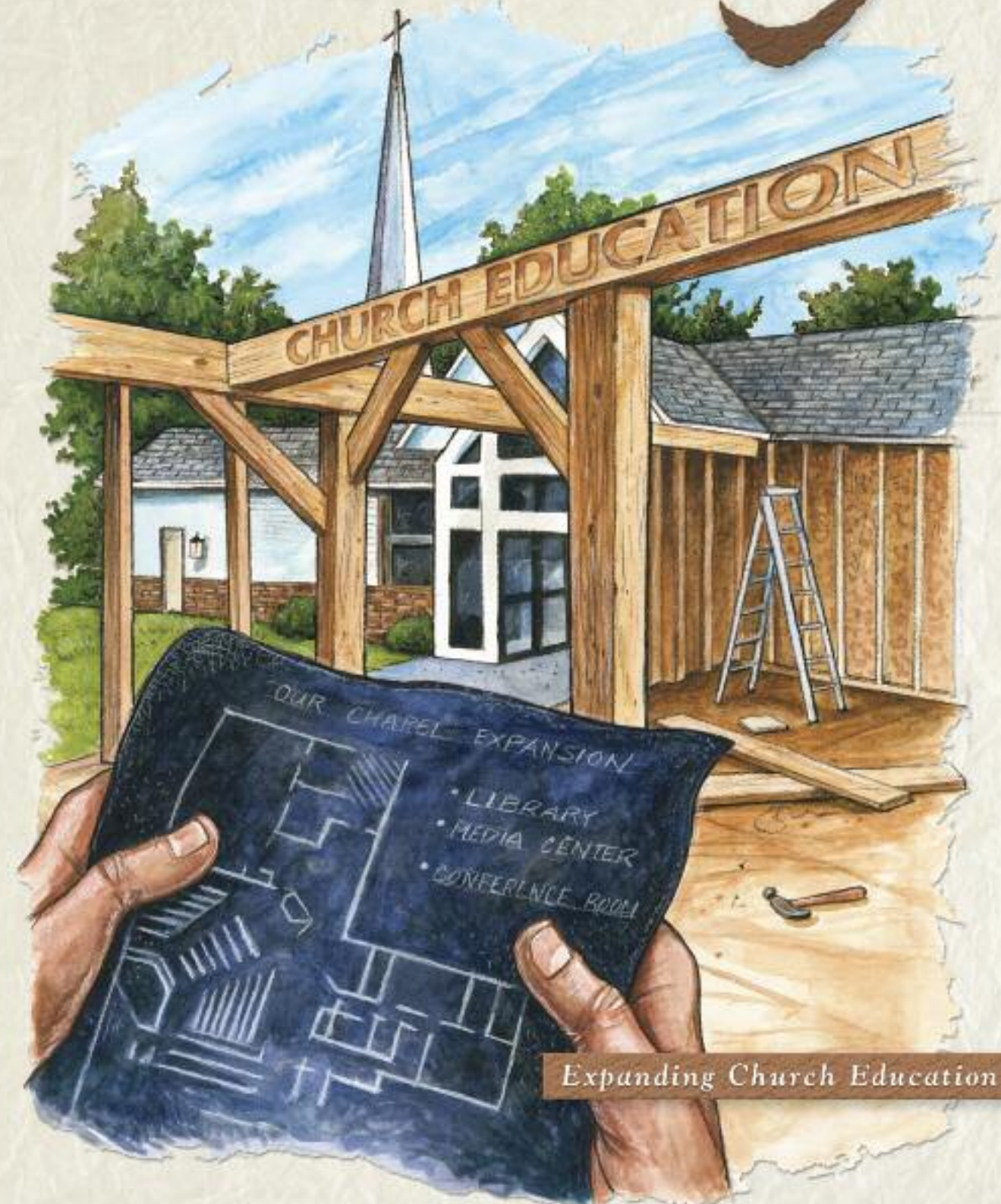


Journey



Expanding Church Education

A target graphic with a church building in the center. The text 'TRUTH UNDER FIRE' is written across the target. To the left of the target is a list of terms: 'INDIVIDUAL', 'HOME', 'FAMILY', 'SCHOOL', '>> CHURCH', 'FAITH', 'PHILOSOPHY', '>> DOCTRINE', 'EDUCATION', 'DISTORTION', '>> CONFUSION', 'FEAR', 'DESTRUCTION', 'CHAOS'. To the right of the target are four icons: a circle with a crosshair, a ruler, a circle with a crosshair, and a crosshair. At the bottom of the target is the text: 'IRON SHARPENS IRON CONFERENCE', 'MAY 21-24, 2009 DUBUQUE, IA', 'EMMAUS BIBLE COLLEGE'. At the bottom of the entire graphic is the text: 'DOCTRINAL CONFUSION IN THE CHURCH'.

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God's Approval of our Study

As a building inspector scrutinizes the quality of a workman's construction, so God will evaluate our handling of His Word.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, NASB)

Our culture teaches us that we are each entitled to our own opinions, and would even afford us the right to decide what is true for us individually. Rather than seeking to understand what a passage of Scripture meant when the author penned it for his readers, we prematurely jump to creative imagining of how the passage might apply to our situation. Finding application in itself is admirable, but not unless the application is derived from the proper interpretation of the text. Discovering the interpretation takes work and skill and more time than many of us wish to invest. Have you participated in a group Bible study in which participants are encouraged to suggest what a passage means to them? Their suggestions can be random and arbitrary and yet others in the group affirm and validate their contributions. Do some of your friends approach discernment of God's will from the Scripture in a mystical manner that treats the Bible as if it were a magical oracle? Have you helped them interpret properly?

If we want God's approval we must invest more time, energy, and skill in learning to handle the Scripture accurately. Just as a

carpenter must make a straight cut through the wood, we have no right to bend or distort the Scripture to fit our own prejudices. We must resist subjective interpretations. In the context of the second chapter of 2 Timothy, Paul is warning Timothy that false teachers distort the Scripture to the point of saying the resurrection has already taken place. Do we have the skill to refute those who contradict?

To read the Bible devotionally is an admirable pursuit well worth some of our time. To neglect the diligent study of the Scripture will lead to shame when God inspects our workmanship. We must learn hermeneutics to interpret and apply the Scripture accurately. As a stone mason cuts and squares a stone so that it will fit into its proper place in the structure of a building, so we must seek to understand how each passage of Scripture fits into the overall theology that God teaches us in His Word. We cannot be lax. Our work is going to be inspected. We must work hard to be ready.

Kenneth Alan Daughters
President,
Emmaus Bible College



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Journey Magazine, volume 7, issue 1, Spring 2009

Journey Magazine is published by Emmaus Bible College, Dubuque, Iowa, USA.

Opinions expressed in articles published in Journey Magazine are not necessarily those of Emmaus Bible College.

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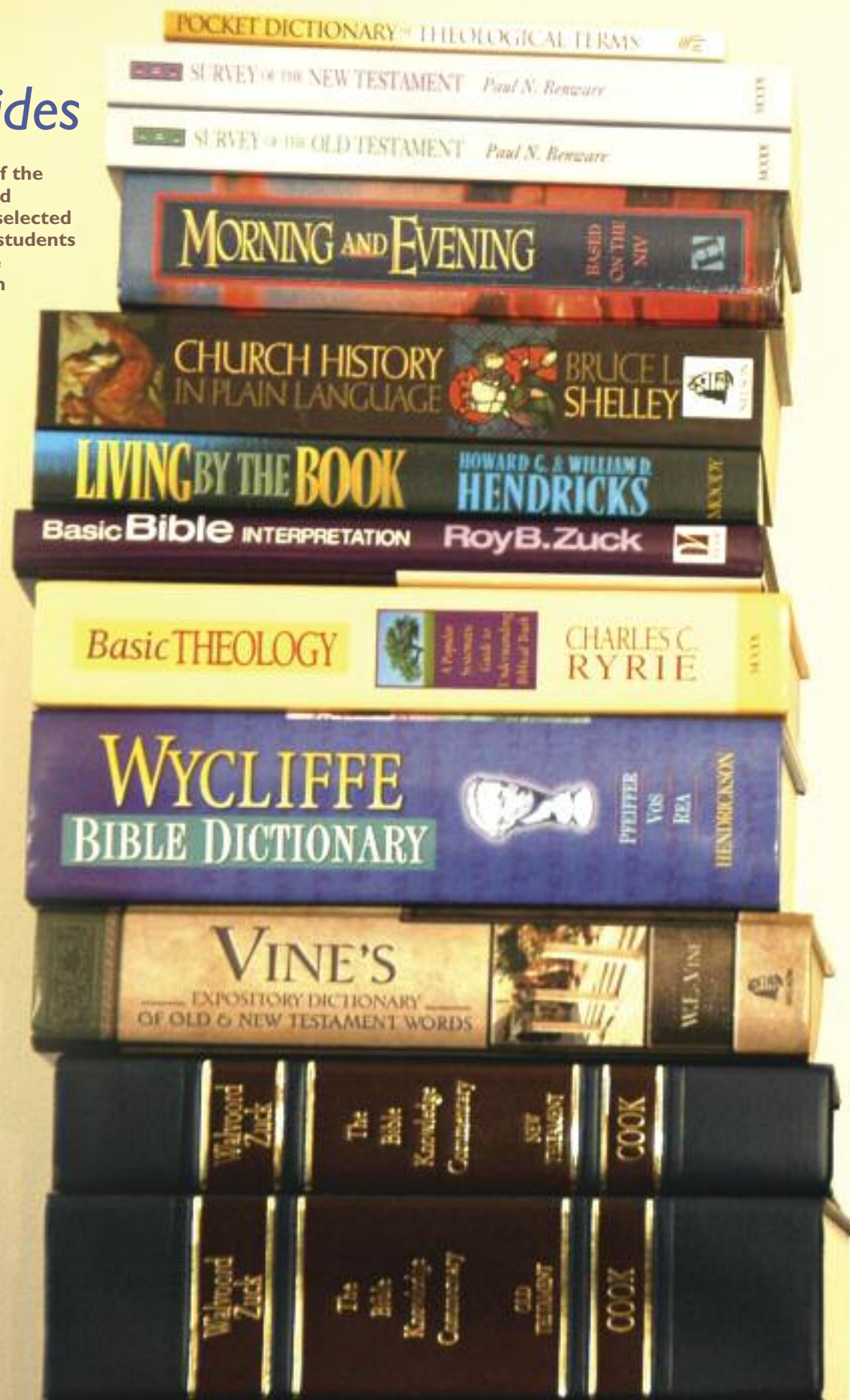
Journey Magazine is available online at:
www.emmaus.edu/journey

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Travel Guides

This collection of some of the finest reference books and commentaries has been selected by a team of faculty and students at Emmaus Bible College to equip the believer with an essential and reliable tool for advancing in serious personal Bible study. These books can be purchased as a group or individually by contacting John Rush at (563) 588-8000, extension 1003 or by sending an e-mail to jrush@emmaus.edu.



Bible Knowledge Commentary

Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck
David C. Cook, 1985

Based on the NIV, this major commentary comes from the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary and offers help from expert scholars in interpreting the Scriptures from a historical, grammatical, and premillennial perspective. Questions such as: What does That verse mean? How should I interpret this passage? What is the significance of this word or phrase in Hebrew or Aramaic? How do Bible-time customs help me understand the meaning of this passage? How does the information on the author, historical background, and features of a Bible book help interpret that book? are answered in this book. This commentary is verse-by-verse and phrase by phrase. Maps, charts, and diagrams are also included and problem passages, alleged discrepancies, customs, geographical locations are all explained.

Wycliffe Bible Dictionary

Hendrickson, 1988

Wycliffe Bible Dictionary provides extensive background information on the names and places mentioned in the Bible, as well as important doctrinal, historical, and Bible background topics. Articles are written by more than 200 leading conservative, evangelical scholars.

- A comprehensive, affordable Bible dictionary for students, scholars, and lay people.
- Major topics are given extensive coverage, and contributors are noted after each article.
- Many topics include bibliographies for additional research.
- Over 900 photos, maps, charts, and drawings illustrate the text.

Vine's Expository Dictionary

Thomas Nelson, 1996

This convenient one volume combines *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* and *Unger and White's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*. This book allows you to easily access the alphabetized English equivalents of the Greek or Hebrew words from which they are translated. Throughout the text the most significant biblical words are illustrated by Scripture passages, comments, cross-references, ancient and modern meanings, precise etymologies, histori-

cal notes, and clearly defined technical information. Each original language is indexed, and the addition of a topical index allows you to access all the dictionary entries pertinent to specific New Testament ideas and teachings.

Basic Theology

Charles Ryrie
Moody, 1999

Over the years Charles Ryrie's name has become synonymous with dispensational theology. With his clear understanding of the Scriptures and unpretentious writing style, Ryrie has written *Basic Theology* for every student of God's Word, from the devotional student to the seminary student. Featuring charts, definitions, and Scripture and subject indices, *Basic Theology* will give you a clear and comprehensive picture of Ryrie's approach to systematic theology. Its 94 chapters are arranged in outline style for easy reference. Considerable emphasis is given to explaining the dispensational view of the end times.

Morning and Evening

Charles Spurgeon
Hendrickson, 1997

For thousands of Christians over the last century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* has been a daily devotional guide through life's ups and downs. New generations can once again enjoy Spurgeon's beautiful prose and elegant command of the English language in this completely revised edition. *Morning and Evening* offers readers the best of Spurgeon's insight and wise counsel on themes that are as relevant to our day as they were in his day. In this updated version, Spurgeon's work is returned to its former brilliance while retaining the beautiful language of the original King James Version.

Living by the Book

Howard Hendricks
and William Hendricks
Moody

How would you describe your personal Bible study? Mundane or motivational? Lackluster or lively? Redundant or reviving? Howard and Bill Hendricks offer a practical 3-step process that will help you master simple yet effective inductive methods of observation, interpretation, and application that will make all the difference in your time with God's Word!

Survey of the Old & New Testaments

Paul Benware
Moody

This is an outstanding survey of the entire Bible. Exploring the historical progression of the Old Testament, Volume 1 offers a book-by-book analysis from Genesis to Malachi. Volume 2 examines the fulfillment of the new covenant, and includes information on Roman politics and the intertestamental period.

Church History in Plain Language, Third Edition

Bruce Shelley
Thomas Nelson, 2007

This third edition improves the most engaging and readable single-volume history of the Church by bringing the story into the twenty-first century. Faced with some astonishing changes in the Islamic world, a global resurgence of Roman Catholicism, the decline of Christianity in the West coupled with the rapid growth of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in the southern and eastern hemispheres, readers need a current explanation with intellectual substance that will provide historical context and update readers on all these new developments. The new edition of *Church History in Plain Language* does that in a stimulating manner, and it promises to be the new standard for readable Church History.

Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms

InterVarsity, 1999

For every beginning theology student! This affordable A-to-Z reference gives you quick access to more than 300 definitions of English and foreign terms. Written by a team of respected teachers, it also identifies key theologians, traditions, and organizations.

Basic Bible Interpretation

Roy B. Zuck
David C. Cook, 1991

Isn't Bible interpretation just for the experts? No, says Dr. Zuck – it's essential for each Christian's understanding and application of Scripture. Discover the challenges, problems, key terms, and history of interpretation – all in practical, down-to-earth language. Develop the skills you need to get the most out of your Bible study!



Bible Memorization Bill Longstreet for Every Believer

Is Bible memorization worth the effort? Those who attended the Bible Memorization for Every Believer seminar at the Iron Sharpens Iron conference in May 2008 seemed to agree and would answer “Yes!”

For many people, memorizing Bible verses is hard work. You’d be surprised at the excuses I’ve heard from people who said they can’t memorize Scripture. Yet I’m amazed to find they have memorized or filled their minds with many insignificant facts and statistics [e.g., Babe Ruth’s or Michael Jordan’s career averages and accomplishments; or names of every song on albums by recording artists from decades ago]. Many of us have quickly learned new street addresses, e-mail addresses, passwords for various log-ins and security codes, and mobile phone numbers of our friends. But we don’t think we can memorize God’s Word nor have the time to do so. I have never heard a good excuse from anyone for not memorizing verses, and I’ve not heard a valid excuse for not studying the Bible, praying, or for spending special time with the Lord.

The Heart of the Struggle

Why is Bible memorization such a struggle for some of us? Is it because we lack desire to do so? Do we really understand that we need to memorize and meditate on the Word of God? It is essential for our growth and maturity. Are we convinced that by memorizing His Word we will know our Lord and understand His will better? The only way we can really obey God is to know His Word. We need to continually bathe our minds in the Word [“Marinate our minds in the Word” is how Fred Kosin puts it!]. The first step in

being a successful verse-memorizer is to have a heartfelt desire to know God’s Word. You begin to understand that your time memorizing is really time with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the living “Word” and it is His Word you are memorizing!

The only way we can really obey God is to know His Word.

It Takes Discipline

I remember that after I trusted the Lord Jesus Christ and became a Christian I had the desire to read the Bible and pray. I wanted to soak up everything I could to learn more about Him. But then something happened: I found that if I didn’t discipline myself, my daily Bible reading and prayer time would often slip away. I found that other things of lesser importance would fill in the time. There was a competition for my time by many other worthwhile things, some of which pertained to ministry. [Sounds a little like Martha, busy with service and no time to sit at the feet of the Master to learn!] The “other worthwhile things” really couldn’t compare to Bible reading and prayer, my special time with the Lord, but I had to learn that I needed to develop a daily discipline to strengthen these proper desires. Therefore, discipline is the second step towards being a successful Bible-memorizer.

It Takes Understanding

The main goal of Bible memory work is to learn the meaning of the verses so you can apply them properly. What good is it if you can recite hundreds of verses but don’t understand what they mean or how they

can be used to help you or others? Proper application and understanding are essential. This is why we don’t use sledgehammers to swat at gnats or flies. The sledgehammer would be misapplied.

It Takes Meditation

Meditation is an essential ingredient when you are memorizing. Spend time with a verse. Purposely take a verse card and spend an entire week with it. Read it. Recite it. Think about each phrase. Pray while you are meditating on this portion of Scripture. Don’t rush through it. Be sure you have a clear understanding of what the verse means and how you can apply it. Can you use this verse to help others? Prepare your mind for the occasions where this verse can be appropriately presented to others. What does the verse teach you about the Lord? Did you gain any new insights about Him and His will?

One Program in Action

Over the years at Fairbluff Bible Chapel in Charlotte, NC, we have had many Bible memory programs. Not all of them have been as successful as our most recent program. Of course, for anyone who participated in the programs of the past and grew in their knowledge of the Word and relationship to the Lord, we praise the Lord! But in our program launched in 2008, success was measured by the following criteria:

- At least 40% of the fellowship participating
- 90% completing the program
- And subjectively: Is there a noticeable difference in our Prayer Time & Worship; Do we see noticeable evidence of application of the Word?

The Bible Memory Program is getting excellent results at our assembly. We began to make adjustments to our programs based on evaluating “what went wrong” in the past and the changes we have made have provided us with good results [as stated in the bullet points above]. The main changes made were the following:

- We introduced accountability. Every participant has a specific person he/she recites to. We called this person a “Hearer / Encourager” [HE]. The HE’s were carefully selected and saw the work they were doing as a ministry. They prayed faithfully for those who were memorizing; called the participants on the phone; e-mailed them; and had regular contact to be sure no one lagged behind. The prayer support and encouragement has made a difference! It has given opportunity for several others to use their spiritual gifts in the assembly for the Lord.
- We instructed our fellowship on the importance of the Bible Memory Program and its value. Memorization of the Word can keep us from sin and folly. It can cleanse our mind. It prepares us for service. It helps our worship and our prayer life. Many in our fellowship are now convinced of the value of Bible memorization.
- We made the structure of the program manageable. Each week of the program, the verse or verses to be meditated upon and memorized are what can fit on a card — a business card! The

program is not intimidating, the cards are convenient to carry around, and we emphasize the importance of meditating on the Word. We don’t see the value in last-minute memorizing like some of us might have done in cramming for a final exam.

The adjustments mentioned above also can be used as good techniques by anyone who is developing his/her own memorization program on an individual basis. Find an accountability partner who knows what you are doing and will encourage you and pray for you as you memorize. Regularly have a time you can meet so you can recite the verses learned. You can also use the time to explain to your accountability partner what the verses mean and how they can be used. Perhaps even specifically, how they helped you! Pray together about your memory work and any difficulty you may be experiencing.

Write in your journal or on a piece of paper to be kept with your Bible, the value you see in memorizing Scripture. Write down your goals for doing this, and define your heart’s desire. You might explain this as if you were writing a note to the Lord. Affirm that you know you are obeying Him by doing this. Review what you have written on a regular basis and begin to record the things you learn as you meditate on each verse. Perhaps, write these things on the back of the cards you make for yourself.

Keep the program manageable for yourself. You should be thinking about a lifelong discipline — a marathon race, not a sprint. Bible

memorization is something every believer should be involved with all the time. Each day we should be meditating on a portion of the Word, why not the portion we are trying to commit to memory? Some people have the ability to memorize a verse a day, or even more. Don’t measure yourself by what others are doing. Remember that the importance of Bible memorization is for you to know the Word so you can apply it properly and grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Choosing the Right Club

I like to golf, but am a very average golfer. Nonetheless, when I go golfing I have a bag of clubs I carry with me and each club has a different purpose. I have a driver to use off the tee box when a long drive is needed and I have other clubs for approach shots and others for when I’m around the green or in the sand, and a putter for when I’m on the green and trying to put the ball in the hole. It wouldn’t be very helpful to my game if I used only the driver on the course, it wouldn’t be appropriate for every place or shot where my ball was lying. The same thing holds true for Bible verses. Most believers know John 3:16; they can recite it word perfect. But John 3:16 is not the verse for every situation. It would be good for you to have many other verses available [which have been committed word perfect to your memory] that you can quote when the right situation presents itself. In the same way that I pull out a different club for different shots needed on the golf course, you should be able to pull other verses

out of your memory for many situations: verses pertaining to evangelism; verses for encouragement; verses for times of temptation; for holiness; and many more!

I have also been surprised by believers not knowing where to even look for a suitable verse in their Bible, because they haven’t attempted to memorize or meditate on Scripture. Time spent memorizing the Word will help you find your way through the Scriptures. Meditating helps you to understand the context. As a believer, you already know that “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17-17, NASB). A verse like this should remind us of the great value in committing many verses to memory because of all the areas we can apply the Word to our lives.

An Urgent Call to Action

Did you know there are many places in the world today where it is illegal to have a Bible? Persecution of believers who follow Christ is very real, and there are those who lay down their lives for following Him. How much value do you think they have placed on the Word of God? If our Bibles were taken away from us, would we be able to recite vast portions of it to help others? How would we witness to others without a Bible to open? Would our efforts to paraphrase something we think resembles a verse be a convincing proof of the power of the Word? We must memorize His

Word! Who knows where we will be or when we will need it, and a Bible may not be handy!

How would we witness to others without a Bible to open? Would our efforts to paraphrase something we think resembles a verse be a convincing proof of the power of the Word?

There are many places you can go to find useful resources and tools to help you with Bible memorization. I found several useful Web sites rather easily by doing a search online. Going to trusted sources like the Navigators can also be helpful. There usually are verse packets that can be purchased inexpensively at Christian bookstores, but you can easily make your own cards too. Some people prefer to hand-write their cards as it helps them immediately in the memorization process. However, don’t let decisions like making cards or purchasing them be a stumbling block to you. Get started right away to meditate and memorize the Word of God!

I don’t know anyone who ever felt Bible memorization was not worth the effort. Everyone who commits to this grows in his or her relationship with the Lord, especially if the desire is to honor Him and not be puffed up with pride by the num-

ber of verses learned. I suppose I should clarify one point concerning this: I have known unbelievers who have memorized many verses without having a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Lord willing, this knowledge will one day help them to come to trust Him for salvation, “For faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

This article has been written for every believer with a view to encourage you — it is well worth the effort to memorize God’s Word. The rewards for doing so are priceless! †



Bill Longstreet
Bill has been married for 35 years to Marj, his life long love (whom he’s known since Kindergarten in Sunday school!). Both trusted the Lord in 1980, after which the Lord blessed them with two daughters – Jan (who graduated from Emmaus in 2005) and Sarah (who is home with the Lord, 2001). They look forward to becoming grandparents in March. Bill graduated from Rutgers University ('72) BA History (Concentration: Medieval Ecclesiastical) and earned his NJ State Teacher’s Certificate (Secondary Education) from Newark State College in '73. Bill taught and coached in public school before trusting the Lord, and began a business career the same year he was saved. He is an Account Manager selling electrical control products for 25 years (this has been his “mission field” where Bible memory work has been essential). His participation in Bible memory programs began at Woodside Chapel in NJ in 1981, and he has initiated and led several programs at the chapel level. Bill has been an elder at Fairbluff Bible Chapel (Charlotte, NC) since 1990 and a recent member to the Board of Trustees at Emmaus Bible College.



Getting Excited About Church Libraries

Ron and Kay Maness

Does your church have a library, one that is vibrant and active and getting used? If not, why not? Do you have any idea how much of a blessing a church library can be, and how it can contribute to the building up of the body of Christ and the equipping of the saints for ministry?

Why Have a Library?

Books have always been powerful tools in awakening hearts, minds, and consciences. Almost without exception, those men and women whom God has used most powerfully were men and women who knew the power of good books... The right book placed in the right hands at the

right time can make a lasting difference. Terry Glaspey.

Most Christians who have been serving the Lord for any length of time can pin-point biographies that have made a significant impact on their lives. Sinclair Ferguson.

So if books are that important, then it is a short step of logic to the conclusion that it makes sense for a church to have a library of good, well-chosen books for the use of the body — to place the right book in the right hands at the right time. It is because of convictions like these on the part of our elders that a library ministry has long been

considered a core ministry at Community Bible Chapel (CBC) in Richardson, Texas, a suburb of Dallas.

To illustrate the impact of the right book in the right hands, my wife, Kay, and I remember Natalie, who was six years old when we started the library. Every week she would run to the library for new books and devour them. The missionary stories in particular made an impression on Natalie, and especially the story of Amy Carmichael, missionary to India. Natalie dreamed of growing up and following Amy's footsteps and after college she moved to India to work with a Christian organization which worked with AIDS orphans. She

was working in a poverty-stricken area of India with no libraries and limited access to books. There were lots of young Indian men passionate about ministry, but their resources were very limited, and they didn't have access to commentaries or Bible reference books. Natalie was shocked, remembering that she had grown up with the CBC library, where she could find 20 books on any subject to read and make comparisons, and formulate her own understanding on a given topic. So she contacted us, and with financial donations from members of CBC, we put together a large collection of basic books to provide them with a library. In that way,

the ministry of a church library in Texas was pushed to the other side of the world by a young girl remembering the impact of good books on her life.

CBC Library and Emmaus

Several current members of the Emmaus faculty and administration attended CBC while they were at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) and during that time each was a frequent user of the library. This list includes Steve Sanchez, Joel Hernandez, Ben Mathew, and Ken Daughters. Because of that familiarity with the CBC library, Kay and I were asked to give a seminar on starting a

church library at the 2008 *Iron Sharpens Iron* conference, and this article is based on that presentation. Because we can't include all of the details presented in that seminar here, I invite you to go to the library section of our CBC Web page (www.communitybible.org) for a more extensive article on "Starting a Church Library."

History of the CBC Library

Our library began in 1984 with several boxes of donated books from some graduating seminary students. Our elders recruited me (and I recruited Kay) to help get it started. Kay and I didn't have any experience at operating a

library, but what we did have was a real love for books. So although we didn't really know what we were doing or what we were getting into, we began cataloging and processing those donated books. After those books were processed, a church member made an anonymous gift of \$5,000 for further growth of the fledgling library and so we had a fund to start purchasing new books. After that initial gift was exhausted, the elders established an annual budget and began committing funds each year for the purchase and maintenance of Christian literature and other media items for the benefit of the body.

A Thumbnail Sketch

CBC is not a large church, with less than 500 members including children. Our library is undoubtedly large for a church our size because of a concentrated and committed emphasis over a 24-year period. Some sample statistics will give you an idea:

- 13,000 books • 1,000 videos and DVDs • 300 CDs and audio resources
- Annual budget over \$8,000 • Online catalog with Internet access • Weekly checkouts of 100 to 175 books and media items

Getting Started

Building a library is a step-by-step process. We presently have a great facility with 850 square feet of space, custom-built bookshelves, and a computer system that features an online catalog. It didn't begin that way. We began with a library in what was essentially a large closet, with a manually-typed card catalog system. But when our church added a new wing to our building, it included a new library with greatly expanded space, and we converted to a computer-based catalog system. When we later moved into a new church building, a

centerpiece of the building was the centrally-placed library facility. Next, we converted to another computer system that allows online access. It has just been a matter of taking one step at a time.

Developing a plan. Like most matters in life, that first step should be to develop a plan. Determine which groups you wish to serve, and what media you want to offer (books, magazines, DVDs, audios, etc). Donated books will only take you so far: at some point you need a budget to purchase new media items on a regular basis. This brings up the issue of leadership support. Church leadership needs to share your vision for the importance of a church library, and wholeheartedly support it by the provision of adequate physical facilities and an adequate budget for the regular acquisition of books and other media. Will you use a computer or a manual system? There are a number of good software packages out there to fit any budget. Lastly, what classification system will you use—Dewey or Library of Congress? We use Dewey, which is the one generally recommended for church libraries, and the Sears List for subject headings.

Thinking Ahead. You can avoid a lot of headaches by thinking beyond just your immediate needs. Because we didn't know enough to plan ahead, we later had to convert from the Union classification system to Dewey, then from a manual card catalog to a computer system, and then from a DOS-based computer system to a Windows-based system with online access. Make sure you get a system that will provide for future needs, something you can grow into. The same goes for physical facilities.

Beginning Resources

For a discussion of library supplies and resources needed to classify media items and assign subject headings, see my

article, or visit a very helpful online article on the DTS Library Web page titled "Resources for Starting and Maintaining a Church Library." Go to the DTS Library Web page and search for "church libraries" (Web address: http://library.dts.edu/Pages/Help/Misc/church_lib.shtml).

Staffing Up: Tasks to Perform

A number of tasks must be performed on a routine basis. You will do well to think these through early on and determine who can help you carry them out. Those tasks include purchasing books and other media items; classifying the media items (using Dewey and Sears); data entry into the computer; processing media items for circulation (attaching book pockets, labels, date due slips, covering the books, etc); processing returned items at peak times on Sunday mornings; preparing new book lists; and monitoring past dues.

What to Buy and Where

We are fortunate to live in Dallas and we visit the DTS bookstore once a week to see what is new and purchase books. The rest of our purchases are largely from amazon.com and other online sources. As far as what to buy, there are a large number of subjects and types of books to consider, such as commentaries, systematic theology, reference books, church history, leadership, specific areas of ministry, counseling, apologetics, biographies, Puritan and other classics, fiction, marriage and family, women's issues, Christianity and culture, cults, missions and mission biographies.

There are a number of good guides to commentaries and reference books, such as John Glynn's *Commentary and Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources*. Glynn's guide is updated regularly, and includes a "must-have" per-

sonal reference library, recommended commentaries on each book of the Bible (categorized by level and perspective, such as conservative, liberal, etc.), and books on a large number of theological topics. Other similar guides include those by James E. Rosscup and D.A. Carson. One series I would particularly recommend for church libraries is the NIV Application Commentary series which is now nearly complete. My article includes more detailed recommendations.

Promoting the Library: Encouraging Usage

The best-stocked library is of no benefit if it is not used. So the promotion of the library is essential. Ideally the library is in a central location where it is visible, with a lot of traffic. Here are some essentials to encourage usage:

Highlight new books, first through a new book display in the library. Since we add new books all the time, we want library patrons to feel they might miss something if they don't stop by the library each week and take a look at the new items. On the first Sunday of each month we have a bulletin insert with a list of new books from the past month, with brief summary comments about individual items. Lists from previous months are available on the library counter, and are posted on the library Web page.

Know your patrons and what types of books they like. When new items arrive, don't wait for them to come in the library: carry the book out and put it their hands. Often when I purchase a new book, I already know who I going to show it to. Did you get a new book on missions or evangelism? Show it to the missions or outreach leaders. You will find that people appreciate that kind of personal attention. After all, a librarian doesn't need to be passive, just standing behind the count-

er waiting for someone to come in and check something out. **Pursue your patrons.**

Other suggestions to encourage usage are **book reviews**, done either by yourself or another patron. Hand them out in the library, include them in church newsletters, or post them on the library Web page. If a book was recommended by a patron, type up a card saying, "Recommended by John Smith", and attach it to the book. Encourage the formation of **reading groups** to read a particular book and discuss it. And you can encourage Sunday school teachers to bring in their classes for **visits to the library**; encourage small group ministry leaders to **recommend books to their members**; and prepare **lists of basic recommended reading**.

Becoming a Community Library

That is what we have become at CBC. A large part of our usage comes from people who don't attend our church, such as people from our neighborhood, or those whose children are involved with groups that meet in our building (scouts, AWANA, etc). If your church has a marquee sign, you could advertise your library as open to the community.

Sharpening Your Edge

To sharpen or maintain your edge, **visit other church libraries**. If there isn't another one near you, perhaps there is one in a city where you will be going on vacation. Visit the Web pages of other libraries. There are **church library associations**, such as the Evangelical Church Library Association (www.eclalibraries.org). They publish a quarterly magazine with book reviews and helpful articles and have a mentoring program for new librarians. Let them know you wish to be mentored: they will match you up

to a mentor. There are also online forums for discussions by church librarians. And certainly you are welcome to contact us with any questions you have.

So Get Started!

We hope this article has shown you how to go about starting a library that can be a powerful tool in your church for building up the body of Christ. God has richly blessed the library ministry at CBC and He can do the same for your church library ministry. I am still as excited about buying books for our library and putting out each new book list as I was 24 years ago. As Jesus taught in the parable of the mustard seed, great things can come from small and humble beginnings. **So what are you waiting for? Get excited, and get started!** †



Ron and Kay Maness
Ron Maness and his wife, Kay, who met at Baylor University, have two grown children and three grandchildren. Ron later furthered his education by enrolling in the non-degree program at Dallas Theological Seminary, where he took various courses of interest over a five year period. Ron has been in the banking industry and Kay the travel industry for over 30 years. They began attending Community Bible Chapel (CBC) in Richardson, Texas in 1980, where Ron's passion for books and reading led the CBC leadership in 1981 to ask him to undertake the building of a church library, which at that time consisted of several boxes of donated books. Kay joined with Ron in that ministry, and together they saw the library grow to over 13,000 books plus other media items, as well as an internet presence on the CBC web page.

PREACHING AND THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

BY PETER MEAD

{ To preach effectively,
a preacher must love
God passionately.

Preaching stands at the center of assembly life. This is not only true practically — in service schedules and worship logistics — but it is also true theologically. Speaking the Word of God is central because our God is a God who has spoken and speaks through His Word. Christianity stands apart from all other religions because in Christianity we have a God who initiates, who makes the first move, who speaks first.

The sad reality is that many contemporary congregations gather

around a weak word. The loving God who speaks through His Word seems to be essentially silent. Some churches look to the Bible for an ancient word brought to bear on contemporary listeners' minds merely through cold truths in proposition form. Others turn to the Bible with a skillfully generated attempt at "making that old truth relevant to today" (the skill varying from pulpit to pulpit — although the issue here is not skill, but a wrong view of the relevance of Scripture). Others treat the biblical

revelation as a starting point for their own message. Still others as a set of accepted vocabulary for a more contemporary attempt at speaking into the lives of those gathered — either by means of essentially new revelation ("as I was preparing, God told me . . ."), or the increasingly common lists of hints for living birthed out of human wisdom and then pasted onto a biblical narrative. How sad that so many gather around a weak word!

The “Great Commandment” must be given freedom to wreak havoc in our individualized and self-centered lives as believers, and it also must be given freedom to run riot in our preaching.

Help from the Great Commandment

How can we address these inadequate approaches to preaching? How can our preaching honor the reality of a relational God who reaches out to us, in and through His Word? Perhaps one approach is to evaluate our preaching in light of the “Great Commandment.” When Jesus was asked for the greatest commandment, His response was to cite a very familiar text from Deuteronomy 6:5 — “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Then he added another text from Leviticus 19:18 — “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In light of the love of God for His people, Jesus emphasized the need for the twin responses of loving devotion, both vertically and horizontally. Get these two commands, and everything else falls into place. Perhaps the Great Commandment might help our preaching?

If God is a loving God who speaks through His Word, then the assembly is to be a listening and responding community. Listening to His Word and responding to His love. The community of God’s people is called by a captivating love to be lovers: lovers of God and lovers of others. The “Great Commandment” must be given freedom to wreak havoc in our individualized and self-centered lives as believers, and it also must be given freedom to run riot in our preaching. What might this look like?

Preachers Loving God

At the risk of oversimplifying the sermon preparation process, it involves two phases. First comes the passage study phase, which focuses on understanding the biblical passage. Second comes the message formation phase, in which the meaning of the passage is combined with an awareness of the listeners in order to form a message that will faithfully, clearly, and relevantly present the teaching of the passage to them.

Preacher, Love God in the Passage Study Phase

The preacher should pursue the study phase as a lover of God. Studying a passage of Scripture should not be merely cold exegesis, original language study, commentary consultation and the derivation of a proposition statement. The study phase should involve a prayerful, interactive and relational dynamic as we fellowship with our God in the study of His Word. This is not to say we are freed from the burden of the finest exegesis our Bible study skills will allow. Surely a heart gripped by the love of a God who gives of Himself through His Word will earnestly desire to understand that Word as effectively as possible? The goal here is not some sort of a mystical study phase divorced from the rigorous study of the revealed Word, but a spiritually sensitive study fired to rigorosity by the captivating love of God. Paul urged Timothy to be a worker who rightly handles the word of truth (2Tim.2:15), having already told Timothy of his goal in all things — the goal of love (1Tim.1:5).

Preacher, Love God in the Message Formation Phase

The preacher takes the fruit of that study of the passage and maintains the same God-captivated motivation when it comes to forming the message. The goal here does not suddenly shift from the sublime to the pragmatic. There should be no shift from the spiritual to the practical matter of simply being ready to preach when Sunday comes. The formation of the message is to be an act of responsive love in which the preacher seeks to bring pleasure to God by the diligent care poured into this aspect of the ministry. For when Sunday comes, this message is preached as a Word from God. Inasmuch as it accurately reflects the teaching and relevance of the biblical text, it is spoken with an authority that is not the preacher’s, but God’s. So, the preacher is preparing with the gaze of his soul fixed on a God who is delighted to work in human lives through this message. A message that is at one and the same time both an act of worship, a form of worship-speech in which the preacher makes much of God, yet at the same time it is an applicational message of relevance to the lives of the listeners. It is applicational and relevant because God loves them and cares about the specifics of their lives today.

In preaching the preacher stands between heaven and earth and in that moment not only loves God, but also represents (that is, re-presents) the love of God to the people. In preaching there is the potential for a great reciprocity between the spreading goodness of God’s Trinitarian love toward the people that are His own,

and the love of those stirred to respond to Him in that moment. To preach effectively, a preacher must love God passionately. However, this is not enough; the “second commandment” also applies to preaching. We are to love God, and to love others.

Preachers Loving Others

How does the preacher preach out of love for the listener? Surely, a loving preacher would not merely preach to scratch itching ears, while at the same time failing to present the fullness of God’s message in His Word? A loving preacher will give what is needed, not just what is wanted. Surely, a loving preacher would not deign to offer his own nuggets of life skill in place of the grandeur of God’s self-revelation? Surely, a loving preacher would not simply bruise listeners with the pressure of duty, after himself being warmed and delighted by that captivating divine love in his own times with God? How sad that so many churches perceive repeated tirades of guilt-inducing duty to be so spiritual (appealing to the flesh), while others seem satisfied with tips for living only ornamented by reference to an apparently now silent God.

Listeners do not need tips for living better independent lives, they need God. Listeners do not need guilt-stirring pressure to pull their act together, they need God. They need to be able to engage with Him in a faith response to His Word. They need to experience in community the joy of God’s wonderful giving of

Himself through the Word — both the written Word, and the incarnated Word. They need messages that are highly biblical, for the Bible is where God speaks. They need messages that are communicated clearly, for what other standard is fitting for a God of such effective communication? They need messages that are relevant in deeply spiritual and practical ways, for God is not pleased with irrelevant historical lecture, lofty theological ramblings or petty practical tips. God loves these people, so our preaching of His Word should reflect that in its biblical content, effective communication and genuine emphasis on relevance.

We must preach as those genuinely captivated by the love of God in the Word of God. We must preach contagiously as those who enjoy delightful engagement with this God. Our listeners will subconsciously mimic our leadership in their own “spirituality”— the question is; what kind of spirituality will they mimic? Will theirs be an intellect-only spirituality? Or will it be a purely pragmatic, self-concerned spirituality? Will it be a pseudo-spiritual flight of fancy unearthed in the truth of God’s revelation in His Word? Or will it perhaps be relational, Word-based, heart-level, real?

Conclusion

Perhaps many of the weaknesses in the church today reflect the weaknesses of the pulpit? It is easy to look back to “the good old days,” whenever

they might have been. But the truth is we no longer have the greats from previous generations: Luther, Calvin, Sibbes, Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley, Spurgeon, Ironside or Lloyd-Jones. What we need are preachers greatly gripped by God in this generation. We need preachers captivated by the love of God, gripped with a passion for God, and thoroughly prepared to preach the Word of God to the listeners of today.

Our preaching, perhaps the central ministry of assembly life, can be greatly strengthened by evaluating it in light of the Great Commandment. God is a God who speaks through His Word. He is a God who speaks because He loves. We dare not stand and speak for Him if we are not captured by that love — a love responding to Him, and a love overflowing to others! †



Dr. Peter Mead
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Listeners do not need tips for living better independent lives, they need God.

Sam Thorpe

The Regional Bible Study Model

God's Word is clear: All believers should be growing in their understanding and application of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:11-14). God has placed Bible teachers to facilitate this development process in the church. For a variety of reasons, some local churches have not developed this resource internally and a systematic teaching of the Scriptures is lacking. One alternative is to provide this teaching on a regional basis and assist a community of local churches to encourage the spiritual growth of the believers in God's Word.

This is not a new concept. The New Testament reflects a community of involvement among the local testimonies of believers. Colosse and Laodicea shared Paul's epistles. Antioch and Jerusalem helped each other practically. Many of the apostolic writers sent the greetings of the saints locally to the saints receiving their epistle. Believers are commended in fellowship between local assemblies. The spiritual gifts of Ephesians 4:11, which include teachers, appear to be given for the edification of the body of Christ, on a regional, rather than local level.

Following the example of other successful regional Bible Study programs, WORD ALIVE Southeast was established in 1999 to provide structured, systematic Bible teaching to the local assemblies in Georgia and South Carolina. September — May, on the second Saturday of each month, four hours of in-depth biblical instruction offered at a centralized location attracted 40-60 students from young believers to mature elders. The teaching staff comprised of both local and national teachers took up book studies; overview surveys; doctrine; church truth; prophesy; Bible study methods; evangelism; apologetics; and various topical studies.

The local chapel provided lunch, and the fellowship and networking among the participants became of great value. A committee of leaders representing the involved local churches gave attention to the administrative and logistical needs of the program. A free-will offering box made available to the participants provided the funds to support the program.

For many who never had the opportunity to attend formal Bible-school training, this program filled the gap. We observed spiritual growth and maturity on both the individual and

assembly level. This model was adapted from others and has since been reproduced several times and adapted in other regions. The WORD ALIVE Teen program continues on strong at the Lakeside Bible Chapel in Lincolnton, Georgia and the adult Bible study program has matured to the point that it could be decentralized to other local assemblies. Those interested in starting a regional Bible study program for their area are invited to contact us for more detailed information: by phone (706) 359-6297; or e-mail sambarb@nu-z.net †



Sam Thorpe Sam, along with his wife Barbara, have raised four children who are going on well in the Lord in happy assembly fellowship and seeking to serve Him in various capacities. Sam serves the Lord in an itinerant teaching ministry being commended into the Lord's work on a full-time basis from the Lakeside Bible Chapel, Lincolnton, Georgia. Over the past 30 years Sam has served on the Oversight of three local assemblies, the last of which was his commending assembly, a new work planted by Sam and another brother in 1995. After completing the one-year program at Emmaus Bible School in 1968, Sam joined the military and flew helicopters for the US Army. At the end of the Viet Nam conflict he returned to college completing degrees in Civil Engineering and Business Administration and was employed in the nuclear materials industry with for E.I. DuPont and Westinghouse Electric Corp. at the Savannah River Site, Aiken, SC. After holding various engineering and human resource management positions for twenty-seven years, he took an early retirement to enter full time Christian service for the Lord.

To the Praise of His Glory #7

Encouraging a Singing Church

Lisa Beatty



In the preface to a collection of Charles Wesley's hymns, *Sacred Melody*, published in 1761, his brother John Wesley provided instructions for singing the songs in the collection.

- Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
- Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.

- Sing All. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
- Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.
- Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct

from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony, but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.

- Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.

- Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your Heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward you when He cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Wesley's words may bring a smile as we read them today, but his concerns about the quality of congregational singing still ring true. In these directives, one can sense Wesley's frustrations with those in the congregations of his day that did not sing, sang too slowly, sang only for the attention of others, or sang without engaging the mind. Many of our congregations struggle with the same issues today.

Wesley was not, of course, the first to provide instruction for congregational singing. As one reads the psalms, one senses that David and the other chief musicians may have had similar challenges in engaging their congregations. This may be one reason that the psalmists emphasize the imperative to sing so many times in their psalm texts.

- Psalm 9:11 Sing praises to the LORD.
- Psalm 30:4 Sing praise to the LORD, you His godly ones.
- Psalm 33:2 Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.
- Psalm 33:3 Sing to Him a new song.
- Psalm 47:6 Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.
- Psalm 47:7 Sing praises with a skillful psalm.
- Psalm 66:2 Sing the glory of His name.
- Psalm 68:4 Sing to God, sing praises to His name.
- Psalm 68:32 Sing to God; sing praises to the Lord.

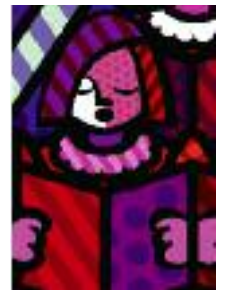
- Psalm 81:1 Sing for joy to God our strength.
- Psalm 95:2 Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
- Psalm 96:1 Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.
- Psalm 96:2 Sing unto the LORD, bless His name.
- Psalm 98:1 O sing to the LORD a new song.
- Psalm 98:4 Sing for joy and sing praises.
- Psalm 98:5 Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre.
- Psalm 100:2 Come before Him with joyful singing.
- Psalm 105:2 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him.
- Psalm 147:7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praises to our God on the lyre.
- Psalm 149:1 Sing to the LORD a new song.

And this in a culture that appears to have been steeped in music! Musical expression was a part of all facets of life in the Old Testament from family celebrations to the entertainment of kings to the worship of the One True God.

In our culture too, music is ubiquitous. It is so pervasive that we don't even notice it at times. We hear it in elevators and medical offices and from our car radios and iPods. Music plays a part in most of the memorable experiences in our lives — church meetings, weddings, and other special events. There is, however, a profound difference between music in our current culture and music as seen in the biblical record. To a great extent, we are simply passive consumers of music, not active participants. We watch others perform rather than joining in song. Is it any wonder that many local churches struggle to engage people in fervent and joyful singing to the Lord?

We have little control over the cultural experiences of those in our congregations, but unfortunately, we often exacerbate the problem by actions and

choices that may inhibit whole-hearted congregational singing. Distracting song-leaders, musicians with limited skills, selections that are unfamiliar, a lack of variety in musical expression, even the seating arrangements or acoustical properties of a church building can put a damper on congregational singing. Attitudes can also inhibit congregational song. Perhaps music is not valued in a local body, as evidenced by scant attention given to choosing the music for singing. Maybe personal preferences in musical style stand in the way of unity of expression in the body.



So...what can we do to encourage, rather than inhibit congregational song?

1. Provide direct teaching from the pulpit related to the use of music in the church. Congregations may have little understanding of the purposes for congregational singing. Singing provides an avenue expressing our deepest thoughts and emotions to God. It has the power to communicate truth and unite us as believers. And God commands us to praise Him through song.

2. Make congregational singing a priority. Even if there are individuals in the church with significant musical gift, make sure that emphasis is given to congregational singing, rather than individual or group performance. There is certainly a place for special music in the church; I have often been blessed by the ministry of a soloist or small group. But...corporate praise and worship in song involves each individual as an active participant, rather than a passive spectator.

3. Emphasize the object of our worship, praise, and thanksgiving rather than the avenue. At times we are guilty of equating the quality of our music with the quality of our worship and praise to God. Music is simply a vehicle; and there are others — Scripture reading and prayer are two examples. It is the

object of our worship that is important, our holy and righteous God.

4. Add variety and freshness to your musical expression by learning new congregational songs regularly. This is best accomplished through introducing, singing, and reviewing new song literature over a period of a few weeks. I would not, however, recommend learning new songs during a worship service. When learning new music, it is very difficult to focus on the meaning of the text.

5. Make judicious use of hymn stories. Knowing the circumstances under which a hymn writer composed a text can enhance its meaning. For example, knowing that the writer of *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go* lost his sight, and thus his fiancé, makes his references to light and to God's faithfulness even more poignant.

6. Challenge singers to focus on meaning. Often, we sing words without focusing the mind on the truths we sing. I was once challenged by a speaker's statement that Christians lie more often when singing than at any other time. Our lips make statements of commitment that do not even register

intellectually. We sing words extolling the beauties of Christ and a few minutes later can't even remember the hymn we just sang. We need to be regularly reminded to sing with both the spirit and the mind.

7. Encourage the purchase of hymnbooks, chorus books, and CDs for devotional use at home. In the *Foundations of Church Music* class that I teach at Emmaus, I require students to write a journal entry on a hymn text each week. Students find this exercise very valuable, as it slows down the pace at which they reflect on the truths in the song texts.

8. Church leaders should be spiritual models for the congregation. Demonstrate the value of music in the life of the local church by singing joyfully and fervently. I remember sitting in a meeting in a local church where the elder making announcements and the scheduled speaker chatted through the song service. In other instances, I have observed elders finishing conversations in the lobby during the song service and finding their seats just in time for the message. These actions communicate loudly and clearly

to the congregation. To encourage obedience in praising God through song, we should model obedience before the congregation.

In our efforts to encourage a singing church, Wesley's final instruction is as important today as it was 250 years ago: *Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your Heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward you when He cometh in the clouds of heaven.* †



Lisa Beatty
Lisa Beatty is the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Emmaus Bible College and has been a faculty member in the Music Ministry department since 1992. Lisa and her husband, Kevin have two teenage daughters.

Another Issue on Educating the Church???

Dave Glock
Editor

The answer to that question is, "Yes, without apology!" For 40 years I have been teaching the course at Emmaus called *Ecclesiology* — it is the ninth of the 10 major doctrines of Scripture. When I was a student at Emmaus in the late 1950s, this course was taught by William MacDonald. It was called *Church Truth*. The truth has not changed! Over those 40 years numerous changes have taken place in the Brethren Movement — some good, some not so good! Recently in an introductory class of this course, I related my experience in assembly life when I was the age of my present students. That was two generations ago! Help! My weekly church schedule went like this:

- Early Sunday morning tract distribution by the young people: We put them in the already-delivered Sunday papers! It wasn't illegal then.
- Sunday School for all ages — adults included
- Breaking of Bread
- Park Evangelism in warm weather
- Afternoon Sunday School
- Evening Gospel and Ministry Service
- Monday night Girls Meeting (my girlfriend, later wife went)
- Wednesday night Prayer Meeting and Bible Study
- Thursday night Mission Work (when I first preached)
- Friday night Children's Work (We called it "Happy Hour"—well ahead of the age!)
- Saturday afternoon City Hospital Chapel

- Saturday night Youth Meeting — We did the Emmaus Correspondence Courses together.

Worship, evangelism, Bible study, prayer, and fellowship—that sounds like a local church.

Whenever I start taking a stroll down memory lane, probably making it better than it ever was, my son, Jonathan, with whom I serve at Emmaus will say, "That was then, this is now!" The point I was making in class was to emphasize the necessity of *Participative Church* as contrasted to *Observer Church*. Participative Church was then, was in the New Testament, and it should be now! That is the design of the church required in the dual truth of priesthood and giftedness. Every believer is a priest and every believer has received a gift to be exercised in church life. The church schedule of meetings and external activities should be planned to provide opportunity for functional priesthood in worship and prayer; and for functional use of gift in edification, fellowship, and evangelization. This is the genius structure of the New Testament church that makes everyone dependent on one another and important to the whole of the body though giftedness. It is the heart of a participative Breaking of Bread where the priesthood of all believers is scheduled for worship as it is for prayer in the Prayer Meeting. Priesthood and Gift!

At the heart of *Participative Church* is the necessity of education in Holy Scripture to be able to worship

God with understanding, to pray knowing the revealed mind and desire of God individually and for His people. At the heart of *Participative Church* is the necessity of education in Holy Scriptures to be able to use gift accurately and effectively for the building up the church and for evangelization in the world. We must be able to "keep our finger on the page of Scripture" in worship, prayer, teaching, Christian fellowship, and in the communication of the gospel.

To return to the opening question — yes this is a second issue on educating the church. Because that is the need of the day! Our history of participative church life is in decline. Personal Bible libraries are virtually nonexistent, private Bible study is rare, conferences and inter-assembly education functions are disappearing. This decline will produce ignorant priests and disable the use of gift.

The schedule of my church life as a young person would not fit today's world for numerous reasons. But the commitment and priorities must remain the same and be adapted to today's world if we are to serve as priests and gifted members of our local church. This issue of *Journey* will provide some helpful suggestions for improving our priestly function and our use of gift in church for God's glory and for the benefit of God's people! †

Help Wanted

The current economic downturn caught many people by surprise, but we are thankful that we know that it didn't catch our Heavenly Father by surprise. We are ever mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ from John 15 when He said, "Without Me you can do nothing". Our desire to teach the Word of God and prepare students for service comes to naught without the Lord's help. Our desire to grow and expand programs is doomed to failure without the Lord's help. The Lord has moved and worked on behalf of Emmaus through His people over the past 68 years, as we know He will continue to do so. We are praying that the Holy Spirit will be moving in the hearts of our friends.

Will you pray with and for us? Will you recommend that young people that you know consider Emmaus for their college choice? **Would you consider how you might partner with the college in a financial way? To make it easy for you, we have included a self-addressed, postage paid envelope.** Thank you in advance for being used of God to meet our need.



BIBLICAL
HERMENEUTICS

RIGHTLY

AND
READING
THE

WORD
OF TRUTH

BY
JACK
FISH



The word ^{hermeneutics} comes from the Greek word which means “to interpret.” Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. How do we interpret the Bible correctly? What are the rules and guidelines for correct interpretation? If Scripture is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16), then reading it, studying it, and understanding God’s message to us is one of the most important things we can do. But how do I interpret the Bible correctly? How can I read my Bible so that I hear the voice of God and not my own voice, or the voice of man? There is a lot of confusion in this area.

Modern literary interpretation operates on a reader-centered hermeneutic. The reader determines the meaning of a writing. The author has been banished. What a writing means is not what the author meant when he wrote it, but what the reader sees in the text and gets out of the text. This of course means that the meaning of a particular writing is always changing. You see one meaning in it; I another. Everything is subjective.

Common sense would tell us that the meaning of a particular passage is what the author meant when he wrote that passage. But with the Bible we have a unique situation. Who wrote Romans? Our first answer is the apostle Paul. But 2 Timothy 3:16 says that God is the ultimate Author of Scripture. So we have the human author and the divine Author. Sometimes God intended more than the human authors understood. But we still are looking for what the author of Scripture intended (whether the human author or the divine Author), not just what we think a passage means to us.

The Main Rule of Interpretation

Jim Van Dine, who teaches a course in hermeneutics at Emmaus, introduces the subject by asking three questions: 1. What are the three most important things in real estate? Answer: location, location, location. 2. What are the three most important things in French cooking? Answer: butter, butter, butter. 3. What are the three most important things in the interpretation of Scripture? Answer: context, context, context. This is so basic that everyone agrees to it, but in the actual interpretation of Scripture it is often ignored. This is one of the reasons Scripture is often misinterpreted. I would like to spell out this rule of context in six specific areas.

How can I read my Bible so that I hear the voice of God and not my own voice, or the voice of man?

The Rule of Context Spelled Out

1. Interpret According to the Context of Scripture as a Whole

The Reformers had a central rule, *Sola Scriptura*, “Scripture alone”. By this they meant that Scripture is our only rule of faith and practice and Scripture interprets Scripture. One thing this means is that if you have two interpretations — one that agrees with the rest of Scripture and one that does not — you accept the interpretation which harmonizes with Scripture. This, of course, does not guarantee the correct interpretation, but it does show us what is an incorrect interpretation — the interpretation that dis-

agrees with the rest of Scripture.

That justification is by faith and not by works of the Law is a truth clearly taught in many different books. It is emphasized, discussed, and argued in Romans, Galatians, and the Gospel of John (See Rom. 3:28; 4:5). But James 2:24 presents a problem. James says, “**You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone**” (NASB). The rule that Scripture interprets Scripture, or the analogy of faith, says that James is to be interpreted by what is taught in Paul and the other books of Scripture. Do not make one Scripture contradict another.

Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the deity of Christ and claim that John 1:1 should be translated, “The Word was a god.” Does Scripture allow us to believe there is more than one God? If Christ is not truly God but is merely a god, then He is a false god! This is not the teaching of Scripture. Scripture calls Him God (see John 1:18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8-9; 2 Peter 1:10), He is worshiped as God, He has the attributes of God, and He does the works of God. John 1:1 says He is God, not just a god.¹

2. Interpret According to the Context of a Passage

A second rule is to interpret according to the context of a specific passage. To take a verse out of context is to make it say something that is foreign to the surrounding verses.

I remember a youth group which always ended its meetings by joining hands and reciting Genesis 31:49, “**The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another**” (KJV). That sounds good—may the Lord protect us while we are apart. But in the context Jacob and Laban were separating. Neither of

them trusted the other. So Laban said, “**The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.**” The next verse is, “**If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me**” (NASB). In other words, if you wrong my daughters while we are absent one from another and I can’t do anything about it, God will get you.

Psalms 2:8 should not be used as a banner verse at missionary conferences: “**Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance**” (NKJV). This does not say we should pray that God would convert the nations. The next verse in Psalm 2 says, “**You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.**” The context is judgment not conversion.

The Methodists during the time of John Wesley had a method of using the Bible to find guidance from God which encouraged this abuse. Some call this “luckydipping.” They would open the Bible at random, point to the page, and whatever verse they pointed to would indicate God’s will for that moment. The story is told of one lady who did this. The verse she chanced upon was Matthew 27:5, “**and [Judas] went and hanged himself**” (KJV). That didn’t seem too encouraging, so she thought that she would try it again. Her next verse was Luke 10:37, “**Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.**” This was getting uncomfortable so she tried a third time. This time her verse was John 13:27, “**What thou doest, do quickly.**”

Let me give an example where good Bible students have differed and where I think the problem of interpretation comes from not observing the context. I am referring to the parable

of the prodigal son. Is the prodigal son of this a parable an unsaved person coming to the Lord for salvation, or is this a parable of a backslidden believer who is restored to the Lord?

The Backslidden Believer

Interpretation. Two things support the interpretation that this refers to a backslidden believer: First, it says that he was a son. He never ceased being a son. He was not made a son by returning to his father; he was already a son. Second, he came back to his father.

The Unsaved Coming to Salvation View. The problem with the backslidden believer interpretation is that it ignores the context. Look at Luke 15:1-2. “**Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’ So He told them this parable**” (NASB). Actually He told them three parables: the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. In the context these three parables are our Lord’s justification for eating with sinners. They are parables of sinners finding the Savior, not of backslidden Christians being restored to the Lord.

3. Interpret According to the Context of Usage

The principle here is that the meaning of words is determined by how they are used.

At the time of the Reformation there was a controversy over justification by faith versus justification by

works. Part of the controversy also involved the definition of the term “to justify.” The Reformers said it means “to account, to reckon as righteous.” The Roman Catholics said that to justify means “to make righteous.” This is actually a huge issue and it continues to be debated today. When we are justified, are we made righteous or are we accounted to be righteous?

If to justify means to make righteous, then it is a process that has not yet been completed. Does God make us righteous? Yes He does. But the Bible calls this sanctification. Once we have been saved, the Holy Spirit works in us and transforms us progressively toward the final goal of making us conformed to the image of God’s Son. But the process won’t be complete until we are glorified (Rom. 8:29-30). If to justify means to make righteous, then present tense (you are being justified) can be used, or the future tense (you will be justified) can be used. But the past tense (you have been justified) cannot be used.

How do we determine the meaning of a word like justify? It is by usage. Let me give an example from a passage in the Old Testament where there is no theological controversy and where the meaning is clear. Deuteronomy 25:1 says, “**If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked...**” Here is a court case. A person is guilty. What does a judge do? He condemns the guilty. Another person is innocent.

What does the judge do? He justifies him. Now what is it that the judge does when he justifies the innocent man? Does he make him righteous or does he declare him to be righteous? The judge does not make him righteous. He is already righteous. All that the judge can do is make a legal declaration. He pronounces him to be righteous. Isaiah 5:23 speaks of those judges “**who justify the wicked for a bribe.**” What do they do? They don’t make the wicked man righteous. Rather, they are corrupt judges who take a bribe and make a legal pronouncement. They say this man is innocent or righteous. A crooked judge cannot make a guilty man righteous; but he can make a legal pronouncement. He declares him righteous.

Theologically we have not been made righteous yet. We still have fallen natures, and we continue to sin. But God reckons Christ’s righteousness to us and we are declared to be righteous in Him. That is why Romans 5:1 says, “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God.**” It is something that has already happened. We are fully and completely justified, not on the basis of our works, but through faith in the Savior who paid the penalty for all our sins and gives us acceptance by God as righteous in Him.

The hermeneutical principle is that the meaning of a word is interpreted according to usage.²

4. Interpret According to the Context of the Type of Literature

Within the Bible some passages are historical narrative, others are doctrinal exposition, and others are poetry, prophecy, parable, wisdom literature, etc. Failure to recognize differences in these types of literature has sometimes led to erroneous interpretations.

CONTEXT
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CONTEXT

The Interpretation of Parables

A parable is not an allegory. From the time of the early church the parable of the Good Samaritan has been allegorized. An allegory is a literary device in which the literal meaning is not the real meaning. It is just a vehicle to convey the real meaning. For example, *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory in which all of the details are meant to be figurative illustrations of spiritual truths. *Pilgrim's Progress* was not meant to be taken literally.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) has often been allegorized. The Samaritan represents Jesus. The inn is the church. The oil and wine are the Holy Spirit. The man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Down from Jerusalem is away from God. He fell among thieves who stripped him, beat him, and left him half dead (v. 30). These are the effects of sin in our lives. The priest and Levite who passed by represent the Law. According to this allegory the parable is saying that Christ, moved with compassion comes to meet us, pays the cost to cure us, and provides for our spiritual needs. I heard a preacher who used this approach, saying he could not figure out what the donkey in the parable represents (v. 34). What he didn't realize is that the donkey doesn't represent anything! It is not meant to be symbolical. It is just part of the story.

There are two reasons for saying this: 1. This is a parable, not an allegory. Not everything in a parable is symbolic. Parables often make just one main point. 2. The parable is about our love for others, not Christ's love for us. Remember the rule of the context of the surrounding verses. In verse 29 Christ told this parable in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus had cited the Scripture "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). The lawyer had asked the question "Who is my neighbor?" in order to

justify himself. The parable was not designed to show how Jesus acted in love to us but how men should act in love toward others. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The principle is: Do not allegorize a parable. This can become tricky, because parables are figurative ways of expressing a truth. But every item in a parable doesn't have to be given a meaning. Some parts of the parable are just parts of the story.

Historical Books versus Epistles

Scripture is normative for our life and practice, but how do we establish scriptural norms and practices? Can we derive a principle from a particular occurrence in a historical book? For instance, some have argued on the basis of the book of Acts that receiving the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace. While it may happen at the time a person believes, it is something that normally happens after salvation. That is a doctrinal conclusion based on examples seen in the historical book of Acts. In Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, and in Acts 10, when Peter was preaching in the home of Cornelius the reception of the Holy Spirit was immediate at the time of repentance and faith (Acts 2:2-4, 38; 10:44). However, in Acts 8:14-17 the Samaritans had believed without receiving the Holy Spirit and Peter and John were sent to lay hands on them in order that they might receive the Spirit. In Acts 19:1-7 Paul found disciples who had not received the Holy Spirit and upon whom the Holy Spirit came when he laid hands on them.

What we actually see in the book of Acts is a mixed pattern. Some received the Holy Spirit immediately on believing, while others at a later time. But here is a case where the teaching of the epistles is clear and decisive. In Romans 8:9 Paul says, "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you."

But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."

If a person does not have the Holy Spirit, he does not belong to Christ. He is not saved! The doctrinal teaching of the epistles is that you do have the Holy Spirit when you are saved. How then do we explain Acts 8 and 19? Probably on the basis that Acts describes a transitional period between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, between Judaism and Christianity. Acts 8 has to do with Samaritan believers and Acts 19 with disciples of John the Baptist. They were special cases to link the reception of the Holy Spirit with the apostles in order to emphasize and establish the unity of the church.

This does not mean we can dismiss all historical incidences as normative. They are included to teach us something. But we need to be careful when a practice is merely referred to, or referred to only once in a historical book. We are on more solid ground when we find a principle or practice in the epistolary teaching.

5. Interpret the Bible Literally

The term "literal interpretation" is often misunderstood. We use the term "literal" in two different senses. Literal can be opposed to figurative, or it can be opposed to allegorical. If we insist on literal interpretation as opposed to figurative, then Matthew 5:30, "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off," means we should literally cut off the hand. That is missing the meaning of the passage which is saying we must be ruthless in dealing with sin in our lives. The other meaning of "literal" is opposed to allegorical and here literal means normal. "Interpret" literally means interpret the way you normally use language. Literal interpretation allows for figures of speech. Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Is he a literal lion? No. This is a figure of speech, a metaphor. He is like a lion in certain

characteristics. Another name for literal interpretation is grammatical historical interpretation. We interpret using the normal laws of grammar in the historical context of the passage.

An example of a non-literal interpretation may be seen in the interpretation of the 153 fish in John 21:11. When I was in school, a traveling preacher came to our assembly and was speaking on John 21. He saw great significance in the number 153. What was the significance of the 153 fish? A literal interpretation would say it means that they caught 153 fish. What fisherman can't tell you how many fish he catches? But that didn't seem meaningful enough to this preacher, so he sought for a deeper meaning. He asked what number should be associated with the Old Testament. The answer was ten-the number of Law (the Ten Commandments). What number should be associated with the New Testament? Answer: seven (the number of perfection or completeness). Add ten and seven and you get 17. Then if you take 17, 16, 15 ... 1 and add them all together, what do you get? 153! So the 153 fish signify the completeness of both the Old Testament and the New Testament! Such an interpretation says more about the ingenuity of the interpreter than it does about the teaching of the New Testament.

While the Reformers insisted on the literal interpretation of the Bible, one area where they made an exception was in the area of eschatology, the doctrine of prophecy. For example they understood the church to be spiritual Israel. When they saw Israel in Scripture, they sometimes understood it to refer to the church. Many today still insist that the church is spiritual Israel. However, a concordance reveals that the term "Israel" is used 68 times in the New Testament. There is no question it refers to those who are ethnic Jews in the great majority of cases. There are

only a couple of passages that are even controversial. The overwhelming literal usage of the term should make one hesitate before reading the term Israel to refer to the church in the New Testament.

6. Interpret According to the Periods of Redemptive History

Why don't we sacrifice animals? Doesn't Scripture command this in the Old Testament? Why don't we stone people in the church for committing adultery? Doesn't God's Word command this? The answer is that while all Scripture is equally inspired, and all Scripture is profitable and has lessons for us, not all Scripture is written to us. We are living in a different dispensation from the Old Testament saints. We are not under the Mosaic Law. Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. There are differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

For instance, do you like to sing Psalm 51:10? "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." That is the cry of the heart of a godly believer. But then we come to verse 11, "Do not cast me away from Your presence; and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." Do not take your Holy Spirit from me! Is that a prayer a Christian should pray? It was David's prayer, but it is not our prayer. That is because in the New Testament the Holy Spirit permanently indwells every believer. To lose the Holy Spirit is to lose salvation (Rom. 8:9). But in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit would come on individuals selectively and temporarily. The Holy Spirit came upon David, but there was no promise of permanent indwelling. We are living in a different dispensation.

We must distinguish the periods of time in the progressive revelation of God. Only those things which are

directly for the church age can be directly applied to us. Other things may be applied indirectly.

CONCLUSION

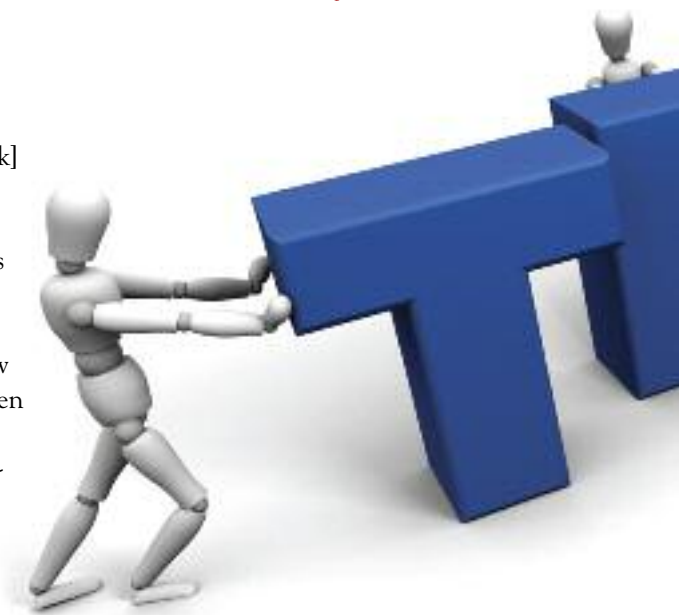
Scripture is not putty in the hands of the interpreter, to be shaped into any form and made to say what the interpreter desires it to say. It is the Word of God and must be handled carefully and correctly. That is why Paul tells Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Hermeneutics seeks to determine the correct rules for interpretation so that we might be the approved workmen who accurately handle Scripture. †

¹ For a detailed discussion of the deity of Christ in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity see John H. Fish III, "God the Son," EmJ 12 (2003): 3-127. This is also found under the title "The Beloved Son," in *Understanding the Trinity*, ed. John H. Fish III, (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2006), 189-313.

² Note also that etymology or root meaning may not be a reliable guide to a word's meaning. The English word "manufacture" comes from the Latin *manus* (hand) and *facio* (to make). But an automobile manufactured in Detroit is not "hand made." The word *gymnasium* comes from the Greek word *gymnos* which means "naked." Even though the ancient Greeks competed in the gymnasium without wearing clothes, this does not affect the meaning of the word in modern English usage.



Jack Fish
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Alex Strauch

Developing a Strategy for Effective Bible Teaching in the Church

Editor's Note: This article is an edited transcription of a message delivered by Alex Strauch at the 2008 Iron Sharpens Iron conference held on the campus of Emmaus Bible College.

In a previous article in *Journey* I sought to set forth a strategy for biblical education in the local church.¹ That article was addressed primarily to elders. In this article I am speaking to all those who have teaching responsibilities in the church. My comments are directed to those who are mature, spiritually-gifted teachers and to those who are just beginning to be involved in this important and wonderful work.

Although not all Christians are spiritually-gifted teachers who minister the Word full time, there is a real sense in which every mature believer should be able to open the Bible and explain the gospel and the basic truths of the faith to others (Heb. 5:12). Parents, for example, should be teaching their children day and night (Deut. 6:4-7). Every believer should be able to share the essentials of the faith with his neighbor, fellow worker, or fellow student (1 Pet. 3:15).

Leland Ryken, professor of English at Wheaton College, has written, "Teachers are the single most important ingredient in any educa-

tional program." That is certainly true. When you look back at your own education, whether elementary school, middle school, high school, or university, it was the teachers who changed your life. We must confess, of course, that we do not remember all of what was said in class. Someone has said that 80 percent of what the teacher says in class is forgotten within a half an hour of the student leaving the room. But good teachers turn a switch on in the brain. And God uses them to turn that switch on — and the light bulb goes on. And from that point on the student becomes a learner. Even the best teacher can

only teach so much. Most things you learn in school are forgotten, unless your brain has been turned on and your interest in the subject has been piqued. The best thing a teacher can do for a student is to excite him about his subject. The student will do the rest. When you look back at your own Christian education — your own experience in Sunday school, church meetings, or Bible camp — there was someone along the way who excited your interest and curiosity in the Bible and the things of God. That person was vitally important as a person to you, his student.

A Call to Study

As the New Testament makes clear, a believer needs to be growing and learning (1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2). In the case of teachers this means they need to be growing in their knowledge of the Word and in their ability to communicate it. To encourage you in this area I would like to suggest a wonderful book by John Stott entitled, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. In it he has a chapter, "The Call to Study," which is a very important chapter for young men to read.² That chapter alone is worth the price of the book. He writes, "There is no doubt that the best teachers in any field of knowledge are those who remain students all their lives." This is especially true, he adds, for those who teach God's Word.³ The legendary Charles Spurgeon agreed, "He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who no longer sows in the study, will no longer reap in the pulpit."⁴ The ideal church must be a "Bibliocracy," wrote P. T. Forsyth. Its Bible teachers must "know [their Bibles] better than any other book. ...

The Bible is the one [handbook] of the preacher still, the one manual of eternal life, the one page that glows as all life grows dark, and the one book whose wealth rebukes us more the older we grow because we knew and loved it so late."⁵ These men all knew that Bible teaching requires hard work and self-discipline.

Time for Study and Preparation

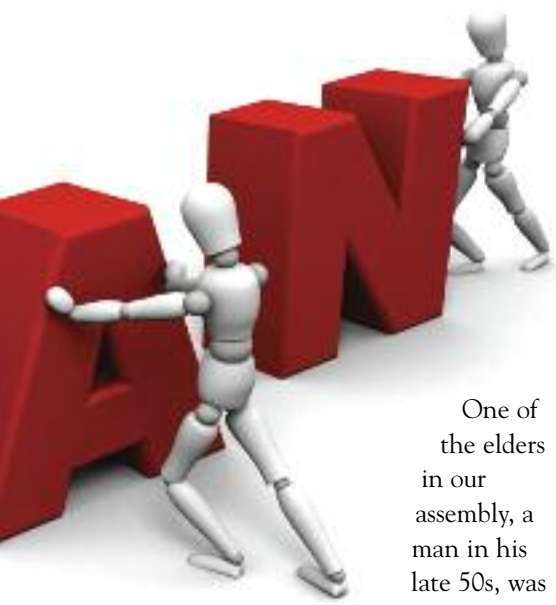
Every good Bible teacher knows he must set aside time for preparation. He knows he must say "No" to other things if he is to master this Book. It is in the area of self-discipline and hard work that many teachers and preachers fail. Waiting until Saturday night to prepare the message is an insult to God and to your audience. I know a preacher who prepared his messages on Sunday morning. When the deacons found this out they fired him.

Elders and other teachers should encourage one another to set aside one or two evenings a week for serious study of the Word. I ask the people I am involved with in teaching to set aside Monday night for their teaching preparation. I tell them, "Don't go out Monday night; don't get involved in any activities that evening. Monday night is your night to prepare for your Sunday school class or for your small group fellowship". It grieves me to look around in the Lord's Supper meeting and see someone preparing his/her Sunday school lesson.

If I am preaching on Sunday, I set Monday aside for sermon preparation. Do not be like the preachers who start preparing on Saturday. Their excuse

is, "I do better under pressure." Let me tell you why that doesn't work. It goes against the way God has made us. If you will do your preparation on Monday, your brain (the most unusual organ in the universe — more versatile than any manmade computer) will work on that material. I do all my hard study on Monday and then, throughout the week, my brain is mulling over and reflecting on that material. And throughout the week new illustrations and applications will come to mind. So feed your mind Monday, let it do its work throughout the week, and you'll be a better teacher on Sunday.

I have another suggestion — especially for those who show real promise of becoming gifted Bible teachers. In addition to Monday night, you need a couple of additional nights home a week to study the Scriptures. One of the most terrible things happening to the church is the madness of busyness. People are so busy they have no time for God and the study of His Word. So spend those additional evenings at home preparing your heart and soul by learning the Word of God.



One of the elders in our assembly, a man in his late 50s, was the CEO of

a billion-dollar company for 25 years. He worked long hours in what he called his “dark tunnel.” Every day during those 25 years he got up an hour and a half early to read and study the Scriptures. Today he is a marvelous Bible teacher in our assembly, but he paid a price. You will not grow in your teaching if you are not willing to pay such a price.

There was a young woman in our church, just in her thirties, who died of cancer. She loved the kids in her Sunday school class. Before she died we visited her at home, and her mother showed us her lesson materials. She spent hours preparing every week—going well beyond the published lesson plans. It was the highlight of her week to take several hours getting ready for that class. To this day people still speak of what they learned in her class.

Basic Tools for Bible Study

Every Bible teacher needs basic tools. First of all, you need a good Bible with readable 12-point print and large

margins for notes. Let me suggest that you leave your study Bible at home in your designated study area. Have another Bible for taking to church. I suggest this because people are always leaving Bibles at church or losing them in other places. I will sometimes have fun with such a person by asking, “Did you read your Bible this week?” “No, I didn’t.” “Do you know where your Bible is?” “No, I don’t.” “Well, I have it here at the chapel!”

I never take my study Bible out of the house. I keep it on my desk. The reason is that I lost a very good Bible one time with all my notes in it. Since then my study Bible remains at home. Bible paraphrases are fine for easy reading, but for serious study you need a good literal translation that is true to the original languages and is in understandable English (e.g., NASB, ESV, KJV, older NIV).

Second, you must have a Bible concordance. The more I study the Bible, the more I need my concordance. It will not only help you find texts, it will help you see how words are used in different contexts.

Third, you will need books to help you with word studies. The old standard is W. E. Vine’s *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. The best edition of this classic work is the edition published by Nelson. It contains not only Vine’s work, but *Nelson’s Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words* (by Unger and White) all in one volume. A more up-to-date work — William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* — has been published by Zondervan. Neither Vine nor Mounce require that the student be able to read Hebrew or Greek.

Fourth, the Bible student needs a Bible dictionary. A revised edition of Unger’s Bible Dictionary entitled *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (ed. R. K. Harrison, Moody) would be a good place to start. Those with a larger budget might also want to procure the 5-volume set, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*.

Fifth, you should have at least one good one- or two-volume commentary. I highly recommend the 2-volume *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Victor Books), edited by Walvoord and Zuck and authored by members of the Dallas Seminary faculty. I have given away many copies of this excellent set. I would also suggest Bill MacDonald’s one-volume *Believer’s Bible Commentary* (Nelson). It is very good and very simple to read.

Sixth, I would suggest a study Bible, that is, an English Bible with study notes provided by the publisher. Most study Bibles are generic. In other words, they take no stand on premillennialism, dispensationalism, or covenant theology. They mention such subjects, but offer no opinion on which interpretation is correct. I prefer a study Bible that helps the student in forming a correct theology. For that reason I suggest the study Bibles authored by Charles C. Ryrie (*Ryrie Study Bible*) and John MacArthur (*MacArthur Study Bible*). MacArthur’s work is a virtual commentary on the whole Bible. Ryrie is not as elaborate, but is very good.

Basic Guides for Preaching and Teaching

Not only do we need tools to help with Bible study, but we also need help in learning how to teach and preach. If the Bible is the priority of

our teaching and preaching then we must improve our teaching skills and methods to make the Word attractive and interesting to our listeners. It is a sin to bore people with the truth.

Erasmus, the noted Greek scholar wrote, “If elephants can be trained to dance, and lions to play, and leopards to hunt, surely preachers can be taught to preach!” Fred Craddock, a contemporary writer on preaching wrote, “Concert pianists continue to run the scales. Tennis professionals still take lessons. Can anyone think of a reason why a preacher should not work regularly at his skill?”

In 1966 Alfred P. Gibbs came to speak at Pinebush Bible Camp for two weeks, something he did every year. He was one of the greatest children’s workers and evangelists in the 20th century. Along with many other books and pamphlets, he wrote *A Preacher and His Preaching* (Walterick). That year I was at Pinebush, and, for some reason, Mr. Gibbs was on a soapbox complaining about the quality of preaching and teaching in the assemblies. And even though he was a part-time faculty member there, he did not spare Emmaus Bible School from his complaints. He said, “We believe in teaching, we do a lot of teaching, and we have many good things to teach.” “But,” he asked, “Why aren’t we teaching well, and why aren’t we teaching people how to teach?” He went on to scold Emmaus and the assemblies for not teaching homiletics and helping young men improve their teaching and preaching skills. He said that some of the preaching in assembly pulpits was so poor it was actually causing damage to people and turning them off to the truth.

This is still a widespread problem, not only in the United States but around the world. I was in another country last year, and after I finished speaking a man came up to me and said, “I don’t know what to do in our local church. There isn’t a single person that has any ability. They don’t even have a clue how to give a lesson. Not a one of them makes sense. What can we do?” We need to help people with homiletics. We need to help them to speak clearly and to be understood. It’s not impossible to learn this.

For help in this area I would recommend that the fledgling teacher or preacher read some books on homiletics. For those with little or no background in public speaking it would be to good start with a book like A. Duane Litfin’s *Public Speaking: A Handbook for Christians* (Baker). A well-known work on Bible teaching is *Creative Bible Teaching* (Moody), by Larry Richards. Then you might want to read a basic textbook on homiletics like the book of Mr. Gibbs, *A Preacher and His Preaching* (Walterick). Two standard seminary textbooks are Lloyd M. Perry’s *Biblical Preaching for Today’s World* (Moody, 1973) and the bestseller by Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: the Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* (Baker, 2001). These volumes are for those who are addressing adult audiences, but there are many others geared for those who teach little children and teens.

It is also important that our young preachers and teachers listen to

gifted speakers, and our modern technology (MP3 files, CDs, books, and tapes) makes the world’s great preachers readily available. Martin Lloyd-Jones said this, “What then is a young preacher to do? Let him listen to other preachers, the best and the most experienced. He will learn a lot from them, negatively and positively. He will learn what not to do, and he will learn a great deal of what he should do.” Listen to good sermons, and read good sermons.

In our church we will pick five well-known expositors and get their sermons (CDs or tapes) on whatever book of the Bible we happen to be expounding at the time. After studying the passage, our Sunday preacher will try to listen to each of these five expositors through the week.



I have personally learned much by listening to S. Lewis Johnson, Bill McRae, John MacArthur, John Stott, James M. Boice, Eric Alexander, and others.

Additional Education

There are additional things we can do to help our teachers and preachers. First, I would recommend sending them to conferences where they will hear the best preachers, teachers, Christian educators, and theologians. Put money in your church budget to help with at least part of the cost for those who go. Every year there are conferences in the United States that provide good preaching and excellent seminars. In our community there is an annual Sunday school convention. We always send people to that convention to get them acquainted with new materials and new ideas for working with children and youth. We invite them to then share what they've learned with their fellow workers — things that will help our local church.



Second, if you have young people who are not getting enough training at home, encourage them to attend Bible college. I encourage all of our young people to attend for at least a year. Two of my daughters attended Emmaus Bible

College and loved it. They sat under the ministry of good, balanced teachers, and they made friends with young people from all over the country. I personally attended the whole program (three years in those days, four years today), and it changed my life. And don't be afraid of them when they come back with lots of new ideas. Encourage them to return and use those ideas to help the work grow and improve. If I had the money I would send every one of our young people to Emmaus — for at least a year.

A Call to Love Your Students

Howard Hendricks was an unsaved kid on the inner city streets of Philadelphia, and there was a guy named Walt. Walt loved kids and wanted a Sunday school class, but none was available. So he went out into the neighborhood and rounded up his own Sunday school class. Every week he would pick up thirteen kids that he found on the inner city streets of Philadelphia — unchurched kids — bring them to church, and teach them in Sunday school. All thirteen came to know Christ. Eleven of them went into full-time Christian service as missionaries and other teachers. One of them was Howard Hendricks, probably one of the greatest Christian educators of our time. He is still alive today and still teaching — a man in his 80s. Hendricks says this about his Sunday school teacher, Walt, "He was not the most scintillating person in the world, but he was for real. I knew it, and so did everyone else in that class

Actually, I can't tell you much of what Walt said to us, but I can tell you everything about him ... because he loved me for Christ's sake. He loved me more than my parents did."^{vi} What is the greatest thing we can do for our students? Love them.

Another educator says this: "No substitute exists for a teacher's love for his or her students. Teaching is far more than getting across content. It is also cause for communicating genuine, personal interest in and love for each student." In short, the first essential skill is love and respect for the students. Good teachers love their students. They respect their students. They value them, they care for them, they're patient with them, they understand them, and they want to help them in any way. So if you want to be a good teacher, love your students.

A Call to Continually Improving Your Teaching Skills

All of us who are teachers, at whatever level — from teaching young children to seniors — need to have a driving passion to improve. And we can. We can all improve immensely. I have seen teachers I thought would never make it, and today they're doing a marvelous job. They are doing well because they stayed at it, wanted to improve, and were willing to learn.

Be Accurate in Your Work

The apostle Paul wrote, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved; a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, ESV). It is a terrible thing to present God's Word and then afterwards be ashamed because you were not prepared. I want

to exhort you to have a healthy fear of teaching error or falsehood. You should know what you are teaching and why it is true. You need to rightly handle the Word of truth. Even if the material given to you is pre-prepared, such as published Sunday school material, you are responsible for its accuracy. This means you must study and be sure what you are teaching is correct. If you have questions, you should call someone who is knowledgeable in the Scriptures who can help you.

Outline Your Lesson

When I first started preaching my wife would say to me, "Alex, your outline wasn't clear and I got lost." I realized that if she couldn't follow me then the rest of the audience was lost as well. It's not the audience's job to make sense of what you are saying. It is the preacher's job to make Scripture clear for the audience. Some time ago my wife and I were at a church listening to the speaker. I leaned over to my wife and I said, "Honey, what is he talking about?" She said, "I don't know. You're the preacher!" I had no idea what he was talking about. He spoke of many things, but I didn't have a clue as to how it all held together.

Whenever you are teaching, always have a clear, orderly outline. It structures your thoughts and keeps you on track. This will allow your listeners to follow you. They will be able to follow you and anticipate where you are going.

As you are studying a passage of Scripture and preparing a message on it, always be thinking of how you will outline and structure the material. Your outline will contribute one of the most important things to your

teaching, namely, clarity. When I'm preparing a message, I have two separate sheets of paper before me. As I'm reading commentaries or listening to a CD, I am always making notes on one of the pieces of paper called my outline. I know I am not ready until I have a good, clear, well-developed outline that people can follow. (On my second sheet of paper I jot down ideas for application). I'm not satisfied until I have the skeleton of the message, and that is the outline. It's very simple, very clear, and very easy to follow.

All outlines should be parallel in thought. Your main heading may have just a couple of words. Or it may be a prepositional phrase. Or it may be a complete sentence. Each of the following main headings should follow the same pattern. If Point 1 is just two words, Points 2 and 3 should also be two words. You should not begin with two words and then have a prepositional phrase as your second main point and then have a complete sentence as your third.

Let me illustrate. I'm currently working on a topical message on love. My headings might be: Study love; Request love; Teach Love; Model love; and Practice love. The headings are parallel. It would destroy the parallelism of my points to have: Study love; Please ask God for a loving heart; Teach love to the teachable; To model love is to inspire love so do loving things; Learning to practice love." If you can look at an outline and figure out what the sermon is, it is probably a good outline. If you look at the outline on the back of the church bulletin and it's absolute mayhem, then I can tell you what the sermon's going to be like.

When you have a good, clear out-

line, it doesn't have to be a lot of points. It should be whatever the material calls for — that's really what you want. After announcing each point, your first sentence should explain what you are going to talk about. Too many preachers announce their point and then wander all over the place. It almost seems as if they are filling time. Get right to what you're going to say. If what you can say can be said in five minutes, say it. Don't take 20.

Gifted preachers have different approaches to time. Some are 20-minute speakers, some are 30-minute speakers, and others (particularly expositors) are 45-minute speakers. The important thing is that every truly gifted speaker makes very good use of his time. One of the characteristics of the ungifted preacher is that he has no sense of time. He is boring, and time stands still. He speaks for 20, 30, or 40 minutes and says whatever it is that he has to say and repeats it all three or four times.

Apply Your Message

Here is where many young teachers of the Bible fail. They give facts and information, but they do not apply the text to real life situations. They do not move or challenge people. I would make this a rule, if you have a 40-minute message, make sure a solid 15 minutes is application, minimum. As I noted above, when I am preparing my message, I keep a separate piece of paper upon which I write applications. While reading books I try to find strong application. The elders at Littleton Bible Chapel want strong application on Sunday mornings at 11:00; not just information, but application. It is the application that challenges people and makes the

Word practical. Remember, the Bible is a practical book, meant for life.

Illustrator Your Message

Jesus was the master Teacher and He was a great illustrator. He took illustrations from every sphere of life. Illustrations drive home your point; they open a window onto the truth of the Word. They can be of all kinds, but people particularly like personal illustrations.

Illustrations are hard to find. It is easier to study the text of Scripture than to find good illustrations. I agonize more over illustrations than anything else. Studies have shown how people pay better attention when the illustration comes. People can only take so many facts and information before zoning out.

Illustrations are especially important for children and young people. I have done many years of children's camp at Camp Elim in Colorado, and I always use films and slides. I still have adults tell me they remember the slides I showed when they were children and all the sound effects I supplied. I made lots of noises and sounds and beat with a stick before I changed each slide. I would cry and scream and sometimes the kids would get so caught up in the presentation that they would cry.

A very helpful resource on this subject is the book by Leslie B. Flynn, *Come Alive With Illustrations: How to Find, Use, and File Good Stories for Sermons and Speeches* (Baker). An old classic is Donald Grey Barnhouse's, *Let Me Illustrate* (Revell). Barnhouse, a real master at the art of illustration gives some clues to his approach in the foreword to this book.

Deliver It Well

Once you have accurately prepared your well-outlined message with its illustrations and applications, you still have to communicate it to people. Unfortunately, many of the people you will teach aren't that interested, have other things on their minds, or they're easily bored. Teaching people — young people, especially — is not easy. So you must be well aware of how you are communicating. It is a lifelong pursuit to learn to communicate well on an individual and corporate level. Here are some suggestions:

Introduce the Message Briefly

The purpose of the introduction is to capture the audience's attention and introduce listeners to the major theme of the message. John Broadus once quipped, "Well begun is half done, and ill begun is apt to be wholly ruined." Good counsel on this important subject is offered by Michael J. Hostetler, *Introducing the Sermon: The Art of Compelling Beginnings* (Zondervan).

Frederick Buechner estimates that a good sermon should have a two-minute introduction in which the audience's expectancy is aroused. Tragically, many preachers offer introductions that are far too long. Such a preacher gets so bogged down it becomes evident to himself and his congregation he will not have time to finish. He will often conclude with the apology, "I'm sorry that I didn't cover all my points!" Well, of course, he spent too much time on the first one. And then he really offends; he goes overtime. Be gripping, and be brief.

Be Yourself

Never try to be someone else or use a different voice. God made you the way you are and He wants to use you. Of course, He will improve what you are and who you are, but it will still be you. If you try to copy someone else, people will see you're not being yourself. Many students at Dallas Seminary have learned the hard way that there is only one Howie Hendricks — he can be emulated but not imitated.

Be Simple and Clear

The experts agree that this is one of the most important attributes of good teaching. Be clear! Be direct, simple, and obvious. One book on preaching says that the three principles on preaching are: be clear, be clear, be clear. Don't wander around or talk in mysteries. Young preachers often make the mistake of having too much material, much of which is complex. Don't overload people with too much detail. Sadly, some preachers have a tendency to wordiness and sanctimony. Both tendencies should be curbed.

More and more I have discovered in preaching that you must make clear points so people are actually anticipating the next point. You should enable them to clearly follow you. You should whet their appetites for the next point. You need to provide very clear transitions in your sermon and not just jump from idea to idea.

Use Good Voice Inflection

Your voice is your tool for speaking and communicating. Learn to improve it and use it correctly. Don't speak in a monotone or without inflection. Change your speed and learn to pause. Learn to speak out loudly when you need to. It's not loudness but intensity that's important.

Be Animated

This is especially important with children. Walk around, use facial expressions, use your hands and legs; in fact, use your whole body. Smiling is very important. Be alive! Only dead people don't move, and you're not dead yet. Remember, you're not preaching for undertakers but for living people.

Use Humor

Humor is a great tool from God, but be natural. Don't try to be funny, yet use humor when appropriate. Remember, you are using this tool to communicate God's truth. Preaching is serious business, so don't let humor get out of control.

Be Passionate

Show some passion and interest in your subject. Don't leave the impression that it's killing you to teach God's Word. As someone once said, "Don't look as if you were baptized in lemon juice or weaned on a dill pickle." Be interested in your subject and show excitement. You need energy. You should exhaust yourself in your teaching. Billy Graham's physician told him that one sermon delivered with passion uses up the emotional and physical energy of an eight-hour job.

Speak with Authority

Paul tells both Timothy and Titus to teach with authority (1 Tim. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Titus 2:1, 6-7, 15). It is God's Word we're teaching, and when we are correctly communicating His Word, we have His authority behind us. Think of yourself as a great ambassador delivering the message from the King of Kings. If you don't know something, say "I don't know!" There is nothing wrong with that. But when you

are convinced of the truth of the Word, speak with authority (1 Pet. 4:11).

Use Visual Aids

I include under this heading hand-outs, outlines, power point presentations, overhead projectors, etc. People learn through both the ear and the eye. Don't be afraid of using props or visual illustrations. It is even appropriate to have someone join you to role play to make a point.

Control Your Material and Your Time

Many teachers and preachers fail at controlling their material. They get to Point 1 on the outline, and they give too much time to it. Then they have no time left for their conclusion or their big point. Even great teachers make a mistake here. They spend too much time on some illustration or point and run their time out for the big point of the sermon. We need to ask ourselves before we start, "Where is the heart of my message?" And then we need to make sure we get there. Here's what I do. I write five minute markers indicating where I need to be at each stage of the sermon. I make sure there is always plenty of time for my big "cannon shot" and for my application.

And they fail to control their time. Many preachers do not realize that when they are speaking, time goes faster for them than for their listeners. So learn to move through points quickly. Force yourself to identify where you should spend the most amount of time in your message. When I look a message over I lay the whole thing out on a table before me, and I tell myself, "Move over these points quickly and don't get bogged down. Here is where I want to spend most of my time."

Conclusion and Response

The conclusion is what I call "landing the plane." Some people are great at getting the plane off the ground into the air, but they can't land it. If you can't land the plane, you crash. Many sermons crash because the preacher doesn't know how to land it, so he repeats himself three or four times, circling the runway and never delivering his payload. Make sure you know how you're going to conclude your message. Then, try to have time for the audience to respond in a moment of silent reflection. †

¹ Alex Strauch, "Developing a Strategy for Biblical Education in the Church," *Journey* 6 (Fall, 2008): 6-21.

² John R. W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 180-210.

³ Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 180.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry: Addresses to Ministers and Students* (1900; reprint ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1960), 236.

⁵ P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (1907; reprint ed., London: Independent Press, 1964), 26.

⁶ Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 1987), 13-14.



Alex Strauch
Alex Strauch is the author of *Biblical Eldership*, *The New Testament Deacon*, and *A Christian Leader's Guide to Leading With Love*. He serves as an elder at Littleton Bible Chapel in Littleton, Colorado where he resides with his wife, Marilyn.

Dr. MacLeod Asks

Faculty member Dave MacLeod leads us in a public forum to discuss issues pertinent to contemporary Christian life. Last issue he asked the following question:

THIS ISSUE'S QUESTION:

How can we more effectively contribute to the improvement in the moral standards in our community? To denounce "wickedness in high places," as some do, is easy but makes no impact where impact is needed. To set a good example in our own lives is essential, but is it sufficient? What further suggestions can readers make?



NEXT ISSUE'S QUESTION:

Many assembly elders have expressed concern over the attitude of their young people to the Lord's Supper. The elders observe that many of their remembrance meetings lack the qualities of edifying worship and spontaneous enthusiasm. They remember days in the past when the meeting was vital, joyful, spiritual, and filled with worship. Do you find this to be true? What can be done to revitalize our meetings?

Please send responses to Journey Magazine, Emmaus Bible College, 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001, or e-mail to journey@emmaus.edu. Include name, city, state, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.

Steven Ritland responds:

Perhaps the most important reason why moral standards are low is that so many people are unbelievers. The impact of modern media (films, TV, and coarse musical tastes) have had a tremendous impact on born again Christians as well as those who are unregenerate.

My suggestion is that not only do we need to be more aggressive in evangelism, but that we need to be more diligent in prayer and fasting, more serious about our devotedness to the Lord, more consecrated to His will, more dependent upon the Holy Spirit, more conscientious about abiding in Christ, the true vine. Without these things there will be no fruit. In short, the problem is that unbelievers are worldly, but too many believers are worldly also. There is a need for believers to be consciously pursuing a sanctified life.

The stories of revival should motivate us. Wesley's preaching literally changed Britain. The slave trade, violence in sports, coarseness and lewdness of behavior, public drunkenness and swearing disappeared because of the gospel preaching of that man and his fellow Methodist, George Whitfield. A humorous, but powerful, illustration comes out of the Welsh revival of the early 1900s. It is said that miners who had been converted were puzzled that their horses no longer obeyed their commands. Then they realized that the poor animals did not understand the miners because they were no longer swearing at them.

So let's repent of our worldliness and lack of evangelistic zeal. Let's earnestly seek the face of the Lord in prayer. And let us boldly share the gospel with family, friends, co-workers, fellow student, and neighbors who will go to hell if they do not place their faith in the Savior.

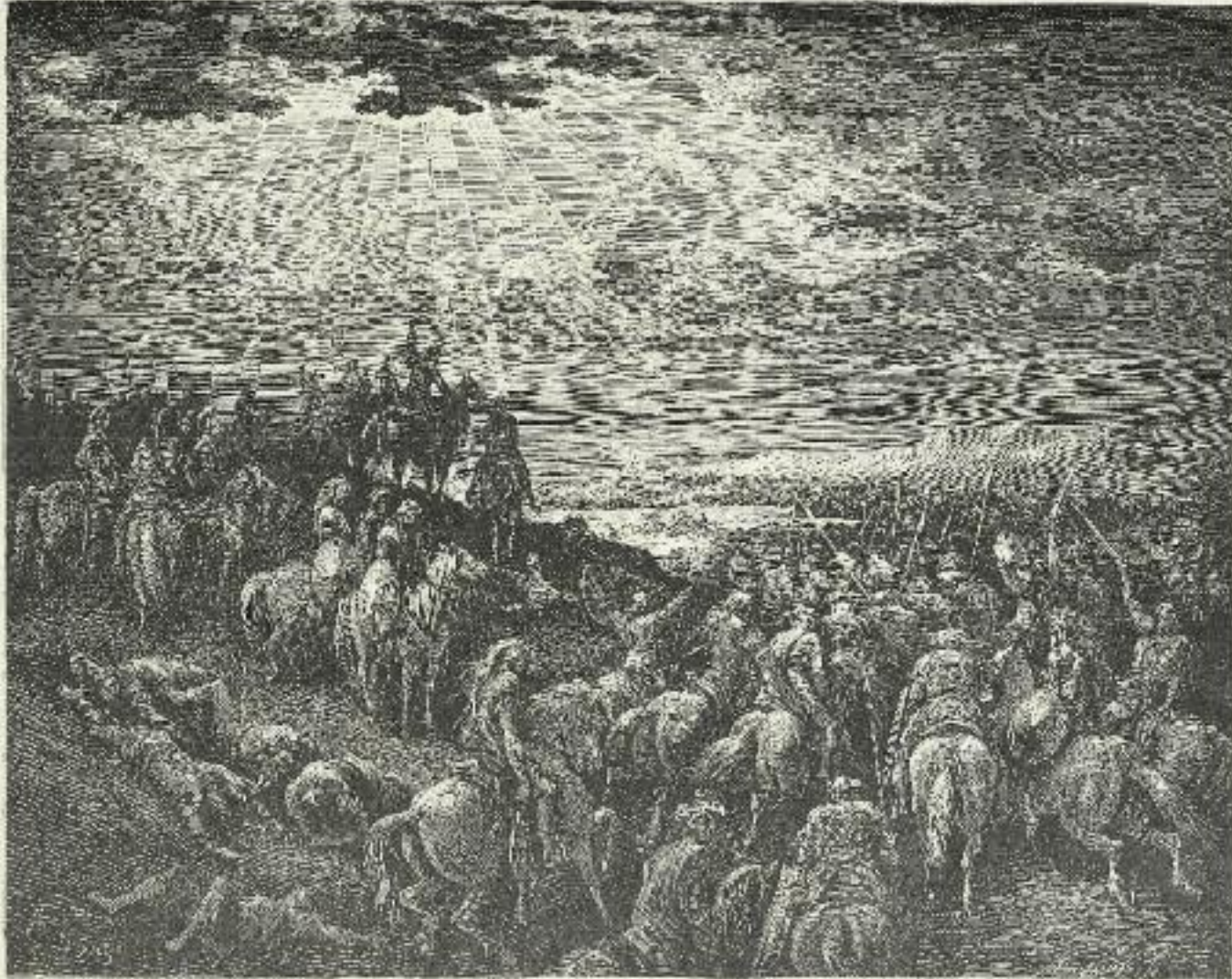
Steven Ritland
Rochester, MN

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The Miracle of Faith Chris Lange



Gustav Dore, public domain

As the widely-circulated story goes, Benjamin Franklin was attending a lavish Paris banquet along with the British ambassador and the French minister. The full company included many of the most brilliant and intellectual men and women of the day who surrounded the extravagant court of Louis XVI. During the evening the diplomats were asked to toast their native land. The British ambassador remarked, “To

England! — the Sun, whose warm beneficent rays encourage the growth and industry and assist in the expansion of labor in every form throughout the world!” The French minister’s response was, “To France! — the Moon, whose soft glow encourages the flowering of literature and the mel-
lowing of the arts!” Many in the audience were wondering how the sagacious Franklin would find something to claim for the United States.

Franklin, without hesitation, claimed “To the United States! — the Joshua at whose command the sun and the moon stand still!” I would love to have been there at that moment! What a remarkable political coup for Franklin in those heady days of American independence.

Apart from Franklin’s intent that America’s prominent place in world politics was imminent, his reference to Joshua’s prayer to God (10: 12-14)

that the sun and moon stand still, recognizes one of so many Old and New Testament miracles our God performed that defy the wisdom and understanding of man. God’s covenants with the nation Israel and with the church at the time of Christ and thereafter reveal His awesome supernatural power that transcends the natural world. Franklin’s world, however, was transforming into a new era, based on the “new science” of the 16th and 17th centuries. Isaac Newton’s theories on the nature of gravity and laws of motion had revolutionized the manner in which scientists viewed the universe. Newton, who was a Christian, believed the study of mathematics held the key to understanding all of nature and led to the increasing importance of empirical data and observation.

Science as it is...

Science, then, through careful observation and collection of factual information, became the method of interpreting all of life. Scientific knowledge revealed nature only for what it was and nothing more. Hence, theological and spiritual truth could not determine the principles that governed the natural world — that is, the amazingly complex system of naturally occurring and perfectly repeating laws and recognizable processes around which all of life revolved. Religion and faith exist and remain outside the natural order. And similarly, science could not determine any aspect of divine reason and purpose in the faith life of an individual, gained spiritually — for science must deal with empirical truth alone.

Many attempts since that time have been made to reconcile science

and religion. In the 17th century Blaise Pascal would seek to explain the essence of religion as a “leap of faith,” a step away from empirical science, when an individual would put full confidence and trust in divine grace. What all later attempts would show is that the natural world is a closed system wherein all of life’s intricate details can be explored and catalogued according to the principles of rational thought and strict observable data. But faith in a supernatural God suggests truth and understanding in a system that is not closed.

Some Christians would face an interesting dilemma as science became a greater part of man’s understanding of the world and reality around him: if God had created the natural world with natural laws that operated perfectly, and perfectly established the order in the universe, with rational explanations for all systems, would He, if petitioned in prayer, change these natural laws to effect the miraculous? Would God change the whole natural system to answer a believer’s prayer? The thinking was that God would not invalidate the system He created; in fact, He would always function within the system, not contradicting the mechanisms of His own creation. The prevailing philosophy of the age, deism, suggested that God had created the world and all its wonders — and then “stepped out of the way” to leave the superintendence of everything to man. Therefore, if God has “stepped out,” would He then have to “step back in” to answer prayer in a supernatural way?

When Joshua asked God for a miracle, when we ask God for a miracle, are we hoping for something that should not and could not happen — if God is true to His own creation?

Emphatically no! As believers, we know that, though we have a God who works in time and space (in the closed system which He created that had a clear beginning and has an end known only to Him), our sovereign God exists outside of that continuum and He enters into our reality according to His sovereign will — apart from our finite understanding. And yet, if we are speeding downhill on skis, traveling more than 40 miles per hour, our bodies are going to be subject to the same laws that Newton first theorized centuries ago. When we pray for protection while skiing, are we praying that God will work outside of His natural laws, thereby protecting us when we catch an edge and preventing our bodies from traveling like missiles as all other objects do when so set in motion?

Thomas Jefferson, one of our Founding Fathers who was profoundly impacted by the age of reason and rational thought, decided to remove from his Bible all the miracles Jesus performed. He wanted to know God by his reason, without the supernatural elements that could not be validated by empirical science. The Jefferson Bible is still on sale today in bookstores.

Faith as it is...

But as believers we don’t know Him solely through the revelation of science. We know Him because He has made Himself known as the God of the natural and the supernatural. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made,...” (Romans 1:20, NASB). He is the God “who gives life to the dead and

Emmaus On the Road

calls into being that which does not exist” (Romans 4:17b).

What does this mean for me as a teacher? What would I want those under my care in the church to know? I want them to know — in the same way that I want to know — that we must have absolute confidence in God. We must have absolute trust in Him no matter what the rational worldview of today insinuates about our faith. His plan for us is always a demonstration of His loving goodness and mercy, regardless of our pain and suffering or of our disillusionment with earthly events. Our humanness rejects suffering, loss, and pain. We do not want to encounter ill-timed and tragic circumstances. Most of us want calm, peaceful, healthy, and carefree lifestyles with no emotional and psychological disturbances. What God causes in our lives, however, is for His glory.

*When Joshua asked
God for a miracle, when
we ask God for a miracle,
are we hoping for
something that should not
and could not happen —
if God is true to
His own creation?
Emphatically no!*

Truth as it is...

Those who live by faith must hold fast to this truth, regardless of what He does in and through us. This is not blind, mindless acceptance or

hopeless resignation. It is our place in His eternal plan for us, and embracing this truth brings the joy and hope and peace that center us in Him. My finiteness is evident to me every day, and my understanding of God’s overarching will is tentative at best. I wish I could say with certainty that I know why God does what He does in the situations that arise in my life with those I know and love. The familiar verses in Isaiah 55 remind me of my frailty: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts” (vv. 8-9).

The Bible tells me that God counts and names the stars. It also tells me that Jesus Christ is Lord of the wind and the wave. I know from Scripture that my frame was not hidden from God when I was skillfully made in secret, when He saw my unformed substance and my days were written in the Book of Life before I breathed my first breath. I know that whatever this world deals out to me, no one and nothing can snatch me out of Jesus’ loving hands. Jesus has told us all that where He is, there we will be when God sums up all of time in His Son. Will my heavenly Father work miracles in my life (apart from the miracle of my own salvation)? Will He work them in your life? It is not a question of “would He?” or “will He?” but “can He?” — and yes, He works all things after the counsel of His own will. Maybe the sun and the moon will “stop” for you and for me in our days yet to come. If not, we must have deep, enduring faith in the One who will never leave us or forsake us. †



Chris Lange
Chris Lange teaches history, english composition and literature at Emmaus where he has served on the faculty since 2000. Chris and his wife Nancy have four grown children and are enjoying their two grandsons.

Name	Location/Events	City/State	Dates
 Ken Daughters	Northwest Bible Chapel Iron Sharpens Iron Conference Koronis Bible Camp	Chicago, IL Dubuque, IA Paynesville, MN	April 19, 26 May 21 – 24 July 20 – 26
 Jack Fish	Woodside Chapel Iron Sharpens Iron Conference Woodside Chapel	Maywood, IL Dubuque, IA Fanwood, NJ	Apr 19, 26 May 21 – 24 June 14
 Ken Fleming	Bayside Community Church Conference Hokah Christian Church Conference Missionary Orientation Program Bayside Community Church	Tampa, FL Logansport, IN Hokah, MN Quebec City, QC Greenwood Hills, PA Tampa, FL	Apr 12 Apr 18, 19 May 3 May 16, 17 June 13 – 19 June 28
 Dave Glock	Asbury Community Chapel Oak Ridge Bible Chapel Iron Sharpens Iron Conference Warrenville Bible Chapel Des Moines Gospel Chapel Lakeside Bible Camp Koronis Bible Camp	Dubuque, IA Milan, IL Dubuque, IA Warrenville, IL Des Moines, WA Clinton, WA Paynesville, MN	Apr 12, 26 May 3, 10, 17 Apr 17 – 19 May 21 – 24 May 31 June 7, 14 June 22 June 22 – 26 July 20 – 26
 Jon Glock	Bible Truth Chapel Iowa Bible Camp Horton Haven Bible Camp Des Moines Gospel Chapel Lakeside Bible Camp	Wausau, WI Manson, IA Chapel Hill, TN Des Moines, WA Clinton, WA	Apr 17 – 19 June 21 – 26 July 12 – 17 July 19 July 19 – 25
 Joel Hernandez	Missionary Orientation Program	Greenwood Hills, PA	June 13 – 19

Emmaus On the Road

Name	Location/Events	City/State	Dates
	Warrenville Bible Chapel	Warrenville, IL	Apr 12
	Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel	Dubuque, IA	May 17, 24
	Iron Sharpen Iron Conference	Dubuque, IA	May 21 – 24
	Mountain Top Youth Camp	Pinnacle, NC	June 14 – 20
	Woodside Bible Chapel	Maywood, IL	July 12, 19
	Bair Lake Bible Camp	Jones, MI	July 12 – 18
	Warrenville Bible Chapel	Warrenville, IL	Apr 19, 26
	Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel	Dubuque, IA	May 3, 10
	Iron Sharpens Iron Conference	Dubuque, IA	May 21 – 24
	Sandy Creek Bible Camp	Washington, TX	June 7 – 12
	Oak Lawn Bible Chapel	Oak Lawn, IL	June 21, 28
	Arbor Oaks Bible Chapel	Dubuque, IA	April 12, 19, 26
	Oak Lawn Bible Chapel	Oak Lawn, IL	May 3, 10, 17, 31
	Iron Sharpens Iron Conference	Dubuque, IA	May 21
	First Colony Bible Chapel	Sugarland, TX	Apr 19
	Sandy Creek Bible Camp	Washington, TX	Apr 20 – 24
	Park Manor Bible Chapel	Elgin, IL	Apr 26, May 3
	Warrenville Bible Chapel	Warrenville, IL	May 17
	Oak Lawn Bible Chapel	Oak Lawn, IL	June 14
	Iron Sharpens Iron Conference	Dubuque, IA	May 21 – 24
	Park Manor Bible Chapel	Elgin, IL	July 19, 26
	Bible Truth Chapel Southern California	Wausau, WI	Apr 17 – 19
	Men's Conference, Verdugo Pines	Wrightwood, CA	May 1 – 3
	Horton Haven Christian Camp	Chapel Hill, TN	June 7 – 12
	IFCA National Convention	Kalamazoo, MI	June 22 – 26

If you would like more information about having faculty speak at your assembly, retreat, conference or camp please call 1-800-397-BIBLE or e-mail info@emmaus.edu.

News from Emmaus

From the Emmaus Bible College Alumni Committee

We would like to extend a heartfelt "thank you" to the individuals/couples who donated to the Alumni Christmas Gift for 2008. With 129 gifts, we were able to raise \$13,007 towards the purchase of a new snow-plow/maintenance pickup truck. Once again the Lord has chosen to bless Emmaus through our faithful and generous alumni! The search will begin soon for a truck that will meet these immediate needs of the College. Thank you as well to all those who prayed with us for these needs to be met. We look forward to another great year of service in 2009!

Christian Ministries Seminar

Emmaus was pleased to host its annual Christian Ministry Seminars on February 8-10, 2009. Our plenary speaker, Phil Parsons from Christian Missions in Many Lands, brought encouragement and insight to our

students on the need to hear and live the commands of our Lord. Over 80 people from 40+ ministries were on campus to expose our students to the many opportunities in camp, missions and para-church ministries. It was a wonderful time of encouragement and fellowship, and a time where many students make decisions about their ministry for both short and long term.

Strategic Long Range Plan In Process

The time has come in the cycle of institutional life for the college to craft a new strategic long range plan. The process will result in a plan document that will articulate the direction the college is going over the next 3 years, and specific initiatives that need to be accomplished. As the plan is developed, input is being sought by a variety of stakeholders in the college, such as board members, administration, faculty, staff, and students. Data gathered from Institutional Assessment is also used in the planning and decision making process. We are working with a consultant from the Chicagoland area to help us with this project. Please pray with and for us as we seek the Lord's direction and will for the future.



Iron Sharpens Iron 2009

Emmaus Bible College will host the ninth annual Iron Sharpens Iron leadership conference to be held at the College on May 21 - 24, 2009. Each year approximately 300 leaders from across North America gather together for teaching, interacting and for stimulating opportunities for growth and development in Church life. The theme for ISI 2009 is *Truth Under Fire - Doctrinal Confusion in the Church*. We are excited to welcome Dr. Norman Geisler, Alex Strauch, Mark Stevenson, and Dr. David MacLeod as our plenary speakers, as well as several seminar speakers from across North America. Register online or find more information at www.emmaus.edu, or by contacting Angie Hubbard (ahubbard@emmaus.edu). Spanish translation is available.

News from Emmaus



Emmaus Bible College Named to Presidential Honor Roll for Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service honored Emmaus Bible College with a place on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for exemplary service efforts and service to America's communities.

Launched in 2006, the Community Service Honor Roll is the highest federal recognition a school can achieve for its commitment to service-learning and civic engagement. Honorees for the award were chosen based on a series of selection factors including scope and innovation of service projects, percentage of student participation in service activities, incentives for service, and the extent to which the school offers academic service-learning courses.

Emmaus Bible College has worked to serve the Dubuque community for almost 25 years. During the Annual

Service Day in September, students, faculty, and staff work together on projects for area organizations, including the YMCA, Dubuque Park and Recreation Department, Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque Arboretum, Dubuque Community School District, Oakcrest Nursing Home in Dyersville, IA, and Tri-State Christian School in Galena, IL. They also assist private business and property owners with various outdoor projects. As part of the Service Learning component of every academic program at the college, Emmaus students provide approximately 13,000 hours of service each year to local churches, ministries, schools, and other non-profit organizations in the Dubuque area.

"In this time of economic distress, we need volunteers more than ever. College students represent an enormous pool of idealism and energy to help tackle some of our toughest challenges," said Stephen Goldsmith, vice chair of the Board of Directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees the Honor Roll. "We salute Emmaus Bible College for making community service a campus priority, and thank the millions of college students who are helping to renew America through service to others."

Overall, the Corporation honored six schools with Presidential Awards. In addition, 83 were named as Honor Roll with Distinction members and 546 schools as Honor Roll members. In total, 635 schools were recognized. A full list is available at www.nationalservice.gov/honorroll.

Please Pray for Our Finances

The recession has hurt Emmaus significantly in three ways. First, our students are finding it more difficult to afford college education. A surprising number of newly accepted students were not able to come this year due to finances, and our existing students are in need of more financial aid. Second, our donors have also been hurt by the economy and are having a hard time keeping pace with our needs. Through the fall gift income from individuals was tracking at only 45% of normal. Third, our investments, though relatively small, have gone the way of the stock market. The losses from these three equal 20% of our budget. We have cut 10% from our already frugal budget, but to have to cut another 10% would be severe. Please pray with us that the Lord will provide so that these cuts will not be necessary. There is good news, too. Donations during December exceeded our expectations, and applications for fall enrollment are tracking ahead of schedule.



FROM THE DESK OF
DR. STEVE WITTER

Dear friend of Emmaus:

I just glanced out of my office window, and noticed that the courtyard is covered with snow from the storm last weekend. The temperature is hovering at 8 degrees this morning...but there is cause for rejoicing! Spring is right around the corner!! During spring, when I look out of my office window, I will see trees that are beginning to bud, flowers poking through the ground, and there will undoubtedly be a robin or two searching for the next meal. The white ground gives way to brown...and then the grass turns green again.

Most importantly, we celebrate Easter in the spring time, and we are reminded that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof positive of the believer's great hope of eternal life. In fact, the apostle Paul ends his great chapter on the importance of the resurrection this way: "but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" [1 Corinthians 15:57-58].

In this time of economic crisis, we at Emmaus are seeking to live out the truth of these verses. As we look at lower enrollments, stock market losses, and a significant decline in gift income, it would be easy for us to become discouraged. However, we are committed to being **steadfast**, to being **immovable**, to continuing to **abound in the work** that God has called us to. **Will you stand with us to that end?** We cannot do this in our own strength, and ask that you uphold the college in prayer. The Savior said "without Me, you can do nothing", and we **need** you to beseech the Father on our behalf **regularly**.

Through the month of March, our gift income is running **25% behind** our budget. Unless the trend lines improve, we project finishing the fiscal year somewhere between **40-50% behind** budget. This will have a devastating impact on the college. **Would you consider if God could use YOU to help meet our significant need?**

Another significant way that you can stand with us is to recommend Emmaus to prospective students that you know. Emmaus strives to be a place **where lives are transformed, character is shaped and purpose is found**. Our student satisfaction rates are outstanding, we simply need more students to "come and see". Please contact us at info@emmaus.edu to pass along the name of a prospective student, or to request information. If you aren't sure what Emmaus is offering these days, visit our web site, or give us a call—we are excited about what God is doing here at EBC.

As always, if I can answer specific questions for you, if you'd like an Emmaus representative to visit you or your church, or if I can be of help to you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me. My email is switter@emmaus.edu, and my office phone is (563)-588-8000 x1124.

Because HE lives,

Steven R. Witter, PhD
Vice-President for Advancement

