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We want to hear from you!

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(864) 322-0838 or send them by e-mail to info@fbfi.org.

You may request that your letter not be published or that your name be withheld, but anonymous letters will not be accepted.

Thank you so much for scientific "facts" and **⊥** giving us an organization to be part of that speaks to others regarding Scripture. our stand with Fundamental Bible Believers.

> Rev. Donald E. Karnes Chesapeake, Virginia

TrontLine has been a $m{arGamma}$ great learning tool, but sometimes the content sails over my head. Perhaps it would be helpful to your lay subscribers and young Christians if you could include a "beginners" segment in each issue. Articles could deal with beliefs of other denominations (or cults), Baptist History, principles of good music, etc.

While I appreciated the information in the article by Mr. Caesar, I am curious as to the intention of the editors for including it. . . . How will we respond if future "improved scientific technology" produces "facts" which once again point to an older universe? The title asserts that "The Good Shepherd Is the Creator of the Heavens," but the proof of that statement seems to rest upon brute

not upon clear statements from the

> Sam Hendrickson Troy, Michigan

Twas saddened to read Lof what has happened with Dr. Bell. Unlike several others who have fallen, Dr. Bell makes no excuses. I am thankful for a man of enough character to admit he sinned and who is man enough to do what is Biblically right afterwards.

> Dan Sehested Romania

was quite encouraged *Mike Evans* Lby the article by Don Murrells Inlet, Harrelson, "Where Are South Carolina the Young Fundamentalists?" I have been burdened for what the future holds for young men who graduate from seminary and colleges. For the last several years we have been taking 3 or 4 young men for 8 weeks in the summer as a part of our staff. If there are young men out there who are interested in this type of ministry, I would encourage them to contact me.

> Pastor Mel Hall Elkins Park, PA

Frontline

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On the Front Line

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Let The Bible Change Your Life

Jesus and leader of the church at Jerusalem, gave us a wonderful text on the practical value of the Word in bringing needed change to our lives. His congregation scattered by persecution, James was greatly burdened that they continue to grow through their many trials and afflictions, and wrote not only to them but to us of how this growth would happen. His focus on obedience is as relevant today as it has always been: "But be ve doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

Many who claim to believe the Bible often fail to change and grow, even though they are trying to reform their lives. The Word of God has the power we need to change, and we must seek change through it. God wants us to know the truth. "Let every man be swift to hear" he declares in James 1:19. The flesh would rather speak passionately than listen patiently. The problem, our "own lust" (1:14; 4:1-3), is often the first place we look for the solution. The resulting frustration and anger will never bring the desired change. As James goes on to say, we should be "slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

If you want real change in your life, you must "lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." Any Christians who really

ames, the half-brother of word and be willing to grow by the word. The process of putting off the old man and putting on the new, with the key of the empowering Word "renewing the mind" is taught not only by Paul (Eph. 4:17-24; Rom. 12:1, 2), but also by James 1:19-27. The "engrafted word" is the implanted word received in meekness, the virtue of the nonresistant heart.

The first step in growing through the Word is to believe it. If you really believe in the Scripture, you will apply your heart to the kind of change it can bring. But there are Christians who will insist that they believe the Word who still do not change and grow. James makes it clear that there must be evidence in the life that verifies belief in order for it to be considered genuine. You must not only believe it, you must obey it. The man who hears the Word but does not do it has deceived himself. The tendency to quibble over this claim is evidence of its truth. "Doing" results when you are submissive, but deception results when you are selfish. If hearing alone brought change, all of us would have to be much better than we are now.

James provides helpful illustrations to drive the point

home. A man comes to the mirror, not just for a glance, but to gaze with serious consideration only to go away and forget what he has seen. And, some men come to hear the Word repeatedly only to go their way to forget repeatedly. You

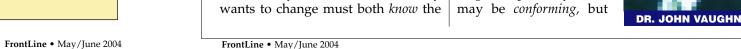
is the place to get the outside appearance temporarily in order, but long seasons in the Word are the place to bring the inner transformation. The way to be a changed man who "continueth therein," is to be a man who "being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work." This is the man who "shall be blessed in his deed." James is not teaching reformation, but transformation. He is not appeal-

you must be *transforming*. The mirror

ing to works instead of grace. He is telling us that true belief is obedient. His summary in James 1:26, 27 shows us the balance of both believing and obeying. God rejects our religious pretense (v. 26), but clearly expects our religious purity (v. 27). Simply put, since the Bible has the power you need to change, you must live it.

I once knew a man who worked as a building inspector who required a contractor to tear up a concrete sidewalk and replace it because he had failed to put expansion joints in it to prevent cracks. He had scored the surface to make it look right, but he had not done it right. The inspector's reply was appropriate for this text: "If you know how to make it look right, you know how to do it right." Those

who know what the Bible requires must be faithful to do what the Bible requires. One of the first and most important things a Christian should learn is how to learn. Here in this issue of FrontLine are articles and Bible studies to help you let the Bible change your life.



Paul Michael Garrison



hen I was eight years old, my little brother was born. At first, he proved to be quite a disappointment. After all, he was too little to play with or to do much of anything interesting, at least to an eight-yearold. But slowly I was allowed to interact with him in a more adult role—for example, by holding him, feeding him, and even changing his diapers.

In feeding my baby brother, I learned what anyone who has tried to feed a baby has learned: a baby cannot be fed when his mouth is closed. And closing their mouths is something that babies will typically do when you are trying to feed them. You can push and smear, but until the mouth is open, no food is going in. So, in an attempt to entice that little one to eat, we try games. One game involves making wide sweeps with our arms as we pretend that an air-

plane is coming into the hangar. Or we sputter like a motorboat in hopes that the kid will open his mouth long enough for us to shove some food in.

Normally, for us adults, keeping our mouths shut is harder than keeping them open. Along with many others, that's a problem I personally have experienced. We open our mouths freely and let out all sorts of comments that we shouldn't. In this sense, we would do well to keep our mouths shut more frequently. However, spiritually, we are to keep our mouths open. "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. 81:10).

Like a baby that closes his mouth to food, we adult believers often close our mouths to the spiritual nourishment God would give us. However, we need to be open to anything the Lord would send our way. By keeping our us. Rather, He looks us straight in the eyes and gives us "mouths closed," we rob ourselves of spiritual bless- a firm warning: "Open your mouth." If we don't, what ings and growth.

A baby does not realize that the one feeding him is acting in his best interest. He knows only what he wants, and at times he does not want to eat. Likewise, we adults do not always see what is in our best interest. Instead, we see only what we want or what seems tantalizing to us. However, we would do well to remember that God has our best interest in mind, and He knows what spiritual nourishment we need.

When we as parents (or an older sibling) receive a closedmouth approach from the not-sohungry baby, we often resort to the games mentioned above.

Sometimes this works; sometimes it doesn't. However, fact, and we exhibit the same stubborn will of the baby God doesn't play games with us. When we refuse to open our mouth and take in His truths, He may pull back the spiritual spoon and leave it there, with no funny motorboat noises or airplane landings to entice Paul Michael Garrison is a graduate student at Bob Jones University.

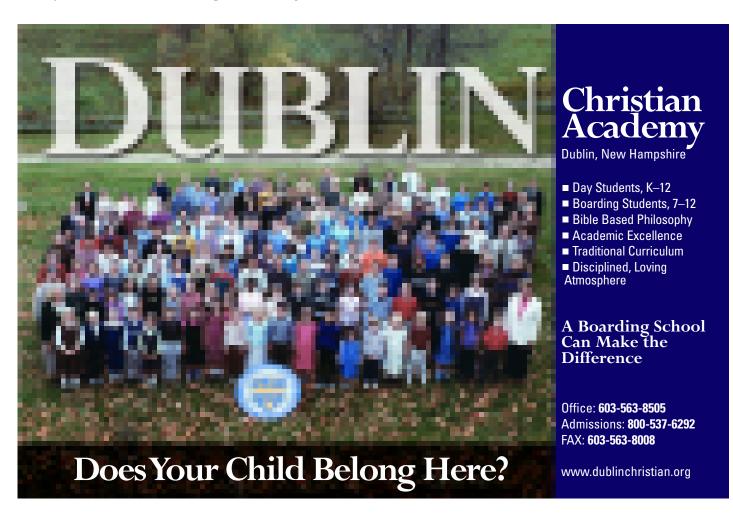
comes next is less pleasant.

A baby does not realize that the one feeding him is acting in his best interest. He knows only what he wants, and at times he does not want to eat.

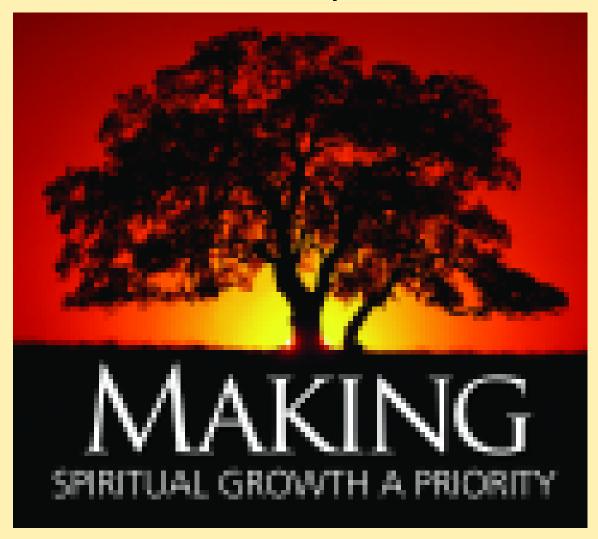
Sometimes, in order for a baby to be fed, his mouth has to be pried open. This not a pleasant experience for the one being fed, nor for the one doing the feeding. Similarly, God must pry our mouths open to give us what we need. Divine chastening is one successful mouthopener. Deuteronomy 8:5 warns, "As a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee." God chastens us until we are ready to be fed.

It does not take supreme powers of logic or deduction to realize that it is much better to receive nourishment willingly than to be fed by force. But somehow we forget that

who refuses to be fed. Open widely to the blessings and tests that the Lord has for you!



Rick Barry



Risser* to lift weights with them, he had ▲ no clue how greatly it would affect his change the situation." life. But because Tony had been a cross-country runner since his school days, he appreciated the benefits of fitness. He also knew from articles in Runner's World magazine that upper-body strength improves running endurance, so he long, Tony mastered the lingo of bench presses, was immediately gung-ho.

"Let's do it!" he agreed.

On that first night with the basement weight set, Tony felt out of place. Unlike his two friends, he had never seriously lifted weights. Of course, like many boys in high school, he had played around with the universal machine in the gym, imum output. Experiencing definite increases in but he had never noticed any benefit from it.

"All through school I was a tall, skinny kid," he says with a grin. "I actually tried to gain weight in high school and couldn't. People used

The winter when two friends invited Tony to tag me with nicknames like 'Stringbean.' I didn't like it, but it seemed I was powerless to

Good-bye, Mr. Stringbean

However, week after week Tony and his buddies continued their basement workouts. Before military presses, standing rows, sets and reps, plus the anatomy of triceps, deltoids, latissimus dorsi, pectorals, and other muscles. He also learned how to stress muscle groups efficiently to achieve a satisfying "burn," the stinging sensation in muscles that have been forced to maxstrength encouraged Tony to drive harder, pushing to conquer ever-greater weights.

"After a couple of months, I began to wonder what in the world my wife was doing to my shirts," Tony says with a laugh. "I thought she was ruining them in the laundry. When I fastened the top button to put on a tie, my collars were getting tighter. Across my chest, the fabric looked stretched, and the buttons puckered. I assumed she was doing something wrong and shrinking my clothes."

"It's not my fault," Tony's wife defended. "You're the one putting on the muscles. Haven't you looked in a mirror lately?"

Then, examining himself in the bedroom mirror, Tony was genuinely astonished to realize that his formerly

skinny frame was actually gaining mass. Instead of the beanpole he used to see in the reflection, his new image displayed a touch of the "V" shape he admired in bodybuilders. His chest and arms were also showing more definition. Of course, he had known that he was growing stronger, but he had been "Stringbean" for so long that he had given up any hopes of being anything else.

Encouraged by that discovery, Tony added extra workouts to his weekly sessions. When winter yielded to springtime and his two friends grew tired of the ritual, Tony was just getting started. He enrolled in a fitness club and pressed forward on his own.

"I also began subscribing to a couple weightlifting magazines," Tony adds. "Being a Christian, I was embarrassed

at first that the magazines pictured female weightlifters in skimpy outfits. But before long I got used to it. As more time passed—and I hate to confess this—I began sneaking peeks at those same photos."

Shifting Gears

"I didn't realize it at the time," Tony explains, "but my main goal for exercising had stopped being health and physical fitness. Instead, I wanted to look strong and be admired for my appearance. I felt proud when I wore a Tshirt and friends made comments like, 'Wow, you're really bulking up!""

On another occasion, Tony says, a woman at the gym walked over just to compliment him on his build. "I'd never considered myself great looking, so the attention went to my head. I was still no candidate for the cover of *Muscle & Fitness*—not by a long shot. But I was no longer a fence post, either."

In a moment of reflection, Tony shares how bodybuilding also affected how he viewed other people: "I'd meet someone and rather than thinking, 'He seems like a nice guy,' or 'I should share my faith with him,' I'd mentally criticize him for having wimpy-looking arms or a flat chest. Or I'd glance at a woman and tell myself how much better she would look if only she would work out on a legcurl machine. In other words, I became disconnected from

truly important issues and was thinking in superficial terms of appearance. Sure, I still prayed and read my Bible. But I was so caught up in external values that I wasn't getting as much out of them as I did before."

Straightening Priorities

"Lord, how did I

get here?" Tony

finally prayed in

the solitude of his

bedroom. "I know

spiritual things

are the most

important, but I

haven't been

acting like it."

Tony's wife was the one who finally helped him to realize the transformation going on inside of him. For a while he had tried to brush aside her worries about his weight lifting. But one day she blurted, "You're different! All you think about is working out and how you look. I see you admiring

yourself in the mirror all the time. You're not the same person I married!"

Tony didn't immediately believe his wife's arguments. On the other hand, he couldn't deny that he was spending more time on strengthening his body than in fortifying his soul. In the past he had looked in mirrors mainly to shave, comb his hair, or put on a tie. Now he frequently paused in front of one to look for new gains in size. For him, eternal values had slipped aside only to be replaced by temporary, less-important ones. He no longer felt close to God, not even in church.

"Lord, how did I get here?" Tony finally prayed in the solitude of his bedroom. "I know spiritual things are the most important, but I haven't been acting like it. I've been too full of myself to care about You or other people. I want You to

occupy first place in my life again."

Today, Tony still exercises, but not to the degree he once did, and with more wholesome motivation: simply to keep his body in good health. "I've gone back to my running, and I lift weights just once a week at home—without the inspiration of muscle magazines. I do believe in physical fitness. The Lord gives each of us only one body, and I want to be a good steward of the one God gave me. But spiritual fitness is even more crucial."

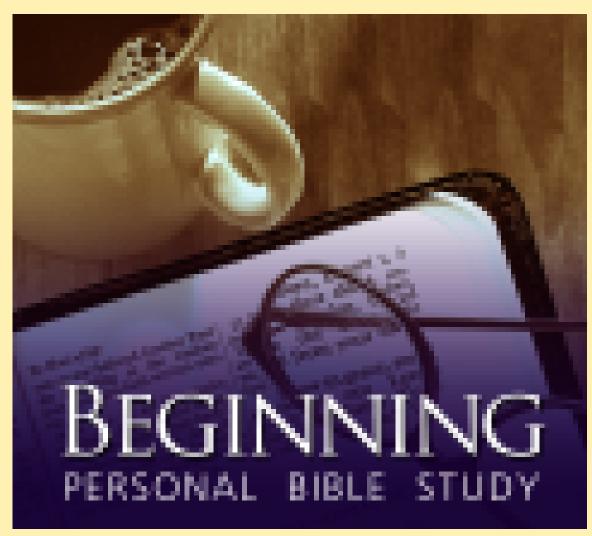
Tony believes the lesson he learned is important for all Christians, both men and women. Why? "Because our society emphasizes temporary, outer appearance rather than lasting, inner attractiveness. People are so worried about how they look in the eyes of other people. Instead, we should be concerned about how we look in the Lord's eyes. After all, the beauty that comes from purity and holiness is the only kind that never wrinkles or grows flabby."

What is Tony's favorite Bible verse? "That's easy," he replies. "Matthew 6:33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. . . . ' When you give first priority to God and His kingdom, everything else in life just falls into its proper place."

Rick Barry is a freelance writer living in Bristol, Indiana. He is also an editor for FrontLine magazine.

* Not his real name

Linda Hull



"Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34).

of Bible study is to get started! Too often we L believers get bogged down in our efforts to read our Bibles by worrying about the superfluto cover, just as I would any other book. ous. Fretting about which translation to use, which book to read, how many verses, and even understand as I had first thought. Or was it that what time of day to read all become hindrances to what should be a rewarding experience.

Personal Testimony

Years ago, as a new believer, I began a serious study of God's Word. I found that no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't understand it. In total frustration, I cried out to my Lord, begging Him to teach me. With a feeling of hopelessness, I laid my King James Bible aside, certain

that it was just too hard to grasp.

The next day, I mulled over the fact that I had read many books in my life without any trouhave learned that the most important aspect ble. I wondered why I couldn't just sit down with my Bible and do the same thing. The idea took root, and I resolved to read my Bible cover

> As I began, I realized that it wasn't as hard to my Lord had opened my eyes? All I knew was that suddenly the truths of God's Word were beginning to make sense. In fact, I was soon finding so many important truths that I was afraid they would get lost in that large volume and that I wouldn't be able to find them again.

> On my next trip to the store, I bought a highlighter pen. As I read, I highlighted specific verses. I was amazed at how frequently passages applied to my own life. In time, my Bible became

quite colorful. Everything seemed important enough to warrant that yellow highlighter! My original plan was that if I had to thumb through my Bible trying to find a specific verse, the yellow ink would catch my eye and enable me to find quickly the verses that had reached my heart. Now I had the problem of too much yellow highlighting! Yet, the more I studied, the more familiar I became with each book. With delight, I discovered the Bible stories I had heard as a child. Now they were in context, and I understood better how they all fit together to reveal the nature of my Lord.

How to Get Started

Establishing a new habit is difficult. Distractions and disruptions can soon pull us away from our appointed task. When it comes to Bible study, we need to remember that Satan doesn't want us to learn the truths of God's Word. Therefore we ought to expect obstacles in accomplishing our daily Bible reading goal. Realizing that I need the power of the Holy Spirit to help me understand and apply the truths of God's Word to my life, I like to begin my study time with prayer. In addition, prayer serves to clear my mind and heart so I can concentrate better.

When time allows, I enjoy reading five chapters in Psalms, one chapter in Proverbs, and two chapters each in the Old and New Testaments on a daily basis. Consistently following this procedure, I learned that it's possible to read the books of Proverbs and Psalms monthly, the New Testament in less than a year, and the Old Testament in about a year. By reading Proverbs and Psalms repeatedly, I found that I had begun to memorize bits and pieces of Scriptures without even trying. I had secretly envied believers who could rattle off verses at whim. Now I found that I could too, but only if I kept on reading the Word! Hiding God's Word in my heart gives me a source of strength and inspiration to draw upon in times of need.

I also learned that it's best to select a quiet time when I'm at my freshest and most alert. For many people, this is first thing in the morning. The most important item on our daily schedule should be our quiet time with Scripture. Entering it into our daily planners establishes it as a priority and ensures a slot in our busy schedules. If you find that you can't meet your Bible reading goal, make adjustments. Be flexible. But make it a quality time of fellowship with our Lord. Don't hurry. The main point is to read your Bible and spend time in prayer on a daily basis.

Often, a particular need in my life guides my Bible study. I use the Scriptures as a sieve through which I sift all the advice and counsel of this world. God's Word has become my foundation, and my life is based on its truths. It's now natural for me to seek God's wisdom when searching for solutions to problems. However, a word of caution is in order: the Bible is not a fortune-telling device. Verses must be understood and applied in context.

Helpful Tools

I have read several different translations; however, I have come to prefer the King James Bible, originally published in 1611. In comparing the various translations, I discovered some discrepancies in newer translations that do alter the

meaning. In addition, research seems to indicate that the KJV Bible is actually self-explanatory and is at about a sixthgrade reading level. Many words that seem difficult individually are easily understood in the context of a passage.

As a teen, I was given a King James Bible with proper names broken down into their syllables with stress marks and vowel sounds. This is an invaluable aid to pronunciation. Recently, while I was teaching my Sunday school class of eighth graders, they asked how I knew how to pronounce these strange, foreign names. I was delighted to show them my "self-pronouncing" Bible!

My Bible also includes a brief dictionary, which defines and clarifies unfamiliar terms, and it provides a listing of verses where those words are found. While the language of the King James Version seems archaic today, before long I came to love its richness.

As I study the Bible, I rely on Strong's Concordance to locate verses and to clarify word meanings in their original language. Strong's lists each English word and the Scripture verses containing that word. After each Scriptural reference is a number indicating the corresponding Hebrew or Greek word, which can be found in their respective dictionaries, also included in Strong's.

Closing Thoughts

Many people find commentaries helpful. However, I have not always relied on the thinking of others, because so many people are swayed by new thoughts or trends that come along. My preference is to read the Scripture first, and then to seek answers to my questions with sources that I know are grounded in the truths of the Word. Doctrinal and ideological differences can color a commentator's perspective and interpretation of Scripture, so it is necessary to choose study aids carefully. As 2 Timothy 2:16, 17a advises, "But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker."

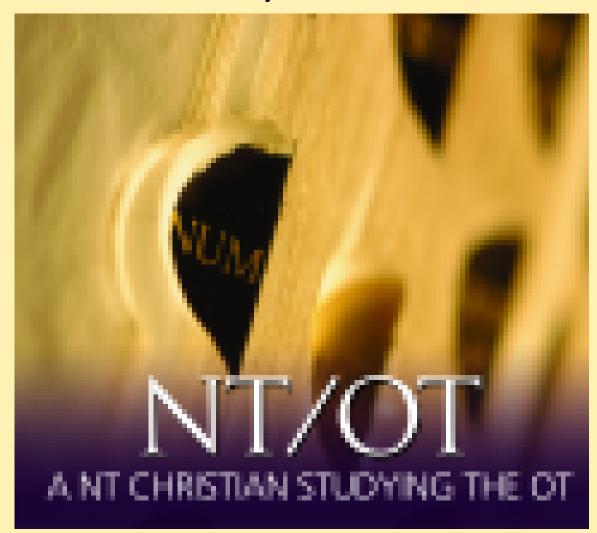
I'm thankful that the Holy Spirit brings understanding to the seeking heart. My goal of reading the Bible cover to cover was reached long ago. There is great satisfaction in having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and in coming to an understanding of why that is possible. Before I began reading my Bible, I had little knowledge of spiritual truths. Consequently, I was unable to share my faith about Jesus. Just as bad, I had little appreciation for how much I was blessed because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

One of the prerequisites to Bible study is a seeking heart. Our Lord is ready to reveal truth to those who will hear. However, knowledge brings with it a responsibility-one of obedience. When God reveals Himself, we must make a choice to follow or reject Him. I encourage anyone who wants to begin a personal study of the Bible to begin in the book of John in order to learn of Jesus. Start your journey to understanding God's Word today!

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto vou. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:9, 10).

Linda Hull is a freelance writer living in Walden, New York.

Layton Talbert



s the Old Testament at all authoritative for ▲ Testament believer even attach much value the OT. Many Christians treat the OT as little to the Old Testament? And if so, in what ways more than a prophetic handbook fulfilled by and areas is the Old Testament (OT) to be Christ with a devotional appendix (Psalms applied as either authoritative or valuable for and Proverbs), and they do not utilize it to the New Testament (NT) Christian?

twenty years after the inception of the Church, history has witnessed an unending struggle with the relativity of the OT to the NT believer. It is instructive to note that, in the Church's first major confrontation with this issue, the Jerusalem Council resolved that the OT is authoritative for the NT non-Jewish believer in its moral and ethical principles, but not in its ritualistic precepts (Acts 15:1-29). Nevertheless, Christians who have wrestled with the problem through the years have come to a variety of conclusions.

Unfortunately, a common view tends to be the New Testament era? Should the New one of disparagement, or at least neglect, of its full, God-intended potential. Old Beginning with the Jerusalem Council some Testament scholar Walter Kaiser pointedly observes that

> it is difficult to think of very many areas of Christian theology that are not affected in a major way, either by the inclusion or the deliberate omission of the OT data from its systematization. Moreover, when it is recalled that over threefourths of the total Bible is found in the OT, it is enough to give one pause before cavalierly bypassing the most extensive

record of God's revelation to mankind (Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament, p. 17).

For the Christian, the leading question in the debate is, what does the NT have to say about the OT? Ironically, there is little ambiguity in the answer to that question. The NT itself argues that the whole OT is profitable, relevant, and authoritative for the NT Christian—not only in its prophetic predictions, but also in its revelation of God, its evaluation of man, its moral demands, and its application of timeless principles. Many factors argue for this conclusion, but three major considerations highlight the relationship of the OT Scriptures to the NT Christian: the NT view of the OT, the NT use of the OT, and the nature of the Author of both the OT and the NT.

The NT View of the OT

There are eight NT passages that inform the Christian reader outright in what ways and to what extent the OT relates to him. These passages address the very heart of this issue and must, therefore, govern a Christian's thinking if he is to cultivate a Biblical perspective and an accurate use of the bulk of God's revelation to man.

The earthly ministry of Christ was, of course, permeated with His use of the OT. His assessment of the OT relative to the Christian is succinctly summed up in two passages. (1) In John 5:39 He affirms that the OT has a significantly Christological orientation. (The OT Scriptures, Christ claimed, "are they which testify of me.") This is further confirmed by the Lord's post-resurrection sermon to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:26, 27). (2) In addition, Christ's statement in Matthew 5:17, 18 stresses the continuing relativity and authority of the OT for all time.¹

(3) Peter has one particularly insightful revelation about the OT writers to add to the list. In the theologically-oriented context of 1 Peter 1:10–12, he emphasizes that the OT prophets were not ministering so much to their own era as to future Christians.² This passage not only verifies that the OT prophets often communicated far more than they realized or understood, but also demonstrates that God plainly designed and intended much of the OT more for NT believers than for the OT saints.

(4) Paul, in contexts of theological instruction as well as practical exhortation, contributes the most—and the most significant—comments relative to the value of the OT for the Christian. In Romans 4:23, 24, he not only uses the OT to establish and illustrate the theological doctrine of justification by faith, but also essentially argues that God included a very specific portion in the OT (Gen. 15:6b) for our benefit.3 (5) In Romans 15:4, a passage devoted to practical doctrine and exhortation, Paul asserts that everything written in the OT was included for our instruction.⁴ (6) In the eminently practical context of 1 Corinthians 9:9, 10, which deals with ministerial remuneration, Paul argues that a specific, obscure OT law regarding the treatment of *animals* was actually written for *our* sakes.⁵ (7) In 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11, Paul teaches that the historical experiences of Israel are designed to warn us, and they were recorded for our spiritual welfare to deter similar behavior on our part.6 (8) Finally, the crowning comment of the NT on the OT is found in 2 Timothy 3:15–17.7 Paul's inspired assessment of all Scripture (which, at the time he penned those words, still consisted primarily of the OT) is that it is directly from God and profitable to the Christian in establishing his creed as well as his conduct. The impact of the plain implication of verse 17 is unambiguous and inescapable: no NT believer can achieve full maturity or be thoroughly equipped to serve God without the full-orbed ministry of "all scripture"—OT as well as NT—in his life. God has expressly given and preserved the whole Bible to that intent.

To summarize the NT teaching on the OT, the following principles can be observed from the passages cited above: (1) The OT has a decidedly Christological orientation (John 5). (2) The OT remains pertinent for believers of all ages (Matt. 5). (3) The OT was divinely designed, in many of its revelations, more for the NT believer than for the OT saint (1 Pet. 1). (4) The OT was recorded for our doctrinal and practical benefit and is divinely intended for our spiritual welfare (Rom. 4, 15; 1 Cor. 9, 10). Finally, (5) the OT makes a profitable and significant contribution to Christian belief and behavior, and is God-intended to make Christians mature and equipped to serve the Lord (2 Tim. 3).

For a Christian to ignore or neglect his OT, therefore, is not only detrimental, but actually disobedient. Nevertheless, the question remains as to how the OT is to be understood and applied. The answer is to be found, at least partly, in the patterns established by the NT use of the OT.

The NT Use of the OT

The NT is replete with quotations of and allusions to the OT. Estimates vary (depending on one's definition of "quotation") from 150 to 300 explicit quotations, with over a thousand allusions to the OT. These not only comprise a considerable proportion of the content of the NT, but also frequently provide the basis for doctrinal instruction, practical exhortation, logical argumentation, or illustrative elucidation of Biblical truth.

For example, Paul argues in Romans 15:4 that what was written in the OT was written for our instruction. The context is significant, for the argument of the passage runs as follows: (a) instruction—believers are to abstain from offensive activities for the sake of weaker brethren (chapter 14); (b) exhortation—strong Christians ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (15:1-2); (c) example—even Christ did not live a selfserving life; (d) quotation—"but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me [Ps. 69:9]" (15:3); (e) application—for whatever was written in the OT was written for our instruction (15:4). The connection between verses 3 and 4 is the fulcrum of Paul's argument relative to the value of the OT. Paul applies Psalm 69:9 to Christ in this context, because He is the supreme example of the principle of self-denial that is contained in Psalm 69:9, and Paul is concerned with inculcating that principle in his readers. The application of this OT principle to Christ furnishes a case-in-point to demonstrate that all the OT is designed to teach us timeless, applicable axioms.

Another example is 1 Corinthians 9:8–10, where the context demonstrates the application of an underlying universal truth, which Paul uncovered in a seemingly obscure legislative detail. In the process of arguing the legitimacy of ministerial exemption from outside labor, and the responsibility of believers to support financially their preachers (vv. 6, 7), he goes so far as to insist (v. 8) that the OT law teaches this principle of ministerial remuneration when it says, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn [Deut. 25:4]" (v. 9). Did God, Paul goes on to ask, say that just for the sake of oxen? Or was He saying it for our sakes? Assuredly, he concludes, He was saying it for our sakes!9 This illustrates Paul's recognition that underlying the literal, temporal, localized, nationalized OT revelation there exist eternal, universal, axiomatic truths—timeless principles that the NT itself applies to modern Christians.

The Immutability of God

The final consideration that must shape our attitude toward the OT is a theological one regarding the nature of the Author. The inspiration and authority of the OT is everywhere assumed and frequently explicitly affirmed in the NT. Hebrews 1:1, 2 spans the theological gulf between the OT and NT by asserting that the same God who spoke in past times to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son. One important thought that this passage invites is that the NT writers were not consciously composing a "New Testament" as distinct from the "Old Testament." They were simply continuing to record the revelation God was giving through them.

The NT is not an updated and edited revision of the OT; it is a sequel—an organically related continuation of God's self-revelation. God, in His character and nature and in His evaluation and essential expectations of man, never changes. The cardinal text for the immutability (unchangeableness) of God is, of course, Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I change not." Its NT sister text is Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever."

This is not to say that God never alters His methods in dealing with men. God's will for man never changes, although the specific means to performing and fulfilling that will may be altered by God. Such is the case with the temporal institutions established by the Lord for Israel.

But even in the OT regulations for Israel (repealed for the Church), there are eternal truths that reveal why God required those specifics of Israel, and why the principles they embody are still relevant today.

For the NT Christian, the OT is not an optional study. The NT verifies the authority and relativity of the OT for the Christian. The NT use of the OT demonstrates its applicability to the Christian. The immutability of the Author ensures the timelessness of its essential revelations.

The OT is not a book of outdated

temporal institutions, but a volume of ageless, eternal truths. For sheer bulk and diversity of material it is, frankly, unrivaled by the NT. This is not to pit one volume against the other, for they are one Book. Neither can be correctly interpreted nor fully appreciated without the other.

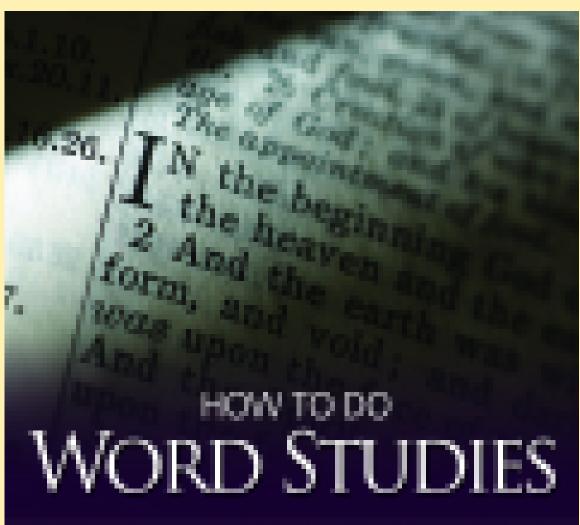
The final argument for the Christian's view of and relationship to the OT comes back to 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Every portion of both the NT *and* the OT is profitable, and therefore necessary, to effect full spiritual maturity and to equip God's people in any and every age to serve Him as they ought.

- ¹ Here Christ assures His hearers that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them; for, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." That "law" in v. 18 is a generic term is evident from v. 17. Thus, the OT, in Morgan's words, "cannot be set aside, it cannot be abrogated, it cannot be trifled with as unimportant" (*Studies in the Four Gospels* [Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1937], 51).
- ² The OT prophets "prophesied of the grace that should come unto you," and it was "not unto themselves but unto us they did minister." Note here and in Paul's arguments below the repeated emphasis upon the OT's benefit and design for the Christian ("unto us," "for our sakes," etc.).
- ³ Paul says of Abraham, "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; *but for us also*, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead."
- ⁴ "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written *for our learning*, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." For a discussion of the oft-ignored but suggestive context of this well-known verse, see the next section.
- ⁵ "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. . . . For our sakes, no doubt, this is written." See next section for a discussion of this context.
- ⁶ "Now these things were *our examples*" and "all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written *for our admonition*."
- ⁷ "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."
- ⁸ Extraordinary examples include Romans 9, 10, where OT quotations comprise nearly one half of the total material (25 out of 54 verses), and Galatians 3, where a quarter of the material is OT (7 of 29 verses).
- ⁹ He is not denying the literal intent of the original words. "He only means to say that the law had a higher reference. Although the proximate end of the command was that the laboring beast should be treated justly, yet its ultimate design was to teach men the moral truth involved in the precept. If God requires that even the ox, which spends his strength in our service, should not be defrauded of his reward," then He certainly expects this principle to be exercised toward men (Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [1857; reprinted, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976], 157–58).

Dr. Layton Talbert is a FrontLine Contributing Editor.



Andy Naselli



Then I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." So asserts Lewis Carroll's colorful character in Through the Looking Glass. That may be the case for Humpty Dumpty's use of words, but it is emphatically not the case for a person's interpretation of words—especially in God's written revelation to man.

When the Bible uses a word, it means exactly what the Author intended it to mean—neither more nor less. The Bible cannot mean what it never meant. When we read the Bible, our task is to discover what the Author meant. Sometimes that involves investigating the text right down to the smallest meaningful component of written language—a single word. Analyzing a word in the Bible is doing a *word study*.

The Value of Word Studies

Word studies are among the most rewarding methods of serious Bible study. Completing a word study is as satisfying as exiting a mine with a sack full of jewels. Word studies shed light on the meanings of passages that the reader may otherwise misinterpret. They also help the reader appreciate difficult—but theologically significant—passages.

For example, what does "only begotten" mean in John 3:16? Does it mean that Jesus was the only Son whom God the Father begat? "Only begotten" translates the Greek word monogenes, which some have assumed to be a compound of the words monos ("only") and gennao ("I beget"). Consult a concordance and you will find that monogenes occurs nine times in the New Testament. One of those instances is Hebrews 11:17, which calls Isaac Abraham's

only begotten son. Was Isaac really Abraham's only son? No, Genesis teaches that Abraham first fathered Ishmael. However, Isaac was Abraham's unique son. That is what monogenes means: unique or one of a kind. It more likely is a compound of the words monos ("only") and genos ("kind"). So, John 3:16 asserts that God gave His one-of-akind Son.

Word studies are valuable for the insight they provide in interpreting a word in a specific passage, but they are not necessarily quick and easy to do. They demand research, but should be condensed to be practical.

Steps for Word Studies

Step 1: Choose a word to study. Select a word from a specific passage in your English Bible and find out what word that is in the original text (Hebrew for most of the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament). You can do this in several ways: use an English Bible keyed with numbers matching Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, use a Greek-English interlinear Bible, or purchase a Bible software program, such as Online Bible or BibleWorks.

But how will you decide which word to study? Here are some options that may help you.

- 1. Study a word that you encountered in your devotional reading that you do not quite understand, such as "imputed" in Romans 4 or "propitiation" in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10.
- 2. Study a word with theological significance, such as "redemption" or "sanctification."
- 3. Study a word whose significance is unclear in certain passages. (One example is the word "firstborn." Christ is described as the firstborn among many brethren [Rom. 8:29], the firstborn of all creation [Col. 1:15], and the firstborn from the dead [Col. 1:18]. What does that mean—and equally importantly, what does that not mean? "Firstborn" translates the Greek word prototokos, which may refer to one's order of birth or may emphasize one's status, namely, preeminence.)
- 4. Study a word that appears infrequently. Generally, such words are less daunting to study thoroughly. For example, the word proörizo ("predestine") occurs only six times. Of course, higherfrequency words are not less rewarding or significant. They just require more time.
- 5. Study a word with apparent synonyms and antonyms such as "love" or "hate" (see Matt. 6:24; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13).
- 6. Study a word with figurative meanings such as the New Testament word for "flesh" (sarx).
- 7. Study a word that occurs frequently in a single passage or that is the main theme of a passage, such as the word "sin" (hamartia) in Romans 6, "law" (nomos) in Romans 7, "love" (agape) in 1

Corinthians 13, or "patience" (makrothumia) in

Step 2: Compare the Hebrew or Greek word with its English translations. It may be enlightening to compile the different ways English translations render a word. For instance, the KIV translates the Hebrew word chesed as "mercy" 149 times, along with 9 other ways. However, the NASB translates it as "lovingkindness" 176 times, along with 18 other ways.

Step 3: Find and organize all (or at least a representative sampling) of the uses of the word in the Old Testament or New Testament. Some people may skip this step because looking up every occurrence could take hours, depending on how many times the word occurs. However, even if a word occurs hundreds of times, this time-consuming step is richly rewarding and is part of the thrill of personal discovery. You can perform this step by looking up all the references for a Hebrew or Greek word in Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible or a computer program like BibleWorks. When you do, take your time. Meditate on the word and its uses in various contexts. Cultivate a consuming preoccupation with the different ways the Author uses words.

When studying an action word, look for the subject (Who/what is doing the action?), the object (Who/what is receiving the action?), related words in the context including synonymns and antonymns, plus any other contextual clues. If you are studying an Old Testament word, remember that Hebrew poetry uses parallelism (rhyme of thought rather than rhyme of sound as in English).

Step 4: Determine the word's range of meaning. Rarely does a word mean exactly the same thing in every context. Just flip through an English dictionary. Nearly every entry has multiple definitions because words have different meanings in relationship to other words.

For example, consider the range of meaning of the English word "run" in the following sentences: I run two miles a day. She has a run in her nylons. That grapevine runs through the fence. My nose runs when I have a cold. I need to run to the store. My new computer runs faster than my last one. I try not to let the water run when I'm not using it, because that runs up the water bill. I ran out of gas today. Someday I'll run for president.

That's quite a range of meaning for one small word! The Oxford English Dictionary lists 82 separate categories of definitions for the verb "run," and many of those categories break down into more precise definitions. Obviously, "run" cannot convey all of those meanings at the same time, nor can an interpreter make it mean whatever he wants. He must interpret the meaning in context. Understanding words in the Bible works the same way. You cannot look a word up in a dictionary and arbitrarily pick whichever definition you prefer. A specific word means only one thing: what the Author meant. The context reveals what the Author intended.

Step 5: Determine the word's meaning in key passages. Observing how the word functions in nontheological contexts often sheds light on its theological usage. Here are several examples:

- 1. The Greek word for forgiveness (aphiemi) is also the word for Jesus' commanding a fever to "leave" a sick person (Luke 4:39). This nontheological context illustrates that forgiveness involves a dismissal of our sin.
- 2. Chata is one of the Hebrew nouns for sin. Judges 20:16 describes stone-slingers who would *not miss* at a hair. The word miss translates chata. Similarly, sin involves "missing the mark" of God's perfection.
- 3. Zakar is the Hebrew verb for "remember." What does God mean when He promises, "Their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34)? God is not promising that He will choose no longer to be omniscient with reference to their sins. God is promising that He will not be actively preoccupied with forgiven sin. Nontheological passages demonstrate this meaning (see Gen. 8:1; 30:22; Esther 2:1).

Dangers of Word Studies

Word studies can be dangerous! D. A. Carson's Exegetical Fallacies lists sixteen specific errors (pp. 27–64). (Insufficient space does not permit listing those here, but I recommend this section of Carson's book.) The main error is determining a word's meaning by its etymology (called the root fallacy). Etymology is the history of a word's meaning and sometimes involves defining the compound parts of the word. However, the way to avoid this error is to focus on the word's contextual usage, not its etymology. Etymology often can be helpful (e.g., a bookshelf is a shelf for books), but it is not the governing factor in a word's meaning.

For example, the words metanoeo ("repent") and metanoia ("repentance") do not mean only a change of mind

even though their etymology seems to indicate that (meta means "after," hence, change; noeo/nous mean "think/mind"). Based on the words' usage, they refer to a change of one's mind, emotions, and will that necessarily results in a change of life.

Here's an illustration: Can you imagine people 2,000 years from now defining the English word "butterfly" based on its etymology? An airborne dairy product? That would be outrageous because contextual usage—not etymology—determines meaning. In word studies, as with all of Bible interpretation, context reigns! Abuse results from hasty conclusions, incomplete study, and faulty assumptions. Carson suggests that the principal cause for such abuse stems from a limited knowledge of original languages (p. 64). This should not frighten you from doing word studies, but it should suggest sensible caution as you do them.

Conclusion

What's in a word? A word can be loaded with significance. Just be especially careful to interpret a word accurately in its context. When the Bible uses a word, it means just what the Author intended it to mean—neither more nor less. So don't interpret words the way Humpty Dumpty uses them. Now get out your Bible tools and start digging!

The New Testament's standard Greek lexicon (i.e., dictionary), known as BDAG, gives only two definitions for monogenes: (1) "pert. to being the only one of its kind within a specific relationship, one and only, only," and (2) "pert. to being the only one of its kind or class, unique (in kind)." Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed., revised and edited by Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 658.

Andy Naselli teaches Greek as a graduate assistant at Bob Jones University, where he is pursing a Ph.D. in Theology.

Further Sources Explaining Word Studies

■ word studies. This list progresses from simpler explanations to more technical studies.

William D. Mounce, *Greek for the Rest of Us: Mastering Bible* Study without Mastering Biblical Languages (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 198–220. This book is ideal for people who want to be familiar enough with Greek to use it in Bible study. It comes with a CD-ROM on which Mounce lectures through the book in easy-to-understand language.

Roy B. Zuck, Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1991), pp. 101–112.

Darrell L. Bock, "New Testament Word Analysis" in Introducing New Testament Interpretation, edited by Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), pp. 97–113.

The following sources offer helpful information on D. A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), pp. 25–66.

> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching & Teaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), pp. 105-129.

> Gordon D. Fee, New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 100–113.

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> James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

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Stephen Caesar



followers, "Ye are the light of the world" ▲(Matt. 5:14). Christianity has indeed been the light of the world, always standing in opposition surviving descendant of one of the mutineers, to the great evils, be they slavery, abortion, infanticide, human sacrifice, or any such atrocity.

The eighteenth-century mutineers of the British ship *Bounty* provide a particularly notable example of the beneficial nature of Christianity on sinful humanity. Led by Fletcher Christian, the mutiny on the Bounty overthrew the ship's brutal commanding officer, Lt. Bligh. After Bligh and his loyal officers by killing the Polynesian men with the colluwere set adrift, Christian and his followers sailed to tiny Pitcairn Island in the Pacific Pitcairn, only four original mutineers Ocean. There they settled with six Tahitian men remained—sailors named Young, Adams, and several women.

The February 1988 issue of Smithsonian featured an article on the fate of the settlers. "At

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His first," the journal reported, "Pitcairn was the Eden that Fletcher had envisioned." However, according to Pitcairn Islander Andrew Young, a life soon turned dreadfully sour. Young told Smithsonian that "the six Tahitian men were treated like slaves. . . . They were not allowed to own land, and after a few years there were quarrels over the women." As a result of this treatment, the Polynesian men rose up and killed some of the mutineers, including Fletcher Christian. The remaining mutineers responded sion of the women. Four years after landing on Quintal, and McCoy—as well as the Polynesian women and the children they had born to the mutineers.

enness (Rom. 13:13). McCoy, who had once worked himself, he taught all his descendants to read and write in a distillery in Scotland, discovered how to brew from the *Bounty Bible.*" a strong alcoholic drink from the roots of the native

It is not wisdom

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ti plant. Quintal went berserk while drunk on this concoction, and Young and Adams killed him in self-defense. McCoy, in a drunken fit, jumped off a cliff into the ocean with a rock tied around his neck. Adams, who by then had become an alcoholic, experienced what Smithsonian called "a religious vision," and he quit drink-

A Bible that had been brought from the Bounty sparked Adams's conversion. When Young died of asthma, Adams, now a Bible-believing Christian, became the only surviving member of the original mutineers who had settled on Pitcairn. Under his

guidance were ten Polynesian women and twenty-three sick world, just as He was the hope and light of sin-sick children. Andrew Young, the descendant of the ill-fated Pitcairn Island. asthmatic, told Smithsonian: "Luckily for us, Adams set the standards early on for being industrious and good Stephen Caesar is a freelance writer living in Arlington, Massachusetts.

Soon, a new sin beset this island Eden—drunk- Christians, and although he had a limited education

This is certainly an appropriate assessment of the

true nature of the gospel of Christ. Jesus, for example, said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes" (Matt. 11:25). In Acts 4:13 we read, "Now when they [the Pharisees and the Sadducees | saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

It is not wisdom and education that can turn sinful, rotten humanity around—it is the message of the gospel, a message found nowhere else but in the Bible. Christ is truly the hope and light of a sin-

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We would be grateful for the fellowship and input of others. Please come, observe, and mentor.

On the Home Front

FBF NEWS AND EVENTS

Tim Locke, Managing Editor

Regional Meeting Reports

On November 10-11, 2003, Pastor Ted York of Green River Bible Baptist Church hosted a Wyoming state conference of the North Central Region. Keynote speakers included Pastor Rick Cross, Pastor Ron Van Hee, and Dr. Tom Knauf. The conference had a high attendance of 48 with many visitors. The conference theme was "Keeping the Old Paths in the New Millennium."

On January 26–27, 2004, Pastor Rick Cross of Faith Baptist Church (Longmont, Colorado) hosted the North Central Regional meeting. Keynote speakers included Dr. Tim Jordan of Calvary Baptist in Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Dr. James Efaw of Beth Eden Baptist Church in Wheat Ridge, Colorado; and workshop speaker Pastor James Tita of Cameroon, West Africa. The conference had a high attendance of 202 with men coming from Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Idaho, and Utah. The conference theme was "Top Priorities."

On March 8–9, 2004, Pastor Jim Baker of Grace Baptist Church in Kettering, Ohio, hosted the Mid-Atlantic Regional meeting. Keynote speakers included Dr. Charles Britt Sr. of McEver Road Baptist Church in Gainsville, Georgia; Dr. Neil Caldwell of Muncie, Indiana; and Pastor Bennie Moran of Faith Baptist in Morgantown, West Virginia. The conference had a high attendance of 110 with men coming from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and northern Kentucky. The conference theme was "Baptist Fundamentalism: Origins, Objectives, and Outlook."

2004 Meetings

June 15-17, 2004

National Meeting Rev. Bradley Smith Bethel Baptist Church 200 N. Roselle Road

Schaumburg, IL 60194 (847) 885-3230

July 12-15, 2004

Mexico Regional Meeting

Dr. David Cortez Pena Iglesia Bautista Puerta Abierta Ave Quintana Roo Y Calle 12 #2111 Tijuana, Baja California Norte 011-52-664-684-7045 Contact: Bacilio Alfaro balfaro1@aol.com

July 25-30, 2004

Pacific Rim Regional Meeting Rev. Peter I. Maruyama Narashino Baptist Church 4-17-10 Moto-Ohkubo Narashino, Chiba, JAPAN 275-0012 011-047-477-8910 Contact: ruthdick@mtj.biblobe.ne.jp

August 2-4, 2004

Alaska Regional Meeting Dr. Bruce Hamilton Hamilton Acres Baptist Church 138 Farewell Avenue Fairbanks, AK 99701 (907) 456-5995

October 4-5, 2004

Mid-America Regional Meeting Dr. Bud Steadman Community Baptist Church 5715 Miami Street South Bend, IN 46614 (574) 291-1884

October 18-19, 2004

South Central Regional Meeting Pastor Larry Karsies Harvest Hills Baptist Church 9713 N County Line Road Yukon, OK 73099 (405) 721-1920

October 18-19, 2004

Wyoming Satellite Meeting Pastor Ron Van Hee **Grace Baptist Church** Box 1322 (Walnut at Willow) Rock Springs, WY 82901 (307) 382-4532

November 1-5, 2004

Caribbean Regional Meeting

Dr. Johnny Daniels Calvary Baptist Tabernacle PO Box 3390 Carolina, PR 00984 (787) 520-2227

November 8-9, 2004

Southern California Regional Meeting

Camp Ironwood 49191 Cherokee Road Newberry Springs, CA 92365 (760) 257-3503 (760) 272-1350 Contact: Ron Smith at smithafbm@ccis.com

November 9, 2004

Northeast Regional Meeting Trinity Baptist Church

80 Clinton Street Concord, NH 03301 (603) 225-3999

November 11-12, 2004

Northern California Regional Meeting

Camp Lucerne PO Box 487 Lucerne, CA 95458 Contact: Dr. John Mincy (925) 757-5242

INSPIRATION FOR THE PASTOR'S STUDY

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Not a Day Without Its Pages

Today, a Monday, I began the morning as I'm always trying to do, with my Bible and a good book. Three chapters of Exodus and the 28th Psalm, and thirteen pages in a book I'm plowing through right now, Sidney Greidanus' Preaching Christ from the Old Testament.

"Thirteen pages? Why just thirteen?" someone asks. Believe me, I'd like to have read thirty or even three hundred more. In fact, there are two other books (a biography of Matthew Henry's sister, Sarah Savage, and Horatio Bonar's The Everlasting Righteousness, a true classic on justification) that I've been alternating in the mornings with Greidanus and would like to have read today as well. But like most days, today has its pressing urgencies (especially this article!). So I was compelled to stop after just the first major point of one of Greidanus' chapters. But at least I chipped away at something.

How much did you read this past Monday morning? Or the day before? Well, okay, the day before was the Lord's Day and you were completely occupied with final touches for the pulpit. How about the day before that—Saturday? Pretty busy then, too, I guess. Last Friday? Nothing then either? Um. How about Thursday? Well . . . did you do any serious reading last

We might as well be candid here. Preachers often have nearly as much trouble as their people finding motivation and time to read. That's not true just of men who aren't "readers." It's true of those who love to read and default to it ravenously.

So I'd like to discuss this subject of a preacher's reading: why he must do it, and when and how to make it happen.

Inside

Bring the Books—Key books for the pastor's study
Straight Cuts—An exegetical study
Windows—Themed sermon illustrations

But I'm Not a Reader

Maybe Peter wasn't either. But he evidently read Paul's epistles (2 Peter 3:15, 16), and if, as tradition testifies, they both spent their last days in Rome, he might have seen "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits" (2 Tim. 2:6)

Paul's last letter, including its closing request, "when thou comest, bring . . . the books, but especially the parchments."

The parchments were probably vellum manuscripts of Scripture. The books, evidently something less than Scripture, were dearly desired nonetheless. C. H. Spurgeon marveled over this. The Apostle's own writings are inspired,

yet he wants books! He has been preaching at least for thirty years, yet he wants books! He has seen the Lord, and yet he wants books! He has had a wider experience than most men, yet he wants books! He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had heard things which it is unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants books! He had written the major part of the New Testament, yet he wants

Spurgeon concluded by applying the example to us.

Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our people. You need to read. Renounce as much as you will all light literature, but study as much as possible sound theological works. . . . We are quite persuaded that the very best way for you to be spending your leisure, is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in our Lord and Master's service. Paul cried, "Bring the books"—join in the cry.

The bolding of the last four words is my own, not Spurgeon's, but he'd approve, and so, I suspect, would Peter. So do our own consciences. They nod affirming-

ly that everyone, including Apostles who write Scripture, ought to read. But why? Here's one major reason.

Reading exposes us to the teaching ministries of other gifted members of the Body of Christ. God's gracious gift of writing implies that He means for not only the Church's contemporary teachers to instruct Christ's Body, but also its past instructors. We're woefully impoverished if we neglect to hear teachers and preachers who, through the medium of the pen, "being dead, yet speak."

It's reading that sits us down at the feet of the Church's most skilled instructors—not only its apostles (who, like Peter, evidently read each other's works), but also its Luthers, Calvins, Baxters, Wesleys, Tozers, and so on.

Gladys MacLean, working among the Saoras, a jungle tribal people in Orissa, testified to the glory of this:

Books! What a treasure. . . . Baxter, Haldane, Guthrie, Brooks, Boston, Ryle, Winslow, Matthew Henry, Owen, and scores of others became my Seminary teachers. I used to sit in a trunk of a huge tree lost in soul rapture of joy or tears. . . . There in my Puritan Seminary, away from all the comforts and distractions of civilization, I lived and walked with the cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews 11.

So can we.

That brings me to a second reason for reading. Ever feel like you're running on empty in the pulpit? Shrewd old Francis Bacon advised that it's "reading that makes a full man."

Paul set before Timothy the goal of so progressing in his own growth in grace that his "profiting [would] appear to all" (1 Tim. 4:15). When it does, our people will want to know the secret. A pastor who reads, quotes, and extols good books will soon find himself ministering to a reading people. His example and recommendations stimulate their spiritual appetite.

Reading furnishes us with both new facts and new ways of stating old ones. It fills a man so that his preaching conveys that he's always speaking out of an overflow. On the other hand, the almost inevitable consequence of a preacher's ceasing to read himself full is that his preaching turns sentimental. Lacking fresh insights, he

scrapes about for feeling. Having no convincing arguments he gropes forward in melodramatic spasms. Without the strength of studied convictions he flaps about pathetically for momentary eruptions. This wears him out. It kills him before his appointed time. Two and three times a week he's scraping about in the pulpit from the bottom of his emotional barrel.

Phillips Brooks urged, "The preacher's life must be a life of large accumulation. . . . Then your sermons shall be like the leaping of a fountain, and not like the pumping of a pump."

Here's a third reason for not neglecting to read. In addition to furnishing us with things to teach to others, there's also the happy effect that reading has upon our own inner man. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones once described the effect upon his spirit of reading a biography after a very demanding Lord's Day. He was scheduled to preach in another city on Monday night. Upon settling down on the train he opened *The Life of Hugh Bourne* and was soon engrossed. "I had one of the most enjoyable days of my life. When I reached Manchester my fatigue was gone and I was ready and anxious to preach."

For myself, I can only say that I could never even begin to express in this life what I owe to good books. Their silent, invisible ministry to my soul has been, in large part, the unseen source of much of whatever inspiration, victory, and consistency I've ever enjoyed in my personal walk with the Lord.

That brings me to the last reason with which I'd like to encourage reading. Paul set before Timothy the goal of so progressing in his own growth in grace that his "profiting [would] appear to all" (1 Tim. 4:15). When it does, our people will want to know the secret. A pastor who reads, quotes, and extols good books will soon find himself ministering to a reading people. His example and recommendations stimulate their spiritual appetite. They, in turn, reward him by developing into a more comprehending, thoughtful, and appreciative congregation.

Men sometimes snort, "Ha! You don't know the kind of people I'm preaching to." Well, I do know this. I've pastored in both the city and the country, and both a large as well as a small church. In both cases there were people who objected to being taught and would not use their minds. They would not obey the admonition to "gird up the loins of [their] mind" (1 Pet. 1:13). But in both cases there were people who would. (Surprisingly, it's often been the new believers, even those with only minimal education, who've been the most responsive.)

I've assumed it was in a church's best interests to pitch my preaching to the teachable. The others either became so or drifted away and had their places filled by those who were. Why deprive our best people of delightful inspiration, meaty instruction, and spiritual stimulus for fear of alienating the disobedient? Begin every sermon assuming that people know nothing about the passage. That way you leave no one behind, no matter how untaught. But continue the sermon assuming that peo-

ple can learn anything. That way you satisfy anyone willing to learn.

But I Have No Time

I suppose that if there's any one question that I've been asked most frequently about reading, it's focused on how to get it done. Over the years my answer has developed into two parts. The first has to do with the vexing issue of time.

Frankly, we all find time for what we really want to do. Readers want to read more than they want to watch TV, work in the yard, play sports, or any number of other things that non-readers would rather do. Even as children, Charles Spurgeon, Mary Slessor, Alexander MacLaren, and many other future Christian household names forfeited typical childhood pleasures in order to stay inside and read. When compelled by circumstances, they were ingenious at finding ways to keep it up.

As a ten-year-old factory spinner, David Livingstone propped books up on his machine so that he cold catch a sentence every time he passed from one side of his work to the other. Alexander Whyte, apprenticed to a shoemaker at thirteen, not only contrived to read books at his workbench, but sometimes even sacrificed some of his hard-earned pennies to induce a younger lad to read to him while he worked.

People like this are always snatching spare minutes for reading—over breakfast (Why not? How many other people think nothing of watching *Good Morning America* while they eat their cereal?), between appointments, on a break, after supper, before going to sleep, and anywhere they can catch a few minutes with a book.

But it's only the lighter sort of books that can be read this way with any profit. So even readers feel that they don't have enough time for really serious literature. I've found two ways to get more time for the weightier works. The first is by scheduling reading into the first hour or so of every day right along with my Bible reading and prayer time. That's how I managed thirteen pages this morning. It isn't much on any given day, but like investing a few dollars every week, it pays off enormously over years.

Even ten pages a day, six days a week, amounts to over 3,000 pages of serious reading every year. That's the equivalent of ten 300-page books. In ten years that'll be a hundred volumes. Those are books I'd never get read if I didn't schedule that little bit of time every morning. But the fact is, most preachers would be able to read more than ten pages a morning if they just made up their minds to do it. Even a slow reader can cover 15-20 pages of material in an hour or so. To reclaim some of that hour, try leaving the newspaper until lunchtime. And how about experimenting a week or two without *Good Morning America?* You're not really going to miss anything vital anyway.

The other thing I've found to be helpful is occasion-

ally setting aside entire days for reading. Seldom do I spend them here in my study. I fill a thermos, pack a lunch, tuck two or three books and my Bible into a briefcase, and head swiftly for a park. Then it's an hour or two with one book. A little walk. An hour or two with another book. Read while I eat my lunch. Walk around again, or take a catnap, and then two or three hours with the last book. The variety not only precludes my burning out on just one title, but also nourishes a spirit of happy anticipation that drives me eagerly right through the day.

This approach I've found to be so successful that if I were able, I'd gladly do it two or three times a month instead of a few times a year. I'd like to recommend it very, very highly, especially to those in larger and very busy ministries. You'll be surprised at how much serious material you can digest when you get yourself completely separated from all the nagging sights and sounds that customarily clamor for your attention.

Frankly, we all find time for what we really want to do. Readers want to read more than they want to watch TV, work in the yard, play sports, or any number of other things that non-readers would rather do. Even as children, Charles Spurgeon, Mary Slessor, Alexander MacLaren, and many other future Christian household names forfeited typical childhood pleasures in order to stay inside and read.

Understandest Thou What Thou Readest?

The other half of the answer to the question of how to read concerns method. Books differ dramatically in familiarity, complexity, substance, and style. A man who has read half a dozen books on the current translation controversy can zip through the next one with merely a glance at many of its pages. On the other hand, one's first reading of a really substantive work on a subject will be time consuming.

The complexity of the material also governs how we read something. Puritan material, for example, is often a labyrinth of many levels of subordination expanding out into a bewildering number of points and observations. I confess to being unable to read material like this without using highlighters. Main points in green, major subdivisions in orange, the next level of points in

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blue, the next level in pink, and the final level in purple—with yellow being used at every level to underscore striking statements.

In addition, it's imperative to approach any book, particularly the heavier sort, by first surveying its contents to discover where the author is taking you. It's amazing where most people begin a book—the first word on the first page, plunging right in without so much as a glance at the map to see where they're going. No wonder they're lost within ten pages.

First of all, do you even understand the title? What's this book about? "Soteriology," you say. Well, you've got to grasp it more specifically than that. Is the book about how Christ is glorified in salvation, or the substitutionary nature of the atonement, or the nature of regeneration? Deliberately focus on the emphatic thrust of the title.

Then look at the map, the table of contents. Glance right down through the major chapter divisions. Stare at them until you comprehend them. If some aren't clear, turn to them and read a paragraph or so until they are. Go back and look at the map again. Can you follow the writer's development of the subject from beginning to end? What issue is he beginning with? What does he end with? To what chapter heading is the bulk of the material given? Take five minutes or so with this exercise when you begin reading and you'll be light years ahead of the plunge-into-the-thicket-without-knowing-where-I'm-going kind of reader.

Finally, Some Suggestions

(1) Surrender your reading to the Lord. Love Him with all your *mind*, the mind with which you read. This means exercising a self-denying discrimination about reading choices. Richard Baxter warned believers,

As for play books, and romances, and idle-tales they are powerful baits of the devil, to keep more necessary things out of their minds, and better books out of their hands, and to poison the mind so much the more dangerously, as they are read with more delight and pleasure: and to fill the minds of sensual people with such idle fumes, and intoxicating fancies, as may divert them from serious thoughts of their salvation: and (which is no small loss) to rob them of abundance of that precious time, which was given them for more important business; and which they will wish and wish again at last, that they had spent more wisely.

(2) Be especially guarded toward novels, science fiction, secular poets, and pagan philosophers. The mind of our flesh is biased toward error, especially when it's attractively packaged or widely recommended. Robert

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Murray M'Cheyne wrote to a friend in school, "Beware of the atmosphere of the classics. It is pernicious indeed; and you need much of the south wind breathing over the Scriptures to counteract it. True, we ought to know them; but only as chemists handle poisons—to discover their qualities, not to infect their blood with them."

- (3) Pray. A ministerial responsibility as important as reading should be guided by the Holy Spirit in answer to our earnest prayers for leading—just as we pray for Him to guide our choice of texts for preaching or contacts for evangelism. Then remember that when we pray, what happens is the answer. I pray, and then assume that when my attention is repeatedly drawn to a title, that's the answer to my prayer. Certain books almost seem to "call" from a distant shelf in my library. I've learned to take them down and at least give them a chance.
- (4) Read the great writers themselves rather than someone's writing about them. Mark Twain quipped that "a classic is a book which people praise and don't read." I'm afraid that this may also be true of the great historical works on theology. The only way to know a theologian accurately and satisfyingly is to read him for oneself. A single month given to actually reading the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, for example, is worth many times more than reading what someone else says about them.
- (5) Don't dismiss a writer out of hand simply because you encounter something with which you disagree. After all, the only errorless book is the Bible. We can all thank God that our people haven't dismissed us and our sometimes flawed teaching the way we've done some authors because of something out of kilter here and there in their writings.
- (6) At the same time, don't allow yourself to lose objectivity about an author. When a man blesses our heart we're prone to overlook too much. The telltale sign that a man has almost imperceptibly become our guru is our unwillingness to hear his writings criticized.
- (7) Read more than one book at a time. And let them be of different kinds—a weighty theological tome, a biography, something on a current issue, one on preaching, pastoring, counseling, etc. In this way there will be something that will beckon and motivate you to keep at your reading on any given day.
- (8) Don't be enslaved to finishing books. Many aren't worth finishing—or perhaps I should say that they aren't worth reading with equal attention to every chapter. An author may exhaust his good idea within thirty pages. But since the publisher was intent on having a \$13.95 seller, he churned out another 150 pages of mediocrity. Don't let your conscience accuse you of never finishing anything just because you put books like this down after the first chapter. To quote Francis Bacon again, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

Bring . . . the Books

venty years later. The testi-

This fourth installment in our series on John Armstrong's Five Great Evangelists focuses on the relatively unknown preacher Asahel Nettleton. Born in Connecticut on April 21, 1783, Asahel was the second of six children born into a nominally religious family. In spite of the religious apathy of his early life, he came under powerful conviction and was converted in 1800 during the Second Great Awakening.

Interestingly, as powerful and successful an evangelist as he was, Asahel never presumed on his own standing before God. One author noted:

He was always shy about dogmatically stating in public that he was a genuine subject of grace. . . . Even the most godly were not presumptuous about being Christians. They candidly faced the possibility of being deceived. But Asahel did believe in the assurance of salvation, and few doubted that he possessed it.

After completing his studies at Yale University he was licensed to preach in May of 1811 and began an itinerant ministry in the smaller and neglected churches in southeastern Connecticut. This area had been visited by an earlier evangelist, James Davenport, during the First Great Awakening. Seeking results similar to those of Whitefield's meetings, Davenport had resorted to highly unusual and emotional techniques. While there was an initial (and often large) response to his ministry, it was soon evident that there were few genuine conversions. (Many historians of revival cite his unorthodox methods and his unstable personality as reasons for the halting of the Awakening in that area.) Years later, Nettleton found these churches hard, cold, and spiritually barren, like ground burned over by fierce fire. He observed in these kinds of evangelists how one could virtually kill the churches in the name of reaping a large harvest of souls.

It was in this cold and barren field that God chose to bring fresh life through the ministry of this humble and unassuming man. From 1812 to 1822, he patiently ministered in congregation after congregation as an unpaid, itinerant preacher, praying and preaching that God would again visit His people. His simple style powerfully affected his hearers. His meek and quiet spirit, his utter dependence on God for results, and his rejection of man-induced means were in stark contrast to the ministry of other evangelists such as Finney who were gaining a reputation and a following by introducing new methods for bringing revival to a church or a community. During that decade of ministry he saw unusual blessing from God upon his ministry, and over 30,000 souls came to genuine faith. It is noteworthy that these numbers do not reflect the number of decisions made at his meetings but rather the count of those who remained faithful in the churches well after his meetings were over. By several counts up to 90% of this number were still faithful in church and had evidenced lasting spiritual change ten and twenty years later. The testimony of a church in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, serves as an example. During the meeting in 1818 eighty-four were converted. Twenty-six years later their pastor reported that all eighty-four were still faithful to the Lord. In

"... when thou comest, bring with thee ... the books" (2 Tim. 4:13)

Forgotten American Evangelist

Asahel Nettleton:

his meeting at Ashford, Connecticut, there were eightytwo conversions, and years later only three had fallen away from the Lord. This is in stark contrast to Finney's ministry as expressed in a frank letter to him from one of his own close ministry associates,

Let us look over the fields where you and I have labored as ministers and what is now their normal state? What was their state within three months after we left them? I have visited and revisited many of these fields and groaned in spirit to see the sad, frigid, carnal, and contentious state into which the churches have fallen and fallen very soon after we first departed from among them.

His belief that revival was a God-centered sovereign intervention of the Holy Spirit apart from the methods and machinations of men was diametrically opposed to the new thinking represented by Finney. This led him to an inevitable controversy with the new theories and ultimately with Finney himself. He believed the new thinking would dramatically affect the future of genuine revival.

If the evil be not soon prevented, a generation will arise, inheriting all the obliquities of their leaders, not knowing that a revival ever did or can exist without all those evils. And these evils are destined to be propagated from generation to generation, waxing worse and worse.

One hundred and sixty years have passed since Nettleton's death, and the history of revivals and their lasting effects have proven his words right. In our age rife with Finney's thinking and approach to evangelism, it is no wonder that Nettleton and his history has remained in obscurity. We would do well to consider Armstrong's closing observation:

Not only has Nettleton been forgotten, but more tragically, the way he preached the Word and prayed that God alone would open the heavens has been lost as well. The term "revival" has not only been redefined over the last century and a half but the wake left by this redefinition has set the church back immeasurably—perhaps all the way back to times more like the dark days of pre-Reformation Europe.

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Straight Cuts

Christian Liberty Texts

This isn't about some one text but about a category of them—those that deal with what we tend to call "doubtful things." Passages such as Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 through 10, and single texts such as 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 or 1 Thessalonians 5:22—just to name the most pertinent to the debates over Christian liberties.

It's been my experience that much of the debate involving these texts takes place at the wrong level. It often begins and persists at the level of applications; actually, those discussions ought to be left for the very end. In fact, unless they are, there's little if any prospect for agreement—if for no other reason than that the two (or three or four or . . .) sides have no common pole star by which they've agreed to chart the course of their debate.

It's simply not enough for two Bible believers to go at each other with nothing more than a vague, mutually-taken-for-granted-assumption that the Bible is that pole star. There's considerably more that must be agreed upon before two believers are adequately prepared to debate a question of Christian living profitably.

For instance, the Bible is a lengthy book of 1189 chapters written over a period of some 15 centuries by about 40 authors. Those authors were influenced by a variety of theological, historical, personal, and cultural factors as they wrote. I'm listing those four influences in just that order deliberately. It's the order of priority which I would, in most cases, accord to them in the discussion of a debated passage (and hence its applications). But when my opponent presupposes a different priority for influences like these, we'll often find ourselves incapable of resolving an issue. We'll go away reporting to our brethren that we ended hopelessly divided over baptism, capital punishment, a Christian's involvement in civil government, liberty to drink alcoholic beverages, or music styles when, in fact, the disagreement existed at a much deeper level even prior to our discussing the particular subject.

In addition, those same four factors are influencing us as the readers of Scripture. Our reasoning too, like that of the Biblical authors when they wrote, proceeds along the lines of our theology, the view we hold of our place in history, our personal identity, and the degree to which we've been nuanced by our culture. But unlike the writers of Scripture, whose priorities were superintended by the Holy Spirit at the very moment they laid quill to parchment, we're not always conditioned by those influences in the right order. In the heat of battle, what ought to be the least controlling, our cultural conditioning, may actually override what we profess to be our theology.

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There's no possibility, of course, of coming to complete theological agreement before debating practical questions. Nor of shedding our cultural lenses to the degree that we see pristinely. But what is possible is at least recognizing

"Rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15)

and identifying the degree to which our presuppositions may be contributing to confusion.

Even more important is the need for joining our debates at the right place. We ought to begin at the level of exegesis. Long before we take off the gloves about how to apply a passage we ought to get down to working harmoniously on the texts to be sure of what they actually say. We ought to be asking one another, "What do you understand this text to be saying?" before we ask, "How do you believe this text ought to be lived?"

For instance, how often has someone thrown down I Thessalonians 5:22, "Abstain from all *appearance* of evil," as the clinching argument for some fastidiously rigid conviction? No question but that we must live above reproach, but is this text really Divinely intended to be the trump card for ending all debate about whatever anyone perceives to be suspicious? What does the term translated "appearance" (*eidos*) actually refer to? The "look" of something or the "form" of something? Or both? This is a question to be settled by objective exegesis, not subjective argument.

Or what about, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22)? Is this actually a blank check for any behavior not explicitly forbidden by Scripture? An "open sesame" to everything except what the Bible specifically calls sin? Well, how would we get at the answer? In this case there's no key term in the verse on which the question turns. But there's an immense context (three full chapters) stretching both backward and forward and loaded with significant words, Scripture quotations, admonitions, and even specific applications.

We'd probably find ourselves much closer to each other on applications if we'd begin by sitting down across a table from one another with Bibles, lexicons, and exegetical commentaries. It's seldom done, but it should be if two Christian leaders are risking misunderstanding or even separation from one another over questions the Scripture doesn't answer specifically.

It takes big doses of both humility and integrity to submit ourselves to such an approach. Apart from doing so, what chance do we have for ever being of one mind? If we won't submit ourselves to the discipline of discovering the mind of the Spirit, how will we ever keep His unity in the bond of peace?

Windows

I Have Found The Book—2 Kings 22:1—20

A fter the death of Solomon in the year 931 B.C., Judah had twenty different rulers in a period of 345 years. Of those kings, God declared that eight of them did right as David their forefather had done. The rest of them did not. In the wake of multiple kings, most of whom abandoned God's truth, it is not surprising that God's Law became so unimportant that no one realized it was lost. When King Josiah's workers discovered God's Law while they were repairing the temple, it had a dramatic impact on the king who desired to do right.

Diligent Workmen Discover God's Word (vv. 1—10)

Josiah came to the throne of Judah as a child and ruled in a turbulent age. About the time he began to rule, the world was experiencing a major power shift from Assyria to Babylon. His own nation was reeling from the effects of ungodly leadership by Manasseh and Amon. In the midst of such political and religious upheaval, young Josiah was determined to seek the Lord. He needed light from God's Word to guide him in a dark and uncertain day.

Christians today also need light from God's Word to guide them. Before the days of modern navigational aids and precise technology, ship captains directed their vessels across the oceans with the aid of two compasses. One compass was fixed to the deck where the pilot at the wheel could see it. The other compass was fastened on one of the masts, far above the ship's deck. Often the captain sent a sailor up the rigging to inspect the other compass. Two compasses were necessary because the compass affixed near the wheel was subject to the influence of metal on the deck or metal objects nearby. It was possible for the compass near the wheel to give a false reading, but the one removed from the influence of metal objects was always accurate. Christians need the compass of God's Word as they traverse the sea of life. The compasses of human wisdom and personal opinion are subject to errant readings. God's Word alone accurately charts the path God has determined for His people.

Josiah was concerned to bring God's people back into fellowship with God. He ordered repairs for the temple, and in the process of making repairs, workmen discovered the Book of the Law. The obvious implication is that the book had been lost. How can God's Word be lost? In a word—neglect. Simple neglect of God's Word by one generation often results in ignorance of God's Word by the

next. Someone captured the modern nature of this neglect in a simple poem:

On the table side by side;
A Holy Bible and the
TV Guide.
One is well worn but cherished
with pride
(Not the Bible, but the

TV Guide).

gives the command, 'A window shalt thou make in the ark.'"

"To every preacher of

righteousness as well

as to Noah, wisdom

Charles Spurgeon

One is used daily to help folks decide. No! It isn't the Bible; it's the TV Guide. As pages are turned, what shall they see? Oh, what does it matter; turn on the TV. So they open the book in which they confide (No, not the Bible, it's the TV Guide). The Word of God is seldom read, Maybe a verse ere they fall into bed. Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be, Not from reading the Bible, but watching TV. So, then back to the table, side by side, Is the Holy Bible and the TV Guide. No time for prayer, no time for the Word; The plan for salvation is seldom heard. Forgiveness of sin so full and free Is found in the Bible, not on TV!!

(Author unknown. Cited in Michael P. Green, ed., *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991], p. 369.)

Dedicated Leaders Respond Well to God's Word (vv. 11–13)

When a scribe read the Book of the Law to King Josiah, he was astonished by what he heard. He heard words of warning that rebuked him. He responded well.

James Haldane was also a person who responded well. While a young man, he commanded the manof-war *Melville Castle*. In a fierce battle with an enemy ship, he ordered new men on deck to take the places of those who had been killed or wounded. The men, seeing the mangled and bloody bodies of their comrades, fell back in horror. Captain Haldane began to swear frightfully and wished them all in hell. At the close of the fight, a Christian soldier stepped up and said respectfully to the young captain, "Sir, if God had answered your prayer just now, where should we have been?" This faithful word of rebuke went home to the conscience of Haldane. It led to his new birth in Christ. He abandoned his career in the Navy

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and became a preacher of the gospel, laboring for fifty-four years. But this was not the whole story. James led his brother Robert to Christ, and Robert also became a preacher and an able commentator of the Bible. Then God used Robert Haldane to lead Felix Neff to faith in Christ. Neff became the philanthropic Swiss preacher and leader of Protestantism. A right response to the truth of God's Word starts the repentant sinner on a path of service for God.

Josiah was convicted at the words he heard from God's Book, but that was not enough for him. He desired to understand God's Word more fully. A fuller understanding of God's Word is the result of greater diligence in studying God's Word.

It was that way for Martin Luther. He said he studied his Bible as a person might gather apples. First he shook the whole tree, that the ripest might fall; then he shook each limb. When he had shaken each limb, he shook each branch, and after each branch, every twig. Then he looked under every leaf. Those who would know what God's Word means must first search the Bible as a whole, shaking the whole tree. It should be read rapidly, as any book is read. Then every limb should be shaken—every book studied. Afterward attention should be given to each branch—each chapter—when the chapter breaks do not harm the sense of the passage. Then each twig the paragraphs and sentences—should be carefully studied. The careful searcher will end as Luther did, by looking under each leaf, by searching the meaning of the words.

Josiah wanted to know what the Book of the Law said about him and God's people in Judah. He desired to make the Word "relevant." God has already promised that His Word is relevant. He inspired it so that it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. The result is relevance! It fully equips His people to do good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

It equipped Richard Baxter when he became pastor in Kidderminster, England, in 1640. When he arrived, the city of 4,000 was noticeably sinful. Drunkenness was common; even the children were given over to swearing, and church attendance on the Lord's Day was sparse. Baxter ministered to those people for sixteen years. Fifty years after he had completed his work in Kidderminster, George Whitefield visited the city and discovered that the influence of Baxter's doctrine, works, and discipline remained to that day. Some of the longevity of the preacher's influence must be attributed to his determination to help the people grasp the relevance of God's Word.

Those who attended Sunday services while Baxter was pastor discovered that

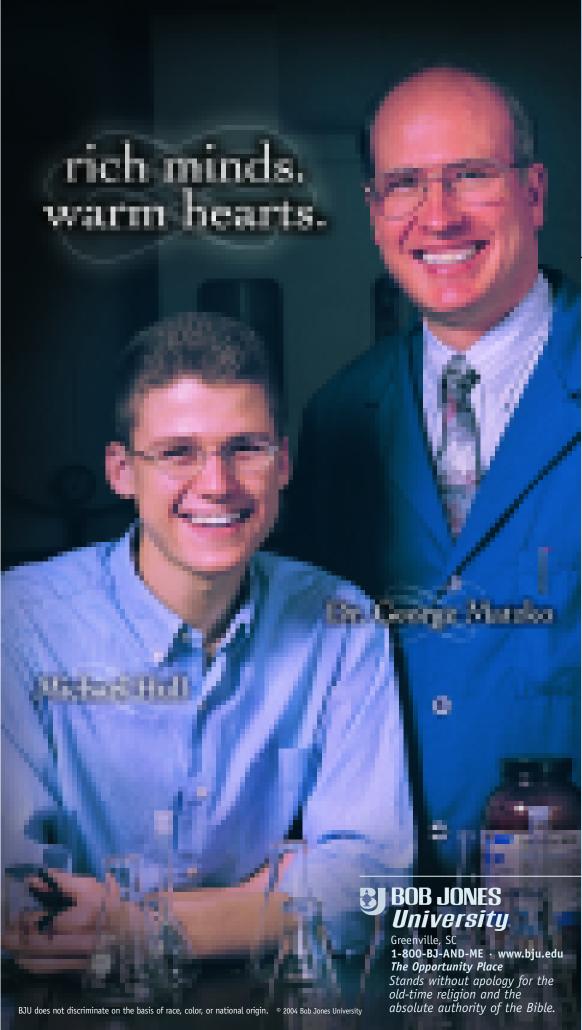
the center of interest was the sermon. Some come for the crowds. But Baxter's congregations came to the preaching. There in the pulpit was "the tall man in black gown, which set off the paleness of his already pain-worn face—upon whom all eyes were fastened." The sermon was never less than an hour long, and was often read; but the vehement intensity with which he delivered it kindled a fire in sermon and in audience alike; and accomplished the preacher's aim, "first to convince the understanding and then to engage the heart" (Harry C. Howard, *Prince of the Christian Pulpit and Pastorate* [Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928], p. 90).

Baxter labored to open the minds and hearts of the people so that they would understand the relevance of God's Word.

A Dedicated Messenger Applied God's Word (vv. 14—20)

Before September 11, 2001, the name Osama bin Laden was unknown to most Americans. Americans thought of Afghanistan as an insignificant Middle Eastern nation, knew little or nothing of Islamic jihad, and assumed that Islamic terrorists targeted only those American interests abroad. However, recent investigation by the Commission on Terrorism indicates that all of these things had gained the attention of the nation's leaders years before the terrorists attacked America. Today it seems that every layperson in the land is aware of Islamic terrorists. What made the difference? Application. Some had known the truth about terrorism for many years. But the truth regarding terrorism was not important to the average American until it was applied in an unforgettable way. If a matter does not affect a person directly, he is generally not too concerned about it. When the preacher fairly and honestly applies the truth of the Bible, listeners realize that it does indeed affect them. Fair application reveals that God's Word expects change in the life of the one who hears it.

Huldah applied God's truth so that Josiah understood that God intended to keep His promise and that He would level judgment against rebellious Judah. She also revealed God's special message for Josiah in which God promised to gather him to the grave in peace. To preach the Word of God is the great privilege and responsibility of the day. Accurate, honest exposition and application bring people face to face with the God of the Bible.



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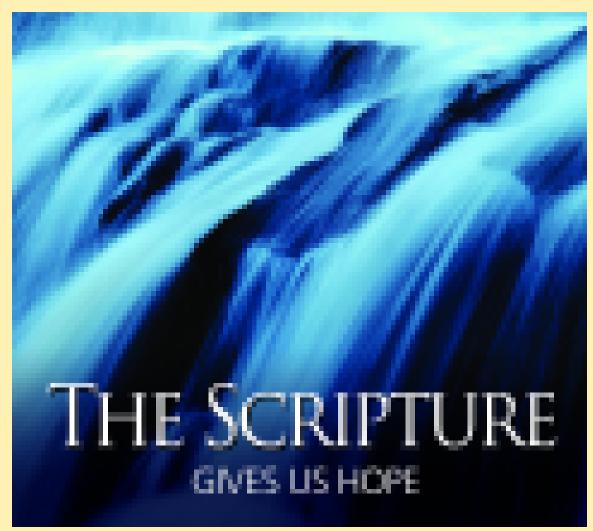
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Dr. David Whitcomb pastors Community Baptist Church in Greer, South Carolina.

Gayle Thompson



"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved" (Habakkuk 2:1).

receive our new memory verse for the **L** week, he handed this verse to us. He read it aloud, and then we put it aside to go on with our daily devotions. I wasn't really sure of the context of Habakkuk 2:1, but I knew I wanted to learn more about it. I decided to read the chapter when I got home to see what it was about.

us spoke on this same verse during our morning devotions. He explained in depth the conflict and corruption and the idolatry that were rampant in Habakkuk's day. He also explained

how Habakkuk struggled with the notion that God was not concerned. The prophet was frustrated with evil men and wondered why God wasn't dealing with them in the way Habakkuk thought He should. Because our modern socies we sat in our boss's office waiting to ty appears quite similar to the days of Habakkuk, this devotional stirred my heart. I wanted to find out more.

Digging Deeper

As I studied the second chapter of Habakkuk, I realized that this man of God had to trust the Lord for the future coming of the Messiah. I, on the other hand, trust God for The next day a gentleman who works with the past work of Christ on the cross. First Corinthians 15:3, 4 describes how this was accomplished: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." The saints of old trusted God and looked forward in their salvation. On the other hand, we New Testament believers look behind to see the finished work of redemption in Jesus' death and His resurrection for our salvation.

Backward Glances

During my years as a Christian I have found that I need to reflect on the past, to recall how God has worked in and through my life. I am not waiting to see my salvation, because that has already come in Avoiding Apathy Christ and the work that He did on the cross for mankind.

Looking behind helps me to move forward in my walk with the Lord. I have only to look back to that miraculous day that He saved me from my sins and made me His child. We, like Habakkuk, walk by faith, not by sight. The trust that is required in us is given to us by the Holy Spirit. If a person does not trust and believe that Jesus came, died, shed His blood for the remission of our sins, and lives to be our intercessor seated at the right hand of God, then that person does not possess saving faith.

Looking back to consider how the Lord has given me the perseverance to continue seeking Him and serving Him is humbling. God's great grace in perseverance enables me to press forward in Him. To me, looking back to reflect on how the Lord's hand of protection has been my shield throughout times of trials and temptations is overwhelming. To go forward is to look back and see how merciful my God has been to me, even when I was not His child. He loved me even when I was yet in sin! That is the greatest love I have even known. To love me and to take all my sins—past, present and future and apply them to His Son so that I might be forgiven is the greatest love, and that great love empowers me to go forward with Him! He is the One whom I am trusting in as I follow the forward path toward a closer walk with Him.

Practically speaking, I look back and see how God's Word has guided me in making crucial decisions. His Word has shown me that, by trusting in His promises and standing on His Word, I won't be fearful when great trials confront me.

In Christ, we know that we have the victory over sin by looking back to His vicarious atonement and by daily going to God's Word. His Word is our sustenance, and we won't go far in our walk with the Lord without a daily filling of it. To eat is to live! To say that we don't have time to feed on God's Word equals a declaration that we want to starve ourselves spiritually. His Word is our strength. It is the fuel we need to press forward with God in a victorious life of walking close with Him. As a mother, I wouldn't consider not feeding my child several times daily. Similarly, we who are Christians shouldn't neglect our time of filling from God's Word. Such neglect will lead to a spiritual decline in our lives. When we don't take delight in God's Word, we're bound for the slippery road of apathy.

Practically speaking, I look back and see how God's Word has guided me in making crucial decisions. His Word has shown me that, by trusting in His promises and standing on His Word, I won't be fearful when great trials confront me. Looking backward also helps me to recognize that, without Jesus Christ in my life, I would be unable to say I live for God. It is impossible to know God but not believe that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. Jesus Himself stated in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." So, as I progress in my sanctification, I am reminded of the past work of my

Savior, and that gives me my strength to go onward with Him.

A Message for Today

Rereading the book of Habakkuk, I noticed that in the closing verses the prophet did have his hope and faith in God. He trusted God, and even during evil times Habakkuk believed that God was aware of the evil and that He was in control. If we believers today will pause and reflect on how God has worked in our lives, we too can press forward in Christ and with confidence say like Habakkuk, "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:18).

We need not be fearful during times of persecution, trials, or discouragement. But fearfulness will result when we trust self, not Christ, in difficult days. Trusting in self leads to living for self. In contrast, we Christians know that God wants us to depend on Him. As His Word admonishes, "[Cast] all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

Habakkuk's Old Testament message is still a good one for today. To

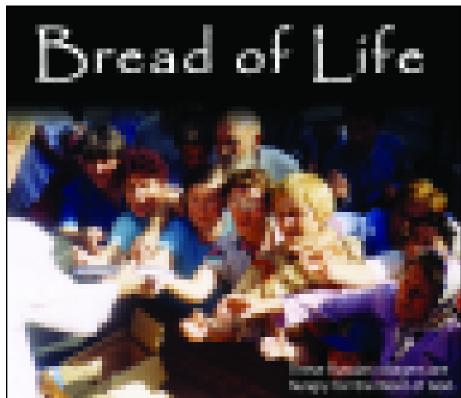


know that our God is the God of the the past work of Jesus Christ, which Old Testament, and that He still works as He did then, is such a blessing to ponder. As Habakkuk recorded in chapter 3, verse 19, "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places."

Our hope as believers stems from WMUU Radio.

gives us eternal salvation and a shining future. Yes, let's look back and see the great things God has done, and then let's march forward with the good news of His precious Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gayle Thompson is a freelance writer living in Greenville, South Carolina. She is employed at





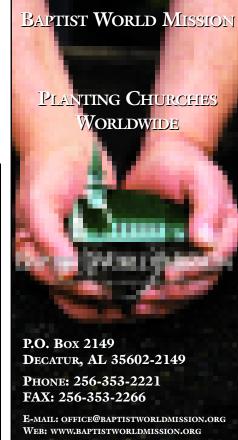
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A new Christian is a living organism as certainly as a new baby is, and must have nourishment and exercise to assure normal growth. -A. W. Tozer

To render passion harmless let us behave as though we had only one week to live. -Blaise Pascal

True fathers in grace meditate upon Christ; they feed upon Scripture, press the juice of it, and inwardly enjoy the flavor of it. —C. H. Spurgeon

Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the can-—Edward Abby cer cell.

He who is not satisfied with himself will grow. -Chinese Proverb

-William Grimshaw Meditation is the soul's chewing.

Measure your growth in grace by your sensitiveness to —Oswald Chambers

Many of us are not thirsty for God because we have quenched our thirst at the other fountains.

—Erwin Lutzer

We must in secret thought chew the cud of every circumstance with continual contemplation.

—Ezekiel Culverwell

The natural man must know in order to believe: the spiritual man must believe in order to know. —A. W. Tozer

Faith gathers the handfuls of sacred corn from which contemplation threshes out the ears and prepares soul-—C. H. Spurgeon sustaining bread.

The sweet spices of divine works must be beaten to powder by meditation, and then laid up in the cabinet of our memories. —Abraham Wright

If the heart be full of holy and heavenly thoughts by meditation, there is no room for evil and sinful thoughts. -William Bridge

The soul of man bears the image of God; so nothing can satisfy it but He whose image it bears.

—Thomas Gataker

All grace grows as Love to the Word of God grows.

By fasting, the body learns to obey the soul; by praying, the soul learns to command the body. —William Secker

Did you never run for shelter in a storm, and find fruit which you expected not? Did you never go to God for safeguard, driven by outward storms, and there find unexpected fruit? -John Owen

God made meat before mouths and He is the Bread our souls' desire. —John Trapp

> Wit & Wisdom is taken from various sources with contributions from Pastor David Atkinson.



FrontLine • May/June 2004

The Widow's Might

Marilyn Vaughan

With explosive

speed, the menacing

figure of a man

hurtled toward me.

His eyes were rivet-

ed on my purse!

was in a hurry. The dark line of clouds in the western sky threatened to swallow the remaining **L** daylight even before the sun slipped beyond the horizon. Anxious to finish my shopping before dark, I slid to a stop in the crowded Kroger parking lot. Grabbing an abandoned shopping cart, I hurried toward the store, eager to escape the frosty December wind. Other shoppers, having completed their errands, were emerging from the store—children in tow—pushing heaping carts toward their vehicles.

In my hurry, I failed to notice a motionless silhouette crouching in the shadows. Suddenly an abrupt movement to my left caught my eye. With explosive speed, the menacing figure of a man hurtled toward

me. His eyes were riveted on my purse! Instinctively, I strengthened my grip on the shoulder straps. While no match for my youthful assailant, I clung desperately to the purse, hoping to buy time until someone either saw the skirmish or responded to my frantic shouts for help.

While I might have parted with the \$30.00 in cash with little struggle, I panicked at the thought of this thief getting my driver's license, checkbook, and

savings account passbook, along with my house and car keys. As the unequal confrontation escalated, I held the cart for support and screamed, "Help! This ments from overhead. man is stealing my purse!" When the shoulder straps broke loose with a sharp snap, I was thrown off balance. The cart flipped over, I toppled to the icy pavement, and the victorious thief fled with my purse.

Belatedly, I recalled the text from my morning Scripture reading. Facing another lonely day during from an obscure passage in Exodus: "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry" (Exod. 22:22, 23). Although these verses come from the Old Testament Law God designed to govern Israel, I believed that the principle

still contains a stern warning to those who afflict widows and orphans today. With no notion of what lay ahead that day, I had claimed the promise during the morning hours, beseeching God's gracious protection from any who might "afflict" me. Then I promptly forgot my own petition.

My present calamity provided a unique testing ground for the promise. My prayer was not eloquent. A barely audible, "Lord, help me!" escaped my lips. I was His child. I was helpless. That was enough. I spun a fragile filament of faith between earth and Heaven. After all, the promise stated, "If . . . they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry."

Immediately, solicitous onlookers surrounded me.

An athletic young man (identified by his girlfriend as a football player) sprinted in hot pursuit of the thief. A policeman assigned to special duty at the door of Kroger likewise left his post to give chase.

Within moments, an aweinspiring procession of five squad cars with screaming sirens sped past the shopping center toward the apartment complex where the thief had disappeared. Overhead, the pulsating blades of a police helicopter

throbbed rhythmically. Against the rapidly darkening sky, its powerful spotlight probed the maze of apart-

Had some major crime just been committed? A murder? A hostage situation? Had a "drug bust" occurred at the very instant that my purse had been snatched? Any of these might explain the frenzy of activity. Certainly half a dozen police officers would not have been dispatched in response to a simple my first year of widowhood, I had received comfort purse snatching in Columbus, Ohio! Or would they?

By now additional clusters of curious shoppers, wondering at the unusual excitement, had gathered in the parking lot. For the next fifteen or twenty minutes we stood transfixed, watching the helicopter circle the apartment complex.

Continued on next page

Ladies' Circle

Continued from previous page

Hidden from our view, less than a quarter mile away, the thief continued to evade capture. Police officers had lost precious moments in their pursuit. Racing into the parking lot adjoining the complex, the five squad cars had narrowly escaped a collision as they slid across the treacherous, unplowed pavement. The officer on duty at Kroger was the one who radioed for backup before beginning pursuit, but he had lost visual contact with the fugitive in the labyrinth of buildings. Just when it appeared that the thief had made a clean getaway, an eyewitness informed the police that he had noticed a young man who matched the suspect's description. He even identified the apartment that the man had entered.

Now police had to determine an appropriate course of action. Even if they captured the assailant with my purse in his possession, their case against him would be jeopardized in court if any of their actions were deemed illegal. The outcome still uncertain, they dispatched an officer to interview me, the victim of the crime. Meanwhile, those who remained decided to see if the suspect answered when they knocked at the door.

Back at Kroger, the crowd gradually dispersed. Reassured by fellow spectators that the police would certainly come to Kroger to locate me, I reluctantly proceeded into the store. Since my bank operates a small branch near the front of the store, I approached the tellers and explained my predicament. I needed to freeze both my checking and savings accounts immediately, pending the possible return of my purse. Completing my business inside the bank office, I telephoned my daughter and told her about the theft.

As I prepared to leave the bank office, a teller informed me that a policeman wished to speak with me. As I turned, both the officer and I stared in astonished recognition.

Standing before me was the only person on the Columbus police force whom I knew personally—a Christian who had been my son's closest friend all through his teenage years in Fairfield, Iowa, a small community over five hundred miles away!

No longer could I doubt God's intervention. Even as Dave questioned me, our interview was interrupted by a call. The suspect had been apprehended—after obligingly opening his door when the police knocked!

Because witnesses had immediately pursued him, the thief had no opportunity to open my purse. A thorough check of its contents revealed that the purse was in its usual state of disarray, nothing missing, contents undisturbed. My heavenly "911" had resulted in a magnificent response to the cry of a helpless widow in a parking lot. God had transformed a cruel crime into a display of His protection and power.

That afternoon God highlighted His promises to me in a succession of astounding events. (Imagine five squad cars in such proximity to me that they could respond within two minutes of the call!) In our greatest extremity, every promise of God's unfailing Word holds firm. As Romans 8:28 reassures, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Had I been spared the attack late that afternoon, I would have been deprived of a vivid demonstration that "God is . . . a very present help in trouble." The widow and the orphan represent the most helpless class of individuals; yet God has chosen to demonstrate His almighty power through our great weakness (2 Cor. 12:10).

My faith that day was tiny—a mere "widow's mite." But God's amazing answer to my prayer conclusively transformed that feeble faith into the "widow's might"!

Marilyn Vaughan is a freelance writer living in Columbus, Ohio.





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The Evangelist's Corner \equiv

The Power of the Word of God

Jerry Sivnksty

The Scriptures declare in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." What a powerful weapon we have in the proclamation of the Lord's absolute truth! So dynamic is God's Word that Jeremiah 23:29 says, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

True power lies in the Word of God, not in any human intellect, personality, or persuasion. The phrase "thus saith the Lord" appears more than 400 times in the Old Testament, thus signifying that the men of God declared the message of the LORD. In the same way, what we need today is the bold proclamation of the Word of God.

Many years ago I listened to a sermon by a man who kept repeating, "Now, of course, you have the prerogative to differ with me." He repeated this phrase so often during his sermon that I could barely restrain myself from jumping up and shouting, "Why don't you just preach the Word?" The authority of God's Word—not our personal opinion—must be what governs our preaching. In 2 Timothy 4:2 the apostle Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

Any message proclaimed from God's Word will be offensive to some. For instance, years ago I was beginning a week of meetings in Pennsylvania. During the Sunday morning service I preached a strong salvation message. After the service, an unsaved man who had become outraged told his wife (a godly Christian woman) that he would never come back to hear me preach as long as he lived. He cursed me and called me every vile name he knew. (I know this because his wife came crying to me and related the entire story.) I told her that I would pray that the Lord would deal with his heart.

Then this same man returned for the Thursday evening service. When I gave the invitation, he walked down the aisle to accept Christ as his Savior! That man attended the rest of the services, and on Sunday morning he came to me, put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Last Sunday, I heard you preach and got so mad at you that I cursed you and called you every name I could think of. I told my wife I would never come back and hear you preach. But for some reason, I just couldn't get what you said out of my mind. I came back Thursday night, and as you preached I saw myself as a sinner in

need of Christ. I want you to know that I'm grateful I got saved under your preaching and that I love you in the Lord." Who can take a man who one Sunday curses you and change him so much that the next Sunday he tells you he's grateful he got saved under your ministry? That's the power of the Word of God!

Several years ago I traveled to India on a missions trip with Dr. Wendell Heller. Of course, we had to preach through an interpreter. In that foreign land I couldn't use American illustrations or humor because they would be unfamiliar to Indian culture. So I relied upon the Word of God alone. In one area where we preached, so many people got saved that they established an independent Baptist church. I will never forget how God altered my own life as I witnessed the power of His Word.

Once I was holding meetings in Michigan. A man from the church and I were out talking to a lady who was not saved. As I was showing her the way of salvation, she interrupted me and said, "Well, I'll tell you one thing. I don't believe there's a hell." I turned to Psalm 9:17 and asked her to read it out loud. She read, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." She was startled and said, "No one ever showed me this verse before." She came under deep conviction as I showed her several verses about an eternal hell. Then I had the privilege of leading her to Christ. The local man and I invited her to attend the meeting that night and to make public her decision of salvation. We mentioned there was a six o'clock pre-service prayer meeting and that the evening service would begin an hour later.

When I arrived early for the prayer meeting, I noticed this lady sitting in the room. I asked her why she had come so early since the service wouldn't start until seven o'clock. She replied, "Well, now that I'm saved, shouldn't I attend the prayer meeting too?" I didn't get a chance to tell any of this to the pastor before the service, and at the opening of the meeting he said, "Before we begin, would anyone like to give a testimony for the Lord?" This lady who had just gotten saved stood and announced, "Yes, I would like to say that today your evangelist came to my home and led me to the Lord. I'm grateful that I'm saved." Again, that's the power of the Word of God!

In Isaiah 55:11 the Lord declares, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

You may contact Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty at P.O. Box 141, Starr, SC 29684, or via e-mail at evangisivn@aol.com.

FrontLine • May/June 2004



Is it "Anxiety" or

"CONCERN"? A SAMPLE WORD STUDY

NOTE TO READER: The column series on the Offices of Christ (Prophet, Priest, King) is temporarily interrupted in order to present the following example of the value of word study as a form of Bible study.

ost of us are naturally prone to worry. When reminded that we are to "be careful [anxious] for nothing" (Phil. 4:6), we sometimes hide behind semantics. "I'm not worried; I'm just concerned. That's different." But when is "concern" justified, and when is it plain old "worry"? Or is there a valid difference?

Have you ever noticed that 35 verses before exhorting believers not to be anxious over anything (Phil. 4:6), Paul commends Timothy as one who "naturally [cares] for [the Philippian church's] state" (Phil. 2:20)? If you were to consult your Strong's *Concordance* (or a Greek lexicon), you might be surprised to discover that Paul uses the same word for Timothy's commendable "care" for the Philippians as he does for the Philippians' prohibited "carefulness." In other words, the Bible uses precisely the same word to denote both legitimate concern as well as forbidden anxiety. What's the difference? First, some statistics.

Word Statistics

It will help first to get a handle on the parameters of our word study. The verb meaning "to be anxious, concerned" (merimnao, pronounced mare-im-NAH-oh) occurs 19 times in the New Testament. The adjective "anxious, concerned" (merimna, MARE-im-nah) appears an additional 6 times. Finally, a negative adjective form "unanxious, unconcerned" (amerimnos, ah-MARE-im-nos) occurs twice. All together, then, the New Testament employs this word family a total of 27 times. Over half of these occurrences (15) are in the Gospels; several (7) appear in the Corinthian epistles; two are in Philippians (2:20; 4:6); and one is found in 1 Peter 5:7. Paul's use of the term in Philippians provides a good starting point, since its two occurrences there demonstrate how the same word may have either a positive or a negative connotation—how the same concept is, in fact, both commended and condemned. The key to the difference is in the *context*—specifically, in the object. You might say one man's worry is another man's concern—literally.

Starting Point: A Contextual Contrast

The AV reading of Philippians 4:6 ("be careful for nothing") is not suggesting that we drive like maniacs or handle sharp knives carelessly. It means we are not to be "full of care," burdened down with anxiety—but about what? The fact that Paul exhorts instead to "make your requests known to God" furnishes a clue; the rest of the context confirms that clue. He has just entreated two believers to set aside their personal differences in a spirit of unity and harmony (4:2, 3). He commands believers to "rejoice" at all times (4:4) and to cultivate "moderation"—a word that connotes a calm gentleness and steady contentment even in the face of adversity or unfair treatment. Then follows the prohibition of "anxiety" and the call to address our frustrations and needs to God through prayer (4:6). Rather than being full of anxious care over our problems, we are to make them known to God and display a trusting confidence in Him to meet undertake for us. In other words, with respect to our own personal needs and desires, merimna (here, anxiety) is prohibited.

In Philippians 2:20, as noted above, Paul uses the same word in *commending* Timothy as someone who earnestly *cared* for the well-being of the Philippian believers (2:20). Paul extols Timothy for the very action and attitude which only moments later he forbids to the Philippians (4:6). What has changed? In a word, the *object* has changed. With respect to the conditions and needs of others, merimna (here, caring concern) is appropriate and commendable.

An examination of the other passages where this word appears bears out this consistent pattern. When the object is a third party—other people, needs or causes outside ourselves—the action described by *merimnao* is commended. But when the object is ourselves and our own needs or circumstances, the same attitude/activity becomes improper and prohibited. In other words, legitimate care or concern becomes inappropriate worry and anxiety when it turns inward and focuses on us.

Negative Examples of "Anxiety"

Matthew 6:25–34 is a classic passage illustrating some of the specifics believers are forbidden to "worry" about. Various forms of the word—translated "take (no) thought"—appear *six* times in these ten verses (a parallel account in Luke 12:22–32 uses them three times). The connotation of *merimnao* here is consistently negative because

the objects are consistently self-centered: your life, your food, your drink, your clothing, your future. This is not a prohibition against fretting over whether we should order prime rib or filet mignon, or get iced tea or a soft drink with our meal. Jesus is not rebuking our indecision in the face of a closet full of clothes. The *quality* of our fare or our apparel is not even an issue. He is addressing our attitude toward whether or not we will even have anything adequate to eat and drink or appropriate to wear in the first place. This kind of worry is to be expected from the heathen. Why? Because they are orphans; they have no "heavenly Father"—like we do (6:26, 32)—on whose provision and protection they can rely. Worry and anxiety about our own needs betray misplaced priorities (6:25), signifys a misunderstanding of God's estimation of us (6:26, 28-30), and are pointless and unproductive (Matt. 6:27). Moreover, they nullify what should be one of the most distinctive traits of the child of God—implicit trust and confidence in a loving, knowing, and able heavenly Father (6:32, 33).

Other passages add to the list of the kinds of things over which Christians are not to worry. The distractions of this life and cares of this age lead men astray from right priorities and proper concerns (Mark 4:19). Luke 8:14 parallels "the cares and riches and pleasures of this life"—which impinge on the personal happiness of the worldling—as that which chokes out the effect of God's Word in the heart (cf. also Luke 21:34).

Remarkably, even seemingly spiritually-oriented concerns are forbidden when they focus upon *self*. The disciples were not to worry about what *they* would say in their *own* defense in the context of persecution, but to rely upon the timely direction of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:11). Christ gently chided Martha (Luke 10:41) for her anxious distraction over her own chores and duties—*even when the aim of those tasks was to minister to the Lord Himself!* The essence of Martha's complaint was that *she* was laboring *all alone* and that Mary was not helping *her* (see Luke 10:40). Surely this has a striking application to the frame of mind with which we approach even our service to the Lord.

All these passages which censure *merimna* share at least this one common thread: *they all address issues which ultimately and essentially focus on us, our circumstances, our perceived needs*. What affects us directly is not to be the object of our fretting worry or anxiety. Instead, we are to commit all such personal issues to God and rest in the knowledge of His goodness and care.

Positive Examples of "Concern"

Where, then, is the line between "anxiety" and "concern"? Again, the common thread running through the passages where *merimna* is commended is this: *they are all areas that stand outside of ourselves and revolve instead around others and their needs*. The unmarried "care" for the things of the Lord and are free to focus their concerns on serving the Lord undistractedly. On the other hand, a married person is called by God to "care" for the needs and pleasure of the spouse (1 Cor. 7:32–34). Paul's own "care" (prayerful concern) for the welfare of all the churches was a perpetual part of the burden of his ministry (2 Cor. 11:28). Similarly, he solemnly charges all Christians to cultivate this kind of mutual, caring concern for one another (1 Cor. 12:25).

Cure for Worry

The New Testament not only prohibits self-absorbed worry, but also prescribes the cure. The remedy is tucked into the very context of three key passages prohibiting the negative aspect of worry: (1) believing prayer (Phil. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:7), which releases our personal anxieties over to our Father and *leaves* them there, trusting Him to take care of them in our behalf, and (2) Biblical priority (Matt. 6:33), which focuses our thoughts and energies on doing God's will, seeking the extension of His kingdom, and fulfilling our obligations to Him as well as to those around us.

Conclusion

This is not a matter of human psychology. This is Spirit-inspired psychology based on the Spirit-directed, context-driven usage of Biblical vocabulary. Instead of a self-centered anxiety that expends time and energy (and demonstrates a lack of personal trust in God) worrying over one's personal needs for which God has already promised provision, the members of the body of Christ should cultivate an others-oriented care focused on knowing and ministering to the needs of those around us. That is the New Testament distinction between "worry" and "concern." Caring concern is commended because it is focused on others and how we can minister to their needs. Personal anxiety is prohibited because it focuses on ourselves and fails to rest in God's promises to meet our needs.

Continued on next page

At a Glance

(Continued from page 31)

will care for us. The point is, wor-

Christianity; it also betrays a lack willingness to care for us and con-This still does not mean that it is tradicts the whole message of right to feel anxious or worried for Christianity. At the same time, the others. We are to maintain the same Holy Spirit's use of the same word kind of confident trust in God to to exhort Christians to turn the care for others as we have that He focus of their concern outward in object is other than self: the form of care for others that rying about our own needs and cir-seeks to discover and minister to cumstances is not only selfish and their needs becomes one of the

contradictory to the whole spirit of most practical demonstrations of what Jesus said would be the identiof faith in our Father's ability or fying mark of His people-mutual love (John 13:34, 35).

Conclusions

Merimna is commended when its

Concern to please spouse Concern to please the Lord Concern for needs and interest in welfare of other believers Concern for spiritual welfare of one's charge Concern for well-being of other assemblies

Merimna is disapproved when its object is self:

> Anxiety over details of one's personal life-needs Anxiety over details of one's personal defense in persecution Anxiety over details of one's personal work and service Anxiety over details of one's personal suffering

Biblical Cures for Anxiety:

Priority—"seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33)

Prayer—"in everything by prayer"; "casting all your care on Him" (Phil. 4:16; 1 Pet. 5:7)

Usage Chart on Merimnao and Cognates

Merimnao—19x Merimna—6x Amerimnos—2x

	Reference	Sense	Object
6x 3x	Mt. 6:25-34// Lk. 12:22-32	negative	your life (food, drink, clothing, future)
2x	Mt.10:19//Lk.12:11	negative	your defense in persecution
2x	Mk. 4:19//Lk. 8:14	negative	cares of this world (worries, anxieties, distractions)
1x	Lk. 10:41	negative	many things (related to personal duties)
1x	Lk. 21:34	negative	cares of this life
5x	1 Cor. 7:32–34	positive	needs of spouse/Lord
1x	1 Cor. 12:25	positive	mutual care of Christians
1x	2 Cor. 11:28	positive	care for all the churches
1x	Phil. 2:20	positive	care for Philippians' condition
1x	Phil. 4:6	negative	personal needs, desires
1x	1 Pet. 5:7	negative	anxiety over persecution (?)





Compiled by Tim Locke, Managing Editor

Evangelical Theological Society and Open Theism

With the ETS's future possibly at stake, the organization's executive committee has issued a split recommendation on two members whose views many consider heretical. By a unanimous 9–0 vote, the ETS executive committee is recommending that Clark Pinnock of McMaster Divinity College in Canada not be expelled from the 54-year-old society. But the executive committee, by a 7-2 vote, is recommending that John Sanders of Huntingdon College in Indiana be voted out. Both men have come under fire in recent years over their embrace of "open theism"a doctrine that says God's knowledge of the future is limited. Open theists say that while God knows all the possible future choices humans may make, He does not know specifically what they will do. At issue this year (at the national meeting): whether open theism conflicts with the society's doctrinal statement, which is only two sentences and simply affirms the doctrines of inerrancy and the Trinity. For Pinnock and Sanders to be removed, it must be proven that their beliefs are at odds with inerrancy. (Baptist Press, 10/31/2003)

Super Bowl Halftime Show

FCC Chairman Michael Powell said Feb. 3 that much of the Super Bowl

simply the controversial ending-was offensive. "I actually find other parts of the programming even more offensive, because I don't think it took much imagination to understand what a great deal of the choreography was portraying," Powell, head of the FCC, said on ABC's Good Morning America. The halftime show concluded with singer Justin Timberlake ripping off part of Janet Jackson's costume. But Powell and others say that the performance up to that point was just as risqué. The day after the Super Bowl, MTV, which produced the halftime show, was promoting the shocking performance on its website. But by the end of the day, MTV had changed its tune by removing any promotion and by posting an apology, saying that the finale was not included in rehearsals. Jackson also issued an apology. Powell isn't buying any excuses. "I've certainly heard the explanations, but [I] don't believe it was an accident," he said on ABC. "I believe that somewhere down the line, somebody knew what was going to happen and some of it was intended to happen. The real question this morning still is who knew what and when?" Speaking on NBC's Today Show Feb. 3, Powell said the FCC has broad power in fining. If each station that broadcast the halftime

show is fined, then fines

halftime show—and not

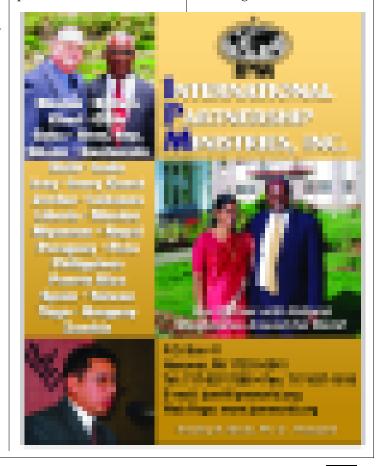
could extend into the millions of dollars. (Baptist Press, 02/05/2004)

Homosexual Men Promiscuous

A new study by a group of University of Chicago researchers reveals a high level of promiscuity and unhealthy behavior among that city's homosexual male population. According to the researchers, 42.9 percent of homosexual men in Chicago's Shoreland area have had more that 60 sexual partners, while an additional 18.4 percent have had between 31 and 60 partners. All total, 61.3 percent of the area's homosexual men have had more than 30 partners, and 87.8 percent have had more than 15, the research found. As a result, 55.1 percent of homosexual males in Shoreland known as Chicago's "gay center"—have at least one sexually transmitted disease, researchers said. (Baptist News, 01/18/2004)

Democratic Interviews with **Advocate**

A popular homosexual magazine landed interviews with three of the leading Democrat contenders in recent months, revealing much about the



candidates that normally goes unsaid on the campaign trail. A smiling Wesley Clark tells readers in the Feb. 3 edition of the Advocate that he "absolutely" would support a decision by Massachusetts legalizing same-sex "marriage" and the he believes the issue should be left up to the states. But he isn't the first Democrat candidate to talk with the magazine. Howard Dean was featured on the cover last April, and an interview with John Kerry was published in September. Richard Gephardt also did an interview. The *Advocate* is considered by many to be the nation's top homosexual-themed newsmagazine. The Feb. 3 edition contains a chart rating all the Democrat candidates, as well as an advertisement by the

NOTABLE QUOTES

riting on the Bible, Winston Churchill said, "Let men of science and learning expand their knowledge and prise and probe with their researches every detail of the records which have been preserved to us from those dim ages. All they will do is to fortify the grand simplicity and essential accuracy of the recorded truths which have lighted so far the pilgrimage of men.

The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants. —William Chillingworth

The English Bible, a book which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power. —Thomas Babington Macaulay

e (the Translator) will find one English book and one only, where, as in the *Iliad* itself, perfect plainness of speech is allied with perfect nobleness; and that book is the Bible.—Matthew Arnold

Democratic National Committee with the banner: "Vote Democrat."

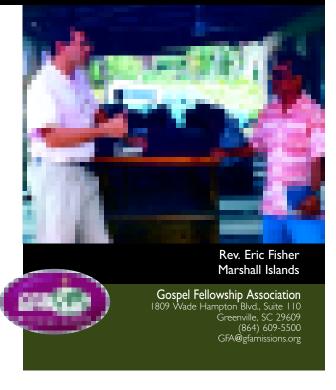
Homosexual activists also consider Dean and Kerry friends of the movement. As governor of Vermont, Dean signed the nation's first same-sex civil union law. Kerry, meanwhile, was one of the only 14 senators to vote against the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which protects states from being forced to recognize another state's same-sex "marriage." It also bars the federal government from recognizing such contracts. (Baptist Press, 01/21/2004)

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Global Focus

The Muslim World

Pearson Johnson and Ben Eckman

We have neglected 1.2 billion people—the Muslim world.

As our global focus moves westward from the Asian nations to the Middle Eastern Islamic nations, a survey of the landscape of Fundamentalist missionary activity reveals little involvement.

Islam poses a tremendous challenge and opportunity to the missionary endeavors of our churches. From humble beginnings in Mecca in A.D. 571 to a life of wealth and power in his final years, Muhammad created a religious system that is followed by one-fifth of the world's population. Though there are a few in our circles who are attempting to reach Muslims, as a movement we have not succeeded in making any substantial effort or plan to reach the Muslim world. Why? In this article and in the next we will share some suggestions as to why and hopefully help spur discussions that will remedy the problem.

First, we have some mental blocks that must be overcome. The first block is the assumptions we have and stereotypes we make. Many Westerners have certain assumptions about Muslims: they are Arabic, they live in the Middle East, and they are fanatics. While these assumptions are sometimes true, the reality is that what is descriptive of one region, country, or even city is completely inaccurate in another. For example, I have conducted missions research in Turkey and Yemen. They share one thing in common—their populations are 99.9% Muslim. Yet these countries are ethnically, linguistically, socially, and economically very different.

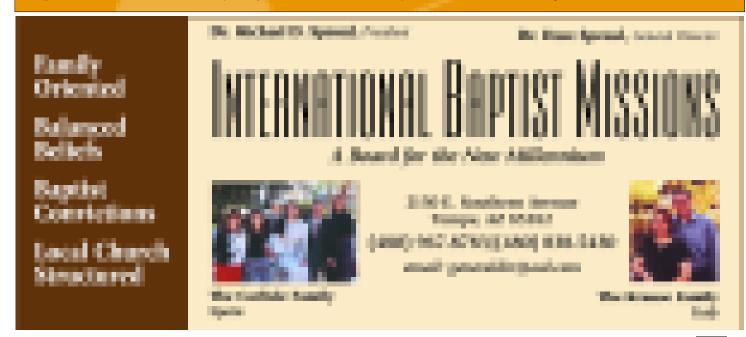
The stereotype that all Muslims are fanatics is also incorrect. As the Crescent Curtain continues to fall, the extremist groups who are opposed to globalization will continue to express themselves. However, the yelling crowds seen on the

news do not give the best picture of the average family in a Muslim nation. The average family is generally quiet and peace-loving. Immigration patterns reveal that thousands of Muslim families have left their violence-prone homelands for the peace and security of Western nations. This has pushed the Middle Eastern governments to crack down on local violence, providing greater safety for their residents. Our interaction with Muslim immigrants in the Detroit area has confirmed this viewpoint. As we alter our stereotypes through increased contact with Muslim families, this mental block will dissipate.

A second mental block is the assumption that Muslims will certainly reject the gospel. The unspoken attitude becomes "shake the dust off your feet and move on where something can be done." The problem with that attitude is simple: there is no dust on our feet to shake off. We have not given the gospel and seen it rejected. I talked to a missionary who lives in the Middle East who has led thirty Arab Muslims to the Lord in the last three years. Amazed, I asked, "How did you do it?" He replied, "I shared the gospel." Could it be that the harvest among Muslims has been small because we have sown little?

What can we do to educate our congregations, reach out to Muslim nations, and establish new and creative ways of doing missions? The next *Global Focus* article will look at the models of ministry that we can follow in Muslim nations known as Restricted Access Nations (RANs). Following that, we will take a closer look at this region, so we can increase our knowledge of, and burden for, their salvation.

Pearson Johnson and Ben Eckman are Assistant Pastors at Inter-City Baptist Church in Allen Park, Michigan.



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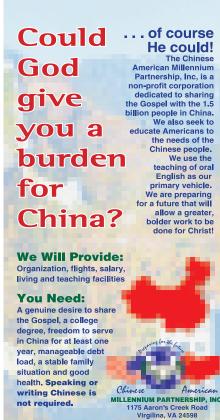
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Real Food for Your Faith

panion shuffled toward Emmaus, they were puzzled and depressed. Take a walk in their sandals and you will see why. All of their hopes and dreams had just been buried in a borrowed tomb. They couldn't make sense of it all. In a sense, they were like every human being. Everyone must choose a source to trust in order to make sense of the events around him. Each person ultimately places his faith in something that he believes to be authoritative. Throughout history, men have chosen one of three sources for this ultimate trust: reason, experience, or Scripture. The description of these men on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24 gives us keen insight into these three sources. Through the instruction of Christ, you can find real food for your faith.

Reason as a Source for Authority

Using reasoning as a source for authority will leave you sad. Luke 24:15 explains that as the two men walked, they were trying to reason through all that had happened. They couldn't make sense of it. From the reading in Luke 24, we can see the world through their eyes. They couldn't make sense of their circumstances. They had been disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, but He had been buried in a borrowed tomb. They couldn't make sense of the actions of the other disciples. Peter, despite all his talk about loyalty, had denied the Lord with cursing. The other disciples were in disarray. They couldn't make sense of the actions of sinners. They had seen how the chief priests and rulers delivered Jesus to be condemned. They couldn't make sense of the suffering of their Lord. The masses had subjected Him to a torturous death. Perhaps they wondered

s Cleopas and his companion shuffled toward Emmaus, they were puzzled and depressed. Take a walk in their sandals and you will see why. All of their hopes and dreams een buried in a borrowed wrong. Everyone must choose or trust in order to make a content of the panion shuffled toward them as well. Their logic failed them as they explained this to the Stranger who joined them on the road that day. They knew that Jesus was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" and they had "trusted" that He was they explained this to the stranger who joined them on the road that day. They knew that Jesus was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" and they had "trusted" that He was they explained this to the stranger who joined them on the road that day. They knew that Jesus was "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" and they had "trusted" that He was the expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Perhaps this rebuke was hard to take, but it was essential. Since they had not turned to the Scriptures as their final authority, their reasoning and experience had left them depressed. Such is the

Experience as a Source for Authority

All of Jerusalem was abuzz about

the gory spectacle of the crucifixion of Christ. Perhaps these men had watched His execution. The experience left them sad and discouraged. Yes, there was talk of Christ's rising again, but these disciples didn't put much faith in this talk. Several women said that they had seen an angel, but verse 11 explains that these men thought that such experiences were merely wishful thinking. As we learn from verse 17, all of their reasoning and experience left these travelers in sadness and despair. This question of experience is even more remarkable when you consider the identity of the Stranger who walked with them. Unknown to them, the Stranger was the Savior; their Companion was the Christ! It is interesting to ask, "Why didn't Jesus merely reveal His identity to them as they walked?" He did not do so for a very specific reason.

Scripture as the Source for Authority

Through His instruction, Jesus served these men with Scripture as the real food for their faith. He said unto them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets

have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."2 Perhaps this rebuke was hard to take, but it was essential. Since they had not turned to the Scriptures as their final authority, their reasoning and experience had left them depressed. Such is the fate of all who seek for an authoritative experience (as the Jews seek for a sign) and authoritative reasoning (as the Greeks seek for wisdom).3 Only the Scripture is a trustworthy Source to feed your soul. We can only imagine what it must have been like to hear that wonderful exposition of Scripture as they walked together. We are not in any doubt about the effect. After their eyes were opened so that they experienced the reality of his Presence, the disciples testified, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"4 If you want real food for your faith, you must begin here.5 Reasoning and experience can build upon the foundation of the Scripture, but they cannot replace it.

Through this instruction from Christ, you can find real food for your faith in Scripture. Have reasoning and experience left you empty and sad? Why not return to the

answer that Christ gave on the road to Emmaus?

¹ Note the imperfect active indicative translated as past, "trusted," in Luke 24:21.

² Luke 24:25–27

³ See 1 Corinthians 1:17–31.

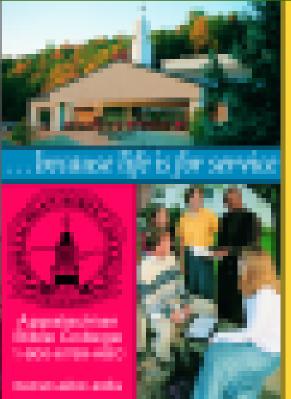
⁴ Luke 24:32

⁵ Note the prominence of Luke 24:44–46 in Christ's later meeting with His disciples.

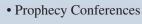
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