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40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible Lesson Plans

# Section 1 – Chapters 1 & 2

## Summary – Chapter 1

The Bible is a collection of 66 “books” that Christians claim are uniquely inspired and authoritative. The Bible is divided into two large sections—the Old Testament (anticipation) and the New Testament (fulfillment). The Old Testament was written from roughly 1400 BC to 430 BC The New Testament was written between AD 45 and AD 90. The Bible records God’s interventions in history as he progressively revealed his plan to provide salvation to a broken, sin-stained world. God’s saving plan finds its culmination in Messiah Jesus, whose death on the cross provides forgiveness of sins to all who place their faith in him.

The Bible is the ultimate authority in any question of belief or behavior. As applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, the Bible not only brings conviction, correction, and true knowledge of God, it also is a source of delight. The Christian can praise God with the psalmist, who wrote, “The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold” (Ps. 119:72).

## Summary – Chapter 2

The first three-quarters of the Bible is the Old Testament. The Old Testament includes 39 books written in Hebrew between 1400–430 BC While the ancient Jews grouped their Scriptures into three main divisions (Law, Prophets, and Writings), our modern English Bible follows a more topical order: Law (5 books), Historical Books (12 books), Wisdom & Songs (5 books), Major Prophets (5 books), and Minor Prophets (12 books). Thus, in book order, our Old Testament follows the topical Latin Vulgate, which modified slightly the order of books found in earlier Greek translations (the Septuagint or LXX). The content of our Old Testament, however, is the same as the Hebrew Scriptures used by Jews in both Jesus’ day and our own.

The last quarter of the Bible is the 27-book New Testament, written between AD 45 and AD 90. The four Gospels (theological biographies of Jesus life)[[1]](#footnote-1) begin the New Testament, followed by a historical account of the apostolic church (Acts); Paul’s thirteen letters to the churches; a letter “to the Hebrews”; letters by James, Peter, John, and Jude; and finally the Apocalypse of John (Revelation).

Chapter divisions were added to the Bible by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the early 1200s. Old Testament verse divisions find their origin in the text segmentation of the rabbinic Ben Asher family (*c.* AD 900). New Testament verse divisions were added by the Parisian printer Robert “Stephanus” Estienne in 1551.

## Lesson Plans

**What is the Bible?**

***Lesson Plans Lesson Plans for Chapter 1***

* + **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**
    1. Can anyone tell me what he or she thinks the overarching purpose of the Bible is?
    2. Who can describe how the Bible functions in their personal life? (i.e. What is the function of the Bible)?
    3. Does anyone see a meta-narrative, or an “end vision” that the Bible points to?

**Outline Summary of Chapter 1**

1. Overview of the Bible
   * + 1. A collection of uniquely inspired and authoritative writings.
       2. Divided into two large sections
          1. Old Testament

39 books of various genres

* + - * 1. New Testament

27 books of various genres

1. Purpose of the Bible
2. Reveals who God is as Creator and one who delights to reveal himself to humans (Heb. 1:1-2).

B. Points to culmination of revelation in Christ.

* + - 1. Purpose is to point to Jesus as our salvation (2 Tim. 3:15) and reconciliation with God as our ultimate source of purpose.

III. Basic story line of the Bible

1. Explains the origin of the universe
2. Preparation of the coming Messiah through his chosen race, the Jews.
3. The consummation of God’s salvation in the return of Christ and the judgment.

IV. Function of the Bible

A. Conviction of sin

B. Correction and Instruction

C. Spiritual Fruitfulness

* + - 1. Perseverance
      2. Joy and Delight
      3. Ultimate Authority in Doctrine and Deed

V. Chronology of the Bible’s composition

A. Old Testament

* + - * 1. Time-line (events and date of books)
        2. Authors
        3. Language (Hebrew/some Aramaic)

B. New Testament

1. Time-line (events and date of books)

2. Authors

3. Language (Greek/some transliterated Aramaic and Latin)

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 1**

1. What is one new thing that you learned about the Bible? (Or, possibly note a previously known fact that struck you afresh.)

The truth of what it claims to be, namely God’s revelation to man written in such a way that one can sufficiently understand who God is, his plans for history, and gain hope for the future.

2. One purpose of the Bible is to bring persons into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Has that purpose been accomplished in your life? How do you know?

Yes. I know this because of what the Bible says about assurance, that if I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in my heart that God raised him from the dead I will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

3. How would you rank your knowledge of the Bible on a scale of 1 to 10? How did you learn about the Bible? (Or, why do you not know much about the Bible?)

I learned about the Bible through personal study, and many faithful teachers who I was blessed enough to sit under.

4. Have you read the entire Bible? If not, consider committing to do so over the next year.

Yes. The Robert Murray M’Cheyne reading plan is a great plan to read thru the OT once and NT and Psalms twice in a single year. Also D.A. Carson’s “For the Love of God” is a great devotional resource.

5. Do you have a general question about the Bible that this section failed to answer? What is it?

No. Possible answers from students might include questions about Canon, etc… which are addressed in later chapters.

**Additional Activities**

(5 minutes) Ask the group to begin an open discussion on what it means when we say Scripture is “God-breathed”. Discuss how the human and the divine hand worked together to write Scripture. Use this as a starting point for future lessons on the Doctrine of Scripture.

**How is the Bible Organized?**

***Lesson Plans for chapter 2***

* + **Opening Questions (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**
    1. Who knows where chapter and verse divisions came from?
    2. How did we get today’s arrangement of the Bible?
    3. Do the Jews of today and Christians read the same New Testament?

**Outline Summary of Chapter 2**

1. The basic division – The Testaments
   * + 1. Old Testament
          1. Written between 1400 BC and 430 BC
          2. Written in Hebrew/ portions of Aramaic
          3. Jews refer to OT as TANAK
          4. Origins of word “testament”
          5. Idea of “covenant”
       2. New Testament
          1. Written between 45 AD and 90 AD.
2. Number and order of Old Testament books.
   * + 1. 39 individual books of various genres.
       2. Organized somewhat topically in modern English Bible.
          1. Law (Genesis – Deuteronomy).
          2. Historical Books (Joshua – Esther).
          3. Wisdom and Songs (Job – Song of Solomon).
          4. Major Prophets (Isaiah – Daniel).
          5. Minor Prophets (Hosea – Malachi).
       3. Jewish canon contains same books in differing order.
          1. Begins with Genesis, ends with 2 Chronicles.
          2. Translations of Hebrew Bible into Greek/Latin changed order.
          3. Order of books is not inspired and does not carry meaning.
3. Number and order of New Testament books
   * + 1. 27 books
          1. The Gospels and Acts
          2. Paul’s Epistles (Rom., 1-2 Cor., Gal., Eph., Phil., Col., 1-2 Thess., 1-2 Tim., Titus, Philm.)
          3. Other letters (Heb., James, 1-2 Pet., 1-3 John, Jude)
          4. Revelation
4. Chapter divisions
   * + 1. Early methods (Eusebius)
       2. Current divisions (Stephen Langton)
5. Verse divisions
   * + 1. Old Testament verse divisions (The Ben Asher Family)
       2. New Testament verse divisions (Robert “Stephanus” Estienne)
       3. Universal acceptance
6. History shows that these divisions are not inspired and carry no hidden meaning.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 2**

1. When you have spoken of the Old Testament and New Testament, have you thought of the term *testament* as meaning “covenant”? How does viewing the Bible as based on covenants between God and humanity affect your reading?

Yes/no. It helps us see how God has dealt with humanity, first with the Jews, and later in a more fulfilled new covenant in Christ that is meant for all nations.

2. Prior to reading the material above, where did you think the chapter and verse divisions in the Bible originated?

Possible answers from group: Maybe some monk in the middle ages??? Maybe the Biblical authors themselves?

3. What is one new fact that you learned about the Bible in the section above?

The true origins of chapter and verse divisions are very interesting. Understanding the development of these divisions really helps to not put any weight into special meanings or signs stemming from studies of these divisions.

4. Has this section raised any questions for you?

Yes. Has the chapter/verse divisions hampered our reading of God’s word in any way?

5. Can you recite the Old Testament and New Testament books in order? If not, make it your goal to learn them over the next week.

Practicing them several times over the course of a week one can learn them very quickly.

**Additional Activities**

1. (5 minutes) Brainstorm to find a better way to divide Chapter and verses in today’s Bible. Is it possible to challenge the current accepted systems for divisions of chapters and verses? Can we find hidden meaning in chapter and verse divisions? What are the dangers of attaching meaning to current chapter and verse divisions?

# Section 2 – Chapters 3 & 4

## Summary – Chapter 3

People have proposed various theories to explain how God inspired the writers of Scripture. If one is faithful to the biblical text, s/he is constrained to say that the Bible is dually-authored. The human authors consciously wrote even as God mysteriously superintended the writing of every word. This is sometimes called the Verbal Plenary (or simply Verbal) view of inspiration.

In studying the Bible, we recognized that the text cannot mean less than human authors consciously intended. Yet, with God as the Divine Inspirer and Lord of history, many texts pointed forward in a way that exceeded the original authors’ abilities to fully comprehend.

## Summary – Chapter 4

In claiming that the Bible is “inerrant” (without error in all its assertions), we are agreeing with the Bible’s witness to itself and the historic witness of the Christian church. Nevertheless, to hold a defensible view of inerrancy, one must recognize necessary qualifications (for example, allowing for ancient literary conventions, partial reporting, paraphrasing, summarizing, phenomenological language, etc.). Christians must be aware of distorted perceptions of the Bible and be prepared with informed responses. Still, the verbal affirmation of right doctrine is not enough. We must demonstrate our submission to the inerrant Word through winsome lives of faith and love (Matt. 7:21; James 2:14).

## Lesson Plans

## Who Wrote the Bible- Humans or God?

**Does the Bible Contain Error?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapters 3 and 4*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Who wrote the Bible?
2. Are there errors in the Bible?
3. What kinds of errors are in the Bible?
4. Is the Bible true?
5. How do we know what the Bible says is true?
6. How do we decide what is true and what isn’t?
7. What does inerrant really mean?

Note individual’s answers on a whiteboard, paper, chalkboard, overhead, etc. Advise that we will be looking for answers to these questions in this class to determine if what they have voiced is fact-based or opinion-based. Encourage individuals to share their viewpoints and allow the class to share their opinions as they are willing. At this point in the discussion, do not point out errors or fallacies in their thinking, beliefs, or opinions.

1. **Outline Summary of Chapter 3**
2. Theories of Inspiration
3. The Intuition Theory – The authors of the Bible exhibit a natural religious intuition also found in other great philosophical and religious thinkers, such as Confucius and Plato.
4. The Illumination Theory – The Spirit of God objectively impressed himself upon the consciousness of the biblical writers in the same way that God communicates with all humanity.
5. The Dynamic Theory – God gave definite, specific impressions or concepts to the biblical authors but he allowed the writers to communicate those concepts in their own words.
6. The Dictation Theory – God dictated the exact words to the human authors.
7. The Verbal Plenary (or Verbal) Theory – Dual Authorship of Scripture. Bible authors wrote as thinking, feeling human beings but who were superintended in the process so that every word written was also the exact word God wanted to be written, free from all error.
   * 1. Dual Authorship of Scripture – each word in the Bible is the word of a conscious human author and at the same time the exact word that God intends for the revelation of himself.

b. Variation within Dual Authorship – Bible authors were prophet, historian, etc., and also God’s revelatory agent. Much of the Bible is situational literature; that is, addressed to specific persons facing particular historical situations with applications for today. God has revealed himself in history through repeated, consistent, and anticipatory ways.

c. Implications of Dual authorship

* + 1. The purpose of the human author.
    2. God included patterns, or foreshadowing, of which the human authors were not fully aware.
    3. The biblical authors were conscious of being used by God to convey his word and believed that their revelation was part of a grand scheme of history.
       - 1. Inspiration and Incarnation

1. The divine-human dual authorship of Scripture can be compared with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both fully human and fully God.
2. The divine=human dimension of the Bible concerns is authorship, not its very nature.

II. **Outline Summary of Chapter 4**

1. The Vocabulary of Inerrancy – Bible accepted as completely truthful in all matters that it asserted until mid-seventeenth century. Within the last 50 years, a vocabulary has evolved to summarize various claims of Biblical truth.
2. Inerrancy – The Doctrine of Inerrancy means that the Bible is completely truthful in all things that the biblical authors assert, whether in geographic, chronological, or theological details.
3. Infallible means incapable of error. The Bible is error-free in matters of theology and faith. Infallible is weaker in connotation and does not include within it the claim that this Bible is free from all error, intentional or unintentional, theological or non-theological.
4. Inspired – Asserts that God was somehow behind Biblical authorship.
5. Neo-orthodoxy – affirms that God revealed himself in history through mighty acts but that fallible human beings recorded these acts imperfectly.
6. Trustworthy/Authoritative – positive and historic terms sometimes used to avoid the issue of the Bible being written without error.
7. Scripture’s Claims About Itself
8. Numbers 23:19 – If God is completely truthful and the Bible is God’s communication to humanity, then it follows that the Bible, as God’s Word, is completely true.
9. Psalm 12:6 – Psalms and Proverbs are filled with repeated praises of the perfections of God’s Word.
10. II Timothy 3:16 – This verse asserts that while the Bible has human authors, the words the authors wrote must be attributed ultimately to the divine in-breathing (inspiration) of God.
11. II Peter 1:21 – This verse reminds us that each word written in the Bible is the exact word God intended to be written.
12. John 10:35 – In his teachings and debates, Jesus repeatedly appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures, with the clear assumption that those texts were completely true in all they reported.
13. Hebrews 1:1-2 – If the anticipatory revelation of God (the Old Testament) was completely truthful, how much more then should the culmination of God’s revelation in Christ be received as completely trustworthy and authoritative.
14. The Historic View of the Christian Church – Truthfulness of Scripture became a major dividing line among Christians in the USA in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Prior Christians had accepted the Bible as completely truthful.
15. Qualifications of Inerrancy
16. Inerrancy applies only to the autographs (original copies of Scripture).
17. Inerrancy respects the authorial intent of the passage and the literary conventions under which the author wrote.
18. The Gospel writers are not intending to give a strict chronological account of Jesus’ ministry.
19. Inerrancy allows for partial reporting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.
20. Inerrancy allows for phenomenological language; that is, the description of phenomena as they are observed and experienced.
21. Inerrancy allows the reporting of speech without the endorsement of the truthfulness of that speech, or the implication that everything else said by that person is truthful.
22. Inerrancy does not mean that the Bible provides definitive or exhaustive information on every topic.
23. Inerrancy is not invalidated by colloquial or nonstandard grammar or spelling.
24. Recommendations for Dealing with Difficult Texts.
25. Be sure that you are interacting with real texts, not another person’s opinion.
26. Approach the text in trust, not as a skeptic
27. Pray about a difficult text.
28. Keep in mind the “Qualifications of Inerrancy” when dealing with difficult texts.
29. Seek counsel when dealing with difficult texts.
30. Be willing to set a text aside for further consideration rather than force harmonization.
31. **Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapters 3 and 4**

**Chapter 3 Questions:**

1. How can a letter from a dead man to dead people (Paul’s letter to the Galatians, for example) be of significance to modern people?

Paul’s letter to the Galatians, along with the rest of the books in the Bible, are still of significance to us today, even though the original author and recipients are long deceased. The Bible is significant because in addition to the human authors, God superintended the entire writing process so that the words the biblical authors wrote were the exact words God wanted written. Since the words written are actually God’s words written through the inspired human author, it is really God who is still speaking to us today just as he spoke then. The truths and principles taught in the Bible through the divinely inspired human authors who wrote God’s words without error apply to us today just as appropriately as they did to the original audience. While the original human writer and human audience are long dead, the words themselves are the living, unchanging message from God to us, and therefore still hold significance for us.

1. Besides the Bible verses cited above, can you list other verses that point to the dual authorship of Scripture?

Other verses pointing to the dual authorship of Scripture include Matthew 5:18, 5:26, etc.,(I assure you . . .), 5:20, 5:22, 5:32, 5:34, 5:36, etc. (I tell you . . .), I Corinthians 11:23 (For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you . . .), and Genesis 1:3, 1:6, 1:9, 1:14, etc. (Then God said, . . .). These verses from both the Old and New Testaments confirm God and Jesus speaking through human authors to both the original recipients and to us today.

1. Is anything lost in ignoring or denying the human element in the writing of the Bible? Is it too simplistic to just say, “God wrote it”?

If we ignore or deny the human element in Biblical authorship, we lose the meaning and understanding of the different styles of authorship in the various books of the Bible. Paul writes caring, concerned letters, while Dr. Luke wrote historical narrative. Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament in historical narrative also, but they are written in a very different style than Luke’s account in Luke and Acts. We must account for the fact that while God authored the Bible, he inspired and superintend the process; he did not override the individual personalities and interests of the humans he created and whom he chose to write his words. God did not put people into a trance and dictate what they were to write on his behalf. He did not write his words on golden tablets for someone to find in the woods and claim to have new truths.

While we can say in one sense, “God wrote it” because he gave the human authors the words he wanted written, we then lose the personal writing styles and culture of the various writers God used. While God authored the Bible, again he did not just simply put people into a trance to write his words, nor did he leave his words lying around on gold tablets hoping some human would stumble upon them while walking around. In considering authorship of the Bible, we must account for both the human element – the personality, writing style, and culture of the author, as well as the divine element – the direct inspiration and oversight of God in ensuring the very words he wanted were written and written without error. We must remember, the divine-human element of the Bible concerns its authorship, not its nature. This can be compared to the divine-human nature of Jesus Christ while here on earth – he was both fully man and fully God, even though he had to give up some of his eternal qualities while here on earth.

1. If one affirms the dual authorship of Scripture, what controls are left in preventing the finding of hidden “divine meanings” everywhere?

When affirming the dual authorship of Scripture, we also affirm implications that prevent us from finding “hidden divine meanings” around every corner. Starting with the clear purpose of the human author’s writing helps us know where to begin. Biblical authors usually seem acutely aware of conveying timely messages to their current audiences. Secondly, God, as the Lord of history and revelation, included patterns or foreshadowing, of which the human authors were not fully aware. We should look in scripture to see what the Biblical authors said about meaning before assigning meaning to a passage or event. We would be remise to find symbolic or prophetic details in the Old Testament when no New Testament author has provided authoritative interpretation of the text, for example. Thirdly, the Biblical authors were conscious of being used by God to convey his word and believed that their revelation was part of a grand scheme of history. Though they could not know all the future events, the prophets certainly would not deny God’s providential control of history, which exceeded their conscious reflection.

1. In what ways are Jesus’ human and divine natures similar to and different from the divine-human authorship of Scripture?

There are similarities and differences between Jesus’ human and divine natures and the divine-human authorship of Scripture. First, just as we humans cannot fully understand how Jesus could be both fully God and fully man, we cannot fully understand how God can so superintend and inspire the process of biblical authorship so that we have exactly the words he wanted without ignoring or destroying the personality and communication style of the human authors. We do not need to fully understand all the details to recognize what is occurring. Secondly, both Jesus and the Bible represent God here on earth for us so we can know and do his will in our lives. Thirdly, we recognize that Jesus surrendered his will to accomplish the will of the Father who sent him, so the biblical authors had to surrender their will in order to write the message from God. Fourthly, we recognize that the divine-human nature of Jesus and the divine-human nature of Scripture are inseparable; we cannot tell where one nature ends and the other begins because they are so closely intertwined. Fifthly, both Jesus’ life on earth and God’s word here on earth are the will of God the Father in action. Lastly, the greatest difference between Jesus’ divine-human nature and the divine-human nature of biblical authorship is that Jesus appeared on earth in the flesh, yet God did not generally appear in human form when inspiring them to write.

**Chapter 4 Questions:**

1. Has anyone ever presented you with an alleged error in the Bible as an argument as to why it is not true? What was your response?

No, no one has ever presented me with an alleged error in the Bible. I have had people tell me that they didn’t believe the Bible, but that is their choice, not an argument about an alleged error. When someone tells me they don’t believe the Bible, I try to ask them a probing question to find out more. Generally, their rejection is because they have chosen to ignore the Word without reading it because they are afraid of what they will find out.

1. What is the most puzzling text in the Bible to you?

For me the most puzzling text in the Bible is not in the oldest manuscripts, that is Mark 16:9-20. Verses 17-18 in particular do not seem to fit with the rest of Scripture. “In my name, they will cast out demons; (I know of some Christians who claim to have this ability.) they will speak in new languages; (I’ve heard “tongues” people speak gibberish, but never have heard of anyone suddenly given the ability to speak a language they have not yet studied, even when they are gifted linguists.) they will pick up snakes; (I’ve seen people pick up snakes, but always with care, never without fear of retaliation by the snake.) if they should drink anything deadly, it will never harm them; (Never heard of or saw this happening. With my IBS problems, I could certainly use this gift!) they will lay hands on the sick, and they will get well. (I’ve seen strong Christians lay hands on the sick, pray for them and anoint them with oil; some have been healed while the Lord has taken others home.) Since this passage is not in the oldest and best manuscripts, I have concluded that this section was added at a later date by a writer desiring to impress others; while recounting some factual events, they added these two verses to impress others with their hope or desire. Whether this was done simply because they didn’t like the way the book of Mark ended or they knew that more used to be at the end of the book and they added their own ending to the story to replace the missing page or pages from the book, only God knows.

1. Why do people disagree on their assessment of the Bible’s truthfulness – some seeing it as the inerrant Word of God and others viewing it as an unreliable collection of contradictory documents?

From my perspective, people reach different conclusions about the Bible’s truthfulness because of the way they approach the Bible. Some approach the Bible with an open mind to see what it has to say and how that compares to the world they know. Others approach the Bible with the acceptance of all or a portion of another world view and wind up rejecting the Bible because it does not meet with their presuppositions. Locally, I see this firsthand in the pastors that the area Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) have had during the past four years. They have had three sets of pastors who taught their people that you cannot believe everything that is in the Bible; you have to pick and choose what is true. My reaction has been, when did God put you in charge of deciding what is true and what isn’t? The first pastor they had here even said that if we had a Muslim Imam come to the area, he hoped that we would include him in our local ministerial association as we were all trying to get to the same place. I was so shocked, that I could not say anything. My knowledge of Islam is that they are trying to get to heaven by works (killing everyone who is not Muslim) by any means possible including deception (The Koran says that is OK if they are not Muslim.). They see Allah as a hateful, revengeful, terrorist, not as a loving God who gave himself for his creation. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; not one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). These last few sentences seem overly harsh, like he is lashing out in frustration/sarcasm against Islam rather than in love, do you want to keep them. I have heard a great deal about human relations and astronomy from these pastors, but never the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. I believe these Lutherans have accepted the theory of evolution as fact, and then approached the Bible with an evolutionary world view, rejecting everything in the Bible that didn’t agree with their presuppositions. They are left with an impotent ritual they follow, ignoring the pleas of the Savior, all because they approached the Bible with a closed mind.

1. If a neighbor were to tell you that he didn’t believe the Bible because it is “full of errors,” how would you respond?

If a neighbor told me that he didn’t believe the Bible because it is “full of errors, “ I would like to think that ideally, I would ask my neighbor for an example or examples so I could help him research it further. My assumption would be that he would be stating this opinion from hearsay, not from reading the Bible himself. If from hearsay, I would assume that he might be able to provide me with an example or examples, but would not be able to give me a reference. If he had read the Bible, he might be able to give me a reference. Either way, I would try to probe to further understand why he thinks there is an error and either explain to him why it is not an error, or research it further to explain it to him. My limited experience to date with this “full of errors” idea is that they are using that as a cover to reject the Bible and Jesus and are not willing to change because they adhere to the presupposition that the Bible is not valid for them.

1. Have you ever met an “ungodly inerrantist” (someone with a verbal affirmation of the Bible’s truthfulness but otherwise ungodly behavior? What does the Bible say about this situation?

The only “ungodly inerrantist” that I can recall were members of a Reformed Baptist Church where one of our homeschool groups met in NJ for our weekly Fine Arts Program for several years. These folks clearly believe that the Bible was true “from cover to cover and without error,” but they were the most legalistic, bitter, miserable people I have ever met. They had rules for everything and judged everyone else, both Christian and non-Christian, by their rules. I very seldom saw any of them smile as they were usually scowling. By their behavior, countenance, or attitude, they drove others away from Christ and prevented them from even wanting to know more about the Savior. The Bible says that without love, we are nothing more than a noisemaker – “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” according to I Corinthians 13:1.

**Additional Activities**

LEADER: Ask individuals in the group to role play sharing the truth and validity of the Bible with someone who believes the Bible is full of mistakes. Divide the class into groups of two students each and provide one set of the information below to each person to role play. Encourage participants to be as realistic as possible. After the role play, ask the individuals to debrief and discuss what they learned that they could apply in a real life situation. Pair each person with a new partner and reverse the roles for additional learning. Be sure they debrief and discuss practical applications after their role plays. After the conclusion of both role plays, ask them to provide helpful insights on their learning to the entire group.

PERSON 1: You are visiting with your neighbor who you know does not attend church and want to invite them to a special Easter program at your church. Begin by asking your neighbor to attend this special Easter program with your family. Respond to your neighbor in this role play as you would in real life, seeking to overcome your neighbor’s objections so you can introduce them to the claims of Christ.

PERSON 2: Your neighbor is inviting you to attend an Easter program with them at their church. You don’t believe in all that church stuff because the Bible is nothing but superstition packed full of errors. If requested, provide your neighbor of examples of errors in the Bible as you stand firm in your convictions. Respond to your neighbor in this role play as you would in real life, seeking to prove to your churchy neighbor that their beliefs are childish and unfounded.

**Additional Activities for Larger Groups**:

LEADER: Divide the individuals into 5 groups and assign each group a position of Biblical Inerrancy based upon one of the five Inerrancy terms (Inerrancy, Infallible, Inspiration, Neo-orthodoxy, and Authoritative). Give them 30 minutes to prepare to defend the validity of their position in a debate. Give each team 10 minutes to present the validity of their position to others; then allow each team 5 minutes to prepare and give each team 10 minutes to attack the weaknesses in the other team’s position and presentation. Then allow each team 5 minutes to rebut the attacks on their position. At the conclusion, allow each team to debrief on what they learned about strengths and weaknesses of each position and how they can better defend their “real-life” inerrant position as they encounter people who hold other positions regarding the validity of the Bible.

You will need to provide resources, such as commentaries, summaries, on-line access, etc., to each team so they can research their position to prepare for the debate. For large teams, you may want to divide the research work so that some members on each team prepare to defend their assigned position while others research weaknesses in the other team’s positions.

# Section 3 – Chapters 5 & 6

## Summary – Chapter 5

Until the late fifteenth century, all Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Bible were copied by hand. Though scribal techniques evince great care, copyist errors were inevitably introduced. As we do not possess the autographs (original copies) of the books in the Bible, the practice of text criticism (studying and comparing ancient manuscripts) is necessary to confirm the biblical authors’ original wording. With the number and quality of manuscripts available, scholars can reconstruct the Old and New Testaments with extreme accuracy. Furthermore, no Christian doctrine depends on any of the remaining debated texts. To get a sense of the kind of textual variants in ancient manuscripts, see the footnotes in any modern translation of the Bible.

## Summary – Chapter 6

The canon is the list of books that Christians view as uniquely inspired and authoritative Scripture. The Old Testament canon consists of 39 books written between 1400 and 430 BC. These books were progressively recognized by those who were contemporaries of their composition and fulfillment. The Hebrew canon at the time of Jesus mirrors our 39–book Old Testament in content. Thus, in affirming the 39–book Old Testament, Christians affirm the Hebrew Scriptures recognized by Jesus and his apostles.

The recognition of the 27–book New Testament followed this historical progression: (1) The New Testament books were written from AD 45 to AD 100. (2) The books were collected and read in the churches (AD 100–200). (3) They were carefully examined and compared with spurious writings (AD 200–300). (4) Complete agreement was obtained (AD 300–400).

The Apocrypha is not considered Scripture by Protestants. The books were written by Jews in the time between the Old and New Testaments (i.e., 430 BC – AD 40). The Jews who wrote the books of the Apocrypha never recognized them as Scripture, and the Roman Catholic Church only officially did so at the Council of Trent in 1546. Various branches of Christianity (for example, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Russian Orthodoxy, etc.) recognize slightly different lists of deutero-canonical (Apocryphal) books.

## Lesson Plans

**Were the Ancient Manuscripts of the Bible Transmitted Accurately?**

**Who Determined What Books Would Be Included in the Bible?**

***Lesson Plans for Chapter 5 and 6***

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Ask the group, “**Has anyone ever asked you why their Bible has added or omitted words in certain passages?**” If so, have the individual describe the conversation. If not, the teacher should illustrate such a situation with these examples: (The teacher can have persons read these and other translations for comparison or display paralleled translations with a projector from <http://www.studylight.org> or similar website.)

Romans 11:6

**ESV**

But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

**KJV**

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

1 John 5:7-8

**ESV**

For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

**KJV**

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Read Colossians 4:15-16 below. Ask the group, “**If archaeologists were to discover Paul’s letter to the Laodiceans, should it be added to the Bible?**”

**ESV**

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read *the letter from Laodicea*. [emphasis mine]

1. **Outline Summary of Chapter 5**

Overview of Textual Issues

*Autographa*

Textual Criticism

The Copying of Ancient Texts

The Old Testament

Dead Sea Scrolls

Other Manuscripts

The New Testament

Text Families

Western

Alexandrian

Byzantine

Caeasarean

Number and Quality of Manuscripts

Samples of Textual Variants

Unintentional Errors

Errors of Sight

Errors of Hearing

Errors of Writing

Errors of Judgment

Intentional Errors

Revising Grammar and Spelling

Harmonizing Similar Passages

Eliminating Apparent Discrepancies and Difficulties

Conflating the Text

Adapting Different Liturgical Traditions

Making Theological or Doctrinal Changes

Christian Orthodoxy and Other Ancient Manuscripts

**Summary Outline of Chapter 6**

What Do We Mean By “Canon?”

*kanōn*

Athanasius

Old Testament Canon

Progressive Recognition

Samaritan Canon

Sadducean View

Josephus

Council of Jamnia

New Testament Canon

Formal Recognition

Apostolic

Catholic

Orthodox

Scriptural Recognition

Colossians 4:16

2 Peter 3:16

Eusebius

The Apocrypha

When the Apocryphal Books Were Written

4 Reasons Why Protestants Reject the Apocrypha

Is the Canon Closed?

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 5 (Below none of the reflection questions are actually fully answered, they are merely spoken of in the context of a class discussion. Is that okay?)**

1. Before reading this question, had you ever considered the transmission of the ancient copies of our Old and New Testaments? If so, what prompted your interest?

For individuals who have considered this question beforehand, survey the different responses and have the group try to identify some major parallels in their experiences (e.g., exposure to different translations, exposure to study Bibles, their preacher bringing out or avoiding a text, etc.) For those who have never considered this question beforehand, ask the follow-up questions: “What was your first response to learning of the Bible’s transmission? Did it cause you to doubt the authenticity of the text? Or, did it strengthen your belief in the text?”

1. When reading the Bible, do you look at the footnotes that deal with the text variants? Why or why not?

For those who look at the footnotes, ask the follow-up question: “By simply noticing the footnotes, could you recognize certain types of variants? Even if you could not formally identify the variants as intentional or unintentional, errors of sight, hearing, etc. The sentence above is incomplete and I am not sure what he is getting at.

1. What is something new that you learned about the transmission of biblical manuscripts?

After individuals identify new information they learned, ask the follow-up questions: “What was most interesting? Why?

1. Have you ever read a book by Bart Ehrman (*Misquoting Jesus*) or Dan Brown (*The Da Vinci Code*), or have you encountered persons influenced by their works?

Survey answers to this question and have the group identify one or two primary arguments these authors make and discuss possible rebuttals to these arguments.

1. Do you have any remaining questions about textual variants or text criticism?

For more in-depth questions see the suggested bibliography in Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible,* 55.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 6**

1. Prior to reading above, had you ever investigated the canon? What prompted your interest in turning to this question?

For persons that had considered the canon beforehand, survey the different responses and have the class try to identify some major parallels in their experiences (e.g., unbelieving family or friends, simple curiosity, experiences with persons from other denominations, etc.)

1. Explain the difference between “an authorized collection of writings” and “a collection of authoritative writings.” Is this an important distinction?

This question, likely, will lead to a discussion about ecclesiology. Christ’s headship of the Church is essential to this discussion. Christ is the single head of the Church (cf. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 2:47; Heb. 1:1-4); therefore, the Church simply acknowledges his authority in all things (including the canon).

1. If a Roman Catholic neighbor were to ask you, “Why do you Protestants cut some books out of the Bible?” How would you reply?

Discuss the four reasons given in Plummer, *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*, 63-66. This evidence exposes the presupposition hidden within the question above. The question is not “Why do Protestants cut some books out of the Bible?” Rather, the question is “Why do other traditions add books to the Bible?”

1. Is it possible to be a Christian and yet have a wrong understanding of the canon (as say, an Ethiopian Orthodox person would)? Explain.

This question, likely, will draw several different answers. Keep the discussion focused by highlighting that other traditions still acknowledge the Protestant canon –– they simply add to it. Therefore, the Gospel is still clear and present within the books they consider Scripture.

1. Does the survey of the canon above leave any questions unanswered for you?

For a more in-depth study of these issues see: Paul Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations,* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999) or F. F. Bruce, *The Books and Parchments,* (Westwood: Revell Books, 1963). For a study of the canon from a historical perspective see: F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988).

**Additional Activities**

For chapter 5, pass out *Additional Activities Handout: Text Variants*. Have the group analyze and discuss the text variant illustrated. For further discussion, have the individuals look for other places in the passage where errors might occur –– errors of sight, hearing, writing, or judgment.

For chapter 6, pass out *Additional Activities Handout: The Canon(s) #1* and *#2.* Have the group analyze and discuss which books were included in both the Hebrew Scripture and the differing Christian traditions. Also, have them note and discuss the number and amalgamation (or division) of some books.

*Note: Exercise handouts are appended to the* Lesson Plans.

Additional Activities Handout: Text Variants

This exercise is intended to illustrate an *Error of Sight* that is common in New Testament text variants (i.e., dittography). The text below is Romans 16:17-27 (*KJV*). The punctuation and spaces have been removed to give the student an idea of what it might have been like to read an ancient Greek manuscript.

Note the repetition of v. 20b (lines 14/15) at v. 24 (lines 22/23). It is easy to imagine a scribe copying this text and, by simply missing his place, mistakenly repeat a phrase or sentence. This particular instance is an actual text variant. The reading here shows up in later manuscripts such as the Byzantine text family (which is where the *KJV* was translated from). However, early manuscripts such as *Codex Sinaiticus* do not have v. 24. Contemporary translations such as the *ESV* do not include v. 24 because translators have consulted a wide range of manuscripts and do not consider it as an accurate reflection of the autograph.

NowIbeseechyoubrethrenmarkthemwhichcausedivisionsandoffencescontrarytothedoctrinewhichyehavelearnedandavoidthemFortheythataresuchservenotourLordJesusChristbuttheirownbellyandbygoodwordsandfairspeechesdeceivetheheartsofthesimpleForyourobedienceiscomeabroaduntoallmenIamgladthereforeonyourbehalfbutyetIwouldhaveyouwiseuntothatwhichisgoodandsimpleconcerningevilAndtheGodofpeaceshallbruiseSatanunderyourfeetshortlyThegraceofourLordJesusChristbewithyouAmenTimotheusmyworkfellowandLuciusandJasonandSosipatermykinsmensaluteyouITertiuswhowrotethisepistlesaluteyouintheLordGaiusminehostandofthewholechurchsalutethyouErastusthechamberlainofthecitysalutethyouandQuartusabrotherThegraceofourLordJesusChristbewithyouallAmenNowtohimthatisofpowertoestablishyouaccordingtomygospelandthepreachingofJesusChristaccordingtotherevelationofthemysterywhichwaskeptsecretsincetheworldbeganButnowismademanifestandbythescripturesoftheprophetsaccordingtothecommandmentoftheeverlastingGodmadeknowntoallnationsfortheobedienceoffaithToGodonlywisebeglorythroughJesusChristforeverAmen

*1*

*5*

*10*

*15*

*20*

*25*

*30*

Additional Activities Handout: The Canon(s) #1

*LAW*

*PROPHETS*

*LATTER PROPHETS*

*WRITINGS*

*HISTORICAL BOOKS*

*WISDOM BOOKS*

*PROPHETICAL BOOKS*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Jewish Scripture (24 Books) | Christian Old Testament (39 Books) | |
| Genesis  Exodus  Leviticus  Numbers  Deuteronomy | Genesis  Exodus  Leviticus  Numbers  Deuteronomy  Joshua  Judges | Ruth  1-2 Samuel  1-2 Kings  1-2 Chronicles  Ezra  Nehemiah  Esther |
| **Former Prophets**  Joshua  Judges  Samuel  Kings | Job  Psalms  Proverbs  Ecclesiastes  Song of Solomon | |
| **Major Prophets**  Isaiah  Jeremiah  Ezekiel  **Minor Prophets**  Hosea –– Malachi (The 12) |
| Psalms  Job  Proverbs  Ruth  Song of Solomon  Ecclesiastes  Lamentations  Esther  Daniel  Ezra-Nehemiah  Chronicles | **Major Prophets**  Isaiah  Jeremiah  Lamentations  Ezekiel  Daniel  **Minor Prophets**  Hosea –– Malachi (The 12) | |

Addition Activities Handout: The Canon(s) #2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Protestantism | Roman Catholicism | Greek Orthodoxy |
| **Old Testament**  Pentateuch (Gen. –– Deut.)  Prophets  Former  Latter  Major  Minor  Writings | **Old Testament**  Pentateuch  Prophets  Former  Latter  Major  Minor  Writings | **Old Testament**  Pentateuch  Prophets  Former  Latter  Major  Minor  Writings |
|  | **Apocrypha**  Tobit  Judith  Additions to Esther  Wisdom of Solomon  Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)  Baruch (+ Letter of Jeremiah)  Prayer of Azariah  Susanna  Bel and the Dragon  1-2 Maccabees | **Apocrypha**  Tobit  Judith  Additions to Esther  Wisdom of Solomon  Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)  Baruch (+ Letter of Jeremiah)  Prayer of Azariah  Susanna  Bel and the Dragon  1-2 Maccabees  1 Esdras (or 3 Ezra)  Prayer of Manasseh  3 Maccabees  4 Maccabees (appendix)  Psalm 151 |
| **New Testament**  Gospels  Acts  Pauline Epistles (Hebrews)  General Epistles  James –– Jude  Revelation | **New Testament**  Gospels  Acts  Pauline Epistles (Hebrews)  General Epistles  James –– Jude  Revelation | **New Testament**  Gospels  Acts  Pauline Epistles (Hebrews)  General Epistles  James –– Jude  Revelation |

# Section 4 – Chapters 7 - 9

## Summary – Chapter 7

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic from 1400 BC to430 BC. The New Testament was written in Greek between AD 45 and AD 90. The Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages and dialects.

John Wycliffe produced the first (handwritten) English Bible and William Tyndale produced the first printed New Testament. We can be grateful for those who risked their lives to translate the Bible into English. Over the last five hundred years, many different English Bible translations have been produced. Older English translations, such as the King James Version or Geneva Bible, are now difficult to understand because the English language has continued to evolve. Also, the discovery of new manuscripts and text criticism (the study of ancient manuscripts to discover the original reading) have resulted in better translations. The modern English language has many readable, reliable translations. We should be thankful that we speak a language for which there are many good translations of the Bible.

All Bible translations fall along a continuum. Some are more “thought-for-thought” (functionally-equivalent) and some are more “word-for-word” (formally-equivalent). It is advisable for a Christian to have several different Bible translations to read, study, and cite.

## Summary – Chapter 8

To interpret a text is to explain the meaning of a text. The meaning is what the author(s) intended to convey in the composition of the text. With the Bible, one must consider the human author’s conscious intent as well as any divine intent clarified by later canonical usage. The Bible clearly teaches that people both rightly and wrongly interpret the Scripture. Furthermore, the nature of language and culture show that additional explanation is often necessary to properly understand a text which was originally written in another language, time, and culture. Spiritual rebellion, or simply a lack of skill, can result in the wrong interpretation of Scripture. While all people have certain hermeneutical predispositions, a self-reflective interpreter will hopefully become more aware of his prejudices and the biases of others. The ultimate goal, of course, is to

have no predisposition that the Scriptures themselves do not enjoin.

## Summary – Chapter 9

By considering how the Bible has been interpreted throughout church history, we can learn from our forefathers in the faith. The first example of Christian interpretation is the use of the Old Testament by New Testament authors. The New Testament authors viewed the Old Testament as reliable history and authoritative revelation, respecting the original contexts of passages cited. New Testament authors also viewed the Old Testament through a messianic, typological lens.

Very soon after the completion of the New Testament, many church fathers erred in fanciful allegorical interpretations. Although a celebrated interpretive approach in the ancient Greco-Roman world, allegorical exegesis distorts the authorial meaning of the text. Widespread allegorical excess was checked by the Protestant Reformation, but received its death blow (in the academy, at least) from modern biblical scholarship (*c.* 1800 – present).

Much modern biblical scholarship, however, introduces another distorting element—an anti-supernatural skepticism. At the same time, in the last sixty years, a vibrant evangelical community has produced many significant academic contributions. Also, in recent decades, both liberal and conservative scholars have employed a number of interpretive techniques that claim to establish an academic “middle-ground”—respecting the surface-level authorial intent of a biblical text without making explicit pronouncements on its origin or reliability.

## Lesson Plans

**Which is the Best English Bible Translation?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 7*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

“Who here believes they use the best English translation and why?” If the room is full of diversity, then you will have several translations, mostly mainline translations such as NIV, ESV, NASB, KJV, NKJV, etc. For time’s sake you should only let one person per translation represented speak for the group. I would only give a minute or two for the defense. You, as the teacher should be careful and not get too involved in affirming or denying their claim, because you will talk about these later on in the lesson. It is important that they know that you are going to be as objective as you can and do not want to chide a person for using a specific version, but you want to show which translations are the best, but each translation has their use.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 7**

1. The Original Languages of the Bible
   1. It is important to start at the beginning with the original languages.
   2. The Old Testament
      1. Hebrew
      2. Aramaic (small minority)
      3. The OT was translated into Greek during the Intertestamental Period
   3. The New Testament
      1. Koine Greek (common language)
      2. After Christianity became international, the whole Bible became quickly available in all different languages.
2. History of the English Language
   1. Any living language is a moving and changing language. The English that we speak and read today, is not the same as a hundred years ago, therefore there have been many English translations since Old English. Furthermore, this is what makes an English translation at times difficult and in need of change.
3. History of the English Bible
   1. The history of the English Bible is one that involves struggle and martyrdom.
   2. Latin was the official language of the church and for the official Bible-Latin Vulgate.
   3. Profiles of Courage
      1. John Wycliffe (1330-1384)
         1. In 1382, he translated, by hand, the entire Bible into Middle English using the Latin Vulgate.
         2. This led to reformation of the church, which led church officials to ban all English copies and the reading of it which was punishable by death.
      2. William Tyndale (1494-1536)
         1. In 1526, he was the first to translate the NT from the original Greek text. Since English translations were still banned, he did this on continental Europe and smuggled copies in.
         2. His assistant, Miles Coverdale, finished the OT and the entire translation became known as the Coverdale Bible, in 1535.
         3. A year later, Tyndale was caught, strangled, and burned. His dying words were “Lord, open the eyes of the King of England.”
         4. In 1537, the prayer was answered and English Translations became legal.
4. The Bible in Modern English
   1. There are more translations today, than anyone 100 years ago could have imagined.
   2. Each modern translation has its weaknesses and strengths.
5. Approaches to Translation
   1. Dynamically Equivalent
      1. This approach strives to accurately translate the meaning from the original language into English, while not paying close attention to word for word equivalency or original grammatical construction.
      2. Ex New Living Translation
      3. Suggested for Devotional Reading
   2. Formally Equivalent
      1. This approach strives to retain word for word translation and maintaining original grammatical structure.
      2. Ex ESV or NASB
      3. Suggested for Deep Study
   3. Readability vs. Accuracy
6. Paraphrases
   1. These are usually translated by one individual
   2. Written for specific subculture
   3. Very bias
7. The King James Version
   1. It was great for its time
   2. Not based on the oldest and most accurate manuscripts
   3. Language is outdated
   4. Suggest NKJV
8. Recent Translation Debates
   1. Debate is over generic pronouns
   2. Traditionally they have been translated as masculine
   3. Dynamic Equivalent Translations
      1. Gender-neutral
   4. Formal Equivalent Translations
      1. Traditionally masculine language

**Answers to Reflection Questions**

1. Which version of the Bible do you own? (Look in the first few pages of your Bible(s) to see.) Why do you use this Bible (or these Bibles)?

I use the NASB primarily in personal studying and in my preaching, but I also use the ESV in teaching Bible Classes. Perhaps I have not completely changed my allegiance to the ESV because I have a lot of passages memorized in the NASB and old habits die hard. However, both of these translations fall under the approach of Formal Equivalency. I use them because of this approach. When comparing readability vs. accuracy, I want to use a translation which is accurate to the original text. The ESV does a much better job than NASB on its readability. Both translations are committee based translations that use the top scholars in their fields.

2. If your church has pew Bibles, what translation is it? Have you ever prejudged a person because of the Bible translation he or she preferred?

The church that I am currently a member at has the ESV as the official pew Bible. I will say that in my earlier life I did prejudge people based on presuppositions and what others had told me about various translations. But, once I was able to compare translations and look at all of the evidence myself I became quite tolerant, until I started learning Greek and then became arrogant again. But thanks be to God, who has allowed me to become humble, and now have tolerance for those who use a different translation and/or approach than I do .

3. Do you prefer reading a more formally equivalent translation (word-for-word) or functionally equivalent translation (thought-for-thought)? Why?

I prefer to read a more formally equivalent translation because I want to stay as accurate as I can to the original text and original meaning. I know that English is a moving language, which is always evolving, but even with that fact we must still be willing to stay faithful to the text, because they are close to the original manuscripts which are inerrant.

4. If you were to obtain additional Bible translations to supplement your study, which ones would you get?

In order to supplement my readings, I already use the ESV, NIV, and the NRSV. If I was to choose to get another translation it would definitely be the NLT. I am top heavy on the formal equivalent approach and need to look at more dynamic equivalent translations.

5. What translation of the Bible would you use for (a) careful, verse-by-verse study, (b) a gift to an international student, (c) reading through the Bible in one year with a group of college students?

For a careful, verse by verse study, I would suggest the NASB because it strives to translate word for word and hold to original grammatical structure, which also makes it wooden, so an ESV may be more helpful. Secondly for an international student, I would give them an NIV which falls in the middle of both approaches and for a reading through the year with college students I would suggest the NLT.

**Why is Biblical Interpretation Important?**

***Lesson Plans for* Chapter 8**

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Once you have chosen the best translation for you and the one which you think is accurate to the original text, the issue then becomes interpretation. As a result, everyone who opens up the Bible becomes an interpreter. Thus, interpretation is very important, because we all think very different things, but we must allow the Bible to speak for itself. To introduce this lesson, one might pick an ambiguous text to show the different interpretations. One might use Acts 2:38 about baptism and ask, “What are the various interpretations that could arise as far as the means, mode and qualifications for baptism? This is not to be a debate, but to show the different interpretations of one verse.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 8**

1. What is Interpretation?
   1. Whenever something is interpreted the meaning of the text is being expressed through speaking or writing.
   2. When dealing with Scripture, the interpreter must be careful to show faithfully the inspired meaning from the original authors, while not neglecting the divine original intent.
2. The Scriptures show the need for Biblical Interpretation.
   1. To say that there is a right interpretation, also means that there has to be a wrong interpretation.
   2. Biblical Texts that demonstrate that there is a right and wrong interpretation.
      1. 2 Tim. 2.15
      2. Ps. 119.18
      3. 2 Pet. 3.15-16
      4. Eph. 4.11-13
      5. 2 Tim. 4.2-3
3. Language and Culture show the need for Biblical Interpretation.
   1. If someone was to put a verse in Hebrew and in Greek in front of someone, they would know that it needed to be translated.
   2. “Translation is the most fundamental form of interpretation” (Plummer 81).
   3. When one translates the text from its original language, they put it in a language, with different historical backgrounds and culture references, thus needing to be interpreted.
      1. Ex Matthew 1.18-the betrothal of Mary and Joseph would have required a writ of divorce, if Joseph wanted put her away or break the betrothal. In America, an engagement to be broken off does not require divorce papers.
   4. It is helpful to understand the Bible as one unified book with the purpose to unfold God’s eternal plan.
   5. Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture.
   6. Scripture must be looked at and interpreted within the context of each book and the Bible as a whole.
   7. It is important to understand the author’s original meaning. This is where you start.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 8**

1. When reading the Bible are you conscious of the danger of misinterpreting it, that is, of misunderstanding it and distorting its meaning in explaining it to others?

We all come to Scripture with our own presuppositions, and before I start to study the word, I try to make it a habit to pray that God would take off my blinders. Even when consulting commentaries and other scholars, we must be careful to still follow Scripture and not man.

1. How is interpreting the Bible different from interpreting any other piece of literature?

Interpreting the Bible is quite different from interpreting any other piece of literature, because what God said he meant, and if we misinterpret it, we are in danger of heresy, not according to man’s views, but God’s views. It is a serious and awesome process to interpret the word of God for our lives today.

1. Consider other Christians whose interpretations of the Bible you have either read or heard. Whom do you consider the most reliable? Why?

The Christians that I trust the most are those who profess to be Evangelical Christians. Although, I would not agree on everything with every evangelical scholar, I do believe that they adhere closer to the text, beginning with its original meaning and bringing its implications into the 21st century context. Men who fall into this category would be John Piper, D.A. Carson, John McArthur, Al Mohler, etc. They are amazing exegetes and expositors of God’s word.

1. What would make you a more faithful biblical interpreter?

I believe that if I knew the original Biblical languages better, then it would make me a better and more faithful interpreter of the word. What I mean by knowing the original languages better is not the vocabulary or simple sentence structure, but knowing the cultural significance behind each word, the historical background of the language and how it evolved. This way I can better understand their meaning and bring it into the context of English, instead of depending on just a word for word translation, which makes for weak interpretation.

1. Are you aware of any theological or interpretive biases you have in approaching the Scriptures? Can you defend having such biases from the Bible itself?

Yes, I am quite aware of the biases that I bring to the table when interpreting and approaching the texts of Scripture. Most of the biases that I have I can defend as coming from Scripture, but I hope that I am also honest enough to admit that some maybe traditional beliefs that have no bearing on salvific matters and straight commandments from God. Additionally, my prayer is that I am open enough to look at others in their biases and not judge as long as the word of God is not being presented in a heretical frame.

**How Has the Bible Been Interpreted Throughout Church History?**

***Lesson Plans for* Chapter 9**

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

What is a theological position that you have changed your stance on in the last 10 years? What made you change your mind and why do you continue to disagree with that past view? Solomon was right when he exclaimed that there is nothing new under the sun in Ecclesiastes. The Bible has been around long enough that it has gone through cycles upon cycles of different interpretations. So, we must look at the past to understand on whose shoulders we stand on and learn from their mistakes and successes.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 9**

1. The Use of the OT in the NT (AD 45-90)
   1. The first place that we see Christians interpreting Scriptures is in their use of the OT in their NT writings. These have several characteristics:
      1. The OT Scriptures were seen as inspired by God, thus making them reliable accounts of his self-revelation.
      2. The contexts of the OT passages cited were deeply respected by the NT authors.
      3. The OT was employed in a “typological and messianic way” (Plummer 86).
      4. The NT authors did not use the OT in an allegorical way, which will be the leading view after this period.
   2. Because they were not perfect in their interpretation, we must be careful not to fully align ourselves with their method of typology. Always remember to first learn the meaning and understanding of the text in its literal original meaning.
   3. On the other hand, let us have reverence and respect for the whole canon, as the early Christians did for the OT. Also, remember that the OT was written for us (Christians).
2. The Rise of the Allegorical Interpretation (AD 100-500)
   1. Allegory is a literary genre which assigns symbolic meaning to all the textual details within a story.
   2. It took many stories in both the OT and the NT that were not meant to be allegory and made them allegory. It was a powerful medium, but very wrong in its interpretation. However it grew for several reasons, including the following:
      1. Allegory was not a major tool in the inspired writer’s tool shed. We see it used in at least one parable (Mark 4.1-20) and by Paul in Gal 4.24. Therefore, many were drawn to it because the canon limited its use. We are often drawn to things we are not familiar with.
      2. Allegory is usually employed to show a hidden, secretive meaning. Human nature is often drawn to those things that are hidden and secretive. It took special “inspired” people to dig out the meaning.
      3. In the Greco-Roman world it was used to interpret difficult religious texts, and so that is how it was used in the early church and onward. Hard passages, such as Noah becoming drunk, was difficult to interpret and so it became an allegory. This was also employed by Jewish exegetes as well.
         1. The allegorical meaning of a text was seen as its highest meaning of that particular passage.
         2. Origen used Proverbs 22:20-21 and I Thessalonians 5:23 as the basis of his hermeneutical approach.
            1. A person is made of three parts: body, soul, and spirit and so is a text: body (literal meaning), soul (moral meaning or ethics), and spirit (spiritual or allegorical meaning)
   3. Although this was the main leading interpretive approach there were a few who still held on to the traditional literal reading of the text. They became known as the Antiochean Fathers. Two famous examples are:
      1. John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407)
      2. Theodore of Mopsuestia (A.D. 350-428)
   4. Although, this particular view took them farther and farther from the literal meaning of the text, they church kept to orthodoxy through “the rule of faith.”
3. The Fourfold Meaning of Scripture (A.D. 500-1500)
   1. Within the same period mentioned previously, men like John of Cassian and Augustine said that each biblical text contained four levels of meaning:
      1. Literal
      2. Moral
      3. Spiritual (allegorical)
      4. Heavenly (this became an allegorical category as well concerning end time themes)
   2. This became widespread as well, but still was steeped in church tradition.
4. The Return to a More Faithful Interpretive Method (AD 1500-Present)
   1. The Reformation Era brought the Scripture back to its rightful place in interpretation. The Reformers championed Scripture alone as their guide, once again allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.
   2. Allegory can still be seen in writings throughout the centuries, but it is now the minority approach.
   3. Evangelicals have continued the fight of the early reformers and this can be seen in their commentary and articles in leading scholarly works.
5. The Anti-supernatural Bias and Skepticism of Modern Scholarship (AD 1650-Present)
   1. Alongside the reformers return to interpreting Scripture literally is the approach by modern scholarship in which they deny supernatural events within Scripture.
   2. The canal through which this approach was birthed was the Enlightenment Period
   3. Many say that when the authors spoke of supernatural events, they were deceived or mistaken.
   4. Other approaches from this view are steeped in sociological and philosophical language.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 9**

1. When reading the New Testament do you pay attention to the citation of Old Testament texts? Do you ever look up the Old Testament texts cited?

In modern day translations it is quite hard not to see when the NT authors use an OT text. Thanks to modern translations, the OT quotations are set apart within the text. I must admit that it is not a habit of mine to check those OT texts. I think when I first began to study the Bible I grew frustrated because the NT writers used the LXX text and so most of the quotations did not line up with what the actual OT text. Despite this, I need to make it a habit to look up those OT citations so that I can get the original meaning of the text.

2. Have you ever heard an allegorical sermon or read an allegorical interpretation in a devotional book? At the time, did you recognize the interpretation method as allegorical? What did you think?

In my recollection, I don’t believe that I have ever read or heard an allegorical sermon outside of my church history classes. I will say that the allegorical sermons that I did read in my church history classes or on my own initiative were very inviting and awe-striking. Even knowing that these were not correct interpretations of the text, it still made me want to trust those “secret, hidden” meanings. I was drawn to them. No wonder the early church was swayed to trust them more than a literal view. They were fascinating and made sense.

3. It has been said, “We can see so far only because we stand on the shoulders of giants.” How would this saying apply to biblical interpretation?

Because we are fallen individuals, we need help from every century to aide us in coming closer to the literal meaning of the text. Our ability to learn from those who went before us should not be limited to those in the literal school. We can also learn from the Alexandrian school and their use of allegory. We can see what passages they saw as difficult and try to unravel their research, and also it makes us search the depths of our hearts and souls in order to bring out the correct meaning. The reformers paved the way towards the literal view being the majority view and we are forever thankful to them.

4. Have you noticed any of the interpretive trends mentioned above in books that you own?

The only trend that I have noticed in the books that I own would be the literal meaning of the text. I tend to read Evangelical Christians, and since they look to the Bible and take up the fight left by the Reformers, they write and believe in the literal meaning of the text. Most Evangelicals write in opposition to the anti-supernatural movement, and so I have read the opposing view only as Evangelicals try to correct them.

5. Of what value are the allegorical expositions of the church fathers?

Although the allegorical expositions of the church fathers are not true to the literal meaning of the text, they are still good ethical lessons that should be learned Most teach good moral lessons that other passages teach openly. Also, we can learn from their homiletics and delivery. Because even though they were often wrong in interpretation, they knew how to craft a sermon.

**Additional Activities**

With these three lessons together, time may be limited to additional class activities, but this one activity should be able to cover all three lessons and review it. Look at Matthew 1:23 and Isaiah 7:14. Remind them that they must first look at the immediate context. The text is talking about a sign in the days of Ahaz. So, who is the child? How is it miraculous in the days of Isaiah? Does it really speak of Christ? In the immediate context, it speaks of a child being pronounced, perhaps it is Isaiah’s son in Isaiah 8, but then there is another child in Isaiah 9. However, it does point to Christ for his was a miraculous birth as well, born of a virgin. Remember that the NT used OT citations as typology. Did Matthew use this correctly? Also, look at how theologians throughout history have looked these two texts which seem to not fit.

# Section 5 – Chapters 10 & 11

## Summary – Chapter 10

In this section, we have begun surveying some general guidelines for interpreting the Bible. The ones we discussed above are: (1) Begin Bible study with prayer, confessing your inclination to deceitfulness and imploring the Lord’s assistance. (2) Read the entire Bible as a book which points to Jesus. (3) Let Scripture interpret Scripture. That is, allow clearer passages to help interpret more obscure texts. Also, let the full swath of Scripture speak on a topic before reaching settled conclusions. (4) Meditate on the portion of Scripture you are studying. (5) Approach the Bible in faith and obedience.

Our survey of general interpretive guidelines continues below in question 11.

## Summary – Chapter 11

In this section, we continued our survey of general principles for interpreting the Bible. In the prior section (question 10), we covered five guidelines. Five additional guidelines in this section are: (1) Take note of the biblical genre you are reading. (2) Be aware of historical and cultural background issues. (3) Pay attention to the immediate and broader context of a passage. (4) Read the Bible in community. (5) Begin the journey of becoming a more faithful interpreter.

## Lesson Plans

**What Are Some General Principles for Interpreting the Bible (1)?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 10*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

What would you say if someone approached you and said, “I was reading 1 Corinthians 15:29 and it talks about baptisms for the dead. Why don’t you baptize people for the dead at your church?”? *As you get responses, write them on the board. After a few minutes, give the following hermeneutical principle.*

This example illustrates one important hermeneutical principle, namely, that we ought to interpret Scripture with Scripture. We should be asking, “Is baptizing for the dead mentioned anywhere else in the Bible?” The answer is no. In fact, to baptize on behalf of the dead would contradict other passages of scripture which tell us that to be absent from the body is to be one with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). When we come to a passage that seems to contradict other passages, we must look for other possible meanings. Here in 1 Corinthians, he seems to be stating a fact that people are being baptized on behalf of the dead. In context, Paul is arguing for the resurrection. Paul is saying, simply put, why would people be trying to baptize on behalf of the dead, if the dead are not raised? He is not validating the practice but simply pointing to an already-existing practice that shows they already affirm the future resurrection of our physical bodies. Thus, if we don’t interpret scripture with scripture, we will end up with some weird, unbiblical practices.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 10**

What Are Some General Principles for Interpreting the Bible? (1)

* 1. Approach the Bible in prayer
  2. Read the Bible as a Book That Points to Jesus
  3. Let Scripture Interpret Scripture
  4. Meditate on the Bible
  5. Approach the Bible in Faith and Obedience

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 10**

1. What role do prayer and meditation currently play in your study of the Bible? Prayer and meditationare vital to deepening our understanding of Scripture. What are some barriers in your life that keep you from prayer and meditation? Consider some of the following: Has your study of the Bible become too routine? Are you setting aside time to concentrate or are you reading on the go? Do you clear yourself of distractions?

2) What steps can you take to make prayer and meditation a regular part of your Bible reading?

Are you having trouble incorporating prayer and Bible study? Consider the following guidance to see if you might find it fruitful: try making Scripture reading the first thing you do in the morning. Before you set your mind on anything else, kneel by your bed and pray according to the following verses from Ps. 119: “Open my eyes that I might behold wondrous things out of your law” (v. 18), “Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart” (v. 34). These are just some suggestions.

3) Do you approach all portions of the Bible as pointing to Jesus? Which parts seem the most difficult to view in this way? Why?

We ought to always approach every passage of Scripture in light of the New Testament teaching about Jesus. Many people often stumble over the holy wars in Joshua and wonder how they are going to connect them to Christ. Well, God made it clear that he was the one who was fighting for his people. In the New Testament, our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ has decisively defeated all of our enemies and we look to the future where he will destroy them finally.

4) What does it mean to let Scripture interpret Scripture?

Interpreting Scripture with Scripture means that we interpret the unclear passages by the clear ones. This is perhaps the most crucial hermeneutical principle because it can prevent a great deal of heresies from arising in the church. If you run across a passage that sounds odd, it is best to do some digging around in the Scriptures to see if it is taught more clearly elsewhere. This is why it is so important to read the Bible and be familiar with it. The more you read and study, the more you will develop a nose for interpreting the Bible.

5) Is it possible to believe and understand the Bible without obeying it? Can you back up your answer with Scripture?

Obeying Scripture is not optional. Many people might give lip service to the Bible but do not live it out. Do you know anyone like that? Do not be deceived, if you do not obey the commands of Scripture, all you have is demon-faith. James 2:19 says that even the demons believe and shudder. The Bible is not a book like every other book. God spoke it so that we would obey it. And through obedience, there is unspeakable joy (Ps. 119:72)!

**Additional Activities**

*Tell the group to turn to Acts 1:8 and to write the verse down on a piece of paper as they reflect on its meaning. Then they are to meditate on it for 10 minutes, reading and rereading the passage, asking the Lord to give them insight. After the 10 minutes are up, ask for volunteers who would share what they have learned.*

So, what insight have you gained from this verse? *Give enough time for five or six responses.* Isn’t it amazing how much we can glean from just ten minutes of meditation? The student of Scripture must make meditation a lifelong goal. Meditation can come in the form of writing, hearing, preaching, singing, or simply sharing God’s word. It is through meditation that we both understand the Word and apply it to our lives.

**What Are Some General Principles for Interpreting the Bible (2)?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 11*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Let’s turn to Mark chapter 7:24-30. *Read the text out loud.* Imagine reading these verses not knowing anything about the cultural context or historical background. What might you think? *Take four or five hands*. You would probably think Jesus was a racist and just plain rude. I say this to illustrate the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context of a passage. But if we know that culturally Jews were not to associate with Gentiles, especially with Gentile women, then the account makes much more sense. We must also keep in mind that Jesus came first to the Jews. You find this out by reading the wider literary context of the book of Mark. Both literary and cultural context are crucial in order to arrive at an accurate interpretation of Scripture.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 11**

I. What Are Some General Principles for Interpreting the Bible? (2)

A. Take Note of the Biblical Genre You Are Reading

B. Be Aware of Historical or Cultural Background Issues

C. Pay Attention to Context

D. Read the Bible in Community

E. Begin the Journey of Becoming a More Faithful Interpreter

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 11**

1. We must be aware of the type of book we are reading. If we read the Psalms, we can expect poetic language that is not meant to convey scientific truth such as “The sun rises.” We know that the sun does not revolve around the earth but it is a way of speaking poetically, using phenomenological language (describing an event as it appears).

2. Reading the Bible in community is crucial. Reading the Bible alone is often how cult leaders are formed. We all have limited perspectives and biases and need people around us to give us their perspectives and insights. How many times have you been surprised that someone saw something in a verse that was so obvious but you missed it? It happens to us all. Joining a Bible study is a great way to learn in a community. In your own personal time, you can surround yourself with commentators, dead and alive, who can offer their insights. Often reading from commentators from past decades and centuries can be enlightening as every generation has their blind spots.

3. Often when we find out some background information it makes a text come alive for the first time. For example, once you understand that crucifixions are reserved for the vilest criminals, the death of Christ seems to be all the more unjust and horrific, highlighting his great love for us.

4) At times, not only is a text brought to life for us, but the meaning is totally changed in light of new contextual information. Right now there is a great debate over Paul’s use of the word “righteousness.” Those who hold to the New Perspective on Paul ground their arguments almost completely in historical contextual evidence. In this case, a doctrine of the Reformation that Protestants have held on to for centuries is being called into question by some scholars. Context matters!

5) In taking your next step to becoming a better interpreter, you may want to check out books that would give you cultural and historical background information, such as the “Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Set.”

**Additional Activities**

*Tell the group to turn to John 10:11-18. Instruct them to spend five minutes writing down observations about the passage. Then ask them to turn to the person next to them and share their insights for another 5 minutes.*

How many of you learned something from the person next to you? How many of you saw something different in the passage than the person next to you? This illustrates the need for community. Now, what if we got into groups of four or five? The insights would increase exponentially.

# Section 6 – Chapters 12 & 13

## Summary – Chapter 12

No one has “arrived” as an interpreter of the Bible. We are all on a journey to greater faithfulness. In this section, I offered seven suggestions for how to grow in hermeneutical skill: (1) Read the Bible. (2) Read and listen to faithful preaching and teaching. (3) Understand the relationship between faith and obedience. (4) Do not just affirm sound interpretive principles; actually apply them. (5) Welcome and receive feedback graciously. (6) Acquire and employ Bible study tools. (7) Pass on what you are learning.

## Summary – Chapter 13

We began this section by noting the priority of the Bible and the importance of choosing secondary resources carefully. Next, we considered seven areas of Bible study tools: (1) A study Bible is a Bible with extensive notes on the meaning of Scripture. *The Zondervan NIV Study Bible* or *ESV Study Bible* may be one of the first tools that a beginning Bible student should acquire. (2) A concordance is a book-length index on the words in the Bible. An exhaustive concordance lists every occurrence of every word in the Bible. (3) Word study tools help one to understand the nuances of particular words in the underlying Greek and Hebrew texts. With the appropriate caveats (see above), a resource such as *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, can be of help to the diligent interpreter. (4) Commentaries are books that explain the text of Scripture, usually in a verse-by-verse or paragraph-by-paragraph method. For advice on which commentaries to obtain, see Tremper Longman’s *Old Testament Commentary Survey* and D. A. Carson’s *New Testament Commentary Survey*. (5) Software programs can provide many helpful digital tools, such as a collection of Bible versions, a study Bible, concordance, commentaries, etc. For persons with some knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, I recommend *Bibleworks* as the best Bible software program. (6) Websites can be helpful for Bible study. A list of ten recommended sites appears above. (7) For advanced biblical and theological study, the curious student will never exhaust the vistas of new reading and research (e.g., church history, practical ministry, systematic theology, etc.).

## Lesson Plans

How Can I Improve as an Interpreter of the Bible?

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 12*

1. **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**What is more important, to know the Word or to do the Word?
   1. Ask, “Who thinks it’s more important to know the Word?”
   2. Then ask, “Who thinks it’s more important to do the Word?”
   3. Then say, “Thank you. Now, for those who say it is more important to know the Word, why do you say that?”
   4. Listen to responses.
   5. Then do the same with those who think it is more important to do the Word.
   6. By this point, somebody probably will have said something like, “You can’t do the Word unless you know the Word.” But even if this is said, just keep asking for feedback.
   7. Then to wrap up this discussion you can have somebody read Psalm 1, Psalm 19:7-14, or Psalm 119 for the importance of knowing the Word, and James 1:19-25 for the importance of doing the Word.
2. What comes first obedience or faith?
   1. Depending on your setting, most evangelicals will say faith.
   2. In either case, you can play this question out in a similar fashion to the first to lay groundwork for the rest of the discussion.
   3. Grace through faith must be the source of all obedience.
   4. Have somebody read James 2:14-26 and Ephesians 4:1.
   5. A secondary question you can ask if interest in this question dies down or you want to keep discussion going is: does obedience evidence faith?
   6. Or said another way, can somebody truly have faith and not obedience?
      1. If the disobedience is temporary, yes.
      2. If the disobedience is perpetual, further questioning would be in line.
      3. Have somebody read 1 John 1:6.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 12**

* Read the Bible
  + Recommended Bible reading plan: “For the Love of God” D. A. Carson
* Read and Listen to Faithful Preaching and Teaching
  + Faithful interpretation is more caught than taught.
* Understand the Relationship Between Faith and Understanding
  + Quote from Augustine: “Believe in order that you may understand”
  + Quote from Anselm: “For I do not seek to understand in order to believe; I believe in order to understand. For I also believe that ‘Unless I believe, I shall not understand.’”
  + Does not mean don’t be honest with God.
  + Essential prerequisites for biblical study that pleases God:
    - Faith in the Lord Jesus
    - Love for others
* Do Not Just Affirm Sound Interpretive Principles; Apply Them
  + Hard to leave behind bad habits.
  + Dangers of not implementing sound hermeneutics:
    - Spiritually starving and confused congregation
    - Teaching teachers to be bad interpreters
    - Spiritual codependency
* Welcome and Receive Feedback Graciously
  + Ask for feedback in content and delivery
  + Decide not to defend yourself beforehand
  + Proverbs 27:17
  + Proverbs 24:26
* Acquire and Employ Bible Study Tools
  + Quote from Erasmus: “When I get a little money, I buy books; and if any is left, I buy food and clothes.”
  + Study Bible
  + Other helpful tools (see chapter 13)
* Pass on What You Are Learning
  + Stagnant pool or flowing fountain

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 12**

1. Is reading the Bible your daily practice? If not, why not start today?

Yes. Thanks be to God for the discipline and endurance to desire to read the primary way in which He has decided to speak to humanity. This is not to say that I have never missed a day, but it is to say that I am striving to make Bible reading a daily practice as much as eating is a daily practice.

1. Is the Bible taught faithfully at your church? Are you and your family being edified and challenged by Scripture there?

Yes. God has been graceful to my family to place us in a local church that believes in the inerrancy and authority of Scripture. The elders of the local church are dedicated to expositional preaching that regularly results in edifying and challenging teaching.

1. If you currently teach or preach the Bible, do you have a method for receiving feedback on your teaching?

I do not normally teach or preach the Bible outside of my home. I do author a blog in which I will exposit a passage every once in a while. In this way, I open up comments and end each post with a question for others to respond. I regularly ask my mentors and close friends to speak into many areas of my life, including my interpretation of Scripture.

1. Do you own a study Bible? If so, who is the publisher? What is the stated aim of your study Bible notes?

Yes, I own the “ESV Study Bible.” Crossway is the publisher. Their website states: “The goal and vision of the ESV Study Bible is, first and foremost, to honor the Lord—in terms of the excellence, beauty, and accuracy of its content and design; and in terms of helping people come to a deeper understanding of the Bible, of the Gospel, and of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.”

1. What relationships do you have that allow you to share what you are learning from the Bible?

I am a community group leader at my local church. There are 5-7 people who regularly gather in my home once a week to discuss the sermon and passage that was preached on during the previous corporate gathering. I also talk with my family daily with regards to what I have been studying or reading in the Bible.

**What Are Some Helpful Books or Tools for Interpreting the Bible?**

***Lesson Plans for Chapter 13***

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. What is more important reading the Bible or reading commentaries and other tools?
   1. Again, this is a teaser question just to get people interested.
   2. You can play it out similar to question #1 where you get people to raise their hand if they think reading the Bible is more important and ask them why. Then ask the others why they think it’s more important to read Bible study tools.
   3. There is valid support for both sides
      1. The Bible because it is the inspired word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, revealer of life, means to salvation, etc.
      2. Study tools because they help you better understand the Bible, which can result in a deeper knowledge of the one true God, a fuller understanding of the One we are to be conformed to, and a richer view into the primary way that God has desired to communicate with humanity.
2. Are physical books or websites more legitimate and/or helpful?
   1. Again, this is not an either/or questions, but if you phrase it this way, discussion and disagreement will most likely arise, which will result in more interest and a better learning environment.
   2. There are strengths and weaknesses for both (clearly stereotyping)
      1. Strengths
         1. Books – highlighting, writing notes, digesting through walking around, teach you through repetition and tend to be deeper
         2. Websites – vast amount of information, easy to navigate, accessible, fast facts
      2. Weaknesses
         1. Books – can be harder to find a passage that struck you, harder to navigate, time consuming
         2. Websites – teach you to not really need to remember anything or learn anything, surface level knowledge resulting in no deep transformation

**Outline Summary of Chapter 13**

1. Introduction
   1. Preeminence of Scripture
   2. Discernment in which tools to consult
2. Study Bibles
   1. Why?
      1. Brief summaries
      2. Historical backgrounds
      3. Discussion of difficult and debated texts
      4. Cross-references
      5. Indices
   2. “The Zondervan NIV Study Bible”
   3. “The ESV Study Bible”
3. Concordances
   1. Translation specific
   2. Be careful not to force a meaning or contextual nuance that is not intended
4. Word Study Tools
   1. Dangers:
      1. Illegitimate Totality Transfer
         1. Transferring all that a word can mean and reads that into the text
      2. Etymological Fallacy
         1. Wrongly believing that in all circumstances knowing the history of a word gives deeper insight into its current meaning

Words mean what the writers intended for them to mean in the historical context in which they were written.

* “Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words”
* “The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis”
* “The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology”

1. Commentaries
   1. To guide the interpreter from idiosyncratic interpretations
   2. Verse-by-verse or paragraph-by-paragraph study of a book
   3. Caveats
      1. Complete series usually not as good as individual works
      2. Be cautious with software programs
      3. Guidebooks
         1. “Old Testament Commentary Survey” –Tremper Longman
         2. “New Testament Commentary Survey” –D. A. Carson
      4. Don’t buy everything that shines
2. Software Programs
   1. Navigate the text of the Bible with ease
   2. Provide helpful secondary texts
3. Web Sites
   1. List of helpful biblical and theological websites
4. Advanced Study
   1. Don’t substitute anything for the originals
   2. Helpful websites for deeper study
      1. [www.biblicaltraining.org](http://www.biblicaltraining.org)
      2. [www.worldwide-classroom.com](http://www.worldwide-classroom.com)

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 13**

1. What tools, besides a Bible, do you currently use in your study of Scripture?

I normally use my ESV Study Bible, websites, and commentaries. Three of the websites that I visit most often are [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org), [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), and [www.biblos.com](http://www.biblos.com). I also have John Calvin’s set of commentaries. I have not used them all but have found his work on the Psalms to be quite helpful.

1. Do you own any useful Bible study tools that you are failing to use? Why?

Yes. There are probably 12 books of Calvin’s commentary set that I have not opened. The Internet has so many resources that are much easier to navigate. I also have an NIV Study Bible, which I previously used often, but then I received the ESV Study Bible as a gift and have not opened the NIV Study Bible in a few months.

1. Of the resources discussed above, what are the top ones on your wish list of future acquisitions?

The two guidebooks for commentaries (“Old Testament Commentary Survey” by Tremper Longman and “New Testament Commentary Survey” by D. A. Carson) are at the top of my wish list because I want to begin collecting specific commentaries for specific books. I am most interested in a commentary on Romans and 1 and 2 Thessalonians currently.

1. Have you ever engaged in any of the word study fallacies discussed above? Do you feel that you sufficiently understand the fallacies to avoid them in the future?

I’m sure I have engaged in some of the word study fallacies discussed above but no specific examples come to mind. It might be because I have not used word study tools very often. Yes, I feel that I sufficiently understand the fallacies to avoid them (or at least attempt to avoid them) in the future.

1. If someone were to ask you, “What book can you recommend to help me understand Ecclesiastes?” where would you go for trustworthy advice on relevant resources?

I would recommend “Old Testament Commentary Survey” by Tremper Longman, “New Testament Commentary Survey” by D. A. Carson, and potentially give them Dr. Plummer’s email address.

**Additional Activities**

Activity #1: Get in groups of 2-3, designate one scribe, and write out the positive aspects of reading and studying the Word. Encourage the use of Scripture. See who can come up with the most number of reasons to read the Bible in 15 minutes.

Activity #2: Hand out pop quiz on ways to improve as an interpreter: list five ways in which you can improve as an interpreter.

Activity #3: Hand out pop quiz on tools to use as an interpreter of Scripture: list five tools that can be helpful in Bible study.

Activity #4: Use one of the tools that were mentioned above to walk through a text. Read a passage in Scripture, read 2-3 commentaries on the passage, study one of the words in the chosen passage with a word study tool of your choosing, and see what a concordance says regarding that word (seeing where else the word is used, etc.).

# Section 7 – Chapters 14 - 16

## Summary – Chapter 14

Differing approaches to interpretation propose the reader, the text, or the author as the final determiner of meaning. In this book, however, I argue that the original human author’s consciously-intended purpose is the final arbiter of meaning. Nevertheless, to affirm an author-oriented approach to biblical interpretation is not to deny the dual authorship of Scripture (that is, both human and divine concurrent authorship), nor the need to seek modern-day implications of which the original human author was unaware.

## Summary – Chapter 15

As argued throughout this book, the conscious intent of the human author is the ultimate determiner of a biblical text’s meaning. Thus, a text can have more than one meaning *if* the author so intended. Of course, texts have many implications of which the original author was unaware but legitimately flow out of the principle(s) he enumerated. Because many people do not clearly define their terms when discussing the Bible, we have proposed a short list of interpretive vocabulary. In dealing with complex prophetic texts, additional nuances are sometimes necessary (see discussion above).

## Summary – Chapter 16

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune God. The Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). The Spirit also assists believers in understanding and obeying the Bible—two sides of the same coin, in biblical thought (Ps. 119:17–20; Matt. 13:11–16; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:13–16; Luke 24:44–45 and John 20:22). Protestant theologians have traditionally called this divine aid in understanding the Bible “the illumination of the Holy Spirit.”

In the normal work of illumination, the Holy Spirit does not whisper to the interpreter additional meanings or data that are not available in the text. Rather, the Spirit enables the interpreter to work diligently, perceive facts accurately, and weigh carefully the plausibility of conflicting data or opinions. As fallen humans, our minds and hearts are prone to deception and self-justification (Jer. 17:9). We must regularly seek the Holy Spirit’s assistance in understanding and obeying the Bible.

Lesson Plans

**Who Determines the Meaning of a Text?**

***Lesson Plans for Chapter 14***

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. **Starter Questions**
   1. Have you ever disagreed with someone’s interpretation of a specific text? How was that disagreement addressed/resolved? Explain.
   2. Who should determine the meaning of a specific text? Why is this important? Is it?
   3. Who should determine the meaning of the Bible? Why is this important? Is it?
      1. (Teacher: ‘These are some of the questions we are going to address today. We will be discussing different views on who can/should interpret the text and how each of those views can make what the words that are being read completely different.’)
2. **Outline Summary of Chapter 14**
   1. The Reader
      1. This approach holds to the belief that it is the reader who determines the meaning of a particular text
      2. Very prevalent in today’s culture
         1. Classroom setting
         2. Book clubs
      3. This approach, since every person can state precisely what it means *to them*, presents countless contradictions between different readers
      4. When the reader is the determiner of the meaning of a text, there is no right or wrong interpretation or meaning
         1. Even if the author him/herself was to disagree with an individual’s interpretation, it still is not seen as a wrong or inferior view because it is the reader’s interpretation
   2. The Text
      1. This approach holds to the belief that after the author has completed his/her work, the text itself takes on a life of its own.
         1. This can result in the text taking on meanings that fall outside of the authors original intent, and could even become contradictory to what the author even intended to say
            1. Historical facts and dates become irrelevant because the text itself gets to decide what it is saying
      2. This view was more popular between the 1930s and the 1960s
      3. Identifying the text as the determiner of meaning is often criticized because text is inanimate; writing on a page or screen cannot construct or decide meaning, it simply conveys.
   3. The Author
      1. This view holds that the original author is the only one that determines the meaning of the text
         1. It is the task of the reader to uncover what exactly that meaning is
      2. This approach is very commonsense
         1. For example: If I came home from work and my wife asked how my day was and I then proceeded to explain to her how the Pythagorean theorem worked, she would surely think I had gone mad! But why? Because I had interpreted her question of how my day was at work as her asking me to explain a highly complex mathematical equation instead. It is indeed nonsense!
         2. This is what happens though when the reader is allowed to determine the meaning of what the author penned
3. **Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 14**

1. Can you recall hearing someone who interpreted the Bible according to a reader-response approach?

Definitely, one time I had a conversation with an acquaintance of mine that said that Jesus obviously was not the Son of God or the Messiah because He had contradicted Himself. I asked my friend to explain herself and she said that Jesus said the second-greatest commandment was to love your neighbor as yourself but then turned around and said that Jesus told people to hate their parents. As someone who may not be familiar with different ways Jesus spoke, she determined the meaning of the text to literally mean that as Christians we are supposed to hate our parents. What I went on to explain to her was that in fact we are not called to hate our parents, but that our love for Christ should be so huge and amazing and all-encompassing that compared to that it should look like we hate our parents.

2. In your opinion, why is the reader-response approach to literature so popular at the current time?

I think the reader-response approach is so popular now because it reflects the attitudes of our society at large. People never like to be told that one thing is ‘right’ or that another is ‘wrong’. Our society believes in no absolute of any type, and I feel like literature is one of the major outlets for that. “For one person to tell me that my opinion about something, whether close or relevant at all, infringes on my individuality and ability to be myself and allow something to really speak to me.” That type of reasoning and response is exactly the thought that encompasses so much of our society today.

3. Do you see any positive qualities to the reader-response or text-determined approaches to meaning?

Honestly, I don’t particularly see any redeeming or positive qualities about the reader- or text-determined approaches. The text-determined response really has absolutely no positive ideas, because as we addressed earlier, a text can convey meaning but it cannot determine meaning. In regards to reader-response approaches, I suppose there may be something for allowing readers to have their own insights into a text. For instance, it is totally fair and allowable that someone could read a Scripture passage and something stand out to them that didn’t stand out to others. I think the Lord wants us to be individuals rather than machines who all think the exact same way, but that freedom should not provoke us to read things into the Scriptures that are not actually there.

4. Can the divine inspiration of Scripture (and thus the dual authorship of Scripture) genuinely be subsumed after the author-oriented approach to meaning?

I don’t think there is any doubt that the divine inspiration of Scripture can be included when we use the author-oriented approach to meaning, but I believe that this issues comes down to an individual’s beliefs about the Word of God as it stands. Personally, I believe the Word of God is not only true and infallible, but that it is also without error. That being said, I believe that the authors of the Bible, under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit, wrote exactly what the Lord wanted them to write, thus allowing the author to fully write and intend what he intended while at the same time the Lord was orchestrating the entire thing from the very start.

5. Of the four objections to the author as determiner of meaning presented above, which seems to have the most validity to you? Why?

To me, I think that objection 1 seems to hold the most water because, as the objection itself presented, it is very true that we cannot ever know or access the author’s thoughts, so how can we actually know *exactly* what he was trying to say? In everyday life, many people say many different things in many different ways. I may personally say something that, on the surface, means something very clear and distinct, but I may be thinking something totally different or opposite. I think this objection seems to be the most valid because I see this very thing take place all the time.

1. **Additional Activities**
   1. Break off into groups of 5 and read out loud the following statements that Jesus made and answer these three questions about each:
2. If the reader were to determine the meaning of this text, what might he/she interpret it to be saying?
3. How do these views differ from what the author was trying to convey?
4. Why is it important to understand this verse the way the author intended for us to instead of the way readers may want to?
5. Scripture references:
   * + 1. Matthew 5:29-30
       2. Matthew 7:3
       3. Luke 9:23
       4. Luke 14:26
       5. John 6:27
   1. Have the class split into groups of 5 and have each person in the group find a verse in the Bible that could have a meaning assigned to it by the reader differently than the author intended. Each person should explain how the passage they found could be wrongly interpreted by the reader. Then have each student share what the author’s original purpose may have been and how he or she arrived at that interpretation.

**Can a Text Have More Than One Meaning?**

***Lesson Plans for Chapter 15***

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. **Starter Questions**
   * 1. Can things we say in everyday speech have more than one meaning? How?
     2. Discuss with a few people sitting around you the following terms:
        1. ‘meaning’
        2. ‘implication’
        3. ‘significance’
        4. ‘subject matter’
     3. How are the previous definitions similar to each other? How are they different?
2. **Outline Summary of Chapter 15**
   1. Important Definitions:
      1. Meaning – “The paradigm or principle that the author consciously willed to convey by the shareable symbols [i.e., writing] he or she used.”
      2. Implication – “Those sub-meanings of a text that legitimately fall within the paradigm or principle willed by the author, whether he or she was aware of them or not.”
      3. Significance – “How the reader responds to the willed meaning of the author.” Upon being confronted with these implications, the modern-day reader/hearer will then respond with acceptance (obedience) or rejection (disobedience).
      4. Subject Matter – “The content or ‘stuff’ talked about in the text” (that is, the textual details in and of themselves without reference to their use in conveying the author’s meaning).
   2. The previous definitions are important to understand as you go through the chapter, because it is only by these definitions that we can answer the question: ”Can a text have more than one meaning?”
   3. We, as readers and hearers, must be able to identify these four aspects of each text and then from that information arrive at a conclusion about that text.
      1. Does it have more than one meaning?
      2. What are its implications?
      3. Will the text have any significance for you?
      4. What is the subject matter of the text?
   4. ‘Typology’ is seeing events in the Old Testament as pre-figuring events or aspects of Christ in the New Testament
      1. Best imagined as a staircase. Hosea can write about something happening then, but Matthew, who is at the top of the steps because of Christ’s coming, is able to see more clearly what Hosea was writing about, even if Hosea himself was unsure of what he was pointing toward.
3. **Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 15**

1. Is the distinction between meaning and implications clear to you? Explain the difference in your own words.

There is definitely a distinction between meaning and implication. The meaning of a text, passage, chapter, etc. is the main idea that the author consciously decided to share with his readers/hearers based on a set of thoughts that all point to the specific meaning he is trying to convey. Implications, on the other hand, while similar to meaning, are different in that implications are more of sub-meanings in a text. Where a specific text has one meaning, it may have many sub-meanings, also known as implications. Also, where meanings are consciously in the author/speaker’s mind, implications are not always consciously conveyed.

2. With reference to Ephesians 5:18, discuss meaning, implications, significance, and subject matter.

Ephesians 5:18 states that we are to “not get drunk of wine”. What this verse doesn’t say, however, is that we are not supposed to get drunk on beer, liquor, bourbon, whiskey, etc. Someone may look at this passage and try to say that since Paul did not mention all of these other types of intoxicating elements that he was obviously saying we can drunk on those, just not on wine. Whereas that may seemingly be the *meaning* of the text, its *implications* surely imply that Paul simply does not want us doing anything that could impair our judgment and decision-making skills. The *significance* of this text is how we, as the readers and hearers of this text, should respond; not only should we abstain from alcohol, but we should also stay free from marijuana, hallucinogens, huffing, and anything else that is known for impairing one’s judgment the same way that alcohol does. The *subject matter* of this text is simply that we should stay free of judgment impairing substances and instead be filled with the Spirit.

3. It is not uncommon to hear someone speak of applying a biblical text to his or her life (or the application of a text). Using the interpretive vocabulary introduced above, explain what people mean by application.

When most people say they have applied a text to his or her life, what they mean is that the text has significance to them. Upon understanding the meaning and implications of a text, the modern-day reader/hearer has a choice of what he/she will do. This choice, regardless of which they choose, is the *significance* the text has on their life. Significance, remember, is simply how a person responds to what they have read/heard; either they will accept or reject the claims Scripture makes and its subsequent meaning and implications.

4. Which of the four approaches to Isaiah 7:14 seems the most convincing to you?

The fourth approach to Isaiah 7:14 definitely makes the most sense to me based squarely upon the idea of typology. I believe that Isaiah understood that God intervened throughout history and was working toward an intervention at some point in the future. That being said, I believe Isaiah knew that one day, years after he had passed on, people would read the book of Isaiah and see that he wrote about things that he understood but not to the fullest extent. In a similar way, he could look back on history and see this same struggle within writers that had come before him. Therefore, as Isaiah wrote this passage, he consciously knew what he was writing about but did not know the final typological results, specifically (in this case at least) being the birth of a boy named Jesus.

5. Consider Matthew 2:15. Look up the text that Matthew quotes [(Hos. 11:1) noting the original context. Of the four approaches to difficult texts surveyed above, which one best fits Matthew’s use of Hosea? See question 24 {“How Do We Interpret Prophecy? [Typology]”) for more discussion of this text.

Clearly, the best approach to this question is to use the fourth approach, that of looking at it typologically, just like we did the last question. When Hosea wrote what he did so many years ago, he had no idea that he was writing about Jesus Christ. Even though he was writing about a totally different event and in a different time and place, Matthew, hundreds of years later, was able to look back on that writing typologically and see that God meant something more than what Hosea had yet realized. Hosea wrote about what he could with the knowledge he had but was aware and expectant that God would, as He had all through history, continue working and unfolding His plan more and more so that, as in the case of Matthew, someone one day could look back and have a better understanding of what Hosea was writing about.

1. **Additional Activities**

Break up into groups of 5 and give them the following passages of Scripture to look up, read, and discover its meaning. For each passage, have the groups identify the meaning, implications, significance, and subject matter of each of the five passages below. Have one person from each group present their findings.

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

1 Corinthians 16:20

Exodus 21:28-30

Psalm 150:1-6

Galatians 5:2

Do the same exercise again, but this time have each person identify the meaning, implications, significance, and subject matter of their favorite Bible verse/passage. Just like the last exercise, have one person from each group present what they found.

**What is the Role of the Holy Spirit in Determining Meaning?**

***Lesson Plans for Chapter 16***

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. **Starter Questions**
   * 1. Have you ever needed help to determine the meaning of a passage in the Bible? Explain. Did it help?
     2. What role do you think the Holy Spirit plays in helping someone understand a text? Why? How does that affect what you are reading?
2. **Outline Summary of Chapter 16**
   1. Who is the Holy Spirit / what does He do?
      1. The third person of the Triune God
      2. Sent by the Father and the Son into the world
      3. Indwells in all followers of Jesus
      4. Enables believers with spiritual gifts
      5. Intercedes on our behalf to the Father
   2. The Role of the Holy Spirit in helping us determine a text’s meaning
      1. The Spirit enables the believer to weigh the evidence that is before him accurately
         1. This compels and enables the believer to act because of his/her ability (due to the Spirit) to see the true state of things
      2. The Spirit enables and compels believers not only to affirm the correct meaning of the Bible but in turn to act on it
         1. The biblical authors themselves do not envision this happening: true understanding results in obedience
      3. The Spirit not only affects the will and brings conviction, but despite what some scholars say, He also aids in cognition
   3. Biblical evidence of illumination by the Spirit
      1. Psalm 119:17-20
      2. Matthew 13:11-16
      3. 1 Corinthians 2:14
      4. 2 Corinthians 3:13-16
      5. Luke 24:44-45
3. **Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 16**

1. Have you ever heard someone appeal to the Holy Spirit to support a meaning of Scripture that seemed to you an illegitimate interpretation? How did you handle the situation?

I have personally experienced this on only a few occasions, but one instance in particular stands out. I was at a church in the Dominican Republic one Sunday on a mission trip and we visited a rather large church that had an English translator for us. While the pastor was preaching, he began to site numerous Old Testament passages about the word of the Lord coming to him. He then began to pray that the Holy Spirit would help him accomplish his ‘task at hand’, after which he began to ‘prophecy’ about different things and people. He walked around the congregation and would utter something when he approached someone and then would say for the whole church to hear what sin this specific person was struggling with and when the Lord would eradicate it from their lives. Many people seemed to be very shocked when the pastor revealed their sin to the church. Personally, this pastor may or may not have been accurately prophesying (the English translator wasn’t great, so it was tough to tell sometimes exactly what was going on) what sin an individual was dealing with, but what struck me as concerning was that he was blatantly revealing the sin to the entire church.

2. Of the two views about the Sprit’s role in biblical interpretation presented above (traditional illumination view verses the Spirit only aids in volition), which do you think is correct? Why? (Or, is there some other view of the Spirit’s work you espouse?)

I think it is clear throughout the Scriptures that the Spirit’s role in biblical interpretation is definitely done so in the light of traditional illumination. Holding to the opposing view fails to take into consideration the damning effects of the fall in Genesis chapter three. Man’s ability to accurately determine the meaning and implications of a text on our own is giving us as humans way too much credit. As fallen man, we will inevitably wrongly determine meanings and implications of texts and passages; not only is the Spirit *helpful* in determining meaning, He is *essential*!

3. If the view on illumination presented above is correct, how should that affect the way you personally study the Bible?

As Christians, we undoubtedly should be diligent in our reading, studying, thinking and meditating on the Bible, but we must also see and savor the necessary privilege to submit to the authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must constantly be confessing our sinfulness and seeking the aid of the Spirit in everything we do, most importantly interpreting the Scriptures. This should affect the way we study the Bible in that we should constantly be reading and applying it to our lives in a way that shows a trust in the Spirit to reveal it to us as we go.

4. If the view on illumination presented above is correct, how should that affect the way you talk about the Bible with others?

I think when we talk about the Bible, it should do a few things. First and foremost, it should keep us humble. When we *know* that we, as sinful and fallen human beings cannot understand the Word of God without the Spirit, it should drive us to our knees. Second, it should be evident in our speech that we trust the Spirit to reveal the Scriptures to us. If someone asks a question that we cannot explain or says something that we do not know the solution to, it should be evident to the person we are speaking with that even when we don’t know the answer we trust the Spirit to give it to us in due time.

Pray this prayer slowly and thoughtfully prior to reading your Bible:

**A Prayer of Illumination**

Living God,

Help us to hear your holy Word with open hearts

So that we may truly understand;

And, understanding,

That we may believe;

And, believing,

That we may follow in all faithfulness and obedience.

Seeking your honor and glory in all that we do.

Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

1. **Additional Activities**

1. Break off into groups of four or five and instruct each person to give an example from his/her personal walk with the Lord of a time when it was obvious to them that the Spirit ‘illuminated’ them. Allow for at least three to four minutes per individual.

2. Have the each person get away to themselves and encourage them to seek the Lord about any texts or passages they may be struggling with. Instruct them to pray that the Lord would make plain and clear to them any passages of Scripture which are unclear or hazy. Allow plenty of time for the class reference the Word, seek the Lord, and otherwise meditate or pray about the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

# Section 8 – Chapters 17 & 18

## Summary – Chapter 17

It is sometimes difficult to keep in mind the “big picture” of the Bible’s over-arching message when looking at the diverse individual parts. Most important is to keep in mind that the Bible is a book about Jesus. The storyline of the Bible reveals the need for Jesus, the promise of Jesus, the anticipation of Jesus, the incarnation/arrival of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus, and the promised return of Jesus. Nevertheless, beyond this Christocentric foundation, a number of additional over-arching hermeneutical grids can be helpful in understanding the structure of the Bible. In particular, we have advocated the value of noting the following biblical frameworks: (1) Promise-Fulfillment; (2) Kingdom Anticipated-Kingdom Inaugurated-Kingdom Consummated; (3) Old Covenant-New Covenant; (4) Law-Gospel; and (5) Salvation History.

## Summary – Chapter 18

If we believe Jesus and the authors of the New Testament, the Bible really is *all* about Jesus. We see this quite plainly in the New Testament with Jesus as the subject, source, and supporting substructure of revelation. Too often, Christian interpreters wrongly disconnect ethical exhortation or doctrinal issues from the person and work of Christ. The Old Testament likewise is a book that prepares for and points to Jesus. In the Old Testament, Jesus is both the propositionally-promised Messiah and the typologically-anticipated Savior. Throughout the entire Bible, every text can be seen as giving a demand of God (law) or a promise/gift from God (gospel). Ultimately, every demand in Scripture shows us our desperate need before a completely holy God—thus pointing again to Jesus as the sufficient Savior and solution to our sin problem.

## Lesson Plans

**What is the Overarching Message of the Bible?**

**Is the Bible Really All About Jesus?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 17 and 18*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Have a volunteer come to the front with his or her Bible. Ask for the Bible, flip it over several times, turn it around, and have the individual close his or her eyes and open to a passage and point. Then write that reference or verse on the board and ask the class, “How does this verse refer to Christ?” Maybe read John 5:39 first and make the claim that all Scripture points to Christ. Take 15 minutes with this discussion as an opening exercise.

**Outline Summary of Chapters 17 and 18**

1. The overarching message of the Bible is Christocentric (fundamental to all other organizing categories)
   1. What does it matter if we have these? If the text is about Jesus, how is it really about him? How does it all fit together? Can become moralism without seeing the big picture. We miss the fulfillment in Christ.
   2. The Person and Saving Work of Jesus Christ
      1. John 5:39, Luke 24:27
      2. Story-line of Bible reveals:
         1. Need for Jesus
         2. Promise of Jesus
         3. Anticipation of Jesus
         4. Incarnation/arrival of Jesus
         5. Teachings of Jesus
         6. Crucifixion of Jesus
         7. Resurrection of Jesus
         8. Ascension of Jesus
         9. Promised return of Jesus
   3. Jesus’ Role in the New Testament Revelation
      1. Subject
      2. Source
      3. Supporting Substructure
      4. Solution & Sufficient Savior
   4. Jesus’ Role in Old Testament Revelation
      1. Propositionally Promised Messiah
      2. Typologically Anticipated Savior
      3. Solution & Savior
   5. Overarching grid is to point to Christ NOT moralism. Graeme Goldsworthy *Gospel & Kingdom*. Ask after sermon, “Do people see Christ more vividly?” Helpful to listen to other people who do it well.
   6. Promise & Fulfillment
      1. Matt. 5:17, Matt. 11:12-13, I Pet. 1:10-12
      2. Ask where are we in that continuum? In promise or fulfillment?
      3. Not just propositional predictions
   7. Kingdom – anticipated, inaugurated, consummated
      1. Graeme Goldsworthy, *Big Picture Story Bible*, Vaughn Roberts (Does this name go with the following quote? I can’t tell if the 2 quotes are from your book or what their source is.)
      2. Mark 1:15 – “when Jesus came he didn’t say, let me tell you about this kingdom…but he said, ‘it’s here’”
      3. Ps. 103:19
      4. A mediated kingship but also a longing for an ultimate kingship
      5. “OT like all these harmonies and then Jesus comes and is the melodic line”
      6. Already & not yet – Matt. 12:28, Matt. 8:11. Lord’s prayer = “your kingdom come”
      7. Criticisms
         1. Can emphasize a theme and miss Christ – he just becomes puzzle rather than central (Mark 9:1 = you want to see kingdom of God in power? Look at Jesus)
         2. Sometimes people can get too clever with them
         3. Can miss beautiful details of Scripture by always summarizing to get the overarching theme
      8. Kingdom of God chart in book (see this)
   8. Old Covenant – New Covenant
      1. Jer. 31:31ff, Heb. 8, Last Supper passage,
      2. Covenantal Theology – Reformed theology. Way of putting the whole Bible together (distinguished from dispensationalism). Not necessarily talking about old/new covenant. Covenant of grace/works flattens out explicit terms in Scripture. New Covenantal Theology – trying to use more explicit biblical language.
   9. Law/Gospel
      1. Gal. 3
      2. Luther
      3. Do this and live/it is done, now live
      4. Lots of buzz about the Gospel
   10. Salvation History/Redemptive History
       1. Story of Bible is story of God intervening to save humanity
       2. Where are we in that?
       3. Oscar Koolman
   11. Dispensationalism
       1. See chart in book
       2. *The Old Scofield Study Bible*
       3. J.N. Darby (1830s)
          1. Consistent distinction btw. Israel & church
          2. Secret rapture
          3. Literal interpretation of prophecy texts
          4. God’s own glory
       4. Progressive Dispesnationalism
          1. Follows more explicit language of Scripture
          2. Bridge btw. Covenantal theology & dispensationalism
          3. “Salvation to the Ends of the Earth” – O’Brien & Köstenberger – best book on Mission (will convince you against dispensationalism).

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 17**

1. What is the overarching message of the Bible?

Make sure the individual mentions something about Jesus Christ. A good answer would go something like this: The overarching message of the Bible can only be understood with a Christocentric foundation. That is, the message of the Bible is either looking forward to Christ, finding its culmination in Christ, or looking back on Christ’s finished work and its implications for humanity. There are various systems of organizing the Bible’s storyline while still maintaining Jesus Christ as central and its main theme.

1. While reading through the above sections, did you recognize a theological system or framework that has been presented to you in the past?

Any of the organizing categories (see outline above) would work for an answer to this question. Something that I could share with the group could be an answer like the following: I have been introduced to all of the theological systems or frameworks outlined in this chapter. However, the theological system that I am most unfamiliar with is dispensationalism. While, I have read most of the *Left Behind* books I am not well read in any scholarly dispensational works nor have I ever sat under the teaching of a dispensationalist pastor or teacher to my knowledge.

1. Did any of the organization structures presented above help you see more clearly the big picture of the Bible?

This should NOT be just a “yes” or “no” answer. Have individuals name what structure helped them and how it helped them. A suitable answer I could share would be: While I have not read Dr. Russ Moore’s book on the kingdom, I find the kingdom grid to be helpful in seeing the big picture of the Bible. While the shortcomings of this grid are apparent, if the kingship of Christ is emphasized and it is granted that not all passages fit into this grid, then I think that this view helps make sense of much of the Gospels and Jesus’ mission.

1. Which of the interpretive grids seems most faithful to the explicit language of Scripture?

Persons should support their answer of *why* the particular interpretative grid they choose helps them. A suitable answer would be something like the following: The promise-fulfillment interpretative grid seems broad enough to encompass much of Scripture and the most faithful to the explicit language of Scripture. Not only are the terms promise and fulfillment used often by Jesus Himself in explaining that He is the fulfillment of that which was promised (Matt. 5:17, Luke 9:31; 21:22; 22:16, 37), but this language is also explicitly used throughout the entire Old and New Testaments. . Dr. Mark Dever’s overview books on the Bible summarize it well. The Old Testament volume is entitled, “Promises Made” and the New Testament volume is entitled, “Promises Kept”.

1. Read aloud this hymn by Isaac Watts (“The Law Commands and Makes Us Know”). Ask yourself, “Have I personally experienced the freedom of the gospel spoken of here?”

The Law commands and makes us know

What duties to our God we owe;

But ‘tis the Gospel must reveal

Where lays our strength to do His will.

The Law discovers guilt and sin,

And shows how vile our hearts have been;

Only the Gospel can express

Forgiving love and cleansing grace.

What curses doth the Law Denounce?

Against the man that fails but once!

But in the Gospel Christ appears

Pard’ning the guilt of num’rous years.

My soul, no more attempt to draw

Thy life and comfort from the Law;

Fly to the hope the Gospel gives;

The man that trusts the promise lives.

Depending on the dynamic of the group, it might be most helpful to make this a rhetorical question. If wanting to have a class discussion on this question (maybe for a smaller group setting) begin sharing something like the following answer to get discussion going:

I am thankful every day to know God’s freeing grace in the Gospel. However, it can be very difficult at times to regularly experience and live in the grace of the Gospel. I am very prone to a performance based Christian life that exhibits itself by getting frustrated at my failures and not giving God the glory for evidences of grace in my life. I am reminded by this hymn of a poem oft quoted by John Piper that goes as follows:

Run John run

The Law commands

But gives me neither feet nor hands

Far better news the Gospel brings

It bids me fly

And gives me wings

I pray every day that I might know the freedom and rest of Christ’s finished work instead of the enslavement of trying to prove myself to God each day. I pray that I would know the promise of Matthew 11:28 and that I would have the humility to come to Christ and know His rest.

**Answers to Reflections Questions in Chapter 18**

1. Do you have a Christ-centered approach to reading Scripture? That is, when you read the Bible, do you expect every text to cause you to savor more deeply the saving work of Christ on the cross?

Individuals should support this answer with a “how”. A suitable answer would be: Seeing all Scripture as Christ-centered is something I can always improve in. Often when I read the Old Testament I do not do the hard work to zoom out and ask the questions necessary to understand how the particular passage points to Christ and His work on the cross. Since all of Scripture is Christocentric, I should more often come to Scripture with the expectation and with preparation to savor Christ’s work on the cross.

2. If you are a preacher, have your messages tended to be more moralistic (“Do this!” “Don’t do that!”) or more Christocentric (“Christ did it all!”)?

Individuals should provide either an example or at least more than just a one-word answer to this question. If they just say, “Christocentric”, maybe follow up and ask them how or why that’s important. A suitable answer would be: I am not a preacher but I expect that it would be much easier to be moralistic in sermons because it is so easy to be moralistic in discipleship. Because of my sin nature, I am much more prone to want a task or duty to accomplish rather than resting in finished work on my behalf. I think the key to living a “cross-centered life” that does not turn Christianity into mere moralism is to do the hard work of never assuming how Scripture points to Christ but to explicitly point it out in each Scripture and meditate on it.

3. What steps can one take to avoid a moralistic reading of the Scriptures?

Any of the suggestions in the book related to Christ or the interpretive grids from the previous chapter would be good here. A suitable answer would be: An easy way to avoid a moralistic reading of Scripture is simply to ask the question of how each passage relates to Christ. If reading from the Old Testament, asking, “How does this passage find its fulfillment in Christ?” Or, “How does this passage point to Christ?” If reading in the New Testament, one can ask, “How does this passage find its source or subject in Christ?” Further, looking at cross references can be a helpful way to get to Christ. Also, whenever a command or law is given, you can remind yourself of your inability and weakness to keep that command and Christ’s perfect righteous life in keeping that law or command.

4. How would you convince a naysayer that the person of Christ really is the central, unifying theme of Scripture?

Individuals should be able to name at least one Scripture reference that proves his or her thesis here. A suitable answer would be: I think I would first go to John 5:39 and show how Jesus himself said that ALL Scripture testifies about Christ. Also, Luke 24:13-35 might be helpful in showing how Jesus explained to the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus what ALL the Scriptures said concerning Himself. Depending on the person’s religious convictions, I think I would ask what he or she thought the central unifying theme of Scripture is and work from there. If someone does not think that Scripture has a unifying theme, I would challenge them based on such passages above where Jesus and the Apostles seem to assume that all the many different books and genres of Scripture all have one coherent theme and point that can be summarized, preached on, and find its point in the person of Jesus Christ.

5. Has the discussion above aided you in seeing Christ as the unifying hub around which the wheel of the Bible turns? If so, how?

Answers must include the “how.” A suitable answer here would be: This chapter has bolstered my confidence that Christ is the unifying hub around which the wheel of the Bible turns. The discussion on biblical typology has especially helped me understand how figures such as Gideon, Samson, Moses, Abraham, and David are all incomplete pictures, but pictures nonetheless of the coming Christ. I wonder if in many cases an argument must be made first that Scripture does have one coherent metanarrative before one sets out to prove that it the unifying theme is in fact Jesus Christ.

**Additional Activities**

1. Provide a brief sample article in which the group can identify the thesis and supporting premises. Have individuals read the article for homework or in class if time permits and then discuss if there is a unifying theme or thesis to the article. They should provide support from the text of the article to prove their answers.

Sailhamer’s article from JETS 44.1 on Messiah in the Hebrew Bible would be a good article to look at while at home.

Any recent op-ed from the NY Times would serve well as a good activity when with the rest of the group.

1. Write a random verse or brief passage from Scripture on the board and have volunteers guess at what the main point is. Follow with asking how that passage relates to Christ.
2. Role play someone trying to convince a naysayer that all of Scripture points to and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (perhaps the teacher should play the role of the naysayer). Have the rest of the group vote on whose arguments were the most convincing. If the naysayer is able to convince the majority of the class, award extra credit. Allow 5 minutes or your discretion depending on the quality for the role-playing exercise.

# Section 9 – Chapters 19 & 20

## Summary – Chapter 19

Most Christians do not attempt to obey all the commands in the Bible (for example, the command to not wear clothes woven of two different fabrics, Lev. 19:19). As odd as it may sound, there are good biblical reasons for neglecting some Scriptural injunctions. As participants in the new covenant, Christians must distinguish between moral commands with abiding authority and those civil and ceremonial regulations of the old covenant that find their fulfillment in Christ (Mark 7:14–23; Acts 15:6–11). The timeless moral commands of both the Old and New Testament, while fulfilled in Christ, find ongoing expression through the Spirit-led lives of Christ’s body, the church.

In interpreting the Bible, it is also important to keep in mind the difference between prescriptive and descriptive writing. Much is described in Scripture that is not specifically commanded. Finally, in seeking to apply commands that come to us with a “cultural veneer,” it is important to determine the underlying theological principles and their concomitant applications in our setting today. Guidelines for determining to what degree a command may be culturally conditioned are listed above.

## Summary – Chapter 20

Until Christ returns, we will live in a world where people disagree over the meaning of the Bible. In this environment, it is important to remember that many so-called “experts” who speak or write publicly on the Bible are actually non-Christians whom we should expect to misunderstand and distort the truth (Matt. 7:15; Rom. 1:28–32; 2 Thess. 2:11–12). Also, the amount of disagreement *among genuine believers* is easily overstated. Moreover, the Bible makes clear that God did not intend to reveal all matters with the same clarity (Rom. 14:5; 2 Peter 3:15–16).

While interpreters have varying levels of skill and knowledge, worldly intelligence does not make a gifted interpreter. A deep knowledge of and whole-hearted obedience to God’s Word, however, makes one truly wise (Ps. 119:98–100). Finally, we noted that that Holy Spirit guards God’s people from error and aids them in understanding and applying his Word (1 John 2:20–27). Such promised divine assistance, however, does not absolve the Christian from the responsibility to be diligent (2 Tim. 2:15).

## Lesson Plans

**Do All the Commands of the Bible Apply Today?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter* *19*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. If it is not necessary for believing men to be physically circumcised anymore, then why did Paul require this of Timothy and not Titus?

2. If we no longer require head coverings for women in our worship services, then why do we also not allow women to exercise authority over men in preaching and teaching as mentioned in 1 Timothy? Are they both cultural mandates? Should they be normative? Should we read these differently? If so why?

1. **Outline Summary of Chapter 19**
   1. Chapter Introduction
   2. Covenant-Bound Commands
      1. Three types of OT Laws
         1. Civil (social) – fulfilled in Christ no longer applicable
         2. Ceremonial (religious) – fulfilled in Christ no longer applicable
         3. Moral (ethical) – Continue but the Spirit allows believers to fulfill them
      2. Unusual and seemingly inconsistent moral laws were to show Israel as set apart and different from other nations as well as prepare them for Christ
      3. Laws upheld in the NT as well as those not specifically repealed by the NT are stilled to be followed by Christians
   3. Prescriptive vs. Descriptive
      1. Does the text prescribe (command) a certain action?
      2. Does the text merely describe a certain action?
      3. This can be difficult to tell
      4. Prescriptive texts usually have teaching that immediately precede them
   4. Culture, Time, and Biblical Demands
      1. Some commands transfer from culture to culture with little or no alteration
      2. Some Commands embody timeless principles that find varying expressions in different cultures (what is the purpose?)
      3. Some commands are non-moral and have no application outside their original setting

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 19**

1. Has anyone ever accused you of picking and choosing your morality from the Bible? How did you respond?

To tell the truth, no one has ever accused me of picking and choosing my morality. Maybe this is a sign that I need to be engaging other Christians who hold different views and do more evangelizing. If I were ever confronted with this situation however, I would do my best to explain how Christ fulfills the civil and ceremonial laws of the OT. I would also explain how the Spirit empowers the believer to be able to follow the moral laws. If they had a specific issue that they felt I was not being consistent with, I would look at it in both the OT and NT and see if it is still forbidden in the NT. If so, I would then look at in its cultural context and try to explain to them why this is still binding on believers today.

2. Do you feel confident explaining why Christians are not to obey food laws or sacrificial laws in the Old Testament? Try giving a brief explanation. Be sure to cite Scriptures to support your assertions.

I would feel confident explaining why each of these is no longer applicable for the believer. In the case of the food laws, Jesus himself in Mark 7:18-23 declares all foods to be clean to eat. The end of the sacrificial system is a little different. Christ is our sacrifice and does what bulls and goat could never do for us (Heb. 10:1-18). Christ has died once and for all. Also, Christ is our mediator before God and thus there is no longer a need for the priesthood mentioned in the OT.

3. Read Judges 11. Is the behavior of Jepthah prescriptive or descriptive? How do you know?

The story of Jephthah in Judges 11 seems to be a descriptive story. For one, there is no teaching that follows the story at all. It merely seems to just present the facts of the story as they happened.

4. In Romans 16:16, Paul writes, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” In what way is this command applicable today? Explain.

Today it is not too customary in our society to great others with kisses. In some societies this still may be applicable however. The command that he gives here is still binding however in principle. We have to get behind the meaning of the text to what Paul is really trying to get at. Basically, Paul is trying to get people to extend warm and friendly greetings to one another. While this was accomplished by a kiss in Paul’s day, we can remain obedient to this command and culturally acceptable by warmly greeting each other with a handshake or even a hug.

5. Are there any commands in Scripture about which you have interpretive questions or doubts?

I personally do not have any doubts or questions about what the Bible commands. If I did however, I would attempt to submit my life to the Scriptures while praying about my problems and reading more broadly within the Scriptures to see if I could get clarification. Secondly, I would consult some good conservative evangelical commentaries as well as other resources that dealt with the given issue at hand.

**Additional Activities**

* 1. OT Law Classification – With the group look at several laws from the OT and have them tell you what kind of law they are looking at and if the particular law is binding on the Christian.
  2. Prescriptive vs. Descriptive practice – Have them team up with a partner and discuss several verses and whether they are prescriptive or descriptive.
  3. Culture and Time homework – Give them several verses and have them apply them to our culture. They should seek to identify if these commands need little or no alteration or if they are non-moral and time specific. If the command is one that is moral, but is tied to culture, the person should identify the underlying principle and then mention the way that principle is applied to our culture.

**Why Can’t People Agree on What the Bible Means?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 20*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

What really are the key issues of Scripture and what are more of the secondary, tertiary, or even quaternary issues of Scripture? You can write the answers given by the group on the board as they call them out to you and place them in either three or even four categories depending on how vital the issues really are. The most important issues involve whether the person is even a Christian or not, while non-important issues such as views on how to take the millennium in the book of Revelation would still allow to people to fellowship together in the same church every Sunday and thus would be either a tertiary or quaternary issue depending on how many levels you have. It is important for people to see that there are differences in the importance of beliefs about God and the Bible. You want people to be able to defend what is truly important in the faith as well as being respectful and not quarrelsome about issues that really do not matter so much in light of eternity.

1. **Outline Summary of Chapter 20**
   1. Introduction
   2. Non-Christians can be expected to misunderstand and distort scripture
      1. Many “Bible Scholars” used in the media are not Christian
         1. They are hostile to Orthodoxy
         2. They have deprived minds because they try and subvert the truth
         3. The world loves them because they tell them what they want to hear about the Bible
         4. They are false prophets
      2. Non-Christians can interpret the Bible correctly
         1. It is a sign of common grace from God
         2. This is not the norm because of sinfulness
         3. Even if they do understand they are unable to properly act because of their sinfulness
   3. The amount of disagreement among genuine believers is overstated
      1. We should not allow secondary issues to divide us
      2. We should always be open to the Scripture changing us
      3. No one is or will ever be perfect in this life so it is important to submit to the authority of Scripture
   4. God did not reveal all issues with the same clarity
      1. Scripture is clear to believers
         1. It takes faith for greater clarity
         2. It also takes the work of the Spirit for greater clarity
      2. The Bible does not intend to make all things clear
      3. We cannot blame God for our misunderstanding of the text
         1. It is our sinfulness that causes us to misunderstand
         2. God will protect the believer for heresy and denial of the faith
      4. God’s word is sufficient but not exhaustive
      5. Caveats on hard to understand texts
         1. Reserving judgment on texts can be helpful at times
         2. Provisional opinions on debate matters is ok
         3. If you are the only advocate of an interpretation, you are probably wrong.
   5. Interpreters have varying levels of knowledge and skill
      1. Human intelligence can be a barrier
      2. The truly wise know God’s word and obey it
      3. Knowledge that does not lead to action if worthless
   6. Interpreters have varying levels of spiritual illumination and diligence
      1. Faithful interpretation involves obedience
      2. Do not approach God and the word flippantly
      3. We cannot rely on ourselves but we must make our arguments from the text itself
   7. Interpreters have various Biases
      1. We all have biases based on several factors in our life and we will never be perfect interpreters until we are in the presence of Christ
      2. We can even be motivated by our unconscious thoughts

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 20**

1. Have you been struggling to reach an opinion on a particular biblical text or theological issue? What is the next step you should take in dealing with this matter?

I have not really wrestled with any major theological issues lately. When I have dealt with issues in the past, I found that it is good to pray for God to give you wisdom and to search the Scriptures as much as you can to find answers to your questions. It can also be helpful to read others’ works such as commentaries or other books, but you have to remember that they are human too ad capable of error.

2. Who is the most recent religious expert you have heard quoted in the news? Could you tell if he or she was a Christian?

It has been a very long time since I personally have heard a religious expert quoted in the news since I do not watch much television. I will say that somewhat recently I did read a religious expert from the seminary take a very unfavorable position with the culture at large and various media outlets lambasted him. He is definitely a Christian.

3. Can you think of an interpretive issue on which you have changed your mind? What convinced you to change?

I can think of a few, especially while I was in college. One of the major changes that occurred was my view of women in leadership roles within the church and home. When I went into college, I thought that women had just as much right to preach and lead as men do within the church and that a family should be a fifty-fifty partnership. The thing is I had never really studied the Scriptures very much on the issue. It sounded good to me for women to be equal in all ways to men since that is what our age tells us. However, I eventually started to read the Bible more and with a greater reading and studying came greater understanding of the Scriptures. I do believe that women should serve in the local church and minister to other women, but I feel that the pastorate is a job only reserved for men. I also feel that the man is supposed to be the head and leader of the household. I feel that women and men have very specific roles in the home that complement each other and that neither one is better than the other.

4. As noted above, Wayne Grudem defines the perspicuity of Scripture accordingly: “The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.” Based on the discussion above and your own reflections, would you add further qualifications?

I think that this is a good definition in that it does mention the role of faith in the clarity in which one is able to read and understand the Scriptures. I would have added in there a line about the help of the Holy Spirit in understanding Scripture. The Spirit plays a huge role in our understanding of Scripture. Also, sometimes texts are hard to understand and one has to search for a long time before understanding a truth. God is faithful though and being faithful to God when you do not have all the answers goes a long way too.

5. Is there some topic on which you wish the Lord had provided additional comment in Scripture?

The major things in the Bible are pretty clearly defined in Scripture. The other things would just be because they were personally interesting to me. I sometimes wish we knew exactly how the beginning of Genesis is really supposed to be understood or the same for the prophecies in Revelation. However, in reality,these things do not affect my day-to-day life all that much. I am thankful that what matters most, is clear to understand.

**Additional Activities**

“Biblical Scholar” Activity – Make a document that contains about 10 to 15 small excerpts from these various “Biblical Scholars” and pass them out to the group. Make sure that the excerpts you choose are challenging either basic doctrinal tenants of orthodoxy or even a few serious second tier beliefs. Have participants answer all of their claims in paragraph form making sure that they reason from the word of God.

Varying Views Assignment – Take a secondary issue such as Divorce where there is quite a bit of debate as to the proper way of handling it and have individuals read all the major views on the issue by the best scholars and leaders. Then have them write about whether or not their view changed in the process. Also make sure that they know that it is ok to have differing views on things such as this and to not verbally beat people up who hold to differing views.

# Section 10 – Chapters 21 & 22

## Summary – Chapter 21

The genre of a work is the specific literary form adopted by the author. In submitting his writing to a particular genre, the author implicitly conveys certain assumptions about how the composition should be understood. A number of biblical genres are readily recognizable (e.g., historical narrative), but even these genres often have shared assumptions which differ from modern works of similar form. The latter half of this book, along with other resources recommended above, can aid the modern reader in understanding the significance of various biblical genres.

Three interpretive missteps were also cautioned against: (1) Misunderstanding the genre of a work can result in skewed interpretation. (2) Mislabeling a biblical genre can be an underhanded way of denying the text’s truthfulness. (3) Principles for interpreting genres can be misused to excuse oneself from the demands of Scripture.

## Summary – Chapter 22

Historical narratives, which constitute roughly sixty percent of the Bible, are the recounting of factual events in story format. This genre is often peppered with sub-genres, such as genealogies (Matt. 1:1–17), songs (Exod. 15:1–18), proverbs (Matt. 26:52), etc. The biblical authors intended for their narratives to be understood as accurate, factual accounts, though their style and organization differ at times from modern historical works.

An especially effective form of communication, historical narratives are not without interpretive challenges. Most significantly, the author’s meaning is rarely “on the surface” of the text. The reader must pay careful attention to subtle clues such as context, editorial comments, thematic statements, repetition, and the statements of “trustworthy characters.” The interpreter’s goal is not simply to rehash the story but to determine why the author has told the readers the story. What was the author trying to teach or convey to the readers through this account? Why has the author included *this* story, with *these* details? Deciphering the subtle authorial clues in historical narratives is a skill better “caught” than “taught.”

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Identify Literary Genre- and Why Does It Matter?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 21*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Show the following cartoon (I am not sure what cartoon is being referred to)
   1. Ask, “Is the creator of this work trying to communicate that the purpose of writing is really what Calvin says? Is that his point? If not, how do you know?”
      1. The author/creator is *not* trying to communicate such a purpose.
      2. The goal of this opening illustration is that our minds automatically interpret things through different lenses depending on the type of genre that we identify something to be.
   2. Follow-up questions/comments:
      1. “Imagine scholars who find this 1000 years from now. Do you think they would argue about whether or not the author truly understood the purpose of writing? (Yes, probably.) If scholars in the future fail to identify the literary genre of this document, they are bound to make huge mistakes in its interpretation, and grossly misunderstand author’s message.”
      2. What is the literary genre of this manuscript? (Cartoon, satire, humor, fiction.)
      3. Are we therefore intended to understand that this is a true story—that it really happened? (NO). What are the clues? (The typical layout that we recognize. The style of drawing. Tigers can’t read.)
   3. Tie this into the lesson, to emphasize what is involved in identifying literary genre of texts and why it matters.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 21**

1. Definition of Genre: “a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.”
   1. Recognizing genres is something we do many times each day. Examples.
2. Identifying the Genre of Biblical Writings
   1. Historical Narrative—most common—60% of Scripture. Example: Genesis
   2. Genealogy. Example: 1 Chronicles 1-9
   3. Exaggeration/Hyperbole. Example Matthew 5:29-30
   4. Prophecy. Example: Isaiah
   5. Poetry. Example: Joel
   6. Covenant. Example: Genesis 17:1-4
   7. Proverbs/Wisdom Literature. Example: Proverbs, Job
   8. Psalms and Songs. Example: Exodus 15:1-18
   9. Letters. Example: 1 Corinthians
   10. Apocalypse. Example: Daniel
3. Interpretive Missteps
   1. Misunderstanding the genre of a work can result in skewed interpretation.
      1. Example: Judges 11:39 is not prescriptive, exemplary instruction, but rather a mere historical narrative report of events.
   2. Mislabeling a biblical genre can be an underhanded way of denying the text’s truthfulness.
      1. Example: Labeling something as myth rather than historical narrative.
   3. Principles for interpreting genres can be misused to excuse oneself from the demands of Scripture.
      1. Example: Dismissing Matthew 5:42 as exaggeration to the point that you don’t hear the radical call to let go of worldly goods.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 21**

1. Make a list of the different literary genres you might encounter in a normal day. What are some of the assumptions you unconsciously make about such genres?
   1. Commercials/Advertising
   2. News
   3. Fiction in books, movies, TV shows
   4. Historical narrative in books, movies, TV shows
   5. Conversation—sharing historical accounts of the day with friends
   6. Street signs
   7. Songs/Poetry—music in the car, at home
   8. Grocery list

Some assumptions: when you’re singing a song in the car, you usually assume that it is not a historical account. When you see a speed limit sign, you assume that it is a nonnegotiable imperative.

1. Look through a table of contents in the front of the Bible. Can you identify the literary genres that are contained in the various books?

If you have trouble identifying the genre of the book of the Bible off the top of your head, turn to the book and see if you can then. If you still have trouble identifying it by looking through the book, get some help from a commentary on that book, or from a trustworthy Study Bible (ESV or NIV Study Bible), Bible Dictionary, or Bible Encyclopedia, such as the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (which is freely available through E-Sword).

1. Of the different literary genres included in the Bible (see chart above, if necessary), which, in your opinion, is most unfamiliar to modern readers?

The most unfamiliar is usually Apocalypse, since the structure and imagery employed is so foreign to modern day readers. It can come across as extremely bizarre and puzzling without a helpful guide. This is a good reason special care should be taken to teach Christians clearly and accurately how to understand books like Revelation and Daniel.

1. Have you ever heard a sermon or Bible lesson that was in error because the interpreter misunderstood the genre of a biblical passage?

Yes. The teacher was teaching through Genesis 1 and said that it was clearly a myth or legend. Based on this genre label, he proceeded to interpret the passage as a mere story that had no ground in history, and claimed that we do not know how God created the universe, but we can at least believe that he did.

1. Can you think of an instance where interpretive principles were appealed to as an excuse for disregarding the clear teaching of Scripture?

Yes. A man I spoke with on a plane told me that he didn’t believe in the exclusivity of Christ. When I quoted John 14:6 he tried to deny the truth of that statement by saying that it was a kind of parabolic statement, and thus not to be taken literally.

**Additional Activities**

1. Create a Jeopardy-style review game, using PowerPoint. The game’s slides will each have a book of the Bible and the participant must name its literary genre to win a point.
2. Discuss the implications of interpreting the Genesis account of Adam as myth. The story must be interpreted as narrative, because otherwise Paul’s argument is undermined in Romans 5:14-21. If we are to understand sin correctly, Adam must be a real historical figure.
3. Put up the following list of books on the board or screen, and give them a few minutes to identify the genre of each, and what clues led them to that conclusion. Then go through the list together, discussing what clues point to the identification (see Figure 10 on pg. 187 if you need a key):
   1. Amos
   2. Mark
   3. Joshua 24:1-28
   4. Job
   5. 2 Peter
   6. Daniel
   7. Malachi

**How Do We Interpret Historical Narratives?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 22*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Have you ever read a novel, fiction or non-fiction that impacted you in a profound way? What was the story or book? What did it teach you? How did it impact you?

-Let students share examples, and share an example from your own life, leading the lecture on the value and power of historical narrative.

2. Read the following story about Adoniram Judson from John Piper’s sermon “How Few There Are Who Die So Hard!”

[While at the university] Adoniram was being lured away from the faith by a fellow student name Jacob Eames who was a Deist. By the time Judson was finished he had no Christian faith. He kept this concealed from his parents until his 20th birthday, August 9, 1808, when he broke their hearts with his announcement that he had no faith and that he intended to go to New York and learn to write for the theater - which he did six days later on a horse his father gave him as part of his inheritance.

It didn't prove to be the life of his dreams. He attached himself to some strolling players, and, as he said later, lived "a reckless, vagabond life, finding lodgings where he could, and bilking the landlord where he found opportunity."

That disgust with what he found there was the beginning of several remarkable providences. He went to visit his uncle Ephraim in Sheffield, but found there, instead "a pious young man" who stunned him by being firm in his Christian convictions without being "austere and dictatorial." Strange that he should find this young man there, instead of his uncle.

The next night he stayed in a small village inn where he had never been before. The innkeeper apologized that his sleep might be interrupted because there was a man critically ill in the next room. Through the night he heard comings and goings and low voices and groans and gasps. It bothered him to think that the man next to him may not be prepared to die. He wondered about himself and had terrible thoughts of his own dying. He felt foolish because good deists weren't supposed to have these struggles.

When he was leaving in the morning he asked if the man next door was better. "He is dead," said the innkeeper. Judson was struck with the finality of it all. On his way out he asked, "Do you know who he was?" "Oh yes. Young man from the college in Providence. Name was Eames, Jacob Eames."

Judson could hardly move. He stayed there for hours pondering the death of his deist friend. If his friend Eames were right, then this was a meaningless event. But Judson could not believe it: "That hell should open in that country inn and snatch Jacob Eames, his dearest friend and guide, from the next bed - this could not, simply could not, be pure coincidence."

His conversion was not immediate. But now it was sure. God was on his trail, like the apostle Paul in the Damascus road, and there was no escape. There were months of struggle. He entered Andover Seminary in October, 1808 and on December 2 made solemn dedication of himself to God.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Ask: What are some mere propositional statements for which this story might be substituted? (E.g. God seeks and finds sinners in powerful ways. You can’t hide or run from God. Life is fleeting and serious. God is sovereign. God works all things together for the good of His elect.) Do you think people will remember this story and its implications? (Yes!) Stories like this make people feel *the weight and reality* of God’s providence. In a similar way, God often uses historical narratives in Scripture to accent the message being conveyed, providing us with illustrations of the deep theological truths present. (I added this to help clarify the above exercise.)

**Outline Summary of Chapter 22**

1. The Nature, Purpose, and Effectiveness of Biblical Narratives
   1. Intention
   2. Factual nature
   3. The power and persuasiveness of stories
2. Guidelines for Interpreting Historical Narratives
   1. Context
   2. Editorial Comments
   3. Thematic Statements
   4. Repetition
   5. Trustworthy Characters
3. Read and listen to wise interpreters of historical narrative often

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 22**

1. Have you ever heard someone employ a story as an especially effective form of communication? If so, when?

Yes. I used a story yesterday while teaching my 3-4 grade class. We were going through Psalm 9, talking about the comfort and beauty of God’s judgment upon our enemies. I told them the story of my parents as missionaries in Oaxaca, Mexico. God ended up killing a Catholic priest in front of a town meeting because he was opposing the spread of the Gospel. That defended my parents’ cause, and the town let them stay.

1. Do you recall a sermon or Bible lesson in which the speaker/author illegitimately interpreted a biblical narrative?

Yes, once the preacher used the story of Esther to illegitimately defend his egalitarian views. He argued that God’s blessing on her as the queen and a person of power was a clear sign that women should be in leadership not only in the public sphere, but within the church.

1. Do you know a trusted interpreter (a more experienced friend, for example) who would be willing to offer critical feedback on your sermons or Bible lessons?

Yes. The children’s director at my church has sat in several times on my teaching and offered me helpful feedback.

1. In the next sermon you hear on a narrative passage, ask yourself these questions: Did the speaker arrive at the correct meaning of the text? If he did not interpret the text correctly, what interpretive principles discussed above aid in properly understanding the text?

I would also recommend for further study on this assignment, that the individual consult the introduction to Karen Jobe’s *NIV Application Commentary* on the book of Esther (Zondervan). It has one of the best abbreviated discussions of narrative hermeneutics that I have yet seen.

1. Choose a narrative book in the Bible, photocopy it, and highlight all authorial comments or summary statements. At the end, look back over the highlighted portions. What was the author emphasizing?

Esther: The author was emphasizing the role of peripety (I am not sure what this word is supposed to be) in the providence of God. By intentionally leaving out the name or mention of God, he portrayed what it often feels like when it seems as though God is absent or far away, and everything is going wrong. Just when it appears hopeless and as though all is lost, God turns our mourning into dancing, through all kinds of means that are mundane, or evil, or unassuming. He puts us into situations that require faith and trust, so that we might be confident that He was the guiding control of events the entire time.

**Additional Activities**

1. Have the students turn to the book of Ruth and look through it for repetition and trustworthy characters. (E.g. Repetition of “redeemer” and “wings”; Trustworthy characters: Ruth, Boaz, Naomi.)

# Section 11 – Chapters 23 & 24

## Summary – Chapter 23

“Prophecy” and “prophet” are terms that can come with quite a bit of modern cultural baggage. We must return to the Scriptures to gain a *biblical* understanding of prophecy. At its most fundamental level, prophecy is the proclamation of a prophet, a person sent with a message from God. Various other scriptural nuances of prophecy are described above.

The following guidelines for interpreting prophecy were suggested: (1) Investigate the book’s background, date, and author. (2) Pay attention to context. (3) Expect figurative language. (4) Distinguish conditional and unconditional prophecy. (5) Seek to understand what the inspired author is trying to convey to his original audience before seeking to determine the meaning for us today. (6) Determine whether the prophetic predictions are fulfilled or unfulfilled. (7) Note the apologetic value of prophecy. (8) Understand the difference between Old Testament-era and New Testament-era prophecy.

## Summary – Chapter 24

In this second of two sections on prophecy, we focused on a subset of prophecy called typology. Typological interpretation cites “types” (corresponding anticipations) from the Old Testament to demonstrate God’s preparation for the climactic “antitype” (fulfillment), Christ. All Old Testament-era saving events, institutions, persons, offices, holidays, and ceremonies serve to anticipate the final saving event, the final saving person, the final saving ceremony, etc.

As typology is foreign to most modern readers, we have discussed some of its underlying assumptions: (1) The authors of Scripture had a concept of “corporate solidarity.” (2) Biblical authors assumed a continuity in God’s dealings with Israel, so that earlier divine interventions anticipated later ones. (3) The New Testament authors understood themselves as living in days of eschatological fulfillment (4) The New Testament authors believed that all the Scriptures were about the Christ. (5) For biblical authors, the concept of “fulfillment” was broader than our normal English usage of that term.

Finally, for other puzzling prophecy texts which cannot be classified as straightforward propositional prediction or typological correspondence, three additional interpretive options were mentioned: (1) The New Testament authors occasionally cite the words of the Old Testament in rhetorical fashion, not meaning to assert any prophetic fulfillment. (2) Sometimes prophecies blend the predictions of multiple events. (3) A number of interpreters claim that the only way to understand some New Testament citations of the Old Testament is to appeal to *sensus plenior*.

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Interpret Prophecy? (General Guidelines)**

**How Do We Interpret Prophecy? (Typology)**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 23 and 24*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Write on whiteboard: “**Repent, the end is near!”**

Ask these questions: Have you ever seen someone with a sign saying this? What presuppositions or biases does this assume? What biases do you or your congregation have when you hear the word *prophecy*?

Facilitate Brief Discussion over these questions

Transition: To establish a right understanding of prophecy against these biases, we need to establish right principles

(Below the contributor gives an actual lesson outline. No one else so far has had this portion. Do you want to keep it?)

Lecture (Use outline below)-pg. 197-199 in book:

1. Define prophet and prophecy in Old and New Testament-era usage

Ask: What do you believe about the gift of Prophecy mentioned in the New Testament?

Transition: It is important to understand the difference between inscripturated prophecy and New Testament-era prophecy. Prophecy as divinely inspired revelation from God has ceased with the Cannon. Guidelines in interpreting inspired prophecy are needed to avoid distorting biblical truth.

Lecture (Use outline below)-pgs 199-200 in book:

1. Investigate the books, background, date and author
   1. Explain why this is important: to understand original authorial intent
   2. Announce several tools for doing so (pg 199)
2. Pay attention to context
   1. Give tools listed below in outline for how to do this (see chapter 23 outline)
   2. Ask if there are questions. Field any questions
3. Expect figurative language
   1. Explain tools to recognize figurative language (see chapter 23 outline)

Ask: How is biblical prophecy different stylistically from the normal language you use in everyday conversation?

Transition: Have everyone open to Isaiah 11:6-8 as an example. Talk about the figurative language here

Lecture (Use outline below)-pgs 200-202 in book:

1. Distinguish between conditional and unconditional prophecy
   1. Read through Jeremiah 18:7-10 and conditional prophecy’s reasoning
2. Seek to understand what the inspired author is trying to convey to his original audience before seeking to determine the implications for us today
   1. Be sure to explain why: right interpretations lead to right implications
3. Determine whether the prophecies are fulfilled or unfulfilled
4. Note the apologetic value of prophecy

Share: Share a personal story of this in evangelism or something that has encouraged your faith

Lecture (Use outline below)-pg 202 in book:

Understand the difference between Old Testament-era and New Testament-era prophecy

Transition: Have everyone look up Matthew 2:13-15. Explains what many Christians would assume Hosea 11:1 would say. Then explain typology’s definition from outline below

Lecture (Use outline below)-pgs 206-209 in book:

Explain briefly the Assumptions of New Testament Authors

1. Corporate Solidarity
2. Continuity in God's dealings with Israel, so earlier events foreshadow later ones
3. New Testament authors believed they were living in the days of eschatological fulfillment
   1. Jesus as the apex of salvation
4. All the Scriptures were about the Christ
5. The broader concept of fulfillment

Write on the board: the six different Biblical uses of the word fulfill (pgs 208-209)

Ask: Have you ever heard or read a typological interpretation that you considered invalid? Facilitate discussion

Lecture (Use outline below)-pgs 209-211: Other options for interpreting puzzling prophecies

1. Rhetorical fashion
2. Single prophecy may have multiple events
3. Sensus plenior

Activity: Hand out or email blank ***in-class activity sheets***. Go through each category with the class, leading them to the correct answers

Close class: Does the understanding of typology challenge you to read your Bible differently? How? Facilitate discussion.

End in prayer

**Outline Summary of Chapter 23**

1. Question: How do we interpret prophecy? (General Guidelines)
2. Introduction
   1. This chapter answers the question, what is prophecy and what are some principles to help us understand it?
3. Defining Prophet and Prophecy
   1. Old Testament
      1. Prophet- someone sent by God with a prophecy (Jer. 1:1-4; Matt. 23:34)
         1. All previous divine spokesmen in the Old Covenant (Heb. 1:1)
         2. Schools of prophets (1kings 18:4, 19; 20:35, 2Kings 2:3-7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1)
         3. Known for
            1. Music-itinerant worship (1Sam. 10:5)
            2. Eccentric behavior (1Kings 20:35-43; 2Kings 9:11; Eek. 4-5)
            3. Fearless proclamation of truth in judgment or blessings to disobedient Israel and other nations (1Kings 22:6-28)
            4. Ability to predict future, explain dreams or have access to hidden information (1Sam. 9:19-20; Ezek.8; Dan. 2:27-28)
   2. New Testament
      1. All of God’s people are considered prophets
         1. All have God’s Word on their hearts (Acts 2:16-18; Matt. 5:12)
         2. Still remains a separate unique gift (Rom. 12:6, 1Cor. 12:10)
            1. Predictions (Acts 11:27-28)
            2. Timely exhortations (1Cor. 14:25)
         3. Men and Women (Acts 2:17)
   3. Spirit-inspired utterance
      1. Old Testament
         1. Spirit comes and departs (1Sam. 10:10-13)
      2. New Testament
         1. Believers have possession of the Spirit (John 14:16-17)
   4. Deuteronomy 18:15-22
      1. Climatic Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth (John 3:34)

b.Still false prophets

1. Guidelines for Interpreting Prophecy
   1. Investigate book’s background, date and author
      1. Questions to ask:
         1. To whom is the prophetic oracle addressed?
         2. Is there a unifying theme?
         3. When were the prophecies proclaimed or written?
         4. How would the original hearers understand the prophecy?

b.Consult a good study Bible or an Evangelical introduction

* 1. Pay attention to context
     1. Notice paragraph and section divisions

b.Compare several translations

* 1. Expect figurative language
     1. Pay attention to authorial intent

b.It is an *emotive* genre

* + - 1. Poetic and figurative pictures
      2. Exaggerated expressions

c.Pay attention to the text poetic line as modern English Bibles have organized them

* 1. Distinguish between conditional and unconditional prophecy
     1. Unconditional- Genesis 12:1-3

b.Conditional- Jonah 3:4

* + - 1. Sometimes can serve as the means of mercy

c.Only context clarifies this (Jer. 18:7-10)

* 1. Seek to understand what the inspired author is trying to convey to his original audience before seeking to determine the implications for us today
     1. Specific unrepeatable events vs. underlying patterns of God’s dealings
        1. Example: God's faithfulness to Israel and the Church
  2. Determine whether prophetic predictions are fulfilled or unfulfilled
     1. New Testament can be your guide
  3. Note apologetic value of prophecy
  4. Understand the difference between Old Testament-era and New Testament-era prophecy
     1. Ongoing gift is not inscripturated

b.Weighted by the Bible (1Thess. 5:20-21)

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 23**

1. How is biblical prophecy different stylistically from the normal language you use in everyday conversation?

In everyday language we do not use the same type or level of figurative language that is used in the genre of prophecy. We typically speak or read more literally. We do not talk casually about many topics addressed in the Bible such as judgment, anguish, longing and celebration. Prophecy is an emotive and poetic language that speaks regularly in exaggerative language and symbolism. This is very different from normal speech because we do not consistently speak to people in our context as if we were in a Shakespearean play. We are much more literal in our speech. Prophecy also typically contains predictions of the future which is not normal in everyday speech.

2. Are there any prophecies in Scripture that have encouraged your faith in the divine origin of the Bible?

The prophecies in Daniel have at times been a particular personal encouragement. It is incredible to read the prophecies in Daniel 8 about the future coming of kingdoms and nations and then read history to see how amazingly accurate these predictions were. We serve a God who is in control over the entire world and universe. It is encouraging to know he is controlling all things for his glory.

3. Do you feel confident detecting figurative language in prophecy? If not, what would aid you in doing so?

Yes, after reading and learning this chapter, I do feel confident of discovering figurative language. But if I was not, I would use the *ESV Study Bible* and/or Harrisons *Introduction to the Old Testament*. I would also pay closer attention to the text and see if it is organized in a poetic line.

4. What do you believe about the gift of prophecy mentioned in the New Testament? Is it still operative today? What does it look like?

Prophecy still exists today in the New Testament-era but in a different way. All of God's people can speak the Word of God because it is written on their hearts and in their Bibles. The New Testament, however, seems to indicate that a unique gift of prophecy still exists for the church (Rom. 12:6). This includes predictions of the future and unique and timely exhortations that demonstrate more supernatural insight (1Cor. 14:25-30; Acts 2:30, 11:27-28). This seems to be the gift of illumination and not inspiration (Eph. 1:15). A person may be able to speak God’s already inscripturated Word with special insight or encouragement into a situation, give a special exhortation with insight that is beyond the natural, or have a special sense of coming events. However, this gift of prophecy is not parallel to the Old Testament as the inspired Words of God. Rather, prophecies in the New Testament are to be weighed carefully by the already completed and inspired Word of God: the Bible (1Thess. 5:20-21). If the prophecy were inspired, there would be no need for the church to weigh it and discard the bad. It would be the Word of God.

5. Have you ever appealed to biblical prophecy to commend or defend the trustworthiness of the Bible?

Yes. Isaiah 53 is a special passage that has been particularly helpful in defending the Bible’s trustworthiness. This is a passage about Christ, but was written several hundred years before his coming.

**Outline Summary for Chapter 24**

1. Question: How do we interpret prophecy? (Typology)
2. Introduction
   1. Subset of prophecy: Typology
   2. Chapter will answer: how do we interpret biblical typology?
3. What is Typology?
   1. History recorded in a series of successive and corresponding saving events that moved toward a divine climatic intervention in Christ
      1. Earlier interventions served as types (Corresponding anticipations) for the final antitype (Fulfillment)
      2. Example: Matt. 2:13-15, Hosea 11:1
4. Author’s assumptions of typological interpretation
   1. Corporate Solidarity
      1. One representing many or many representing one
   2. Continuity of God's dealings with Israel, so that earlier events foreshadow later ones
      1. Later divine interventions mirror earlier ones
      2. Messiah is the climatic apex of saving interventions
   3. New Testament authors understood themselves as living in the days of eschatological fulfillment
      1. Jesus is the apex of salvation
   4. New testament authors believed the Scriptures were about Christ (Luke 24:27)
      1. All of God's promises were fulfilled in Jesus
      2. All of God's prior saving work and revelations anticipate in some way the coming of the Messiah
   5. The concept of fulfillment is broader than our normal English term
      1. Can mean:
         1. Full implications (Matt. 5:17)
         2. Completion of fixed time (Mark 1:15)
         3. Satisfying a request or desire (Esther 5:8)
         4. Carrying out what was promised (Lev. 22:21)
         5. Conforming to obey a requirement (Gal. 5:14)
         6. Correspondence of phrases, illustrations or events between one historical period to another (Matt. 2:23)
      2. American assumption of the word *fulfillment*
         1. Unique, Unrepeatable Propositional Prediction
         2. But could mean any of the 6 above
5. Is typological interpretation a reproducible model?
   * 1. Necessary to ask how any part of the Bible points to Christ
6. Other options for interpreting puzzling prophecies
   1. New testament authors occasionally cite the Old Testament in rhetorical fashion, not meaning to assert any prophetic fulfillment
      1. 2 Timothy 2:19
   2. Sometimes a single prophecy will include multiple events
      1. Isaiah 61:1-2
         1. Saving and judging- the second coming of Christ
         2. Prophetic foreshortening
      2. *Sensus Plenoir*
         1. Fuller sense
         2. Holy Spirit revealed hidden meaning
         3. New testament citations of the Old do not need this explanation

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 24**

1. When reading the New Testament, do you ever look up Old Testament verses that are quoted?

Yes. This is important to understanding your Bible. Since the New Testament writers referred to them, they anticipated that our understanding of their writing will be enriched and deepened by seeking to understand the Old Testament reference.

2. Which is a more convincing way to understand Matthew 2:13-15, as typology or *sensus plenior*? Why?

Typology is much more convincing. The New Testament authors understood themselves as living in the days of eschatological fulfillment. They believed that Jesus was the apex of salvation. Therefore, it only makes sense to look back over Old Testament prophecies and see how this climax in the Messiah was anticipated. It is clear that the New Testament authors believed that the entire Bible is about Jesus and that these revelations anticipate in some way the coming of the Christ. Therefore, it seems responsible to look at this verse as a type of anticipation of the final fulfillment of the Messiah.

3. Have you ever heard or read a typological interpretation that you considered invalid?

There is a possibility that Rahab’s red cloth is not symbolizing the blood of Christ. I have read this interpretation before and am not sure it is appropriate.

4. Explain the use of Jeremiah 31:15 in Matthew 2:18.

Rachel, Jacob’s wife, was buried near Bethlehem. In Jeremiah 31, God’s people are on the verge of exile. God is about to take them out of the land and into a foreign place. Eventually, all of Israel is exiled to Babylon thus leaving their homeland desolate and their nation dissolved. The children spoken of in Jeremiah 31:15 are Jews taken into exile from Ramah, another traditional site of Rachel’s burial. Chapter 31 goes on to predict their return from exile. Similar to this exile, the attempt by Herod on Jesus’ life by killing all the baby boys in Bethlehem was intended to kill the chosen one of God. Jesus is fulfilling the purpose of Israel’s exile.

5. Does the understanding of typology challenge you to read your Bible differently? How?

Yes, in the most important way. The entire Bible is about Jesus and anticipates his coming. It is instructive to be able to read the Bible and see how it points to the Christ.

**Additional Activities**

**(Give a blank sheet out and go through this with the class. This will cover chapters 23-24, so spend all activity time thoroughly going through this one passage)**

Text: Isaiah 7:11-14

Genre Identification: **Ask what Genre this is**: Prophecy

Literary Context: Prophecy of Isaiah, right after his vision in Isaiah 6

Theme here: God will purify his people, specifically Judah in this passage, from sin through judgment but he has an overruling purpose of grace.

Will God’s people trust him or human strategies?

Historical/Cultural Context:

**Ask them who the author is and how they know. Then explain below:**

Author: Isaiah, the opening words of the text explain this (1:1). Isaiah was a married man and a father (7:3, 8:3, 18).

This text seems to be in the beginning of Isaiah’s public ministry and it written around 740 BC.

**Explain to them the historical setting**:

The threats of the Assyrian take over. Assyria was rising to power in the east and Syria and Israel were threatened by them. The king of Israel made an alliance with Syria and wanted to force Judah into the alliance. There were threats of attack from Israel and Syria.

**Ask- How can you find this information out? (Study Bible, resources)**

**Explain the audience**:

Ahaz- King of Judah

God’s rebellious people craving worldly security

Interpretation (Statement of Meaning):

**Ask- What do we see in the immediate context?**

Israel and Syria trying to force an alliance with Judah and all the people are fearful; Judah refusing the alliance; Syria and Israel try to attack Judah; God sending Isaiah to Ahaz; God telling Ahaz not to fear and to stand firm in faith; and Israel and Syria fall as God will use Assyria to deal with them.

**Have a discussion of figurative language**-

Curds and honey- enigmatic: symbols of natural plenty, a land depopulated and untilled.

**Distinguish between conditional and unconditional**

Unconditional due to Ahaz’s lack of faith

**Ask first, and then explain: How would the original hearers understand the prophecy?**

God offers Ahaz a sign, but he refuses. The Lord seeks to strengthen Ahaz’s faith.

The sign is that a virgin will be with a son and his name will be Immanuel and he will know how to refuse evil and choose good.

The Child’s life will be proof of the Divine Word.

Virgin- young woman and sexually chaste.

Immanuel-would be the sign of the message that God is with us guiding and helping.

Sign would have been understood in Ahaz’s own day. Isaiah 8:1-3 provides the sign and the promised deliverance.

God is worthy of trust. Hewill deliver his people and we are to trust in him. The sign is in Chapter 8, as Israel and Syria were destroyed not long after. God has saved his people through judging Israel and Syria and eventually Judah.

**Ask: Is this fulfilled or unfulfilled?**

Have a discussion over this-

Is chapter 8 immediate fulfillment and a later fulfillment? Multiple horizons.

Give the example again of the mountain range- seeing different peaks as you move closer.

Where does this text fit in the overall structure of divine revelation?

**Ask: How do we understand Typology in this passage**?

**Read Isaiah 9:1-7**- Alludes to a greater fulfillment and a greater child with greater effect.

**Read Matt. 1:22-23**

Jesus miraculous birth from a virgin was a direct fulfillment of Isaiah.

This birth of the Savior was the intended full meaning of the sign given in Isaiah.

This is a divine correspondence with the Savior to Israel's history.

The prophecy points to God's enduring promise to the line of David. Matthew presents the birth of Jesus as God's miraculous fulfillment of this promise.

Jesus is God as well as further fulfillment and confirmation that “God is with us.” He has come to rescue his people from the exile. His death and resurrection save us as we trust in him.

**Ask what are Modern-Day Implications?**

**Have discussion**-

That our faith must be in God alone and we must trust in his saving power.

We must put our faith in Christ for salvation.

Jesus rescues us from exile.

Jesus is the Christ.

Do you feel alone? Remember that God is with us.

Where do we trust in human strategy and not God? Where do we need to repent?

**Additional Activities Worksheet for Biblical Texts for Chapter 23-24**

**Text**:

Genre Identification:

Literary Context:

Author:

The audience:

**Historical setting**:

Historical/Cultural Context:

**Interpretation (Statement of Meaning)**:

What do we see in the immediate context?

Distinguish between conditional and unconditional

How the original hearers would understand the prophecy?

Fulfilled or unfulfilled?

Where does this text fit in the overall structure of divine revelation?

**Modern-Day Implications**?

# Section 12 – Chapters 25 - 27

## Summary – Chapter 25

Apocalyptic literature employs symbolic imagery to reveal God’s on-going providential workings and coming interventions. Various biblical books occasionally exhibit apocalyptic features, but only the books of Daniel (esp. ch. 7–12) and Revelation are classified as “apocalypses.” One of the most important hermeneutical caveats with apocalypses is to seek the authorial intent of the often *highly symbolic* dreams and visions. Though non-biblical apocalypses are not inspired Scripture, it can be helpful to read through a few so as to better understand the genre.

Daniel, Revelation, and other apocalyptic portions in Scripture remind us that ultimately God’s people are waiting for a completely new age that will be ushered in according to God’s timing and control.

## Summary – Chapter 26

Exaggeration is a memorable way to emphasize a point and is found frequently in some portions of the Bible (e.g., proverbs, poetry, Jesus’ teaching). In labeling a text as hyperbolic, the interpreter should have clear justification. Eight principles to aid in the identification of hyperbole were outlined above.

Two interpretive dangers related to hyperbole were warned against: (1) a literal reading of language intended as exaggeration, and (2) a disobedient dismissal of biblical teaching because “it’s just hyperbole.” If anything, the urgent and emotive language of exaggeration calls us to more radical emphasis and obedience.

## Summary – Chapter 27

A figure of speech is an expression that is intended to be understood non-literally, and is used for emphasis or creative variation. All languages employ figures of speech, but when we first encounter such expressions with which we are unfamiliar, we have the tendency to read them too literally. Above, we have surveyed ten common types of figurative expressions found in the Bible: (1) metaphor, (2) simile, (3) merism, (4) hendiadys, (5) synecdoche, (6) metonymy, (7) personification, (8) anthropomorphism, (9) litotes, and (10) idiom. The reader should be forewarned that he should not confuse others with some of these more technical terms for figures of speech. Indeed, the important issue is not knowing the name of a figure of speech, but understanding the authorial meaning conveyed by a figurative expression and conveying that meaning faithfully to others.

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Interpret Apocalyptic Literature?**

**How Do We Interpret Exaggerated or Hyperbolic Language?**

**How Do We Interpret Figures of Speech?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 25-27*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Have any of you ever seen a movie like *Revelation* or read a book like *Left Behind* that addresses Apocalyptic events? What did you think about them and did it shape the way you understand books like Daniel or Revelation?
2. Does your parent, teacher or boss every use exaggerated statements when talking to you or someone else?
3. Why do we use metaphors when we are trying to communicate an idea?

Some statements in this outline had periods at the end, but others did not. It seemed that he was somewhat inconsistent of his use of the period. So, I simply tried to make it consistent based on his use or if the statement in the outline was actually a complete sentence.

**Outline Summary of Chapters 25-27**

1. How do we Interpret Apocalyptic Literature?
2. What is Apocalyptic Literature?
3. The English word *apocalyptic* comes from the Greek word *apokalupto*, meaning “to reveal” or “to unveil.”
4. A genre of Jewish literature
5. Known for its use of symbolic imagery
6. Non-biblical apocalypses are pseudonymous (written under a false name).
7. What are some characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature?
8. The expectation of the in-breaking of God into the present age to usher in a qualitatively different existence in the age to come.
9. The use of an angelic mediator or mediators to communicate God’s message to a chosen recipient/spokesman.
10. The journey of the chosen human recipient into the heavenly realms, with ongoing interaction and communication with the angelic mediator(s).
11. Highly symbolic visions or dreams that describe both current hidden spiritual realities and future divine interventions.
12. Visions of final, divine judgment.
13. Warnings of coming distresses and trials to be faced by the faithful.
14. Encouragement to the faithful to persevere in light of the true spiritual realities and coming divine interventions.
15. What are some examples of biblical Apocalyptic Literature?
16. Daniel
17. Revelation
18. What are some examples of extrabiblical Apocalyptic Literature?
19. Book of Enoch
20. Baruch
21. Apocalypse of Abraham
22. Apocalypse of Zephaniah
23. Shepherd of Hermas
24. What are some different approaches to interpreting the book of Revelation?
25. Preterist
26. Almost all events described in Revelation have already taken place, most in the first century or soon thereafter.
27. Tie much of the catastrophic symbols in Revelation to the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in AD 70.
28. Historicist
29. Revelation is a blueprint of the entire span of church history.
30. Portions of the book describe the past, while others look to the future.
31. Idealist
32. Revelation is describing the spiritual realities that reoccur throughout history until the final consummation.
33. Many events throughout history correspond to the different symbols depicted in the book.
34. Futurist
35. Revelation is revealing future end-time events.
36. These events occur directly prior to Christ’s return.
37. What are some guidelines to follow for interpreting the book of Revelation?
38. Old Testament apocalyptic passages provide the most helpful background to understanding Revelation (Isa. 24-27; Ezek. 38-39; Zech. 1-6; Dan. 7-12).
39. Revelation should be read from the perspective of the original audience.
40. The symbolic images in Revelation must not be taken literally. The symbols point to reality in a figurative way.
41. Revelation in not intended to be read chronologically.
42. How do we interpret Exaggerated or Hyperbolic Language?
43. Introduction
44. A literary device to make memorable and emphatic statements.
45. Jesus in Matthew 5:29 to gouge your eye out.
46. Dangers of hyperbolic language
47. People understanding exaggerated language literally.
48. An appeal to one’s understanding of the hyperbolic nature of the teaching as a rationalization for disobedience.
49. What are some principles for recognizing exaggeration?
50. The statement is literally impossible
51. Matthew 19:24
52. Matthew 7:3-5
53. The statement conflicts with what Jesus says elsewhere.
54. Matthew 23: 9 and Matthew 19:19
55. Luke 14:26 and Mark 7:9-13
56. The statement conflicts with the actions of Jesus elsewhere.
57. Luke 14:26 and John 19:26-27
58. Matthew 10:34 and Mark 14:43-50
59. The statement conflicts with the broader teaching of Scripture.
60. Luke 14:26 and Exodus 20:12, 1 Timothy 5:4
61. Jesus taught in the Aramaic language, while the Gospel authors wrote in Greek. They gave us a more literal (word-for-word) translation of Jesus’ Aramaic teaching, and sometimes they gave us a more dynamic (thought-for-thought) translation. (Luke 14:26, a word for word translation; Matthew 10:37, a thought for thought translation)
62. The statement is not always literally fulfilled in practice.
63. Mark 13:2
64. Mark 11:22-24
65. The statement’s literal fulfillment would not achieve the desired goal.
66. Matthew 5:29-30
67. The statement uses a particular literary form prone to exaggeration.
68. Proverbs, poetry, and prophecy
69. 2 Samuel 1:23
70. Matthew 17:20
71. The statement uses all-inclusive or universal language.
72. Sometimes the word all means literally “all,” but not always.
73. Colossians 1:23
74. “All without distinction” but not “all without exception.”
75. How do we interpret figures of speech?
76. Introduction
77. Figure of speech is an expression that, at its base, is to be understood non-literally.
78. Speakers and authors employ figures of speech for emphasis and clarity.
79. Common figures of speech from both the Old and New Testaments
80. Metaphor – a figurative description is applied to a person or thing without overt terms of comparison.
81. Amos 4:1- “you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy …”
82. John 10:14-15- “I am the good shepherd, . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep."
83. Simile – is similar to a metaphor. It uses comparison words such as ***like*** or ***as***.
84. Psalm 1:3- “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”
85. Hebrews 11:12- “Descendants as numerous *as* the stars in the sky and as countless *as* the sand on the seashore.”
86. Merism – a figure of speech in which two elements together stand for the totality of something.
87. Genesis 1:1- “the heavens and the earth”
88. Psalm 139:1- “You know when I sit down and when I rise up”
89. Hendiadys – expression of one idea with two or more similar words, that is two words are used for the same thing.
90. 2 Timothy 1:10- “has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”
91. James 4:2- “You kill, and you are jealous.”
92. Synecdoche – literary expression in which the part represents the whole or the whole stands for the part.
93. Isaiah 52:7- “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.”
94. Matthew 3:5- “Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him.”
95. Metonymy – expression in which one word or phrase stands in for another with which it is closely associated.
96. Hollywood – referring to the American film industry
97. The cross – referring to the atoning death of Jesus (Gal. 6:14)
98. Personification – presentation of a thing or idea as having the qualities or actions of a person.
99. Proverbs 9:1- “Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars.”
100. John 8:34- “Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”
101. Anthropomorphism – presentation of God as having human characteristics or actions.
102. 2 Chronicles 16:9- “For the eyes of the Lord”
103. Exodus 3:20- "So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go.”
104. Litotes – assertion is made by negating the opposite.
105. “He’s no dummy.”
106. Jeremiah 30:19- “I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will make them honored, and they shall not be small.”
107. Matthew 2:6- “are by no means least among the rulers of Judah”
108. Idioms
109. “I weigh a ton.”
110. Isaiah 40:15- “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket”
111. Jeremiah 13:23- “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?”

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 25**

1. Have you ever encountered the view that Daniel was not written until the second century B.C.? How would you respond to such a view?

The introduction to Daniel in the ESV Study Bible gives some details to the belief that Daniel was written in the second century during the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This would change the genre of the book to more of a historical narrative rather than an apocalyptic literature. The book’s visions would be interpreting historical events rather than predicting history. However, the Bible is full of prophecies that show God announcing his plans through his prophets as a means of asserting his sovereignty and giving hope to his people. Isaiah is no stranger in providing detailed and precise information on events to come by announcing the arrival of Cyrus the Great in Isaiah 45:1, for example. The visions of intense change in international power served to show his original audience as well as generations to follow that God is in control and has a plan for his people.

1. Of the four major approaches to the book of Revelation, which approach seems most convincing to you? Why?

It seems during my youth group days that I was taught to interpret Revelation as a futurist. I never gave it much thought really, because I never truly understood what was really going on in the book. But, after becoming more familiar with the different interpretive approaches, I am persuaded by the idealist. The book is more relevant to all believers throughout church history when Revelation is interpretive in the idealist approach. The futurist approach would make very little sense to the original audience of the book.

1. Of the various literary genres that modern Americans read today, which is the closest to apocalyptic?

I would think fantasy or science friction type literature would be similar to apocalyptic literature. They are both influenced by spiritual symbols, magic and prophecies like *Star Wars* or *Lord of the Rings*. They also place an emphasis on a judgment or war that must be thwarted and hope restored.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 26**

1. Have you ever heard a hyperbolic statement in Scripture wrongly taught as literal language?

I might have been taught in Sunday school class not to make an oath, because Christ told the people on the Sermon on the Mount to not make oaths. However, he is properly teaching the people to be people of integrity, who have no need to make oath statements to be believed. However, it is okay to swear an oath in court, because it is proper procedure as a witness to swear you will not provide false testimony on the case at hand. Jesus was more concerned with oaths that are used to justify dishonesty.

1. Can you think of two or three examples of exaggerated language commonly used in modern English?

I once caught a fish the size of a Buick. I have seen that commercial over a million times. I am so hungry I could eat a horse.

1. Of the two interpretive dangers of exaggerated language presented above, of which are you most in danger?

I am most in danger of using exaggerated language as a rationalization for my disobedience. I tend to think Jesus is not actually calling for me to gouge out my eye to prevent me from sinning. As a result, I become careless, and I allow myself to be open to sin. I need to realize that Christ words are a calling to true discipleship, which is a calling of self-denial. If I was struggling with pornography, Christ words in Matthew 5:29 are words of action to eliminate temptations to my sins, which might mean no internet or television. As a true disciple of Jesus Christ, I should be willing to do anything to prevent a slide into sinful habits.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 27**

1. Can you define “figure of speech”?

A figure of speech is an expression that, as its bases, is to be understood non-literally. Speakers and authors employ these expressions for emphasis, clarity, and freshness of thought. All languages and cultures use figures of speech in speech or writing. Figures of speech can be subdivided into different types. These types include metaphors, similes, idioms, personifications, anthropomorphism, litotes, merism, hendiadys, synecdoche, and metonymy.

1. Give an example of some figures of speech from the English Language.

“Uncle Sam” is a personification of the United States’ government. “He kicked the bucket” is an English idiom. “The White House” is an example of metonymy representing the Executive Branch of the United States government.

1. Choose a figurative expression from the Bible discussed above. How would a literal reading of this expression result in misunderstanding?

I was thinking about the implications of interpreting John 10:14-15 literally without understanding that it is a metaphor to be understood figuratively. Jesus says about himself that he is a good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep. We, the readers of Jesus’ words, would think that he sure was an overcommitted shepherd, who cared a little too much for his sheep. Also, it would seem that he was somewhat crazy to state that he would lay down his life for his sheep.

1. Why do persons use figures of speech instead of more straightforward easily translatable expressions?

It is a more interesting way to speak and write. It provides emphasis to certain ideas that you are trying to convey. People like to say it is raining cats and dogs outside, which is more fun to say than it is raining intensely outside. When the proper context is known, figures of speech can be an effective way to have your words and thoughts remembered and understood.

**Additional Activities**

Directions: Name the figure of speech that is used in these examples.

1. Before the conference began, the speaker broke the ice with a joke.
2. It's like boxing a glacier.
3. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.
4. I am the Good Shepherd.
5. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.
6. God created the heavens and the earth.
7. We searched high and low for your keys, but were unable to locate them.
8. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.
9. The cold and the wind went down the hall.
10. The kingdom, the power and the glory
11. “The long hairs are dirty people,” referring to hippies.
12. “Pass me a coke,” referring to soft drinks.
13. All hands on deck.
14. Give us this day our daily bread.
15. “Westminister,” referring to the UK government.
16. The White House vetoed the bill.
17. And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.
18. Mother Nature
19. Uncle Sam
20. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
21. “How are you?” “Not Bad.”
22. And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.
23. He was not unfamiliar with the works of Dickens.
24. For the eyes of the Lord
25. Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His right hand and…
26. His holy arm has worked salvation for him.
27. I weigh a ton.
28. He kicked the bucket.
29. Keep tabs on Fred.
30. Answered and said

Directions: Name the interpretive approach to the book of Revelation used in these examples.

1. The Tribulation occurred in the past during the first few centuries AD.
2. Takes literally the time statements in the New Testament that the Tribulation and His Return would occur ‘shortly’ (Rev. 1:1) & in ‘that generation’ (Matt. 24:34).
3. The events of the Tribulations are spread out over many centuries including events in the past and present.
4. This interpretation approach was always known for its sense of imminence.  Since the world was already going through the Tribulation, Jesus Christ could return at any moment to raise the dead and rapture the saints.
5. The events of the Tribulation are allegorical, spiritual or figurative.
6. The Tribulation will occur in the future.
7. This approach takes the time statements regarding the Tribulation and his return figuratively.  For example, “shortly” is relative to God’s time not man’s (2 Pet 3:8).
8. The 1260 days is symbolic of a period of trial and testing.
9. The 1260 days of Revelation 11-13 corresponds to a literal 1260 days from the beginning of the Jewish War to the destruction of Jerusalem.
10. It sees the Revelation being fulfilled in 70 AD, thereby bringing the full presence of God to dwell with all humanity.
11. Books about the "rapture" by authors like Hal Lindsey, and the more recent Left Behind novels (by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye) and movies, have done much to popularize this school of thought.
12. Interpretations that apply the symbols of Revelation to the gradual division and collapse of the Roman Empire, the emergence of a divided Europe in the West and a Muslim empire in the East, and the collapse of the Eastern Empire while Europe attempts to re-unite and re-create the Roman Empire.
13. Tend to be millenarian, emphasizing the literal reign of Christ on earth.
14. The second coming of Christ occurs about the time that a partly-reunited Europe starts to wage war against Israel. This view is held mainly by conservative Protestant Christians.
15. In his commentary on Revelation, late nineteenth century scholar William Milligan stated, “While the Apocalypse thus embraces the whole period of the Christian dispensation, it sets before us within this period the action of great principles and not special incidents; we are not to look in the Apocalypse for special events, both for the exhibition of the principles which govern the history of both the world and the Church.”
16. The symbols in Revelation are not tied to specific events but point to themes throughout church history.

**Answer Key for the Additional Activities**

1. Metaphor, metaphor, simile, metaphor, simile, merism, merism, merism, hendiadys, hendiadys, synecdoche, synecdoche, synecdoche, synecdoche, Metonymy, Metonymy, Metonymy, Personification, Personification, Personification, Litotes, Litotes, Litotes, anthropomorphism, anthropomorphism, idiom, idiom, idiom, idiom
2. Preterist, Preterist, Historicist, Idealist, Idealist, Futurist, Futurist, Idealist, Preterist, Preterist, Futurist, Historicist, Futurist, Idealist, Idealist

# Section 13 – Chapters 28 & 29

## Summary – Chapter 28

Proverbs are short, memorable observations on the way life *normally* works. Proverbs are not only found in the biblical book by that name but are also found scattered throughout other biblical genres (e.g., 1 Kings 20:11; Matt. 26:52). Like non-biblical proverbs, most proverbs in the Bible are *general* truths, assuming exceptions. Nevertheless, proverbs that describe an inherent quality of God in the abstract (e.g., holiness or justice) are without exception. Some proverbs also imply an eternal trajectory to God’s divine interventions whereby his final vindication of his people occurs beyond the grave. Ecclesiastes and Job, non-proverbial “wisdom literature,” provide canonical confirmation that proverbs are not promises but situation-specific descriptions of the way things normally work.

## Summary – Chapter 29

Poetry occurs within many biblical genres (proverbs, psalms, prophecy, narrative, etc.). Biblical authors employed poetry for two main reasons: (1) as a memory device and (2) to communicate and evoke strong emotion. As many poetic features are difficult to convey in a translation (e.g., repeated syllable or stress patterns), readers of English Bibles are dependent upon translators and publishers to present poetry in such a way that it is recognized as distinct from prose text.

Because poetry often employs exaggerated or figurative language, it is especially important to seek the author’s intended meaning, which may be at odds with a literalistic reading of the text. One helpful hermeneutical tool is a familiarity with common biblical poetic forms and assumptions that underlie them. Above, we surveyed these common forms: (1) synonymous parallelism, (2) antithetical parallelism, (3) synthetic parallelism, (4) “x, x+1” poetic form, (5) repetition of similar sounds, (6) acrostic, and (7) chiasm.

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Interpret Proverbs?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 28*

1. **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**Why do you think cultures create proverbs and similar wisdom sayings?
   1. Cultures create and record proverbs to honor the wise from history in order to give general guidelines and antidotes to life.
2. How are proverbs in the Bible different than those found outside the Bible?
   1. The Bible contains wisdom given by God, not merely men. The world creates proverbs from its own experience and intuition.
   2. Biblical proverbs never exalt wickedness like popular secular proverbs often do.
   3. Have the group read Job 28 to see where wisdom originates.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 28**

1. Even in the Bible, Proverbs are general truths that assume exceptions.
   1. Proverbs 21:17 ”Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.” For example: Rich men don’t always become poor due to their foolishness, some men are exceptionally rich to begin with so their foolishness can hardly ever diminish their abundant riches.
2. Wisdom in the Bible comes in the form of brief proverbs, laments, and wise disputations.
   1. Wisdom sayings are not just found in the book of Proverbs.
3. Proverbs are often situational or occasional.
   1. Therefore, some parallel statements in the Proverbs seem to contradict, but this is because each one talks about a specific situation in which the proverb applies.
4. Some Proverbs, however, have no exceptions.
   1. These Proverbs are essentially promises in Scripture.
      * 1. This might be a Proverb statement about a trait of God that is always true and never changes.
        2. God always hates lies, or God always hates haughty eyes.
5. Some proverbs imply a greater final fulfillment where God settles things in the final day of judgment.
   1. Proverbs 11:4- “Righteousness delivers from death”
      * 1. Obviously all men die: righteous or wicked, but the righteous will be raised to live in eternity with Christ.
        2. Context matters in interpreting wisdom literature, especially outside of the book of Proverbs.
   2. Wisdom in the book of Ecclesiastes is designed to be interpreted through the lens of the final summary statement: Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.
      * 1. Have the group find and read this summary statement to see where and how it is located in context to the whole book. Do you want to delete this? It seems to be more of an activity than a point on the outline.
   3. Wisdom in the book of Job is not really wisdom unless the reader knows God’s final voice to the speakers of the book found in Job 42:1-7.
      * 1. Job’s friends are guilty of a mistake we often make by interpreting the Proverbs as absolute truth with no exceptions.
   4. Both Job and Ecclesiastes seem to be sobering wisdom and a reminder of the ultimate mysterious workings in a world after the fall. These books are helpful correctives to misunderstandings of proverbial sayings.
      * 1. Song of Solomon makes proverbs even more practical by taking wisdom and applying it to action in everyday life, especially at the level of romantic love.

**Answers to Reflection Questions for Chapter 28**

1. Do you have a favorite biblical proverb? If so, is it a proverb that assumes exceptions?

A possible proverb would be Proverbs 12:5, “The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.” In general, the righteous are defined by their thoughts and the holy treasures of their heart. The wicked are usually led astray even further by the wickedness of the counselors they set up for themselves. However, even Jesus rebuked the wicked Pharisees, and his counsel to him was anything but deceitful. 1 John is full of humble reminders that the righteous often have thoughts of wickedness and sin. In fact, if a Christian claims that he never has a wicked thought, he is even more a liar. This proverb assumes exceptions but the general life of a righteous person should be dominated by repentance from these wicked thoughts and an overall abundance of holy meditations.

1. What are some modern (non-biblical) proverbs?
   1. “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.”
   2. “All good things must come to an end.”
   3. “All roads lead to Rome.”
   4. “Crime does not pay.”
   5. “Good things come to those who wait.”
2. Can you think of any non-biblical proverbs that contradict the truths of Scripture?

“Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone”

This saying contradicts verses in the Bible that say we should weep with those who weep and comfort the downcast. God himself comforts those who cry out to him and is a very present help in time of need. An example of this is found in Genesis, when God came to Hagar while she was alone and weeping.

“Let your conscience be your guide.”

The Bible is clear about the depravity of men and his heart being always inclined to evil. The Bible says nearly the opposite of this man-centered proverb. The only right guide is found in God’s direction. Jeremiah said it is not in a man to direct his own steps! Man needs a new heart and a new conscience through regeneration or he will always be going astray.

1. Is Proverbs 22:6 (“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it”) a promise? If not, what are some possible exceptions?

The very man who wrote this Proverb, king Solomon was living proof that a child will stray sometimes from his godly upbringing. Samuel and Chronicles record the near apostasy and sinful ventures of Solomon from the right ways his father, King David, raised him in. This proverb is a general truth about children generally going the way their parents point them. But, Scripture is clear that men will seek out their own evil ways based on the sinful nature they are born with. Men can try and should try to raise their children to walk in the way of the Lord to increase the chance that they remain faithful when they are older. However, God is ultimately responsible for regenerating a man’s heart that he would grow old and walk in the way of godliness.

1. Challenge: Beginning on the first day of the month, read a chapter of Proverbs every day for the whole month. (There are thirty-one chapters in the book of Proverbs.)

**Additional Activities**

1. Find one proverb/ wise saying in the book of Job and Ecclesiastes and show how one should interpret this saying within the greater context of the specific book.
   1. Follow this from the summary notes about the summary statements for each book and the context of the book’s story.
2. Look at the book of Proverbs as a whole. Divide the book up into sections that you think it naturally contains. Are there any categories for wisdom that can be grouped together?
   1. For example: describe the changes between the first nine chapters and the last twenty-one chapters.
3. Describe how you think a set of Proverbs should be preached from the pulpit. Outline the following key parts:
   1. Context: Why this matters less in the book of Proverbs and more so in the other wisdom books.
   2. Parallels: Explain it against other similar proverbs or metaphors within the book.
   3. God’s message: Explain the meaning of the proverb, and why general wisdom can be profitable to the soul.
   4. Whole Bible context: Are there any significant connections to Jesus in the proverb at hand or a clearer perspective that comes from the New Testament? What do you learn about God’s character of holiness from this proverb? Are there any narrative texts that show the truth of the proverb that could help flesh out the wisdom given in it?
      1. Example Proverbs 16:7- “When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”
      2. Joshua 21:44 (Joshua given rest from his enemies and peace in the land)
      3. Hebrews 1:13 (Jesus’ enemies made his footstool)

**How Do We Interpret Poetry?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 29*

**Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Why do people sing songs and use poetry in everyday life? Why do you think God would use poetry in order to communicate truths to his people?
   1. Humans use creative means of communication to put emotion into their words and remember praiseworthy things? God created us to have emotions and communicate in thoughtful ways. Much like a groom wooing his bride God uses poetry to express his love for his beloved bride see (Song of Solomon) and make it easier for his people to remember what he has revealed about himself (see Psalms).
2. Think about some of your favorite songs or poems that you remember. What things about this song or poem make it hard to forget? What emotions does this song evoke in your mind? Have you ever made up a rhyme or song to remember something you didn’t want to forget for a class or test?
   1. Supply examples like the lyrics to the “ABC’s” song
   2. Supply an example of a nursery rhyme to see how many individuals remember the whole rhyme, only by saying it out loud.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 29**

1. Biblical poetry is not just in the Psalms. Poetry can be found in every biblical genre: proverbs, historical narratives, epistles, and prophecy.
   * + - 1. Genesis 4:23
         2. Matthew 7:24-29
         3. Psalm 52:8
         4. Joel 2:10
         5. Lamentations 1-4
2. The assumption behind poetry is that the writer is trying to help the reader remember something that is noteworthy. These can be things to lament or praise. They are not just scientific facts or historical genealogies. They are meant to purposely engage the passive reader into action and emotion in the same way that Jesus taught the crowds he met. Hyperbolic language is common; though it expresses key truths, it often uses exaggerated metaphors.
3. Because of our modern culture, it is hard sometimes to associate and decipher truth from mythology when we see non-literal figurative language used in poetry. However, the writer, especially those in the Bible, still wishes to express truthful information through this type of language.
4. In order to see the amount of powerful poetry in the biblical texts, one must be familiar with the poetic forms within the Hebrew and Greek cultural context.
   1. The Bible rarely uses our modern English poetry style of rhyming.
   2. Some Bible poetic forms that are common include:
      1. Synonymous Parallelism- In this form, two or more lines of the same length and grammatical structure have the same subject. Usually the second line adds to the first by specification or contrasting.

See Psalm 52:8

* + 1. Antithetical Parallelism- The second line of parallel structure states something in opposition to the first line in order to further qualify it.

See Luke 1:46-55

* + 1. Synthetic Parallelism (also called climactic parallelism)- Rather than simply restate the first line that it is paralleling, the second line gives a specific example of the first to extend the meaning further.

See Luke 1:51

* + 1. “X, X+1” Poetic Form- This form particularly looks odd to the modern English reader. Here the author gives a list of items plus one in order to emphasize the matter. The X, X+1 is greatly intended to help the reader memorize the things at hand (for example 6+1 things that God really hates).

See Micah 5:5

* + 1. Repetition of Similar Sounds: This poetic device is probably the most similar to modern English poetry that can include basic rhyme and alliteration in the original language. These things cannot be translated into the modern language and can only be understood through commentaries, Bible footnotes or by reading the original language.

See James 1:1-2(remember- you’ll have to look at this passage in Greek in order to see the significance)

* + 1. Acrostic- Often found in Old Testament passages, this poetic form is usually a list of statements each beginning with consecutive letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

See Proverbs 31:10-31

* + 1. Chiasm- A series of two or more elements followed by a series of corresponding elements in reverse order.

Visually this looks symbolically like:

A

A2

B2

B

See Mark 2:27

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 29**

1. Do you find yourself resistant to reading biblical passages as figurative?

Yes, it is the Christian reader’s pious tendency to take all scripture as literal truth, at face value. The informed reader should be aware of the poetic forms discussed earlier and research the text to see how the author can use exaggerations to express the same plain truths more powerfully. The author expected the genre to be recognized by the ancient reader to signify a switch of interpretation and to evoke emotions that cause the reader to remember the pressing truths. Remember too, that poetry was also more useful for memorization in history because most of the culture was preserved orally due to the fact that reading and writing documents was rare.

1. Does your Bible clearly distinguish which texts are poetic? How?

Yes. Often English translations visually clue the reader into the use of poetry within the biblical text based on the headings or indentations of verses.

1. Of the common poetic forms found in the Bible and discussed above, were any unfamiliar to you?

Most of the poetic forms discussed in this lecture appear to be unfamiliar to the English reader mostly because they are not commonly used to express poetry in our culture. We expect to see rhyme or lines that parallel in word number, syllables or what we call meter. Hebrew poetry uses parallel lines based on context that parallel by adding to or contradicting the previous line in order to get the reader’s attention. The two poetic elements that are the hardest to understand are the use of acrostics and the X,X+1 forms. Unless the reader has access to the original Hebrew text the acrostic will not show up in the English text. Also, most English readers are confused at the X,X+1 form because this would express a sense of forgetfulness or confusion by the original author as though they are not sure even what they want to say.

1. How is modern American use of poetry different from that of biblical poetry?

Poetry for educational use in America is mostly associated with childish nursery rhymes and sing-along songs. Poetry for the adult audience, outside of popular music, is not especially common in our culture, and is not used as widely as it was in the Bible times for the purpose of praise and memorizing truths. As stated in the lecture earlier, our culture associates the use of exaggeration and hyperbolic language with myths and purely entertainment forms of communication, not something as holy and serious as Scripture.

1. How many English poems can you recite from memory? Why, in your opinion, is poetry so rarely employed in our modern American culture?

Most American adults can easily recite many nursery rhymes, famous billboard hits or even poems that they have wrote about loved ones in the past. Perhaps one reason why poetry is not very popular or necessary in our culture is because we are not a culture based on oral communication and oral history. Because of the printing press, we can record simple prose easily to ensure that our most important truths are preserved for later generations. The Hebrew culture of the Bible did not have this luxury and had to create poetic techniques that would help them remember truths and history by catchy poetic techniques.

**Additional Activities**

1. Break off into groups to create a catchy poem to help memorize the seven poetic forms of Hebrew poetry that we are studying. They can strictly use American poetic elements that they are already comfortable with, or they can venture out to applying the Hebrew techniques to get practice with this new content.
2. If there is anyone in the class who can read/or speak Hebrew, have them read a Psalm like 119 or one that possibly has sound repetitions so that the class can imagine how this aspect of the original poetry would have been more meaningful to the intended audience.
   1. Here are some websites that have audio recordings or readings in the Hebrew:
      1. <http://shma-israel.org/music.php>
      2. <http://www.archive.org/details/ShirHaShirim-TheSongOfSolomon_565>

# Section 14 – Chapters 30 & 31

## Summary – Chapter 30

The book of Psalms contains 150 songs. These songs teach us how to pray and sing to God, whether we are living in exalted joy or are struggling under depression and hardship. In this question, we surveyed seven common sub-categories of psalms: lament psalms, praise psalms, thanksgiving psalms, celebration psalms, wisdom psalms, penitential psalms, and imprecatory psalms. In the next question, we will discuss interpretive strategies for the psalms.

## Summary – Chapter 31

In this question, we have suggested some guidelines for properly interpreting the Psalms: (1) Note the organization of the book of Psalms. (2) Read the Psalms. (3) Label the sub-genre of the psalm. (4) Note any contextual information in the psalm heading. (5) Pay attention to the segmentation of the psalm. (6) Recognize the poetic language of the psalm. (7) Explore the messianic significance of the psalm. (8) Pray the Psalms. (9) Memorize the Psalms. (10) Sing the Psalms.

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Interpret the Psalms? (Classification of Psalms)**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 30*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Ask students to offer their opinion on the purpose(s) and spiritual benefit(s) of biblical psalms. Why are so many psalms included in the Christian Scriptures?
2. In their experience, what are some of the ways God uses the Psalms to instruct and/or bless his people?

**Outline Summary of Chapter 30**

1. Introduction/Summary

There is an interpretive benefit to understanding and being able to identify the distinctions between different psalm types. Identifying common characteristics provides a means for grouping psalms according to subgenre.

1. Psalm Classifications
2. Lament psalms
   1. Identified as a cry to God for help made by an individual or group
   2. Most common subgroup
   3. Examples include Pss. 3; 9; 12; 13; 17; 42; 60; 74; 94; 139
3. Praise psalms
   1. Identified as a song of praise to God
   2. God is often praised as Creator, Savior of Israel or as Sovereign over history
   3. Examples include Pss. 103; 104; 106; 111-113; 146; 149; 150)
4. Thanksgiving psalms
   1. Identified as a song of thanks for God’s intervening work on behalf of the singer(s)
   2. The invitation is often made for others to join in thankful worship of God
   3. Examples include Pss. 18; 32; 40; 65; 75; 92; 107; 136.
5. Celebration psalms
   1. Identified as a celebration of the kingship of God over the nation of Israel
   2. Subgroups include (1) royal psalms and (2) songs of Zion
   3. Examples include Pss. 2; 24; 46; 76; 87; 93; 101; 110; 125
6. Wisdom psalms
   1. Identified as songs pointing to wisdom or discussing life’s mysteries
   2. A hybrid of wisdom literature and song
   3. Examples include Pss. 1; 19; 73; 119
7. Penitential psalms
   1. Identified as songs of contrition and repentance
   2. The most familiar example is Ps. 51
   3. Examples include Pss. 6; 32; 38; 102; 130; 143
8. Imprecatory psalms
   1. Identified as songs calling for God’s justice to fall on the wicked
   2. Though difficult, these psalms point to God’s ultimate judgment against sin
   3. Examples include Pss. 35; 60; 109; 137; 140

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 30Does not really give answer to many of the questions, mainly offers direction.**

1. Prior to reading the material above, were you aware of different subgenres within the Psalter?

Provide time for individuals to discuss the various subgenres and their respective levels of familiarity with each prior to reading the chapters. Are they aware of any modern or traditional worship songs that set any of the psalms to music? Does the worship music in their church tradition entail the wide diversity of worship expressions within the Psalter?

1. What is the interpretive benefit of correctly classifying a psalm in the appropriate subgenre?

As the author indicates, there can be some gray area in classifying certain psalms within these seven categories. Frequently, a given psalm will contain elements of more than one subgenre. Nevertheless, determining the primary focus of the psalmist can yield tremendous hermeneutical insight. A further benefit from proper classification may be seen in interpreting the usage of psalms outside the Psalter. For instance, it is helpful to understand that Psalm 110 is a celebration of Israel’s messianic King when we encounter its typological use by the author of Hebrews (cf. Heb. 1:13).

1. Which type of psalm currently expresses your current life situation to God (e.g. thanksgiving, lament, praise)?
2. Allow individuals to reflect on the various types of psalms and their import for everyday life. Encourage them to approach their life situation with as much honesty and transparency as the psalmists. Spend some time praying together as a group using the psalms as a model. Suggest that they quote from particular passages as they pray. As God’s people no longer live in the land of Israel under a Jewish monarch, what is the continuing significance of the royal psalms or songs of Zion?

In Jesus all the Old Testament Scriptures find their ultimate fulfillment (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:25-27). Therefore, we should understand that royal psalms point in their fullest sense to King Jesus. Songs of Zion refer in a historical sense to the location of the temple within the city of Jerusalem. As Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, however, the time has now come when true worshippers are not limited in their worship by geography (John 4:21-24). Therefore, we can read these psalms as having their fulfillment in the coming-yet-already-here kingdom of God.

1. Using the seven psalm categories discussed above, label the following psalms: 1, 13, 21, 48, 51, 95, 137.

*Psalm 1* – This psalm contains many features characteristic of a wisdom psalm. Featured within it are instructions on the differences between the righteous and wicked person, and God’s commensurate response to both.

*Psalm 13* – In this psalm we read David’s cry for help, followed immediately by expression of faith in God’s unfailing love. It is clearly a lament.

*Psalm 21* – The writer of this psalm (David) praises God for granting victory to the king (and thus the nation) and inflicting righteous judgment on his enemies in battle. We can identify this as a psalm of praise.

*Psalm 48* – We read many references to the beauty and grandeur of Mount Zion in this psalm. There is also a reference to worshipping God within the temple. Clearly, this is a celebration psalm (song of Zion).

*Psalm 51* – As was mentioned in the chapter, this psalm is the most famous of penitential psalms. In it, we find many references to David’s sin and his contrition.

*Psalm 95* – This psalm enumerates reasons for praising God. There is also an invitation to thank him, though this occurs within a greater context of praise. The psalm concludes with a strong word of exhortation. We can probably make a case for saying that it is a praise psalm with some characteristics of a thanksgiving psalm.

*Psalm 137* – In our final example we begin with lament language. However, as the singer reflects on the state of affairs brought on by his tormentors, a shift occurs to a strongly imprecatory tone. This psalm includes one of the strongest imprecations in all of Scripture (vv. 8-9).

**Additional Activities**

1. Break off into groups of three to five persons. Assign each group a type of psalm (lament, praise, thanksgiving, etc.) and instruct them to read through as many psalms within this category from the examples listed in the chapter as time permits. As they read together, ask them to consider the following questions:
2. How well does the chapter description of your assigned type match the psalms you are reading?
3. What, if any, “outlying” characteristics are present?
4. What are the hermeneutical benefits of knowing the classification for the psalms you have considered?
5. Discuss the theological implications of imprecatory language in the Scriptures as typified in the Psalms. Questions to consider might include:
6. What do such imprecations tell us about God’s character in judging evil?
7. In light of New Testament (especially Jesus’) teachings concerning our responsibilities toward acts of evil (cf. Matt. 5:43-48), how should we read imprecatory psalms today?
8. Is it appropriate to use imprecatory psalms in Christian worship? Why or why not?

**How Do We Interpret the Psalms? (Principles of Interpretation)**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 31*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Ask someone to stand and read Psalm 135 aloud for the class. Discuss together whether individuals would consider preaching on this psalm, and how they might approach the task. This questions might need to be removed since it is not really applicable to lay people.
2. Ask individuals to come up with some creative, biblically faithful ways in which to insert Psalm 135 into a modern service of worship.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 31**

1. Introduction/Summary

Understanding the psalms is critical for Christian worship and preaching. Numerous principles are provided in order to help the reader gain knowledge and insight into the psalms.

1. Principles of Interpretation
2. Organization of the Book of Psalms in five books
3. Reading the Psalms
4. Identifying subgenres within the Psalms (see Chapter 30)
5. Familiarity with the category distinctions
6. Attention paid to historical interpretations
7. Comparison with similar psalms
8. Note the psalm headings and attributions
9. Note the segmentation of the psalm
10. Recognize poetic language
11. Explore messianic significance
12. Pray, memorize and sing the psalms

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 31**

1. When reading the psalms, have you interpreted them in light of the information in the superscriptions?

Allow students time to reflect on how they have approached the Book of Psalms in the past.

1. Is it valid to read Davidic psalms as “messianic” if they are not so quoted in the New Testament?

Encourage students to glance through celebration psalms to determine whether these psalms in particular can be applied to the Messiah, Jesus. Discuss any potentially negative impact of assuming a universal messianic understanding of the psalms.

1. Looking at the five-part book of Psalms, do you see any internal theological or thematic elements that would explain their grouping into five books?

You may decide to divide up into five groups asking each group to quickly skim through one of the five books of psalms. Suggest that they look for consistently recurring themes or subgenres. Ask them to note any exceptions as well.

1. Challenge: Learn a worship song or hymn that is based directly on a biblical psalm. Sing it to the Lord in person or in corporate worship. For a number of modern worship songs based on the psalms, see “These Things I Remember” at [www.sojournmuisc.com](http://www.sojournmuisc.com).

A second suggested album with modern songs setting text from Psalms can be found at [www.sovereigngracemusic.org/albums/category/sovereign\_grace\_music/psalms](http://www.sovereigngracemusic.org/albums/category/sovereign_grace_music/psalms).

1. Challenge: Memorize a psalm (e.g. Ps. 19) and meditate on it throughout the day-when waiting for the bus, mowing the grass, changing the baby’s diaper, etc.

Ask students to report back on how their meditation on a psalm affected their understanding and appreciation of the Psalms.

**Additional Activities**

1. Request 2-3 volunteers who will commit to individually memorize a psalm of their own choosing. When they are ready (given a week or two), they should expressively recite the psalm in the first person as an act of worship. Instruct readers to pay careful attention to the singers focus (on self, God or the “congregation”) in preparing their psalm.
2. Ask the group to spend 8-10 minutes individually looking through the psalms for possible messianic references. Write references on the board and spend time discussing the suggested passages with the rest of the class. Consider the following:
3. What in the passage points to the Messiah?
4. How does the context support or mitigate a messianic reading?
5. Is the passage (or any other portion of the psalm) quoted in the New Testament in reference to Jesus? (Have a concordance ready, if necessary.)

# Section 15 – Chapters 32 & 33

## Summary – Chapter 32

In this question, we surveyed the history of interpretation of Jesus’ story parables. We divided the survey into five historical periods: (1) Jesus’ original setting and the writing of the Gospels; (2) the early church to the Reformation; (3) the Reformation; (4) the Reformation to the late nineteenth century; and (5) the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. This brief overview will hopefully help the reader avoid interpretive missteps of the past, as well as giving a historical example of the influence of Christian scholarship on interpretive trends.

## Summary – Chapter 33

In this question, we overviewed a number of guidelines for the interpretation of parables: (1) Determine the main point(s) of the parable. In order to determine the main point it is helpful to ask the following questions: (a) Who are the main characters? (b) What occurs at the end? (c) What occurs in direct discourse? (d) Who/What gets the most space? (2) Recognize stock imagery in the parables. (3) Note striking and unexpected details. (4) Do not press all details for meaning. (5) Pay attention to the literary and historical context of the parable.

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Interpret Parables? (History of Interpretation)**

**How Do We Interpret Parables? (Principles of Interpretation)**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 32 and 33*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Before the group enters the room write the word “Parable” on the Board

**Select 3 people to begin by reading the following parables aloud**:

-The lost sheep (Luke 15:4-6)

-The lost coin (Luke 15:8-9)

-The lost son (Luke 15:11-32)

Ask: *“Why do you think Jesus spoke these parables?”*

If the no one answers, have someone read Luke 15:1-3 aloud.

State: “About 1/3 of Jesus’ teachings were parables. Therefore it is important to know what a parable is and how parables have been interpreted throughout history.”

Write the definition of “Parable” on the board white board

State: “*Although this definition is correct,* ***the primary components of a parable are the comparisons being made in the story****.”*

Write the Greek word for parable on the board, followed by its meanings:

Ask: “*Are parables still used today? If so, what is one that you have heard recently? If not, then why do you think people do not use them anymore?”*

I am not sure what you want to do with the text boxes on the side. The outline was originally bullet points with short paragraphs following them. I tried to make it fit more with the others and gave it a more “outline” look and feel.

**Outline Summary of Chapters 32-33**

1. Interpretation of Parables Throughout History

**TEACHER NOTE:**

At this point, lead the students through a (verbal) summary of the chapters using the outline laid out for you.

(“SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 32-33”)

A**.** Jesus’ Original Setting and the Writing of the Gospels

1. There is no dispute that Jesus and the writers of the Gospels had a correct interpretation of parables.

2. Jesus provided a correct understanding of his parables most of the time.

B. The Early Church to the Reformation

1. Shortly after the death of the Apostles the early church began to interpret parables allegorically.

C. The Reformation

1. Theologians sought to interpret parables based on what the authors intended them to mean.

2. Martin Luther and John Calvin pointed out the flawed allegorical interpretations and pushed for a right understanding of Jesus’ words.

D. The Reformation to the Late Nineteenth Century

1. Luther and Calvin significantly challenged allegorical interpretation, but many were still drawn to the false methodology.

E. The Late Nineteenth Century to the Early Twenty-first Century

1. Since the late nineteenth century, there have been many considerable developments in the interpretation of parables.

2. One major development was the call by C.H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias to “interpret parables as they were heard by Jesus’ original, first century Jewish Palestinian audience.” (pg. 268)

1. Principles of Interpretation of Parables
   1. Determine the Main Point(s) of the Parable

1.Evangelicals debate whether or not there are one or more points in a parable.

2.There are four questions that can be asked in determining the main point(s) of a parable.

***a. Who are the main characters?***

Main characters should be given the most attention in a parable.

***b. What occurs at the end?***

Jesus often stresses his most important point at the end.

***c. What occurs in direct discourse (in quotation marks)?***

Direct quotations draw the reader to emphasized points in the parable.

***d. Who/What gets the most space?***

Typically the person or thing which is given the most literary space depicts where Jesus was putting his emphasis.

1. Recognize Stock Imagery In the Parables
   * 1. Each culture and era has stock images that are unique to them.
     2. “Jesus’ first century audience and the early readers of the Gospels also were accustomed to certain stock imagery.”
2. Note Striking or Unexpected Details

1. Many of the parables of Jesus are filled with twists and turns or unexpected details that were shocking to the original hearers.

2. Rather than becoming dulled to these twists and unexpected we must pay close attention and try to understand why Jesus is making this certain point.

Write the next point:

white board

- **Determine the main point(s) of the parable.**

**-Recognize stock imagery in the parables.**

**-Note striking or unexpected details.**

**- Do not press all details for meaning.**

1. Do Not Press All Details for Meaning

1. Not all details in parables have significance.

2. Each central figure generally conveys one main point of comparison.

a. Example: When the father greets his son with new clothes, new shoes, a ring, and a banquet these do not each have some symbolic meaning which must be decoded. Instead they simply signify acceptance and celebration. (pg. 274)

Write the next point:

white board

- **Determine the main point(s) of the parable.**

**-Recognize stock imagery in the parables.**

**-Note striking or unexpected details.**

**- Do not press all details for meaning.**

**-Pay attention to literary & historical context.**

1. Pay Attention to the Literary and Historical Context of the Parable

1. “The authors of the Gospels often clue us to the meaning of the parable by including information about why Jesus uttered that parable or by grouping together parables on similar topics.” (pg. 276)

**TEACHER NOTE:**

Read the parable in Luke 18 aloud, excluding the first verse. Ask the students what the purpose of the parable was.

2. One example is in Luke 18; the parable of the persistent widow.

3. Knowing the historical and cultural background is very important in determining the meaning of parables.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapters 32-33**

**Chapter 32**

1 .If Jesus provided allegorical explanations for some of the details in his parables, what is wrong with taking the next step and providing such explanations for all details?

The first and most obvious response to this question is that we are not Jesus and therefore, we do not have the same authority that he does when it comes to interpreting parables. Christ provided allegorical explanations by the authority of God. However, as fallen men, we cannot simply bend and twist Jesus’ words to fit our own personal agenda. Beyond that, we must consider what it was that Jesus was trying to point out in his interpretations and stick to that meaning rather than trying to create one of our own.

2. Allegory was one of the dominant approaches to literature in the early Greco-Roman world. What would you say is the dominant approach to literature in our day?

I would say that the dominant approach to literature in our day is the reader response method. By this, I mean that any type of written work is ultimately “up for interpretation” because the reader determines what the text means. Even if the author intended their writing to mean something different than what the reader thinks it means, ultimately the reader is right because their interpretation is what matters most. This obviously leads to many different interpretations of one writing which in turn leads to many contradictory conclusions as to what the text actually means. Furthermore, any type of absolute statement about truth or meaning is seen as narrow minded or arrogant and, therefore, typically avoided all together.

3.Look again at Origen’s explanation of the parable of the good Samaritan. How would your church respond to a sermon on the parable that interpreted it in this way?

I do not believe that my church would affirm Origen’s explanation of the parable of the good Samaritan. Our pastors are both seminary graduates and are fully acquainted with the hermeneutical principle of interpreting parables in a way that is true to the author’s original meaning. The pastors stick to a historical grammatical exposition of the Scriptures and pay careful attention to details and interpretations.

4. Do you recall hearing or reading an invalid allegorical interpretation of a parable? At the time you encountered it, did you find the interpretation convincing? Why or why not?

This chapter reminded me of a Bible study that I held at my house, in which we covered the parable of the prodigal son. I thought that the Bible study went really well and that all of the information we received was very beneficial. However, I do recall some allegory in regards to the interpretation of the items given to the prodigal son at his return. The robe represents the son’s honor being restored back to him. The signet ring represents honor and restoration with the family. The sandals represent being a master and not a slave, because only slaves walked barefooted. To me, these interpretations seemed to be based more off of historical context, rather than trying to force a false interpretation into the text. Therefore, I thought that they were very convincing. However, I do see where someone could debate that these ideas are not historical interpretation but allegorical.

5. What would you say to someone who claimed, “Origen’s interpretation of the Good Samaritan convinced me to trust in Christ for my salvation, so that interpretation must be correct”?

I would tell him or her that I am happy that the Lord saved them and that he can save people many different ways. However, I would also tell that person that the true interpretation of Scripture is not based on our own experiences or feelings, but rather, by the authors’ intended meaning. There are many people who are led astray because of the misinterpretation of Scripture. If the person was persistent in Origen’s interpretation, I would ask them what they would do if someone else got saved through a different interpretation of this parable. Whose interpretation would be correct since both people were saved? I believe that this would clearly show that their interpretative method is flawed.

**Chapter 33**

1. Which do you find more convincing- the one point only approach to parables or the understanding that parables can have as many points as main characters?

Personally, I think that parables can have as many points as main characters. I say this because of parables like the prodigal son where it seems that each main character (Father and two sons) is conveying a point. The father represents our heavenly father and his willingness to forgive sinners despite their horrible sins. The older brother represents the hardened Pharisees and religious leaders who are greatly disturbed by God’s mercy and grace towards sinners. And the prodigal son represents all sinners who are enticed by the world and give into the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These main characters come together and ultimately show that God is merciful and gracious towards all sinners if they will only repent and trust in Christ.

2. Why, in your opinion, do Christian speakers and writers so frequently stray into allegorical interpretation of parables?

**It is easier than trying to figure out the authors intended meaning**. Using the historical grammatical method of interpreting Scripture requires much more work. It is much easier to follow the presuppositions that you already have in your mind rather than spending hours trying to figure out what the real meaning is.

**Pride**. People want to find things that others have not. Everyone wants to be known as smart and insightful, so they concoct fanciful meanings from the text so that they will have something that is original and never been heard before.

3. Besides a donkey and elephant, can you think of any other widely recognized stock imagery in modern American culture?

Some of the most dominant images in our culture are those relating to sports. My hometown is San Antonio and we only have one professional sports team, the San Antonio Spurs. Therefore, whenever I see a picture of a spur I think of our basketball team. Another widely recognized symbol in our culture is the cross. Although many people wear the cross on their jewelry as some type of religious statement, most do not have a clue as to what it really means. Finally, there are symbols that relate to different companies and businesses. For example, an apple with a bite in it is known as the image for Mac computers or a big red circle with a red dot in the middle is known as the symbol for Target, a store.

  

4. Challenge: Choose one parable from Matthew 13 and apply the guidelines suggested above.

Determine the main points of the parable.

The main point of the parable of the weeds seems to be that the kingdom of God is made up of those who believe the gospel, while all unbelievers will be condemned to hell.

Recognize stock imagery in the parables.

I am not aware of any stock imagery in this parable.

Note striking or unexpected details.

One of the striking details of this parable is that there was an enemy who came in the night and sowed weeds among the good seed. Furthermore, it was not until the seeds grew to where they had “sprouted and formed heads”, that the owner’s servants realize what had been done.

Do not press all details for meaning.

Not all parables explain what the symbols in the story mean, however in this case Christ explained all the details. The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the Evil One and the enemy is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are the angels. Therefore, to try and interpret anything differently from what Christ has said is to misinterpret Scripture.

Pay attention to the literary and historical context of the parable.

As far is the literary context is concerned, the disciple’s questions for Jesus give us some insight as to why he gave these parables. The primary reason seems to be so that the disciples will have “the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven”. On the other hand, Jesus also acknowledges that these parables were spoken to hide the “knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven” from those who have calloused hearts and are unwilling to believe. In regards to the historical aspect of this parable, the use of agricultural imagery is directly related to the times in which they were living. Those who were listening to Jesus speak were farmers and fishermen who had to grow food in order to eat and parables that relate to their occupations are easy to understand.

5. Challenge: Choose a parable and ask Stein’s four suggested questions.

**Who are the main characters?**

**The prodigal son, the Father, and the older brother.**

**What occurs at the end?**

**The prodigal son is reconciled to his father.**

**What occurs in direct discourse?**

The prodigal son asks his father for his share of the estate, “**Father give me my share of the estate.”**

After the prodigal wasted all his money he came to his senses and said “**How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death!”**

Then he prepared the words that he would say to his father, knowing that he sinned greatly, “**I will set out a go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men**.”

The reaction of the father at the return of his son was “**Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”**

Once the older brother notices the celebration, he asks one of the servants what is going on and the servant replied “**Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him back safe and sound**.”

This infuriated the older son and when his father asked him why he would not join the celebration he responded “**Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fatted calf for him!**

The father responds to his older sons objections by saying **“My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”**

**Who or what gets the most space?**

**The prodigal son receives the most literary space in this parable** because Jesus is trying **to place emphasis on God’s saving nature**. This ties in perfectly with the parable of the lost coin and the lost sheep, because these parables are about salvation coming to those who are lost.

**Additional Activities**

**1.** Have each individual in the group pair up. Tell them to read the parable found in Luke 16:19-31 together. They should then separate and apply the interpretation principles that they just learned. After they have both finished, they come back together and compare their answers.

The participants should have been able to interpret the main point of the parable; unlike men, God judges the heart of man, not their outward appearance.

**2.** Read the students the following modern day parable:

“A woman was asked by a co-worker, “What is it like to be a Christian?”

She replied, “It is like being a pumpkin. God picks you from the patch, brings you in and washes all the dirt off of you. Then he cuts off the top, and scoops out all seeds of doubt, hate, greed etc. Then, He carves you a new face, and puts his light inside of you to shine for the entire world to see.”

**TEACHER NOTE:**

Cheesy analogy aside. The students should be able to recognize that without explaining the stock imagery of what we know today as a jack-o-latern, someone who would have heard this “parable” during biblical times would not have understood it the way we do today. They would first need to understand the concept of a jack-o lantern

Ask: “*Why would someone living in the time*

*of Jesus have a hard time understanding this parable? What information would they need to know before being able to properly understand it?*

# Section 16 – Chapters 34 & 35

## Summary – Chapter 34

Twenty-one of the 27 books in the New Testament are letters. Though written to address specific occasions in the first-century church (“occasional letters”), they are also God’s inspired word to the church of every age. In the discussion above, we surveyed a number of aspects of New Testament letters: (1) the structure of ancient letters—with a sample outline of Philippians; (2) literary forms used within letters; (3) the occasional nature of letters; and (4) the issue of pseudonymity.

## Summary – Chapter 35

In this second question of New Testament letters, we have surveyed some practical issues related to studying epistles: (1) use mirror reading with caution; (2) divide the text into discourse units; (3) understand the organization of a literary unit; (4) determine the meaning of individual words; and (5) apply the message today.

## Lesson Plans

**How Do We Interpret Letters or Epistles? (Structure and Nature)**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 34*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. How relevant are the Epistles for modern day churches and Christians?
   1. The truths found within the NT are timeless and can be applied to contemporary believers.
   2. The epistles do address similar issues that contemporary believers face.
   3. They disclose to us who God is and how He has worked and continues to work throughout His world.
   4. God is timeless and His ways are the same yesterday, today and forever.
2. Does structure really matter as it relates to understanding the New Testament letters?
   1. In modern day letters or emails we also communicate in some manner of structure.
   2. We address it to whom we wish to communicate with. We introduce the situation or ourselves. We address the issue at hand. We ask for a response. We conclude. These formalities are critical for our understanding of modern day correspondence and how much more to understand letters written almost 2000 years ago.
3. **Outline Summary of Chapter 34**
4. Structure of Ancient Letters
5. Introduction and Conclusion
6. Thanksgiving/ prayer
7. Body of letter
8. Benediction or formalized greetings
   * + Figure 13: Sample Outline of New Testament Letter: Philippians
9. Literary Forms Used Within Letters
10. Early hymn or confession
11. Diatribe
12. The Occasional Nature of Letters
    1. Passionate appeals
    2. Timeless authority
13. The Issue of Pseudonymity
    1. Recent Trends
    2. Case Against Pseudonymity

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 34**

1. The letters of the New Testament are both occasional and timeless. In what ways is this both a challenge and a benefit to the modern Christian interpreter?

Understanding the historical context is crucial if one is to truly grasp the intent and purpose of the author. Even though the historical context creates the greatest challenge, the theological and ethical issues addressed by the New Testament authors are equally relevant in today’s world.

2. When studying passages from New Testament letters, do you read them in light of the entire letter’s historical setting? Why or why not?

Understanding the historical setting is important, but the timeless authority of the letters can be applied in contemporary times. By understanding the historical atmosphere, one can have a better understanding of what the author is seeking to communicate. Absence of historical information, however, does not hinder one from discovering doctrinal revelations and ethical instructions.

3. When reading personal letters in the New Testament (e.g., 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 3 John), have you thought of these works as written first to individuals? Does it make a difference?

Because the New Testament contains letters written within a contextual framework, to individuals, one could be tempted to see them as being less authoritative as letters addressed to churches or a plurality of individuals. The truth is that this does not make a difference. Within the Paul’s personal letters to Timothy or Philemon, one finds clear instructions for the church as a whole (Philemon 2, 1 Tim 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22).

4. Does accepting pseudonymous authorship of biblical books undermine the Bible’s authority and/or inspiration?

Pseudonymous writings were rejected and condemned by the early church for the very reason that they were misleading. If the authors of the New Testament had mislead their recipients, then they would have opened the door for critics to insinuate false accusations against the trustworthiness of the New Testament as being a historical accurate document.

5. Of the evidence presented above, what is the best argument against accepting pseudonymous authorship of New Testament letters?

The early churches rejection of pseudonymous writings is the strongest argument of the three.

**Additional Activities**

1. Break up into small groups and have them outline one of the shorter letters. Give them 20 minutes to do this exercise.
   * 1. Have them write out their outline for the class (write example below on board)

*Greeting (Ephesians 1:1-2)*

*Introduction (Ephesians 1:3-14)*

*Thanksgiving/ Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-23)*

*Body (Ephesians 2:1-6:20)*

*Doctrinal (Ephesians 2:1-3:21)*

*Ethical (Ephesians 4:1-6:20)*

*Conclusion/ Benediction/ Formalized Greetings (Ephesians 6:21-24)*

1. Have the same groups go through the NT letters and identify the sender, recipient, and address (chapter-verse) of each of the letters.
   * 1. Write the following example on the board

*Book: Ephesians*

*Sender: Paul (1:1)*

*Receiver: Saints in Ephesus (1:1)*

* + 1. Have the participants share what they discovered
    2. See if all the groups agree or disagree

**How Do We Interpret Letters or Epistles? (General Guidelines)**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 35*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

1. Is the use of alcohol in today’s world comparable to the issue of meat being offered to idols in the ancient world?
   1. Both the use of alcohol and eating of meat are not forbidden in the NT. Yet both have been known to be stumbling blocks for non-believers or a weaker brother.
   2. No matter what the issue might be we must take into consideration the harm that could be inflicted by what we are eating or drinking.
   3. We have to remember that the issue is not about if we believe it to be wrong or right but rather the view of our brother.
   4. The principle of being conscious of others welfare is a timeless principle that applies to both what one eats and drinks.
2. Does it truly make a difference for you to learn something on your own as compared to having someone else reveal it to you?
   1. Self-discovery of God or any new truth moves one from being an observer to being actively engaged and taking ownership. We thrive when we learn something for ourselves and are not dependent upon the experiences of others.
   2. We have to seek to experience God ourselves and not just coast in the wake of others experiences. A great example of this can be found in 2 Chronicles 24. Young Joash (who became king at the age of 7) lived and appeared to follow God all the days of Jehoiada the priest.
   3. Ask the class if anyone can share from experience how God has revealed something to them apart from an outside influence.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 35**

1. Mirror Reading
   1. Defined and explained
   2. Example from 1 John
   3. Disciplined study
2. Divide the Text Into Discourse Units
   1. Questions to ask
3. Organization within a Literary Unit
   1. Discourse unit
4. Determine the Meaning of Individual Words
   1. Interpretive dangers
   2. Word study options
   3. Use of modern English translations
5. Application of Message
   1. Understanding the author’s original message
   2. Culturally bound instructions
   3. 1 Corinthians 8-10 example
   4. Timeless principles listed and discussed

**I thought that the issue here was a page break, I switched it to continuous instead but it did not visually change.**

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 35**

1. Do you or your church currently study, teach, and preach through entire books of the Bible? If not, what would be the benefit of switching to this method?

By teaching through books of the Bible you model for your people how to read and study the Bible. Another benefit is that you will eventually deal with major themes, for they run ramped throughout Scripture. An understanding of the whole book provides better insight into the meanings of individual sections or texts within the book.

2. When studying the Bible, have you ever engaged in a word study? What resources did you use? What did you learn?

Word studies are quite common and can sometimes be confusing or misleading without a proper grasp of the original language. A good study Bible or commentary can help if one needs to grasp a deeper meaning of the original language. A concordance will provide you with the word every time it appears in the Bible. Bible software programs can also be advantageous in word studies.

3. When you prepare Bible studies or sermons, how do you decide what section of text to deal with (that is, where to start the study and where to end)?

You want to teach within a particular discourse unit, allowing the authors thoughts to determine where to begin and end your message.

4. In seeking to understand the structure of an epistolary passage, have you ever tried a visual method (that is, writing it out with indentations or diagramming)?

This is a popular and useful method of organizing a letter or portion of scripture. There are a variety of different methods that one can use to break down the letter into manageable portions. As mentioned in the chapter, if one desires to make the literary connections he must be willing to write it down. By writing down what one sees, they provide themselves with a better opportunity to grasp and digest what they are studying.

5. Challenge: Choose a favorite passage from the New Testament letters and study it afresh this next week in light of the suggested methods above. This must be the experience of each individual and it is highly recommended that teachers participate in this exercise.

**Additional Activities**

1. Break into groups and have them subdivide one of Paul’s letters as if they were going to preach from that letter.
   1. Stress the importance of following the authors thoughts and dividing your messages accordingly.
   2. Assign the letters to the individual groups.
   3. Provide them 20 – 30 minutes to work though this exercise.
   4. Have the groups provide their findings and allow feedback from other groups.
2. Have groups come up with various issues that might qualify in the realm of *adiaphora*.
   1. Remind them that our behavior should not be governed by ultimate categories of “right” and “wrong” but must be shaped by a dual concern—(a) for other Christians’ spiritual health and (b) for the conversion of non-believers.
   2. Have them list various areas that might fit into this category. An obvious example is drinking alcohol.
   3. Allow them to dig and think contextually regarding what they are currently being faced with in their daily lives.

Provide 15 minutes for small group and large group discussions (30 minutes total).

# Section 17 – Chapters 36 - 40

## Summary – Chapter 36

The Bible speaks of the future, but before engaging in more speculative doctrinal formulation, we should begin with its clear teachings: (1) Jesus will come again in visible, bodily form to consummate his eternal kingdom. (2) Between the time of Jesus’ first and second coming, there will be a period of political, spiritual, and environmental turmoil. (3) One day, all persons will be resurrected, judged, and enter into an eternal, unchangeable state of glory or damnation. Such eschatological teaching is intended to give Christians hope in trial and encouragement to faithfulness. Some more debated end-times issues, about which Christians should evince interpretive humility, are: (1) the nature of the rapture; (2) interpretive approaches to the book of Revelation; (3) the meaning of the millennium in Revelation 20; and (4) the role of ethnic Israel in God’s ongoing saving purposes.

## Summary – Chapter 37

“Biblical criticism” is the focused, academic study of the Bible. Eight common forms of biblical criticism were discussed above: text criticism, historical criticism, form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, tradition criticism, literary criticism, and rhetorical criticism. Most of these methods of studying the Bible are employed by both Christian and non-Christian scholars. Non-Christian scholars, however, often have presuppositions about the historicity of the text or the nature of God that result in skewed analyses and conclusions.

## Summary – Chapter 38

Speech act theory, a subset of the philosophy of language, argues that most, if not all, language is inherently action-based. In making a statement, a speaker not only conveys facts (the locution), he also performs an action (the illocution—requesting, commanding, warning, or blessing) and sets in motion the actions of his hearers (the perlocutions). Evangelicals have shown interest in speech act theory because: (1) It offers a philosophical basis for connecting a text’s meaning with its author. (2) It shows promise in explaining the effective dimension of God’s powerful inscripturated Word. (3) It provides a way of connecting modern application (perlocution) with text and author. The future of speech act theory in biblical hermeneutics is uncertain. The theory’s broader acceptance and use will depend on the ability of speech act theorists to clearly communicate its concepts and relevance.

## Summary – Chapter 39

The theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS) is a growing movement in biblical scholarship that calls for a return of the Bible to the church. That is, only the Christian church ultimately serves as the legitimate reader and audience of interpretation. Dominant hermeneutical trends of the last two centuries (mainly higher criticism) have proved a siren song away from this fundamental truth. As the TIS movement is very new, it is difficult to assess its history, characteristics, and trajectory at this nascent stage.

## Summary – Chapter 40

The Bible never changes, but due to interpreters’ changing contexts, people who read the Bible are perpetually asking new and different questions. How are these questions best answered, and, in fact, are all of these questions valid? There is always a need for critical self-awareness in our approach to the study of the Bible. In hopes of facilitating such self-awareness, we have surveyed some recent trends and terms in the field of biblical interpretation. These include: biblical theology, canonical criticism, canonical process approach, reception history, effective history, intertextuality, redemptive-movement hermeneutic, missional hermeneutic, and philosophical hermeneutics.

## Lesson Plans

**What Does the Bible Tell us About the Future?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 36*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

When people think of “end times” what are some images that come to mind? (Write answers down on the board.)

What are some objections you’ve heard non-believers make about the Christian idea of end times? How would you respond to these objections? (One example being Bill Maher’s “Religulous” documentary)

**Outline Summary of Chapter 36**

1. **Evangelical Agreements**
   1. Jesus will come again in visible, bodily form to consummate his eternal kingdom.
   2. The return of Jesus will reveal true believers.
   3. Before Jesus’s return there will be a time of political, spiritual and environmental turmoil.
   4. After Jesus’s return all persons will be resurrected and judged and will enter into an eternal, unchangeable state of glory or damnation.
2. **Evangelical Disagreements**
3. The Rapture
4. Interpretations of Revelation
   1. Futurist -
   2. Historist -
   3. Preterist -
   4. Idealist -
5. The Millennium
   1. Premillennial -
   2. Postmillennial -
   3. Amillennial -
6. The Nation of Israel -
   1. Covenantal
   2. Dispensational

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 36**

1. Did you grow up with any definite beliefs or expectations about the end of the world and Christ’s return? Where did you acquire these beliefs?

My beliefs on the end times growing up was based solely on what the Christian media said. Movies like “The Omega Code” and “End of Days” made me think that the end times were going to be a big-budget action movie but in real life. Also, the imagery of the four beasts before the throne seemed to be the only thing I took out of Revelation as a kid. All these ideas developed for me because the church I was a part of never took the time to break down what this book meant.

2. In your opinion, what eschatological doctrines are absolutely essential for all Christians to believe? Why do you think this?

I believe that the doctrines of Christ coming back, renewing all things and placing all believers into the glorification state are absolutely essential to believe of the eschaton. These are essential because, if believers understand that they were justified and are being sanctified, wouldn’t it be helpful for them to understand that the final stage in their salvation is to be glorified?

3. Have you ever run across any odd teachings about the end times? What do the Scriptures say with regard to these issues?

I’ve heard of many people and religious sects claim they know when the end of the world will happen, including sadly, my own ministry - Campus Crusade. The primary reason for these claims is the idea of interpreting Revelation as a mathematical equation. However, according to Matthew 24:36, “about that day (referring to the end times) no one knows.” Thus, we cannot rightly say when the end of the world will come about.

4. Of the approaches mentioned above, what is the correct way to view Revelation? Can you defend your position from the Bible?

I have simply dismissed eschatology for a long time, only within the last few years of my Christian walk have I began to study this area of theology and listen to all the viewpoints. Even then, I still I’m not fully convinced one way or the other. First of all, I am convinced that if we take God’s word as inerrant then Scripturally there is much more evidence for the covenantal interpretation than the dispensational. As for what the millennium looks like, I tend to side with an amillennial view but I’m also sympathetic with the historic premillennial view. The great thing about both viewpoints is that they’re both filled with plenty of Scripture to back up their points and so it’s very abstract to truly understand which is correct. Only God knows.

5. Of the approaches mentioned above, what is the correct way to view ethnic Jews in relation to God’s ongoing saving purposes?

I believe the dispensational interpretation is completely wrong. When we see God’s saving promises in Scripture, they apply to the true Israel, that is, all believers in all of human history by God’s saving grace. God’s promises are not divided but are one with both ethnic Jews and the Gentiles.

**Additional Activities**

1. Put up definitions of amillennial, premillennial, postmillennial on Powerpoint or a dry erase board and have the group guess which view is being defined.

2. Put up definitions of futurist, historist, preterist, idealist on Powerpoint or a dry erase board and have the group guess which view is being defined.

3. Put up characteristics of dispensational and covenantal interpretations of the end times on Powerpoint or a dry erase board and have the group guess which view is being defined.

**What Is Biblical Criticism?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 37*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

When you hear of biblical criticism what comes to mind? (Write down answers on board).

Does the term biblical criticism usually connote positive or negative feelings in evangelical circles? Why do you think this?

**Outline Summary of Chapter 37**

1. Text criticism - study of ancient texts to establish what original manuscripts said.

2. Historical criticism - historical study of documents in the Bible and related writings, events, persons, etc.

3. Form criticism - how portions of text circulated orally before being written down.

4. Source criticism - study of what literary sources biblical authors/editors drew from.

5. Redaction criticism - study of the role of the redactor (editor) had in the final composition of the text.

6. Tradition criticism - study of the history of a text before its final composition. 7.Literary criticism - study of a text without mention of historicity or authorship.

8. Rhetorical criticism - 1. The labeling of recognized Greco-Roman categories of speech in the New Testament. 2. The detection of beautiful and effective patterns of speech in the text.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 37**

1. Before reading the material above, had you heard of any of these forms of biblical criticism? Which ones?

I had heard of text criticism through taking a Hebrew and Greek class during my undergraduate studies.

2. How does recognizing literary sources for biblical books affect our understanding of the authors’ inspiration by the Holy Spirit?

It brings to mind the dual authorship idea of Scripture. When a book was written, the author had a purpose for writing and when he did write, it was within his own cultural framework. Additionally, the Holy Spirit was over every word within the author’s book to make sure that it was exactly what the Spirit wished to convey. So in recognizing the literary sources within a book, we see a glimpse of the author’s culture and how the Spirit used this to affect the text.

3. Have you ever read an article or book in which a liberal scholar used one of the above methods with anti-Christian presuppositions and/or conclusions?

I’ve seen historical criticism used in order to somehow disprove the Christian faith. One such claim was the recent discovery that archaeologists had found Jesus’ body in his tomb. This of course brings about the implication that, if Jesus is still in his tomb, the resurrection never happened. Thus, we are still dead in our sins and the Bible is a lie. This “claim” was later disproved.

4. In your opinion, is it advisable for a Christian scholar to employ any of the above methods in the study of the Scripture? If not, what alternative approaches would you recommend?

In all these forms of criticism, I see nothing wrong with employing these methods. If we come to the Scriptures with the presupposition that it is inerrant, then these methods will help us all the more in understanding the dual-authorship theory. However, if one comes to the Scripture with bias or doubt, these methods might do more harm than good.

5. Which of the above methods seem to hold the most promise for understanding the author’s meaning of the text?

I think historical criticism is the most promising for understanding the author’s intent. In this method, you are specifically studying the author’s context. So, understanding context is absolutely essential in understanding the author.

**Additional Activities**

1. Put up definitions of the types of criticism discussed in the chapter on Powerpoint or a dry erase board and have the group guess which kind of criticism it is.

2. Research examples of different kinds of criticism and have group determine what kind of criticism it is.

3. Assign a text for the group to interpret using one of the forms of criticism. Discuss aloud.

**What Is “Speech Act Theory”?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 38*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Who’s familiar with the Speech Act Theory? What have you heard about it? (If no one is familiar with it ask the following question...)

If you broke down this theory, what would you guess the theory is about?

**Outline Summary of Chapter 38**

I. Speech Act Theory - the recognition that language is rooted within action

II. History - originated in 1955 by John L. Austin at Harvard

III. Vocabulary -

A. Locutionary act - the meaning of the utterance with respect to the normal sense of vocabulary and grammar

B. Illocutionary act - the statement, with respect to the action performed in its utterance (e.g., request, command, promise, warning, blessing, etc.)

C. Perlocutionary act - an action created or brought about as a result of utterance

IV. Evangelicals and the Speech Act Theory

A. This has become an apologetic approach for arguing the objective grounding of biblical interpretation in a broader academy committed to relativism and subjectivity.

B. This has sparked interest in the intersection of the theory with foundational Christian truths and nature of Scripture.

C. This theory helps evangelicals in obeying the Word of God by explaining the relation between divine and human intent.

V. Caveats and Comparisons

A. Speech Act Theory has often been compared to biblical rhetorical criticism but has come up short.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 38**

1. Does the description of all languages as being fundamentally action based seem correct to you?

This seems to be correct. After all, statements or questions are supposed to bring about an action from the person I’m communicating with and, even though this theory can be a little abstract, it seems helpful nonetheless.

2. In two minutes, could you explain the basics of speech act theory to someone else? Is the theory understandable and relevant?

The speech act theory is the idea that all language is action based. In other words, when we communicate to someone we expect them to respond in a certain way, whether it is through agreement, through a command or whatever. In understanding this, we can see the relevance of the speech act theory as it applies to every act of communication including a casual conversation between friends or listening to a speech by a political figure.

3. Challenge: Choose a short passage in the Bible and discuss these dimensions: locutionary, illouctionary, perlocutionary (see above).

Matt 16:24 - Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciples must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Locutionary - True obedience is through sacrifice.

Illocutionary - If you want to follow Christ, you have to be willing to sacrifice everything.

Perlocutionary - According to church history, all the disciples became martyrs of Christ because of His command.

4. In the discussion above, speech act theory was compared with rhetorical criticism and verbal aspect theory. Can you think of any other academic approaches or theories that offer lessons to speech act advocates?

(I am not familiar with other academic approaches to speech and language. More expertise would be needed.)

5. Can you think of any more accessible terms to substitute for locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary?

Locutionary - Meaning

Illocutionary - Action Stated

Perlocutionary - Consequence

**Additional Activities**

1. Put up definitions of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary on Powerpoint or a dry erase board and have students guess as to which word it is.

2. Research examples of scholars explaining a section of text, have the group guess as to whether the scholar is interpreting the text as locutionary, illocutionary or perlocutionary.

3. Choose a text within the NT and have individuals break down the text into locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary categories.

**What Is the “Theological Interpretation of Scripture”?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 39*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Who’s familiar with the Theological Interpretation of Scripture movement? What have you heard about it? (If no one is familiar with it ask the following question...)

If you broke down this movement, what would you guess the movement is about?

Theological Interpretation of Scripture - academic movement that seeks to return reflection on the biblical text to purview of the confessing Christian church.

**Outline Summary of Chapter 39**

I. History of T.I.S.

A. Introduced by Steven Fowl in 1997 but didn’t reach the academic mainstream until 2005.

B. Though only recent, advocates of T.I.S. claim it is a return to Pre-Enlightenment interpretation.

II. Characteristics of T.I.S.

A. Reader response through the Church creeds.

B. Disillusion with the historical-critical method.

C. Emphasizes confessing Christians for its audience.

D. Respect for external theological parameters.

E. Emphasizes narrative story lines.

F. Celebration for how texts have been interpreted traditionally throughout Church history.

G. Interest in how text has had a cultural impact.

III. Projections

A. Recently the publishing of the Brazos Theological Commentary of the Bible.

B. Though only beginning, it is expected that the movement will face division among itself.

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 39**

1. Before reading the material above, had you ever heard of the theological interpretation of Scripture movement?

I have never heard of the TIS movement before. It seems to be a purely academic approach and thus it’s mostly concentrated within academic circles.

2. What aspects of the TIS movement do you find promising?

I like the idea that this approach is targeted mainly for the Church. I think the TIS movement can bring about some helpful references and tools to equip believers since that is their main audience.

3. Do any characteristics of the TIS movement concern you?

One concern is that there’s a lot of emphasis placed on Church tradition. The focus of the TIS movement is placed on how the Church throughout history has interpreted the text. This can be interesting, but Church history has shown that some texts can be misinterpreted for up to 1600 years - just look at how the Church has interpreted the parables. For a layperson not knowing the characteristics of TIS and is young in their faith, reading things from the TIS movement can bring about some dangerous concepts in interpreting Scripture.

4. Have you noticed any of the characteristics of the TIS movement in recent books you have read or speakers you have heard?

I’ve noticed within the last four to five years there has been a resurgence of Reformed theology and the writings of Calvin and Luther (myself included). Along with this trend, there has also been a growing trend to study the early Church fathers. So, even though I haven’t seen specific examples of the TIS movement, I can see how there has been a sudden interest in the celebration of the Church’s history of interpretation.

5. A few projections for the future of the TIS movement were made above. Which of these projections seem most likely to you?

It seems most likely that the TIS movement will in fact break apart. You have scholars from all sorts of backgrounds coming to the text with their own presuppositions; however, they’re studying more of the tradition rather than the text. This is a good thing, but I believe over time scholars will realize this and their presuppositions will come out thus causing division.

**Additional Activities**

1. Have the group correctly identify the seven characteristics of the TIS movement.

2. Use excerpts from Brazos and common commentaries, individuals will seek to determine whether the excerpt is an example of the TIS movement or not.

3. Cite a text and have the group discuss aloud as to what the TIS interpretation would be.

**What Are Some Other Recent Trends in Biblical Interpretation?**

*Lesson Plans for Chapter 40*

* **Opening Questions- (these are designed to promote discussion and should be asked at the beginning of your time together. If a board is available, it might be helpful to write them out. )**

Aside from the last two movements discussed in the previous chapters, what other hermeneutical trends have you heard of? (Write down answers on the board).

**Outline Summary of Chapter 40**

1. Biblical Theology - an approach to study the Bible that seeks to hear nuances of diverse texts.
2. Canonical Criticism - embraces the completed canon in the context of confessional Christianity as a boundary to study texts.
3. Canonical Process Approach - similar to canonical criticism that respects each biblical author’s original meaning, while seeing a progressive revelation of God’s purpose in later biblical writings.
4. Reception History - how text has influenced Church history.
5. Effective History - how text has influenced Church history and its surrounding environment.
6. Intertextuality - the way one text is alluded or used by another biblical author.
7. Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic - the supposition that Scripture provides a certain trajectory that points to conclusions beyond (and possibly in contradiction to) those issues explicitly addressed in the text.
8. Missional Hermeneutic - the supposition that all biblical texts speak on how God reveals Himself and its relation to how we ought to reveal the gospel to others.
9. Philosophical Hermeneutics - study of how biblical meaning interacts with key philosophical issues (epistemology, ontology, etc.).

**Answers to Reflection Questions in Chapter 40**

1. Of the terms and trends outlined above, which were new to you?

I’ve heard of biblical theology in regards to Vos’s theory of reading Scripture as redemptive, but not in the way it is used today.

2. Do you see any commonalities among the recent interpretive approaches outlined above? What might those commonalities reveal about current cultural context?

There are obviously some heavy comparisons to canonical criticism and the canonical process approach. Also, there is an obvious comparison to reception history and effective history. Because of this, it is safe to say that there is heavy scrutiny about the Bible in our current cultural context.

3. Does being aware of the missional nature of Scripture really make a difference in our understanding and application of it?

I believe so. Scripture is meant to teach, correct, rebuke and equip all believers to action. One such action is working out the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Therefore, if all Scripture calls us to action and the Great Commission is one such example, then there’s no harm in looking at Scripture through the lens of how we are to apply as a way of fulfilling the Great Commission or any other missional action.

4. Challenge: Choose one of the methods explained above and study a specific biblical text in light of the chosen approach.

Matthew 28:18-20 – “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations teaching them all I have commanded you and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And behold, I am with you always to the very end of the age.”

Through the missional hermeneutic method, we can see a great parallel. God has chosen to reveal to the world His only Son and more specifically God chose to reveal His resurrected Son to only a select few. Because of his status with the Father, Jesus is given all authority and because Jesus has all authority, he commands the Church to reveal the news about his life and his resurrection so that all may come to know him as Lord.

5. Challenge: Read Thomas Schreiner’s review essay available at the Web site cited in the footnote in this section. Do you agree with Shcreiner’s assessment of Webb’s redemptive-movement hermeneutic?

I agree with what Schreiner has to say regarding Webb’s work. Webb brings about some solid hermeneutical insight but overall his proof of showing that egalitarianism is biblical is overall abstract and confusing.

**Additional Activities**

1. Put up definitions of recent interpretive approaches on Powerpoint or a dry erase board and have the group determine which approach is being defined.

2. Research a scholar’s view on a biblical topic using one of the interpretive approaches discussed in the chapter, individuals must guess what approach he is using.

3. Cite a popular biblical topic and have the group discuss aloud how this topic can be seen through each interpretive approach discussed in this chapter.

**Persons Contributing to Lesson Plans:**

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Monica Dees

Matthew Dixon

Johan Djuandy

Charles Eldridge

Rod Elledge

Bryan Emerson

Christopher Fleming

Jesse Florida

Jonathan Gann

Gaines Gentry

Zachary Van Gieson

Jason Gilleland

Chase Goff

Joseph Gordy

Meizi Guo

Zachary Harper

Christopher Hartman

Jared Houk

Jeffrey Johnson

Robert Johnson

Travis Johnson

Andrew Jones

Mary Kavanagh

Junkyung Kim

Jonathan Kitchens

Jon Lee

Jesse Leightenheimer

John Logan

William Lookabill

Michael Lopes

Jason Lowe

Ronald Lowenfield

Kylan Mann

Zachery Martin

Michael McAfee

Brett McNew

Tamara Moreland

James Nofsinger

Brandon O'Shields

Evan Owens

Jesse Owens

Lucas Page

Robert Plummer

Ross Ragsdale

Jacob Riggs

Jeffrey Robison

John Russell

Raymond Savely

Timothy Scheiderer

Daniel Schreiner

Lindsay Scott

Christopher Snider

Henry Sofley

Jay Sorrows

John Strickland

Nathan Stuller

Jon Teague

Charles Tenpenny

Joshua Thomas

Will Thomas

Garth Walters

Michael Walters Monica Waters

Bethany Wester

Leah Whiddon

Kevin White Cassandra Williford

Christopher Woodall

Craig Woods

Crockett Jenkins

1. The Gospels could also be classified as historical narrative, but they are historical narratives that focus on a person (Jesus) with the intent of explaining the theological significance of his teaching, life, death, and resurrection. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. John Piper, *How Few There Are Who Die So Hard!* <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/biographies/how-few-there-are-who-die-so-hard>. Accessed January 17, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)