/مطالعه باید به آنها فکر کنید:

- آیا وجود دارد: گناهی برای اعتراف؟ قولی برای عمل کردن؟ نگرشی برای تغییر؟ امری برای اطاعت؟ مثالی برای دنبال کردن؟ موضوعی برای دعا؟ خطایی که باید اجتناب کرد؟ حقیقتی برای باور؟

* یک نقطه کاربرد بهتر از چند مورد است

خود یا افراد دیگر را به چالش بکشید تا یک نقطه از کاربرد را برای یک هفته، حتی یک روز، یا احتمالاً یک ماه امتحان کنید.

معمولاً تصمیمات تغییردهنده زندگی ترکیبی از تصمیمات کوچکتر هستند که وقتی صادقانه انجام شوند و بر اساس آنها عمل شود منجر به تغییر سبک زندگی می شود.

* یک نکته خود را روشن کنید

اگر مردم واقعاً کاری را با حقیقت انجام دهند، حقیقت را به یاد خواهند داشت.

مردم را سرزنش نکنید که هرگز بعد از پیام شما کاری انجام نداده اند، اگر هرگز کاری به آنها نداده اید.

دانستن چیزی هدف نیست. این کاری است که با آنچه می دانید انجام می دهید مهم است.

* کلام را به روابط خود ربط دهید

- پس اگر کسی در مسیح باشد، خلقتی تازه است. یا: «اگر کسی در مسیح باشد، این خلقتی تازه است.» چیزهای

کهنه درگذشت؛ هان، همه چیز تازه شده است! - دوم قرنیتان باب ۵ آیه ۱۷

- عیسی مسیح عمیقاً بر روابط ما تأثیر می گذارد:

« رابطه جدید ما با خدا - نجات جدید، هویت جدید، پذیرش جدید، عشق جدید، آزادی جدید
« رابطه جدید ما با خودمان - اهمیت جدید، هدف جدید، عزت نفس جدید، ارزش های جدید، اولویت های
جدید، استانداردهای جدید
« رابطه جدید ما با دیگران - در خانه من، در کلیسای من، در روستای من، در کار من، در جهان
« رابطه جدید ما با دشمنانمان - هنگامی که ایمان و اعتماد خود را به مسیح نشان دادید، در نبرد تغییر سمت
می دهید. نقل قول از ای دبلیو توزر.

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ABSTRACT

DESIGNING A CURRICULUM FOR TEACHING HERMENEUTICS TO EXILED CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN ARMENIA

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
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This project is intended to resource persecuted pastors in the Middle East by refreshing Armenia Relief Mission's (ARM's) current ministry in Armenia. This process began by evaluating where the conference candidates were coming from through pre-conference surveys, visits, and interviews. The project reached its climax with two different three-day seminars in Armenia in the summer of 2020. One conference trained Armenians, the other expat Iranians. Participants in these conferences were asked to fill out surveys and rubrics in order to evaluate the impact of these conferences in their respective teaching ministries.

Chapter 1 tells the genesis of ARM and introduces the present footprint the ministry has in Armenia and articulates the rationale, purpose, goals, research methodologies, and definitions of the project. Chapter 2 provides an exegesis of three passages of Scripture (1 Tim 4:11-16; 1 Pet 5:1-5; 1 Cor 2:1-5). Together, these passages serve as a basis for the character, conduct, and competency that is to accompany how pastors live, serve, and teach their people. Chapter 3 addresses the need for high-quality theological training for global leaders to be equipped in teaching the Bible effectively. Chapter 4 details the curriculum development process, the pre- and post-conference surveys, and the data collection. Chapter 5 concludes with an overall evaluation of the project as well as suggestions for improvement and further development.

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