Leveraging a Massive Open Online Course in the Local Church to Teach Hermeneutics

A Thesis Project Submitted to

the Faculty of Liberty University School of Divinity

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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December 2018
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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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LEVERAGING A MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH TO TEACH HERMENEUTICS

Howard Dale Tryon, Jr.
Liberty University School of Divinity, 2018
Mentor: Dr. Rick Rasberry

The increase in massive open online course (MOOC) offerings in theological higher education presents unique equipping opportunities for local churches, providing high-quality instruction from authoritative scholars. The purpose of this project is to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. A pretest and posttest assess the effectiveness of the program to impart knowledge of hermeneutical concepts and skills. A concluding survey determines the extent to which participants plan to use learned hermeneutic methods and principles in personal Bible study and teaching preparation, in addition to assessing participants’ experiences with and perceptions of the educational technology. This project seeks to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches.

Abstract length: 136 words
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<td>MOOC</td>
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<td>Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the thesis project, beginning with the ministry context. A brief historical sketch of Calvary Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, precedes an assessment of the role the Bible plays in the church by examining its statement of faith and regular ministry programming. The project facilitator’s involvement with the church concludes the contextual overview. The problem statement establishes the presence of nationally-held frustrations associated with the lack of Bible reading (more specifically, the lack of correct reading, interpretation, and application of the Bible), and then narrows to the lack of training in hermeneutics at Calvary Baptist Church, highlighting a unique opportunity to provide needed and desired training. The purpose statement establishes the goal of the project to utilize a massive open online course in hermeneutics to provide effective and efficient instruction. The project’s limitations and delimitations follow the project facilitator’s basic assumptions. The chapter concludes with the project’s thesis statement.

Ministry Context

In the mid-twentieth century, the Southern Baptist Convention launched a focused church planting initiative called the “Thirty Thousand Movement.”¹ From 1956-1964, the denomination sought to establish 10,000 new churches and 20,000 new missions. At the

conclusion of the movement, 24,917 new Southern Baptist churches and missions had been established, among them Calvary Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Calvary Baptist Church was started as a mission of Beulah Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, in the 1960s. The mission’s first meeting was a prayer meeting held in a family’s residence in May 1963. Its first organizational meeting was held the next Sunday in a local elementary school. Comprising twenty baptized believers and nine children, the new mission adopted the name “Calvary Baptist Mission.” In late 1963, the church extended a call to Rev. Alton Griffin, who began as the pastor in 1964 and served in that capacity for twenty-two years.

It was in 1964 that the church was constituted with sixty-three charter members. In 1965, the church purchased property on Timberlake Road in Lynchburg, and the first building was completed in 1968. Additional construction projects to provide more classroom and meeting space were completed in 1972 and 1984. The centerpiece of construction was a new sanctuary, which was dedicated in 1998. After Rev. Griffin’s resignation in 1986, Rev. Mark Beck served as the congregation’s pastor for seven years (1987-1994). The next pastor was Rev. John Thompson, who served at Calvary Baptist Church from 1996-2006. Dr. Don Williams served the church as interim pastor from 2006 until the summer of 2008. Since then, Rev. Louis Beckwith, Jr. has served as the church’s pastor.

Calvary Baptist Church is an active member of the Baptist General Association of Virginia and the Lynchburg Baptist Association. Total membership slightly exceeds 500, with

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2 This brief church history is taken from the unpublished document “A Brief History of Calvary Baptist Church,” which was created and distributed at the church’s 45th anniversary in 2008. The church’s current pastor, Rev. Louis Beckwith, Jr., provided the document to the project facilitator.

an average Sunday morning worship service attendance of 250 and an average Sunday school attendance of just over 200. The church budget exceeds half a million dollars, with well over ten percent thereof given to cooperative missions work. The church employs two paid ministerial staff: the lead pastor and a director of student ministries. In addition to one paid support staff, the church also utilizes a volunteer director of congregational care and assimilation. Services are held three times each week in addition to many regular opportunities for missions, outreach, fellowship, and discipleship for all age groups.

As with most Southern Baptist churches, the Bible figures prominently in the life and mission of Calvary Baptist Church. This is most clearly evident in the church’s statement of faith and regular Bible study activity. The church’s published statement of faith is an abbreviated version of *The Baptist Faith and Message* of 1963. The statement’s presentation highlights the underlying importance of Scripture to all its key doctrinal tenets, as each section is supported by ample biblical references. The statement’s first paragraph addresses Scripture. This brief section indicates that the Bible is a perfect source of divine instruction, contains truth without error, is completely true and trustworthy, and is the standard for examining all behavior and beliefs. The statement affirms the Bible as the only authoritative source and rule for Christian faith and practice.

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4 Ibid.


In addition to its faith statement, the instructional activity of the church evidences its commitment to Scripture. The age-graded Sunday school curriculum is based on the Bible. The Sunday morning worship service centers on a biblically-based sermon. The Sunday and Wednesday evening services are labeled as “Bible study.” There are Bible studies offered regularly throughout the week, as well. The church’s biblical instruction program relies heavily on the participation of church members to lead classes and studies, since the church only employs two paid ministerial staff, only one of whom serves full time. The Bible-centric activities and programs of Calvary Baptist Church, coupled with the prominence of Scripture in its statement of faith, confirm that the Bible plays an essential role in the life of the church.

The project facilitator was an active member of Calvary Baptist Church from August 2012 through December 2016, when he relocated to another state, and he retained membership until March 2017. He and his family not only supported the ministries of the church prayerfully and financially through regular tithes and offering, but also actively served in various capacities. The project facilitator served on the personnel committee and missions team, was on the offertory prayer rotation, and was ordained as a deacon in the summer of 2015. His wife served on the student ministries committee and technology team, and helped launch a women’s ministry by organizing regular fellowship events. Both the project facilitator and his wife served as preschool Sunday school teachers and extended care teachers. The project facilitator’s entire family regularly participated in the church’s special ministry events and programs.

Problem Statement

The problem this project addresses is avoiding a missed opportunity to provide needed and desired training in basic hermeneutics. Each year the American Bible Society issues its State
of the Bible report. Commissioned by the Society and conducted by the Barna Group, the 2017 nationwide research study asked over 2,000 American adults a series of questions corresponding to six related categories: Bible engagement, perceptions of the Bible, Bible penetration, Bible literacy, moral decline and social impact, and giving to non-profit organizations.\(^8\) In the category of Bible engagement, the survey presented participants with several potential frustrations and asked them to select their most significant frustration when reading the Bible. The most-cited frustration (30% of all respondents) was lack of time, which was followed by respondents who experienced no frustrations with Bible reading (22%). Other reported frustrations included difficulty with the language (16%), lack of excitement about reading the Bible (16%), lack of understanding of the Bible’s background or history (11%), and the inability to locate stories or verses (6%).\(^9\) These foremost frustrations received similar rankings in years past, as well.

Two of the reported frustrations with Bible reading relate to its intrinsic characteristics (as opposed to external constraints or the reader’s abilities and emotions): language and historical context. The longitudinal research study cited above indicates these are consistent, chronic factors negatively impacting Bible reading experiences. Moreover, these two frustrations in particular can be alleviated in part by training readers in basic biblical hermeneutics focused on the grammatical-historical method of interpretation. Whereas hermeneutics may be defined as “the discipline that studies the theory, principles, and methods used to interpret texts, especially


\(^9\) Ibid, 54. Other responses, with corresponding percentages of respondents, included “other” (22%), which was much higher than in previous years, and “unknown” (1%). The 2017 report introduced several new options, including: not knowing where to start (14%), finding Bible stories confusing (9%), and finding the layout difficult to navigate (8%).
ancient ones such as the sacred Scriptures,\textsuperscript{10} the grammatical-historical method “refers to interpretation that pays close attention to both the language the text was written in and the cultural-historical setting or occasion that produced it.”\textsuperscript{11} With an understanding of basic interpretive methods and principles, readers can more effectively interact with the language of the Bible and understand its historic backgrounds resulting in improved Bible reading experiences. The results of the macro-level national survey are indicative of the micro-level experience and sentiments in local churches, which are best positioned to address Bible engagement frustrations through their educational programming. The potential implication of such training is not only enriched personal Bible study, but also improved Bible teaching in the local church. Identifying an appropriate method to use in the local church context to accomplish this goal is challenging given the limited resources of most congregations. The ideal program must be cost-effective, interesting, engaging, and theologically accurate in its approach.

**Purpose Statement**

In 2013, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) offered its first massive open online course, or MOOC. MOOCs provide participants free access to the same level of instruction as students enrolled in on-campus courses. The first such course SEBTS offered was biblical interpretation, or hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{12} The stated purpose of the course was to assist


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 83-84.

\textsuperscript{12} Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, “Board of Visitors and Trustees Gather to Hear about Those Being Sent,” *The Great Commission Magazine of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary*, Spring 2013, 8.
participants in learning how to study the Bible and teach it to others, equipping them with methods resulting in enriched personal Bible study and better teaching of the Word of God.\textsuperscript{13}

Months after SEBTS offered its MOOC on biblical interpretation in the spring of 2013, the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church approached the project facilitator about leading a study on hermeneutics using the course. As a doctoral student at SEBTS, the pastor had firsthand knowledge of the quality of instruction at the seminary and understood the unique and valuable opportunity the course afforded. In addition, the pastor communicated that the church had not previously offered a study on the topic of hermeneutics and felt it would be beneficial to do so. As such, the need was not only current, but also longstanding. The pastor reached out to the project facilitator to organize and lead the study because of his educational background. He saw value in selecting a teacher who had previous academic training in hermeneutics and other related theological disciplines to lead those uninitiated in the discipline.

This project aims to seize upon the unprecedented opportunities presented by the SEBTS MOOC to provide high-quality, theologically accurate, interesting, and engaging instruction at no cost. The purpose of the project is to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. Moreover, this project seeks to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches.

Basic Assumptions

The project facilitator holds a high view of Scripture. He affirms that the Bible is the single authoritative source and guide for Christian faith and practice. With such a view of Scripture, he understands that regular Bible reading and study are not only necessary, but also are expected of believers. Realizing that the Bible is a text far removed in time and space from contemporary America, the project facilitator understands the need for hermeneutics in order to more fully understand and more effectively use the Bible. He affirms that the grammatical-historical method is the best approach to biblical interpretation. It is also his conviction that training should not be limited to clergy, but that all members of a local church can benefit from instruction in basic hermeneutics. Any proposed solution to the ministry problem of the lack of training in hermeneutics must embody and promote these same assumptions and commitments.

Limitations and Delimitations

Within the study of hermeneutics, there is a distinction between general hermeneutics and special hermeneutics, with general hermeneutics referring to interpretive methods and principles that apply to any biblical text and special hermeneutics referring to the rules and principles used to interpret specific genres.\textsuperscript{14} The scope of this project was limited to teaching general hermeneutics. The history of biblical interpretation, including modern interpretive schools and movements, was also outside the scope of this project. Furthermore, the project implementation

was limited geographically, denominationally, demographically, and temporally. The project was carried out on the premises of Calvary Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, over the course of ten weeks in the fall of 2015. Calvary Baptist Church is a Southern Baptist church. As such, the church’s overall culture is markedly conservative and evangelical. In addition, the course study materials were from a seminary owned and governed by the Southern Baptist Convention, thus they presented a conservative, evangelical approach to hermeneutics. Participation in the study was limited to adults who were regular attendees or members of the church. However, the participants need not have had any prior instruction in hermeneutics. Since the program was offered on Sunday evenings, the potential pool of participants was small. Attendance at the Sunday evening service was always minimal, with many adults assisting with other ministry programs during the same time frame, or simply not attending altogether at that time. Finally, the material used for the project was recorded and produced in 2012; however, given the nature and scope of the study topic, the datedness of the material was deemed relatively unimportant.

**Thesis Statement**

The purpose of the project is to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. Moreover, this project seeks to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches.
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to establish the conceptual framework for the project, the literature review begins with an overview of various denominational efforts to codify (at the very least) their distinct hermeneutical approach, or to offer (at the most) a sanctioned approach to interpreting the Bible in their given tradition. These efforts demonstrate the importance of and need for hermeneutics across Christianity. The review then surveys popular works on hermeneutics, which could be utilized for training within the local church. Finally, an analysis of previous in-ministry projects on hermeneutics concludes the literature review. The theological framework establishes the biblical foundation and precedent of the interpretive task, provides a brief theological discussion of special revelation (the Bible) as a divine communicative act which necessitates hermeneutics, and argues the ministerial duty of the church in biblical instruction. The theoretical application section introduces the innovative educational technology of massive open online courses.

Literature Review

Denominational Efforts

The works referenced below provide a sample of primarily periodical literature relevant to the topic of biblical hermeneutics in local churches.¹ Specifically, these pieces highlight efforts by various denominations, broadly speaking, to establish a descriptive and/or prescriptive

¹ The works used were found by searching in relevant journal databases, such as ATLA, using a broad search strategy (e.g., keywords “hermeneutics” and “church”).
approach to hermeneutics, which could be useful for congregations in their respective traditions. These efforts range from the formal (i.e., denominationally-sponsored initiatives) to the informal (i.e., a denominational representative’s own perspective and commentary on the topic). The presentation is alphabetical by theological tradition, with the exception of evangelical hermeneutics, which concludes this section.

**Anglican**

Recognizing the increasing differences of opinion on various social and theological issues (and their resultant strain and conflict) in recent decades within the Anglican Communion, a phenomenon which stands in paradox to a denominational consensus on the authority of the Bible, the Communion initiated the “Bible in the Life of the Church” project in 2009.² This three-year project sought to understand how everyday Anglicans engage with and interpret the Bible in hopes to elucidate the diverse hermeneutical practices prevalent within the denomination and to preserve the unity of the Communion.³ Although the stated goals of the project were four, the two most relevant for the present discussion were: “to distil and develop…the principles of Anglican hermeneutics” and “to produce resource materials for use at all levels of Christian education.”⁴

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⁴ Anglican Consultative Council, Deep Engagement, Fresh Discovery, 3; Lyon, “Mind the Gap,” 452.
At the conclusion of the project, ten hermeneutical themes and seven hermeneutical principles emerged. These themes and principles emphasized the centrality and authority of the Bible in the life of the church and individual, the importance of the original biblical context and the contemporary cultural context, and the necessity of diversity in the interpretation of Scripture. The initiative acknowledged the role and utility of scholarship, both biblical and secular. The interplay of Scripture, reason, and tradition was presented as a classic Anglican approach to viewing and interpreting Scripture.\(^5\)

Among the resources produced as a result of the project, the course “h+” presents a pragmatic resource for use in the local church. Designed to result in better and more effective engagement with and interpretation of the Bible, the course comprises ten sessions teaching participants what to look for in textual interpretation, biblical backgrounds, and literary analysis, and addresses the impact their preunderstandings and experiences have on how they read the Bible. The resource also highlights eight virtues that complement the interpretive skills and techniques learned, emphasizing that the course is as much about character formation and discipleship as it is about hermeneutics.\(^6\)

**Catholic**

In 1993, the Pontifical Biblical Commission released *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*.\(^7\) While maintaining continuity with previous Catholic teachings on the Bible, the

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goal of the document was “to give Catholics guidance and to safeguard authentic biblical interpretation” by “teaching that both historical-critical study and theological reflection on the Bible are necessary in Catholic interpretation.”\textsuperscript{8} Witherup adds that the work’s “real goal is to promote a deeper appreciation of the Bible as the Word of God among Catholics.”\textsuperscript{9} The work first considers the strengths, weaknesses, and utility of various methods and approaches for interpretation, extolling the historical-critical method and strongly criticizing a fundamentalist approach to Scripture.\textsuperscript{10} The treatment of hermeneutics reinforces the traditional Catholic stance, comprising (1) openness to the deeper meanings of the biblical text found in the text as part of the living tradition of the church, (2) re-readings of biblical texts, and (3) actualization, or the application of readings to contemporary circumstances.\textsuperscript{11} Whether or not this document has impacted the average congregant remains questionable to Witherup, as does what exactly characterizes a Catholic approach to interpretation, since the work does not advocate one distinctive Catholic method.\textsuperscript{12}

Realizing this deficiency, Peter Williamson offers twenty principles of interpretation which he distilled from \textit{The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church} and which he posits constitute Catholic interpretation.\textsuperscript{13} Williamson defines these principles as “the presuppositions

\textsuperscript{8} Ronald D. Witherup, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church,” \textit{The Bible Today} 48, no. 4 (July/August 2010): 195.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 200.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 197-199.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 199.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 200.

and procedures appropriate to interpreting Scripture in the life of the Catholic Church.”¹⁴ The principles are presented primarily in focused groups.¹⁵ The first principle stands alone and states the Catholic understanding of the nature of Scripture, i.e., that it is simultaneously divine and human. This is followed by four principles that explain the need for the study and use of scientific, historic, literary, and philosophical disciplines in interpretation of the Bible as an ancient human text. Six principles follow that distinguish Catholic interpretation, emphasizing the prominent role of the living tradition of the church.¹⁶ The next three principles serve to refute the notion of a single, authorially-intended meaning for biblical texts, instead promoting three senses: literal, spiritual/typological, and fuller. The next two principles focus on particular hermeneutical methods to consider when interpreting the Bible. The final four principles relate to the practice of interpretation in the church, featuring actualization and inculturation.¹⁷

**Churches of Christ**

In his article, “Hermeneutics in the Churches of Christ,”¹⁸ Thomas Olbricht seeks to elucidate key tenets of a denominational hermeneutic. He begins by offering his own definition of hermeneutics as “the perspectives and commitments from which believers put questions to the Scriptures” and adds that in order to appreciate any hermeneutical approach one must assess

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¹⁴ Ibid., 330.

¹⁵ Ibid., 332-348.

¹⁶ For a brief, yet authoritative, overview of tradition in the Catholic Church, see *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Tradition (in theology).”

¹⁷ Williamson explains actualization as making “Scriptures fruitful for people living in various times” and inculturation as making “Scriptures fruitful for peoples living in different places,” 347.

perceptions of reality, the role Scripture plays in that reality, and the questions asked of Scripture by those in that reality. Olbricht posits ecclesiology and soteriology as the twofold focus of Churches of Christ/restoration theology before delving into a lengthy treatment of the history of biblical interpretation, highlighting key figures, teachings, methods, and conclusions relevant to a Churches of Christ hermeneutic. From this historic discussion, the following attributes of a Churches of Christ hermeneutic can be gleaned: an emphasis on literal interpretation, the importance of inference, a tendency to focus on the New Testament, the need for reason and common sense, and a proclivity for the deductive and grammatical-historical methods of interpretation. Olbricht distills these into “three major aspects: (1) the command, example, and necessary inference formula, (2) the dispensations, and (3) the grammatico-historical aspects.” Interestingly, Olbricht then proceeds to demonstrate how the first two elements informing his proposed Churches of Christ hermeneutic are increasingly antiquated and much less relevant in light of changes in the denominational culture. As such, it would seem the grammatical-historical method of interpretation holds pride of place in establishing an enduring Churches of Christ hermeneutic. The article concludes with demonstrating how this phenomenon has been actualized in the Churches of Christ apropos changes in its own understanding of the doctrines of ecclesiology and soteriology. Although some conclusions about a Churches of Christ hermeneutic can be drawn from Olbracht’s work, given his own presentation, one questions their continued validity. His work represents more a treatise on church history and historical theology than an in-depth examination and construction of a denominational approach to hermeneutics.

19 Ibid., 1.
20 Ibid., 3-12.
21 Ibid., 12.
22 Ibid., 12-18.
Lutheran

Stemming from a recommendation at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America’s 2005 Churchwide Assembly to investigate and report on the denomination’s understanding of scriptural authority and principles of biblical interpretation, several articles appeared in the spring 2006 issue of *Dialog* to that end. The first half of Dennis Olson’s article, “How Lutherans Read the Bible,” serves as an editorial introduction to the issue and provides useful preliminary information for framing the conversation on Lutheran hermeneutics. Stating the shared central emphasis of the Bible across the Christian community, Olson then provides six distinctly Lutheran themes concerning the Bible: (1) Scripture alone, (2) the clarity of Scripture, (3) the self-interpretation of Scripture, (4) the offices of law and gospel, (5) the Christo-centric and salvific foci of the Bible, and (6) the concession that a canon exists within the canon concerning the utility of texts in proclamation of the Gospel.

Erik Heen follows this discussion with a historical survey documenting the erosion of the hermeneutically relevant doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy within North American Lutheranism, focusing on the ELCA. The opinion and practice among the laity present many contradictions. Most Lutherans think the Bible is inspired and half read it regularly. However, the perception remains that the Bible is no longer central to the life of the Lutheran church and that it is not being engaged. Heen’s solution to reconciling the contradiction lies in understanding the

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24 Ibid., 4.


26 Ibid., 12-13.
changing modern culture and these changes’ impact on hermeneutics. Modernization, and especially scientific advances, only served to widen the gap between the biblical world and the contemporary world, making the efforts needed to discern relevance and application more difficult than most wanted to expend.\(^{27}\) In reshaping a modern approach to Scripture, Lutheran theologians sought assistance through (1) recovering the early Reformation biblical theology of Luther, (2) employing the historical-critical method, (3) seeking greater ecumenical engagement, (4) embracing Pietism, and (5) following suit with most Neo-Orthodox teachings, including rejection of the Bible’s inerrancy and inspiration.\(^{28}\) Heen concludes that such information is helpful and foundational in developing a modern Lutheran hermeneutic, but that such work largely is yet to be done.\(^{29}\)

H. Frederick Reisz asserts that although a Lutheran hermeneutic may exist, the context in which the Bible is read by Lutherans is more telling than, and may inform, any hermeneutical principles they use.\(^{30}\) The author provides ten primary “orientational dimensions” on biblical authority, which constitute this context. These dimensions include such Lutheran teachings as the Christocentric nature of the entire Bible, God’s justifying grace freely given in Jesus, and identification of humanity’s sin in the Law coupled with humanity’s redemption in the Gospel.\(^{31}\)

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 13-14.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 16-17.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 18.


\(^{31}\) Ibid., 26-28.
Reisz’ purpose was not to codify Lutheran hermeneutical principles but to provide insights from a framework of biblical authority to inform such principles.\textsuperscript{32}

The final theme article focuses on reflections from authors of Bible studies written for the \textit{Lutheran Woman Today} magazine, some of which provide insight into the practice of hermeneutics in a local church context.\textsuperscript{33} Goals for studying the Bible, as opposed to simply reading the Bible, focused on the application of the fruits of the hermeneutical process, emphasizing spiritual growth (deepening faith) and its impact on life (biblical living) and relationships (deepening relationships). Although the ultimate goal is life-changing encounters with the Word of God, there is value in learning biblical interpretation methods which focus on literary, theological, historical, and grammatical analysis. The authors present distinctly Lutheran approaches to Bible study, which include educating laity, an emphasis on grace, the use of imagination, consideration of global dimensions, comparative/ecumenical analysis, the dialectic of law and gospel, and the acceptance of ambiguity.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Orthodox}

Theodore G. Stylianopoulos offers four hermeneutical principles from a Greek Orthodox perspective.\textsuperscript{35} Listed as principles of fidelity, these include: (1) fidelity to Scripture, (2) fidelity to tradition, (3) fidelity to critical study, and (4) fidelity to the Holy Spirit. Each principle

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 28.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
receives elaboration. Fidelity to Scripture entails recognizing the Bible as God’s self-disclosure, the supreme expression of which is Jesus Christ, “who forms the center of revelation and marks the unity of the Old and New Testaments,” and “grappling with the paradox of Scripture’s divine and human character.” Fidelity to tradition emphasizes the important role of the community of faith in exercising, and establishing normative criteria for, judgment and discernment in resolving disputes concerning God’s revelation. Stylianopoulos implies subsequent adherence to the Church’s interpretive decisions. Following the examples of the biblical authors and early church fathers, fidelity to critical study emphasizes the interpreter’s responsibility to exercise judgment and discernment in critical reflection during the hermeneutical process. The author offers two interpretive caveats: (1) the interpreter must understand the influence his own experiences and convictions have on his interpretation, and (2) reflection must include faith in the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The active and necessary role of the Holy Spirit in illuminating, transforming, and qualifying the interpreter is the focus of the fidelity to the Holy Spirit principle. Interpretation is not merely an intellectual pursuit, but is also a spiritual endeavor. The author concludes by offering three levels of interpretation. Historical interpretation seeks the original meaning of the text. Theological interpretation “concentrates on the theological claims and themes of the Bible as normative truth and saving message for all.” This type of interpretation considers personal and ecclesiastical presuppositions, as well as

36 Ibid., 328-329.
37 Ibid., 330-331.
38 Ibid., 332.
39 Ibid., 335.
40 Ibid., 336.
historical theology. Finally, mystical interpretation relates to the “spiritual receptivity of the believer” and rests on “the Holy Spirit itself [sic] being the primary interpreter and teacher.”

Stylianopoulos states that the goal of interpretation is growth as a scholar and a saint. Although not as overtly stated as one might expect, one does note the persistent role of tradition, most pointedly expressed as the church fathers, in Orthodox interpretation.

**Pentecostal**

In his article, Andrew Davies attempts to codify a narrowed hermeneutic by focusing on how the Bible is read among Pentecostals. In the opening paragraphs of the article, Davies states that Pentecostal reading of the Bible is characteristically devotional and passionate, with the goal being a spiritual experience. The importance of personal experience is a common theme threaded throughout the article. Davis characterizes the Pentecostal hermeneutic as pre-critical and somewhat fundamentalist. The author makes the assertion that reading the Bible has little to do with intellectual comprehension and focuses heavily on divine self-revelation, that is, an encounter with God. He further posits that Pentecostals assert that one cannot fully understand the Bible, nor that it is desirable, as such an approach limits the God of the Bible. Thus, Pentecostals “prefer to interpret Scripture more by encounter than exegesis,” and pay little attention to the surface meaning or authorially intended meaning of a given text.

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41 Ibid., 337.


43 Ibid., 221-222.
Practically, Davies constructs the Pentecostal devotional hermeneutic as a series of questions to be asked of any text: (1) “What did this mean to its original readers?” (2) “What does it mean to me?” and (3) “What should I do about it?” with the second and third questions being most important and thus the only questions the author addresses. The consequences of the second question are selective reading of the Bible and the lack of a single meaning for any text, as the reader’s interpretation, based on experience and context in life, varies from one individual to the next. The community of faith serves to some extent as a checks and balances mechanism, but not always, as the Holy Spirit’s role in guiding individual interpretation is paramount. The third question emphasis the application of the Bible. Pentecostals read the Bible with an end in mind, and that end is transformative. Pentecostal biblical interpretation seeks a practical response, not a theological response.

Wesleyan

By examining several relevant articles in the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, a picture of key elements informing a Wesleyan approach to reading and interpreting the Bible clearly emerges. Thompson emphasizes the possibility of many meanings of a text because of countless individual readers, balanced by the church to validate such interpretations; Green offers four theses related to how Wesleyans read the Bible; and Wall describes four features of John Wesley’s approach to Scripture. It is evident that Wesleyans esteem the Bible as authoritative

44 Ibid., 223-224.
and foundational for Christian teaching and living. The Wesleyan approach to reading and interpreting the Bible is situated in a postmodern context as the importance of the reader in determining meaning takes precedence over any single, authorially intended meaning of the text. Paradoxically, reading of the text favors a plain or literal sense and always seeks to place a passage in compliance with the whole of Scripture, focusing on such themes as justification, sanctification, grace, love and holiness. Readings and interpretations of Scripture that relate to salvation emphasize divine grace in coming to faith and the pursuit of a life of holiness, thus rendering Scripture as a sacrament, a means of sanctifying grace.

**Evangelical**

Codifying an evangelical approach to hermeneutics is as daunting and nearly impossible a task as defining evangelicals. Fackre’s article on evangelical hemeneutics only serves to highlight the diversity among evangelicals on such key doctrinal issues as Scripture’s infallibility and inerrancy, but at least identifies these issues as centrally characteristic of evangelicalism.\(^47\) In his article on the topic, Kaiser notes that changes in the scope of what constitutes hermeneutics only add to the complexity of identifying an evangelical approach to interpretation. He asserts that “the word ‘hermeneutics’ has assumed a broad semantic field embracing the various forms of literary criticism as well as both ends of the interpretive spectrum involving the text and the reader. Indeed, the reader, his times, culture, psychology, and ‘pre-understandings’ are now as much the object of the hermeneutical process as the text itself.”\(^48\)

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\(^48\) Walter C. Kaiser, “Evangelical Hermeneutics: Restatement, Advance or Retreat from the Reformation?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 46, nos. 2-3 (April-July 1982), 171. Mal Couch offers a chapter on principles of hermeneutics in his work *An Introduction to Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics: A Guide to the History and*
In seeking to establish an evangelical approach to interpretation, Provan begins with the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics” as a quasi-official statement on the topic, representing a consensus among evangelical scholars, but is quick to point to the document’s shortcomings.49 For Provan, hermeneutics needs to suggest how “we are to move from individual biblical statements, conditioned as they are by time and culture, to an overall understanding of the Bible as God’s Word to use today.”50 Thus his primary criticism of the Chicago statement is that “it focuses on telling the reader what to think about the Bible rather than on helping the reader to read the Bible.”51

In a series of articles, Gordon Fee makes an attempt at “finding an evangelical hermeneutic” by addressing major issues within the focused discipline.52 Overall, Fee’s proposed evangelical hermeneutic succumbs to the pitfall of hermeneutics identified by Kaiser above, and Fee’s proposed approach would likely garner similar criticism from Provan as proving more theoretical than practical. However, Fee does offer many principles and propositions essential to an evangelical reading of the Bible, including: acknowledging and balancing the implications of the divine/human nature of Scripture; focusing on the author’s intended meaning as primary in


50 Ibid., 7.

51 Ibid., 22.

the interpretive task; understanding the particularity and eternality of texts as crucial to their application, considering the ad hoc nature of texts as well as the centrality of redemption in the whole of the biblical message; and realizing the impact of personal and ecclesiastical traditions in the hermeneutical process. These traditions include individual and corporate presuppositions, prejudices, biases, pre-commitments, and predispositions.

Walter Kaiser sees the way forward for evangelical hermeneutics as reclaiming key hermeneutical principles espoused during the Reformation. For Kaiser, the chief end of hermeneutics is identification of the meaning of the text, to which end critical methods may be appropriated. The meaning of the text is one, not many; however, its significance, or application, is unbounded and contextual. Kaiser also warns against misappropriation of the Reformation “analogy of faith” as an exegetical tool to level out the Bible to make every passage state the same theological concept. Finally, he emphasizes the need for application of all interpretation via principlizing, which he defines as stating “the author’s propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special application to those truths to the current needs of the Church.”

From the above analysis, certain elements stand out: fidelity to the author’s single intended meaning, the primary goal of hermeneutics as application of truth, and acknowledgement of the interpreter’s preunderstandings. But what distinguishes evangelical hermeneutics? Kaiser and Longenecker use the definition of evangelicalism to establish a basic frame for understanding evangelical hermeneutics, citing the centrality of the gospel of Jesus.

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54 Ibid., 177.
Christ to evangelicals. Provan adds that evangelicals recognize that Jesus is the central figure of the biblical message in its entirety. Thus, as Smith and Goldsworthy conclude, “The purpose, center, and interpretive key to Scripture is Jesus Christ,” and “...he [Jesus] must mediate the meaning of the whole of God’s communication to us.” An evangelical hermeneutic is a Christocentric hermeneutic with the aim of applying the truth of the Gospel to everyday life.

**Popular Works**

Many popular works, as opposed to textbooks intended for college or seminary use, exist on the topic of biblical hermeneutics. Typically intended for a lay audience, these books generally attempt to simplify studying the Bible and promote understanding the Bible. This section provides a sample of such works.

Authored by Howard and William Hendricks, *Living by the Book* claims to be a “standard work on Bible study methods” used in Bible schools, colleges, and seminaries. In fact, the work is the codification of a course on how to study the Bible taught by Howard Hendricks at Dallas Theological Seminary. However, it is not an academic work. The book’s methodical

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56 Provan, “‘How Can I Understand, Unless Someone Explains it to Me?’,” 8.


59 The representative works highlighted were listed as bestsellers on Amazon.com on the topic of exegesis and hermeneutics.

approach provides the reader with a framework for studying the Bible in a way that is practical, readable and applicable. The authors state that it is user-friendly.\textsuperscript{61} The introductory chapters serve to establish the need for such a book, targeting reasons why people do not read the Bible and why people should study the Bible. The remainder of the book focuses on how to study the Bible, using the inductive Bible study method. Each part of the three-step process of observation, interpretation, and application is explained in detail, with many practical implementation techniques provided. The anecdotes peppered throughout the book make it interesting and exercises offered at the end of many chapters make the content engaging and immediately applicable. In order to facilitate use in the local church, a workbook and DVDs were published to accompany the book.

In response to the success of their college and seminary textbook, \textit{Grasping God’s Word},\textsuperscript{62} J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays produced \textit{Journey into God’s Word}.	extsuperscript{63} The book is the direct result of requests for training material in the local church on how to study the Bible based on the textbook. Targeted to adults and older youth, this streamlined version of \textit{Grasping God’s Word} retains the informational core of the textbook while eliminating extraneous materials, such as examples and specialized discussions. \textit{Journey into God’s Word} begins with an overview of the process of Bible reading and application, followed by a discussion of essential skills and insights needed to read the Bible correctly and responsibly. Treatments of select literary genres from both testaments conclude the work. Discussion questions and assignments for each chapter,

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 7-10.


along with a suggested eight-week schedule, make this a viable solution for meeting the need to teach basic hermeneutics in the local church context.64

Although more academic and technical in its presentation, R. C. Sproul’s *Knowing Scripture*65 is a welcome contribution to the corpus of works intended to equip laity with basic hermeneutical knowledge and skills. The impetus for the book is twofold: (1) increasing concern for understanding and applying the Bible’s message today, and (2) the “lay renewal” phenomenon, evidenced by home Bible studies and small group fellowships, which fosters debates, discussions, and comments on Scripture often resulting in disagreements over biblical meanings and applications. While the intended audience is laity, Sproul adds that more specifically his audience is the “serious” reader. His purpose is to provide such readers with guiding principles and basic, common sense guidelines to study the Bible profitably, in hopes to mitigate against the tendency to read the Bible according to one’s own prejudices.66 While the chapters on the practical rules for interpretation (chapter 4) and practical tools for Bible study (chapter 6) make Sproul’s book immediately useful, the majority of the book (approximately 60%) provides theoretical, theological, philosophical, and historical information that, although important and useful, is of more limited interest to the average reader.

*A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules*67 by Robert H. Stein, similar to *Living by the Book*, arose from courses taught by Stein on the topic of hermeneutics. Because of the importance of interpreting the Bible correctly, Stein sought to produce a non-

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64 Ibid., 9-10.
66 Ibid., 13-14.
technical book to help readers understand the goal of Bible reading and how to achieve that goal. According to the author, the goal of Bible reading is to understand what the biblical authors meant. Once this understanding has been reached, the reader must find the valid implications and applications of this meaning. This constitutes the twofold aim of the work: understanding the meaning of the biblical text and applying that meaning. Discussions on the role of the author, text, and reader in that process, as well as a glossary, assist the reader. After establishing this initial framework and process, Stein addresses the various genres of the Bible and the specific rules for interpreting them. Study questions and exercises at the end of each chapter lend to the book’s use in small groups.

In Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes, E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien seek to remind Bible readers that biblical interpretation is a cross-cultural experience, and one’s present culture impacts Bible reading and application often without the reader’s awareness. One of the authors’ basic arguments in asserting this claim is that objective interpretation of the Bible is non-existent. They posit that the reader’s cultural context and assumptions cause him to overlook many cultural subtleties impacting the meaning of the biblical text. They label these contexts and assumptions “cultural blinders” and state that they inhibit modern readers from easily seeing the original meanings. Richards’ and O’Brien’s book offers readers the opportunity to identify and address their cultural blinders. Their approach is to identify nine differences between Western and non-Western cultures, ranging from the least obvious to the most obvious, that are important to know when reading the Bible. The overall

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68 Ibid., ix-x, 2.

purpose is focused on learning more about self as prerequisite to reading the Bible. As they state, “Before we can be confident we are reading the Bible accurately, we need to understand what assumptions and values we project onto the Bible: those things that go without being said and that make us assume that some interpretations are self-evident and others are impossible.”\textsuperscript{70} The ultimate goal of this better, correct understanding of self and Scripture is better, correct application of Scripture. Numerous biblical examples and personal anecdotes make this an accessible book for most readers. Reflective questions at the end of each chapter make the book useful for small group studies.

**In-Ministry Projects**

The number of in-ministry projects on the topic of biblical hermeneutics is substantial. Given the number of such projects, many nuances surface concerning the treatment of the topic. An analysis of these titles reveals variances in five categories: audience, scope, context, purpose, and methodology, which are treated in turn below. Those works cited represent a select number of illustrative titles only and are in no way intended to offer an exhaustive representation. Finally, although many works easily fall into several categories, effort was made to minimize duplication across categories.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 16.
Audience

Many projects focused on particular age groups, primarily adults, but also included college students, high school students, and children. The role in the church of those selected for the focus of the programs as identified in the projects included teachers, pastors/preachers, church leaders, laity, and new believers. Several projects were denominationally-focused, 


representing Southern Baptists, Churches of Christ, and Wesleyans among many others. Finally, some projects targeted certain cultures or groups, terms used broadly here. Represented cultures and groups included Hispanic, Asian (predominantly Korean), women, feminist, and queer.

Scope

The scopes of the projects can be categorized in two ways: (1) the biblical focus and (2) the targeted methods of interpretation. When not focused on the entirety of Scripture, projects addressed one of the two testaments, with varying levels of detail. Some considered the entire testament in its treatment, whereas others focused on a particular subset or genre, e.g. wisdom

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literature,\textsuperscript{89} history,\textsuperscript{90} Gospels,\textsuperscript{91} etc. Some further targeted specific books of the Bible, or chapters within books.\textsuperscript{92} Secondly, many projects were limited to certain hermeneutical methods or aspects of interpretive methods. Represented were works on the grammatical-historical method\textsuperscript{93} and its focus on authorial intent.\textsuperscript{94} Also represented were postmodern hermeneutics,\textsuperscript{95} inductive Bible study,\textsuperscript{96} the historical-cultural method,\textsuperscript{97} and the historical-critical method.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{89} Bryan S. Gunn, “Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Teaching the Members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama to Properly Interpret Wisdom Genre through Preaching from the Book of Ecclesiastes” (D.Min. thesis, Samford University, 2008).


\textsuperscript{91} Donald Roy Frampton, “Reading the Synoptic Gospels Today: A Lay Bible Study Using an Aspect of the Historical-Critical Method” (D.Min. thesis, Columbia Theological Seminary, 1982).


\textsuperscript{94} Sean Ransom, “Theological Curriculum Design with Integrated Hermeneutical and Exegetical Methodology to Help Students Accurately Interpret the Authorial Intent of the Biblical Text” (D.Min. thesis, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 2015).


\textsuperscript{96} Daniel E. Sauerwein, “Inductive Bible Study: A Proposed Program of Study” (D.Min. thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1980).


\textsuperscript{98} Frampton, “Reading the Synoptic Gospels Today,” 1982.
Finally, two projects incorporated other practical and doctrinal theology, exploring the role of prayer\textsuperscript{99} and the role of the Holy Spirit\textsuperscript{100} in hermeneutics.

\textbf{Context}

Context is defined here in a limited way as the physical setting of the project, which includes any geographical designation. As might be expected, many projects occurred in the context of the local church.\textsuperscript{101} Other settings included seminaries, or seminary extensions overseas,\textsuperscript{102} and colleges or universities.\textsuperscript{103} Geographically, the African continent\textsuperscript{104} was well represented. Asia,\textsuperscript{105} North America\textsuperscript{106} and the Caribbean\textsuperscript{107} were also represented.


\textsuperscript{105} Jae Hyuk Yoo, “An Ethnographic Assessment of the Korean Presbyterian Christians in Daegu City (KPCD) in their Reformed Understanding of the Bible” (D.Min. thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2008).


Purpose

An expected intent for developing a project to teach hermeneutics is to equip believers with skills and knowledge to study, interpret, and understand the Bible correctly in order to better teach the Bible. The implication that hermeneutics would also impact daily Christian living\textsuperscript{108} is explicitly stated in some works. Besides teaching to teach, teaching hermeneutics for preaching\textsuperscript{109} was also heavily cited among projects. A few projects related hermeneutics to pastoral care\textsuperscript{110} and one explored the relationship of hermeneutics to apologetics.\textsuperscript{111}

Methodologies

Although the titles of many programs did not state how they accomplished their goals, some revealed the means by which they achieved their goals. Some referred to, or implied, program development, making mention of courses.\textsuperscript{112} Others focused on the development of


written works, including manuals, textbooks, and self-directed study helps.\textsuperscript{113} Finally, two projects in particular referenced the use of computers to assist in teaching hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{114} Of great relevance to the present project is Chadwick’s thesis. In his chapter on future implementation, many of his suggestions are realized with MOOCs, including continuing education in non-credit courses, instruction by experts, and the innovative use of (communications) technologies.\textsuperscript{115}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Theological Foundations}
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\begin{center}
\textbf{Biblical Foundations}
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The biblical passages referenced\textsuperscript{116} below focus to a large extent on those Scriptures where appears one of several Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek words in the semantic field of “interpretation.” In Hebrew and Aramaic, there are eight such words in total.\textsuperscript{117} In Greek, there are thirteen, but the treatment below focuses on the word group under which the concept of

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\textsuperscript{115} Chadwick, “Using Computer Technology to Teach Principles of Hermeneutics to Church Leaders,” 120-124.

\textsuperscript{116} Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the \textit{New American Standard Bible} (La Habra, CA: Lockman Foundation, 1995).

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{NIDOTTE} 5:109.
interpretation is treated most thoroughly in the literature, i.e. ἐρμηνεύω.\textsuperscript{118} The order of the analysis of the verses follows the order in which they appear in the canon.

**Old Testament**

The activity of interpretation first appears in the biblical text in the Joseph narratives of Genesis, specifically Genesis 40-41. Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker in Genesis 40, and Pharaoh’s dreams in Genesis 41. In the Hebrew text, the word group used throughout these chapters stems from the root רעפ. This word group is limited exclusively in its meaning to the interpretation of dreams. The verb form is found only nine times in the Old Testament, all of which occur in these two chapters of Genesis. Similarly, the noun form appears five times and only appears in these chapters.\textsuperscript{119} One might expect the use of the Greek word group ἐρμηνεύω in the LXX version of these texts, but this is not the case. Only ἐρμηνευθής, “interpreter,” occurs in Genesis 42:23,\textsuperscript{120} and refers to the interpreter who stood between Joseph and his brothers. Interesting observations concerning interpretation can be made from these passages. First, dreams required an interpreter. The king’s cupbearer and baker had no recourse, but Pharaoh employed magicians and wise men for the task, who ultimately could not interpret his dreams.\textsuperscript{121} Secondly, when the dreamers sought Joseph for interpretations, he quickly attributed interpretations to God.\textsuperscript{122} Finally, the spiritual nature of interpretation is highlighted. In

\textsuperscript{118} NIDNTTE, 2:29.

\textsuperscript{119} TWOT, 2:744; NIDOTTE, 3:721; TDOT 12:153.

\textsuperscript{120} NIDNTTE 2:277.

\textsuperscript{121} Gen 40:8, 41:8

\textsuperscript{122} Gen 40:8, Gen 41:16.
Genesis 41:38-39, Pharaoh recognizes Joseph’s overt spirituality and that the source of his discernment and wisdom is God. This foreshadows 1 Corinthians 2:4, where Paul teaches that the natural man cannot understand the things of God because they are spiritually appraised and thus are understood only by those who are spiritual.

In Deuteronomy 1:5, “Moses undertook to expound this law.” The Hebrew word translated as “expound” is ובאר. It is typically translated as “make clear,” “explain,” “declare,” or “make plain.” It is used to mean making something clear through explanation. Its use in this verse is significant given the object of explication: the Torah, or law, that is, Scripture. Moses’ pastoral task was not merely that of recapitulation in order that the people would gain intellectual, factual knowledge. He was to explain the Word of God and apply it, or rather exhort the people to apply it and remain faithful to God.124

2 Chronicles 13:22 and 2 Chronicles 24:27 make use of the Hebrew מדרש, a derivative of the root דרש. The root means basically to “seek,” “inquire,” or “ask,” but can also mean “interpret.” The derivate noun occurs only in these two verses in 2 Chronicles and means “exposition” or “interpretation.” It can also be translated “record.” In the NASB it is rendered “treatise,” but great variation exists in the English translations. While some argue the

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123 NIDOTTE, 1:578; TWOT, 1:87.
125 TDOT 3:294.
126 TDOT 3:305-306; TLOT 1:347; NIDOTTE 1:993, 998.
127 TWOT 1:199
“word represents a written historical record (a place to ‘search out something’),” 129 others claim the word may indicate products along the lines of an exposition, annotation, or commentary, which imply interpretation. 130

The Hebrew root פָּרַשׁ can also take on the nuances of meaning of “study,” especially when the Torah is its object. 131 The seeking of Scripture in Psalm 119:45 (“I seek Your precepts”), Psalm 199:155 (“they do not seek Your statutes”), 1 Chronicles 28:8 (“observe and seek after all the commandments of the Lord your God”), and Isaiah 34:16 (“seek from the book of the Lord”) practically could involve their study through examination, investigation, or interpretation, and subsequent application.

In Ezra 4:18, the Hebrew word rendered “translated” is פָּרַשׁ and means “explain,” “make distinct,” or “declare.” 132 The word basically means “to make clear” by revelation, explication, or translation. 133 In this passage it “describes the reading and explanation of a letter.” 134 The letter sent to King Artaxerxes was written in Aramaic, which he could not understand, so it was translated into Persian for him and read to him by a scribe. 135

In Ezra 7:10, the verb פָּרַשׁ appears, where it is translated as “study” given its object is the Torah. This verse provides an overview of the components of the interpretive process, but first

129 Ibid.

130 TDOT 3:306; TLOT 1:998.

131 TLOT 1:350; NIDOTTE 1:998.

132 TWOT 2:740; NIDOTTE 3:700.

133 TWOT 2:740.

134 NIDOTTE 3:700.

highlights the attitude of the interpreter. Ezra’s entire life was concentrated on and dedicated to
the Scripture. With such devotion he studied it. But he did not stop with just study; he obeyed the
Word. Only then did he teach the Word to others. Thus is presented a biblically-established
process and order for interpretation: study, obey, teach.136

Nehemiah 8:8 depicts the Levites engaging in interpretation (the verb פָּרַשׁ is rendered
“translated”).137 The goal of reading and interpreting the Scripture was to give its meaning to the
people so they could understand it. It is often noted that the people needed the Hebrew text
translated into the vernacular, which was Aramaic.138 Breneman highlights not only the need to
interpret the language, but also the cultural divide between the exiles’ previous years in
Babylonia and their scriptural cultural heritage. He further adds that the goal of the interpretation
would have not only theological implications, but also practical implications for the hearers.139

Ecclesiastes 8:1a (“Who is like the wise man and who knows the interpretation of a
matter?”) presents the sole instance in the Old Testament where the verb פֵּשֶׁר, the Aramaic of the
Hebrew פֵּשֶׁר, occurs outside an Aramaic context and does not refer to the interpretation of
dreams, but rather to the interpretation of a prophetic word.140 More specifically, these matters
are those which can be characterized as mysterious or hidden.141 Whereas Longman argues that

136 Frensham, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, 101; Breneman, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, 100-101; Derek
Kidner, Ezra and Nehemiah, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 71.

137 NIDOTTE 3:700.

138 Fensham, The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, 217; Kidner, Ezra and Nehemiah, 116; Breneman, Ezra,
Nehemiah, Esther, 180.

139 Breneman, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, 179-180.


141 Iain Provan, Ecclesiastes/Song of Songs, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 163; Michael
A. Eaton, Ecclesiastes, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009 ), 134.
the answer to the rhetorical questions posed in the verse is “No one,” Bartholomew states that it is precisely the wise man, but he is quick to add that such ability, embodied in wisdom, is from God.\footnote{Tremper Longman III, \textit{The Book of Ecclesiastes}, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 209; Craig G. Bartholomew, \textit{Ecclesiastes}, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 280.}

Similar to the location and use of פֵשׁר in Genesis 40-41, the Aramaic פֵשׁר word group appears over thirty times throughout Daniel 2-7 and is confined in its meaning to the interpretation of dreams and visions.\footnote{\textit{TWOT} 7:744; \textit{NIDOTTE} 3:721; \textit{TDOT} 12:153.} The same observations about dreams and their interpretation in the discussion above on Genesis 40-41 apply to Daniel.

\section*{New Testament}

Many early New Testament instances of the ἐρμηεύω verb group appear in the context of simple and straightforward translation. Hebrew or Aramaic words are translated for Greek-speaking readers.\footnote{\textit{TDNT} 2:662; \textit{EDNT} 2:53; \textit{NIDNTTE} 2:278.} In many cases, the verb, usually rendered as “translated,” could just as easily be rendered as “that is” or “which means.”\footnote{\textit{TLNT} 1:313.} Examples include Matthew 1:23 (“…and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’”), Mark 5:41 (“Taking the child by the hand, He said to her, ‘Talitha kum!’ (which translated means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’”), Mark 15:22 (“Then they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.”), Mark 15:34 (“At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”), John 1:38 (“…They said to Him, ‘Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are...
You staying?’”), John 1:41 (“‘We have found the Messiah’ (which translated means Christ.’’’),
John 1:42 (“‘You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated
Peter.’’’), John 9:7 (“And said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated,
Sent.’’’), Acts 4:36 (“Now Joseph, A Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by
the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement’’’), Acts 9:36 (“Now in Joppa there
was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas’’’), Acts 13:8 (“But
Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them….”), and Hebrews 7:2
(“to whom also Abraham appointed a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the
translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of
peace.’’’).

Luke 24:27 states of Jesus, “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He
explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scripture.” This is the only occurrence
of the verb διερμηνεύω in the Gospels.146 This verse, along with its corollary in Luke 24:32,
demonstrates that the Scriptures require interpretation or explanation. There was something
hidden, or closed, in the Scriptures concerning Jesus and the Messiah of the Old Testament that
was made clear, or opened, by Jesus’ interpretation to these disciples.147

Although no form of ἐρμηνεύω occurs in Acts 8:25-40, the interpretation of Scripture is
clear in the account of the Ethiopian eunuch’s conversion recorded by Luke. Similar to Jesus’
interpretation of the Old Testament for his disciples in Luke 24, Philip interprets the Old
Testament for the eunuch. The eunuch, like the disciples, needed and requested a guide to help

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146 NIDNTTE 2:278; TLNT 1:312.

147 EDNT 2:54; Leon Morris, Luke: An Introduction and Commentary, rev. ed., TNTC (Grand Rapids, MI:
613.
him understand the Scriptures. In so doing, Philip fulfilled his mission as a member of the church, providing guidance into God’s wisdom concerning the Word and Jesus.\textsuperscript{148}

In addition to the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, other instances later in the book of Acts are reminiscent of Jesus’ interpretation of the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{149} Acts 17:2-3 is a clear example. One may assume from the language, “according to his custom,” that Paul often engaged in the ensuing apologetic discourse. Paul uses the Scriptures in a logical manner to explain to his audience that Jesus is the Messiah.

Throughout 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14, the word group appears, but strictly in the context of interpreting tongues. Exactly what the interpretations of tongues entailed is debated. Most agree that it is not an act of special revelation in which a divine mystery is articulated, rather it is making that which is unintelligible intelligible, adding clarification and providing explanations. It is a spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:10), and a gifted interpreter must be present for the utterance to be received in worship (1 Cor 14:28), as its purpose is the edification of the church (1 Cor 14:5, 26).

Perhaps the quintessential New Testament verse on biblical interpretation is 2 Timothy 2:15: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” While it is clear that the method requires hard work and the aim is the approval of God, the exact meaning of the central verb, ὀρθοτομέω, is disputed. While literally meaning to “cut straight,” the implication of the metaphorical language


in its immediate context is correct teaching using straightforward language based upon correct analysis and interpretation of the Word, presenting the gospel without perversion or distortion.\textsuperscript{150}

**Theological Necessity**

In seeking to establish the need for biblical hermeneutics, many scholars begin with principles of everyday contemporary communication.\textsuperscript{151} Whether reading the newspaper, listening to a speech, watching television, or engaging in a conversation, everyone employs principles, processes, methods, and rules for interpreting and understanding the meaning of the communication. The interpretive process occurs naturally and unconsciously. The process is so intuitive that interpretive principles become common sense.\textsuperscript{152} Interpretation is facilitated by a shared, familiar context. Both parties use the same language and experience a common culture. This “spontaneous” understanding, as Virkler and Ayayo label it,\textsuperscript{153} ceases when something unfamiliar is introduced to the communication, such as complex scientific or legal jargon or inferences to recent cultural events.\textsuperscript{154} It is then that one begins to become aware of the need to


\textsuperscript{153} Virkler and Ayayo, *Hermeneutics*, 18-19.

more thoroughly understand and employ the innate interpretive principles and processes, which typically remain unarticulated, and to seek out assistance to reach a correct interpretation.

The aforementioned principles apply to all human communications, which includes the Bible. The divine authorship of the Bible is frequently used to object to the need for hermeneutics. As divine communication, the Bible’s meaning is plain and easily understood at the time of reading.155 However, hermeneutics is necessary, “not precisely because the Bible is a divine book, but because in addition to being divine, it is a human book.”156 Although inspired by God, the text was transmitted and recorded in human language.157 The very nature of human language results in Scripture’s capacity to be understood in more than one way.158 That the Bible was produced in several ancient dialects and situated in ancient cultures, from which modern readers are far removed and unfamiliar, present additional complications.159 Language presents only one of several barriers the modern reader must overcome in order to interpret the Bible. Virkler and Ayayo identify four obstacles, or blocks, to understanding the meaning of the Bible: (1) a historical gap, (2) a cultural gap, (3) a philosophical gap, and (4) a linguistic gap; all of which necessitate hermeneutics.160 Although additional gaps can be added to these, among them

155 Referred to as the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture, this teaching states that “the words of Scripture are sufficiently clear (perspicuous) so that the competent Christian can read and understand its redemptive message without the need for church tradition as an official guide…. [but] does not ignore the fact that many passages are obscure and difficult to interpret” (Hernando, Dictionary of Hermeneutics, 31). This argument also implies that the reader knows how to read well (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 4), and is keenly aware of his own previous experiences, culture and understandings, which can affect his correct interpretation of the text (Fee and Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 22).

156 Kaiser and Silva, Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, 18 (authors’ emphasis).


158 Kaiser and Silva, Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, 18.

159 Osborne, The Hermeneutical Spiral, 23; Fee and Stuart, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, 25; Kaiser and Silva, Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics, 20-21; Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, 5.

160 Virkler and Ayayo, Hermeneutics, 19-20.
geographical, literary, and psychological, the two most common barriers presented in the literature remain language and history/culture, and thus occupy pride of place in interpretive efforts.

In addition to basic principles of communication and their application to the Scriptures as providing rationale for studying biblical interpretation, the Bible itself speaks to the need for hermeneutics. Plummer cites the following biblical references, which demonstrate that there is a correct way to understand Scripture and an incorrect way to understand Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:15, Psalm 119:18, 2 Peter 3:15-16, Ephesians 4:11-13, and 2 Timothy 4:2-3. Köstenberger and Patterson provide a thorough examination of the Pauline imperative in 2 Timothy 2:15 as justification for hermeneutics with the ultimate goal as the approval of God.

Köstenberger and Patterson provide two additional reasons for the necessity of biblical interpretation. The first is an ethical obligation. Hermeneutics, properly executed, demonstrates respect for the biblical text, its authors, both human and divine, and the authors’ intended meaning. Secondly, Köstenberger and Patterson appeal to the character of the Christian. Christians should desire to interpret Scripture correctly because (1) they are seekers of truth, and (2) they love God, God’s Word, and God’s people.

161 See Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 16; Kaiser and Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, 23; and Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 27; respectively.

162 Robert L. Plummer, *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010), 79-80.


164 Ibid., 58.

165 Ibid., 59.
Ministerial Duty

Having established the need for biblical hermeneutics, the subsequent concern becomes identifying whose responsibility it is to teach hermeneutics. In *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church*, Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson state, “The academy has replaced the church as the home of biblical interpretation.”166 Contrary to this declaration, Osborne states, “Basic hermeneutics can and should be taught at the level of the local church.”167 Whether stated negatively or positively, these statements clearly express the local church’s inherent and rightful duty to teach hermeneutics. Millard Erickson cites the edification of believers as a primary function of the church, which it accomplishes through its teaching mission.168 Whereas Braaten and Jenson seemingly depict a mutually-exclusive scenario in which academia has supplanted the church, Erickson views the two working in tandem to fulfill the Great Commission’s teaching mandate, as churches cooperate with seminaries and schools of divinity to teach teachers in keeping with 2 Timothy 2:2, and take ownership of the task of biblical scholarship.169

The biblical mandate supporting the role of the church in teaching hermeneutics is clear. In Matthew’s Great Commission passage, Jesus declared, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”170

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167 Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 27.


169 Ibid., 976.

torch of executing God’s mission to the disciples and, subsequently, the church.\footnote{171} The means by which they accomplish this mission is disciple making, which involves both baptism and teaching. The object of this teaching is first and most immediately to be understood as Jesus’ commands, but it certainly encompasses all of Scripture.\footnote{172} “The church is required by its allegiance to God to present the biblical message.”\footnote{173} In addition to teaching the content of the Bible, the church must teach how to read and study the Bible. “Since God’s written revelation is the central content of Christian education, we need to know how to study the Bible by ourselves before we attempt to teach it.”\footnote{174} Ultimately, the goal of teaching is to understand and obey the Scriptures.\footnote{175} In order to be obedient to the Lord and fulfill God’s mission, the church must teach hermeneutics.

**Theoretical Application**

With the local church assuming its rightful role in instructing members in basic hermeneutics, the most effective method for doing so must now be considered. In fulfilling its teaching mission, Erickson states that “it is incumbent upon the church to utilize all legitimate means and technologies available today.”\footnote{176} Mark Stephenson highlights the many advantages of


\footnotetext[172]{Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 957; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 433.}


\footnotetext[175]{Turner, *Matthew*, 690.}

\footnotetext[176]{Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 976.}
using the Internet in the equipping ministries of the church, which include the incorporation of audio and visual materials, interactivity, quick and easy communication via various channels, and flexibility in the scope and pace of learning.\textsuperscript{177} MOOCs are one of the most recent educational technology innovations in online learning that deserve the attention of the church.\textsuperscript{178} Simply defined, a MOOC is “an educational course made available to a large number of people via the Internet.”\textsuperscript{179} A brief treatment of each component of the acronym provides a better understanding of this educational innovation. MOOCs have the capacity to accommodate up to hundreds of thousands of students, well beyond the enrollment capacities of traditional learning environments. Enrollment is open to all, irrespective of age, previous educational attainments, or any other source of difference, and is free of charge. Providing access to these courses via the Internet results in the ability for students to engage in the course anytime and anywhere they have a connection to the Internet, which means unprecedented flexibility in the pace at which the course may be completed. Despite being massive, open, and online, MOOCs remain courses in the truest sense. There is a “pedagogical agenda” and “a systematic sequence of learning activities,” complete with lectures, readings, discussion, assignments, and assessments.\textsuperscript{180}


\textsuperscript{178} The history of MOOCs and their development out of the open education, distance learning, and e-learning movements are beyond the scope of the present project. Such treatments are well represented in the education literature (see Jonathan Haber, \textit{MOOCS} [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015], 19-46; and Jean-Charles Pomerol, Yves Epelboin, and Claire Thoury, \textit{MOOCs: Design, Use and Business Models} [Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2015], 1-17). The present discussion focuses on key issues of MOOCs as they directly impact and inform this project.


The use of MOOCs is varied, extending well beyond the realms of traditional higher education, and corresponds to the motives of those who enroll in them.\textsuperscript{181} Two primary uses of MOOCs are lifelong learning and professional development, which is logical given the typical MOOC student. Lifelong learners enroll in MOOCs to improve communication or other skills, to learn about a certain topic, to increase their knowledge, or to refresh their knowledge of something they learned previously.\textsuperscript{182} Many professions, ranging from education to health professions and information technology, require continuing education, certification, or licensure, for which MOOCs provide a convenient solution.\textsuperscript{183} Corresponding motives for the main uses of MOOCs for lifelong learning and professional development include curiosity and job advancement.\textsuperscript{184} Other motives for enrolling in MOOCs include personal challenge and competition.\textsuperscript{185}

James Flynn, a professor at Regent University’s School of Divinity, laments that despite the obvious opportunities afforded by MOOCs, “Christian educational institutions and local churches have yet to leverage the power of MOOCs to any significant degree…,”\textsuperscript{186} citing that

\textsuperscript{181} The literature confirms that the typical MOOC participant demographics are not those of the traditional college student, but rather are older and well-educated (Haber, \textit{MOOCs}, 100-101).


\textsuperscript{183} Pomerol, Epelboin, and Thoury, \textit{MOOCs}, 50; Haber, \textit{MOOCs}, 175-176.


\textsuperscript{185} Hew and Cheung, “Students’ and Instructors’ Use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs),” 47.

“MOOCs could provide an opportunity for lay leaders in the local church to obtain…training in selected areas of study at affordable prices, taught by some of the most talented professors….”

The use of MOOCs as a tool for facilitating discipleship and spiritual growth is obvious, but has not yet been investigated. The present project hopes to remedy this deficiency.

Despite the many opportunities, the use of MOOCs must be approached with an understanding of their most significant challenges, all of which are interdependent. The most-cited shortcoming of MOOCs is the high rate at which they are not completed, with some percentages cited being as high as 95%. Through a review of the literature, Hew and Cheung provide insight into student perspectives of MOOCs, including their frustrations with them and the learning challenges MOOCs present to students. The primary frustrations with MOOCs include the quality of discussions, technical issues, unclear instructions and expectations, and peer assessment. The major challenges students encounter with learning in MOOCs include lack of incentive, insufficient prior knowledge, lack of focus in discussions, failure to understand the content and having no one to turn to for help, ambiguous assignments and course expectations, and lack of time. Although not presented by Hew and Cheung, Haber delineates “level of demand” as an issue with MOOCs, which could also account for frustrations and

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187 Ibid., 160.


189 Hew and Cheung, “Students’ and Instructors’ Use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs),” 47-49.

190 Ibid., 49.
subsequent attrition. All these frustrations and challenges served to inform the approach and design of this project.

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191 Haber, *MOOCs*, 108-112. “Level of demand” relates to the difficulty of the subject matter of the MOOC, course length, the nature of reading assignments (required versus optional), and the frequency and difficulty of assessments. Typically, the more closely a MOOC mirrors a traditional course, the more demanding it is.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The third chapter describes how the contextualized ministry problem established in the previous chapters was addressed. It describes the design of the intervention beginning with a brief overview of the selected research method of program development. The program format outlines the conceptualization of the program, attainment of permissions, creation of outcomes, the development of materials, promotion and participant recruitment, and logistics. The implementation of the intervention provides participant demographics and describes the various sessions in depth. The final component of the chapter delineates the data collection and analysis.

**Intervention Design**

**Method**

The applied research method used in this project was program development, which Vyhmeister and Robertson describe as a common approach for in-ministry projects.¹ The selection of this method appeared to be the most logical (and perhaps only) choice since the program was based on pre-existing curriculum. Vyhmeister and Robertson state that program development has to do with, and may involve, curriculum and classes.² The project facilitator

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² Ibid., 45.
adapted the presentation and structure of the existing online course based upon research findings, which are described thoroughly below.

Format

Program Conceptualization

Upon agreeing with the pastor to facilitate a study on hermeneutics using the MOOC at SEBTS, the project facilitator enrolled in the course through the seminary’s website, which was a straightforward process using the seminary’s learning management system, Moodle. This was done to gain a sense of its scope, presentation, and requirements. The project facilitator immediately noted that the MOOC mirrored a for-credit, seminary-level course. The course comprised three required textbook readings, over 40 recorded lectures with accompanying notes, and assessments. Although MOOC participants were not required to complete writing assignments, they were required to complete quizzes based upon reading assignments. The level of demand was high.³ To use the course as designed would be unfeasible in the local church context.

The research of Hew and Cheung on students’ frustrations and challenges with MOOCs greatly impacted the final approach the project facilitator adopted.⁴ In order to address frustrations stemming from the quality of class discussions, which was also an expressed

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³ Haber, MOOCs, 108-112.

challenge, the study was conducted in-person, rather than virtually. Frustrations with technology were eliminated by having the project facilitator handle this aspect of the study. Concerning ambiguity in course expectations and assignments, which again was expressed as a challenge to course participation, the project facilitator designed the study so that the level of demand would be minimal. Participants were asked only to attend the sessions to watch videos and complete listening guides, which were provided. Contributing to any group discussions was strictly optional. No assignments were given as part of the study. The only assessments were a brief pretest and posttest.

The program design addressed the challenges cited by Hew and Cheung, as well. The goals of the study communicated to participants were enriched personal Bible study and better preparation for teaching the Bible. It was hoped that participants would realize the spiritual benefits of participation as an incentive. In addition to expected spiritual growth from the discipleship opportunity, ultimately experiencing God’s approval as a result of better handling the Word of God was an incentive. Since the course was introductory in nature and focused on general hermeneutics, no previous knowledge of hermeneutics was required to participate in the course. Because the study was conducted in-person as a group and because the project facilitator was present at each session and had an educational background in theology, participants were able to seek clarification on any matters of content they did not immediately understand. Concerning demands on time, as already mentioned, the level of demand and expectations for the study were intentionally minimal. No outside preparation was required of participants, and the actual sessions lasted only an hour and were held at a time during already-scheduled church activities. The duration of the study was limited to ten weeks, as well.

5 2 Tim 2:15.
Permissions

In addition to securing faculty and Institutional Review Board (IRB) permissions, the project facilitator sought permission from the church to conduct the study. Using an IRB-provided template, the project facilitator sent a letter to the church to the attention of the pastor, requesting permission to conduct the study and to solicit participants for the study from the congregation. The request was routed to the deacons for review and approval. The deacon body formally presented the project facilitator’s request at a church business meeting. The church voted to permit the study. Written permission from the church to use the congregation for the study was forwarded to the project facilitator shortly thereafter. A copy of the permission letter can be found in Appendix A.

Participant Learning Outcomes

The stated purpose of the program is to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. Moreover, this project seeks to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches. In order to help determine the program’s success in achieving these objectives, measurable learning outcomes were developed.

At the conclusion of the study, participants will be able to:

1. define hermeneutics.
2. identify basic interpretive methods and principles.
3. apply basic interpretative methods to personal Bible study and teaching preparation.
4. assess the effectiveness of MOOCs as a means for equipping believers for ministry.
Learning outcomes one and two were assessed using a pretest-posttest, and were further validated with a survey question. Outcomes three and four were assessed using a concluding survey. See Appendix B for the pretest, including the demographic survey, and Appendix C for the posttest, including the concluding survey.

**Course Materials**

The project facilitator began the process of developing course materials by previewing selected videos for possible use. Given the limitation of the study to general hermeneutics, only videos from the first half of the MOOC were considered since the later material detailed interpretive principles and methods relevant to specific genres of biblical literature. Although relevant, some videos were excluded because the topic was deemed to be tangential rather than essential to the program--for example, a lecture on the history of the English Bible--or because they were targeted to the residential course from which the videos were captured (e.g., the course introduction containing a review of the syllabus and assignments). Videos deemed most appropriate for the study at Calvary Baptist Church were downloaded directly from Vimeo. Appendix D provides links to the videos used in the program. Throughout the video review process, it became clear that there was some overlap in the content of the videos. However, the repetition of hermeneutical methods, principles, and concepts was viewed as beneficial rather than detrimental for participants. The hope was that study participants would realize the most important information through this repetition. The project facilitator viewed the selected videos a second time for editing. Any introductory remarks, including opening prayers, assignment instructions, and concluding remarks were deleted from the videos to shorten their length. The
edited videos were then downloaded to the project facilitator’s personal laptop in order to show them at the church during the sessions.

In addition to viewing the videos to be used, the project facilitator downloaded the accompanying lecture notes for each video selected for use in the church study. These notes served as the presentation outlines for the lectures delivered via the MOOC and were ideal to use as the basis for creating listening guides for each session of the study. When developing the listening guides to be used for the sessions, certain criteria were used to create manageable (i.e., not exceeding a few pages’ length), yet meaningful handouts. Content deemed most critical by the project facilitator was included in handouts. Corollary or supplemental content was generally eliminated, or appended in brief at the end of the handout. Finally, content included in the lecture notes that was not specifically mentioned by the lecturer was generally omitted. The handouts were then formatted to solicit engagement by the participants. The project facilitator adopted a fill-in-the-blank approach to designing the handouts in order to make the sessions more interactive and to encourage participants to listen actively to the lectures. See Appendix E for the handouts used for each session.

**Promotion and Recruitment**

After securing appropriate permissions and completing necessary preparations, the study was promoted in order to recruit participants. An advertisement appeared in the church newsletter. It also appeared in the church bulletin over several weeks. The pastor announced the study from the pulpit on several Sunday mornings prior to the course’s commencement, as well. The project facilitator received informal feedback (personal communications, emails, and phone calls) that was positive and promising. Once the study had started, the class appeared on the
regular schedule of events in the bulletin until its conclusion. In addition, a promotional slide containing the class name, time, and location was created and shown prior to the Sunday morning service from September through November, which coincided with the duration of the study.

**Logistics**

As the start date of the course approached, the project facilitator contacted the church secretary to make necessary logistical arrangements. In addition to a classroom space, suitable technology needed to be secured. The project facilitator considered various ways to play the lecture videos and limited the options to either burning lectures to a DVD for use with a DVD player, or to download and save the videos to a laptop to connect to a TV. The secretary sent the requests to the pastor for additional assistance. He proposed a specific classroom and then informed the project facilitator that the classroom was equipped with a smart TV capable of connecting to the Internet via the church’s wireless network. Given his unfamiliarity with such hardware and his understanding of the volatility of wireless networks, the project facilitator was not comfortable pursuing an approach that entailed streaming over the Internet. The TV did have various ports for connecting external devices. Ultimately, the videos were downloaded to the project facilitator’s laptop, which was connected to the TV with an HDMI cable in order to view them.

In additional to securing space and technology, the project facilitator arranged dates and time for offering the study. Various factors influenced both decisions. In terms of dates, the pastor suggested offering the course of study during the fall. Another discipleship opportunity was being offered during that time frame, and the pastor was in favor of having several options
from which congregants could choose. Because the program could not commence until IRB approval was fully granted, the program was scheduled to being in early September, which was when the other class would be offered, as well. As for time, the pastor had communicated that he wanted the timing to be convenient for both the project facilitator and potential participants. He told the project facilitator that he should not limit his options to regularly-scheduled service times or events. After further discussion, it seemed best to the project facilitator to offer the study on a Sunday evening, as that seemed most convenient for participants and the project facilitator. It also coincided with the other discipleship opportunity. Each session was held in the proposed classroom at the church and typically began at 6:30 PM.

**Intervention Implementation**

**Participant Demographics**

The pretest included a brief six-question survey to collect basic demographic and other background information from each participant. Data points included gender, age, length of church attendance, church membership status, previous teaching experience, and prior exposure to the topic of hermeneutics. Three participants joined the study. Their responses to the survey are below.

One participant was a male between the ages of 41-50. He had attended Calvary Baptist Church for 1-5 years and was a member of the church. He indicated that he had not taught previously either at Calvary Baptist or any other church. He had not engaged in any previous study on the topic of Bible interpretation.

Another participant was a male between the ages of 31-40. He had attended Calvary Baptist Church for 1-5 years and was a member of the church. He indicated that he was teaching,
or had taught, at Calvary Baptist or another church. He also noted that he had not participated in a previous study on the topic of interpreting the Bible.

The final participant was a female between the ages of 31-40. She had attended Calvary Baptist Church for 1-5 years and was a member of the church. She indicated that she was teaching, or had taught, at Calvary Baptist or another church. She had not engaged in any previous study on the topic of Bible interpretation.

The participants shared similar demographics and backgrounds. All had in common that they were members of Calvary Baptist Church and had been members for 1-5 years. Most were either currently teaching or had taught in a local church setting. None had participated in any kind of previous study on the topic of Bible interpretation.

Session One

The first session took place on September 20, 2015, with two participants and the project facilitator in attendance. The study began several minutes later than the 6:30 PM start time because all attendees had participated in another meeting just prior to the study. Because of the late start, a more formal introduction to the course was not provided; however, the informed consent document included a summary. The project facilitator intended to provide background concerning the purpose of the study, the source for the content of the study, as well as an indication of the use of the course as a component for completing the project facilitator’s degree. One participant did receive some of this information in the time between his arrival and the other participant’s arrival.

The session began with a review of the informed consent form. Appendix F provides a copy of the form used. The project facilitator provided an overview of the form’s purpose and
content, and allowed the participants to review the form, encouraging them to ask any questions. The attendees signed the form and returned it to the project facilitator. Next, the project facilitator distributed the pretest and demographic/background survey, which the participants completed within fifteen minutes. Upon completing the test and survey, the project facilitator distributed the handout, which was a listening guide for the first session. The group watched the first video together, completing the listening guide. The attendees engaged in a brief, informal conversation based upon a question about the meaning of a phrase used in the handout. The project facilitator provided a brief overview of the next meeting and closed the session in prayer.

The first video the group watched was 26 minutes long and focused on presuppositions and precommitments. It also introduced a few major hermeneutical principles. The lecturer was Dr. Danny Akin, the president of SEBTS. Dr. Akin listed five essential precommitments of a faithful interpreter, including: (1) commitment to a high view of Scripture, (2) conviction of the profitability of all Scripture, noting that while all the Bible is inspired, there are degrees of importance within the biblical texts, (3) calling to rightly divide the Bible, indicating that the purpose of hermeneutics is to make clear the meaning of a passage, (4) commitment to do clear, hard thinking about the meaning and application of Scripture, and (5) willingness to be confined to the intention of the author. In addition, the key hermeneutical principles outlined included: (1) the location of meaning with the author, (2) the dual authorship of the Bible, and (3) the importance of context in determining the meaning of a text.

Although the project facilitator expected attendance to be low, he did anticipate more than two participants for the first session. Several factors potentially contributed to the low number. The class met at the time of the regular evening service, a service at which attendance was already typically low. Another discipleship class was also offered at the same time, further
reducing the pool of potential participants. The project facilitator could have been more aggressive in recruitment, although the class was advertised in the church’s monthly newsletter, the weekly bulletin, via announcement slides displayed before the Sunday morning service, and through the announcements from the pastor on Sunday morning for several weeks. At first disappointed and frustrated, the project facilitator recognized that the two participants could still benefit from the study and that it was worth continuing for those who did choose to attend. Since it was the first session, the project facilitator was also hopeful that more participants would attend in the next session.

Session Two

The second session occurred on September 27, 2015, and began on time at 6:30 PM. Three participants attended. The project facilitator provided the third participant with the informed consent document, pretest/survey, the first session’s handout, and a copy of the first video on a jump drive, prior to the second meeting. After distributing the listening guide, the group watched the video. Participants asked several questions concerning the listening guide, having missed some of the words to fill in the blanks. A brief discussion ensued, during which participants highlighted one of the last points of the video about communicating in a way people understand. One participant shared a relevant personal story about clear and effective communication.

The video lecturer was again Dr. Akin. His presentation was just over 48 minutes long. In this video, Dr. Akin introduced the inductive Bible study method’s three steps of observation, interpretation, and application, along with the overarching question corresponding to each step (i.e., observation: What do I see?; interpretation: What does it mean?; application: How does it
work?). He introduced several hermeneutical principles and rules, including the singularity of meaning and multiplicity of applications in a text, and honoring the original meaning of a text. Dr. Akin overviewed interpretive methods used by Dr. Haddon Robinson and Dr. David Allen. Dr. Akin pointed out how these scholars’ methods resembled the inductive Bible study method he presented at the beginning of the lecture. Throughout his overview of these methods, he highlighted several important principles and rules, including: (1) finding natural divisions or breaks in passages, (2) the analogy of faith, (3) asking the right questions of a text (who, what, when, where, why, how?), (4) the prominent and primary role of prayer in Bible interpretation, (5) the importance of background study, and (6) the importance of noting and analyzing verbs when studying the Bible. In this second video, Dr. Akin also pointed out the importance of grammatical analysis in interpretation.

Overall, the participants appeared to be enjoying and benefiting from the content of the study. They expressed their lack of knowledge of hermeneutics along with their desire to learn more. At this point in the study, the project facilitator already noted room for improvement. It would have been ideal to provide all the handouts for the entire study in advance in a format that would keep them together, such as a sturdy folder, or binder. This would have required having polished versions of each listening guide completed prior to the commencement of the study. At the very least, it would have been better to provide a binder in which participants could store the handouts as they were received throughout the study, rather than distributing loose sheets for which the participants were then responsible. The project facilitator also noted that the lecturer often used specific technical language and referenced scholars likely unknown to most people. Identification of such terms and persons prior to viewing the videos would have assisted participants in listening by eliminating the distraction of unfamiliar language.
Session Three

Session three was held on October 4, 2015, with two participants in attendance. Since the third participant communicated his absence in advance, the study started a few minutes early. In the time before beginning the study, participants contributed several encouraging comments concerning the video lectures. Although the lecturer spoke quickly, they found the videos interesting and able to keep their attention. After distributing the listening guide, the attendees watched the third video. Upon completing the viewing of the video and there being no additional comments or questions from the participants, the session ended early. The project facilitator uploaded the session handout and video to Dropbox and sent links for them to the absent participant.

The third video lasted just over thirty minutes. The lecturer was again Dr. Akin. The focus of the content was the interpretive method used by Dr. Jerry Vines. The approach was the inductive Bible study method of observation, interpretation, and application, which was fleshed out in detail. Concerning observation, Dr. Akin highlighted ways to read the Bible, which included reading it prayerfully; carefully, asking the six key questions (what, why, when, how, where, and who?); imaginatively; and obediently, focusing on identifying themes and main points, looking for repetition, paying attention to transitional words, noticing rhetorical questions, and heeding changes in location, time, or setting. Concerning interpretation, Dr. Akin emphasized the importance of word studies, context, background information, cross-referencing, consultation of commentaries, and specific principles of interpretation, such as first mention, full mention, repeated mention, etc. Since it would be addressed in later lectures in great detail, there was no detailed discussion of the step of application. The lecture concluded with summary
observations that encouraged interpreters to look for key words, themes, verbs, warnings, promises, lists, commands, and figures of speech when reading the Bible.

Session Four

For various reasons, no one attended the fourth session, scheduled for October 11, 2015. In order to keep the course on its ten-week schedule, the project facilitator sent Dropbox links for the handout and video to the participants and encouraged them to view the video and complete the accompanying listening guide prior to the next meeting.

The fourth video was just under twenty minutes long and featured Dr. Akin as the lecturer. The entirety of the lecture focused on the inductive Bible study method step of interpretation, presented as five suggestions for interpreting Scripture, followed by several guiding interpretive principles. The first suggestion was to study the book of the Bible as a whole, which was further broken down into using introductions and commentaries to learn background information related to date, authorship, recipients, and purpose; drafting an outline of the book; and examining the context of the particular passage under study. Secondly, interpreters should establish a solid textual base, using original language texts, if possible. Otherwise, Dr. Akin suggested comparing various English versions. Thirdly, interpreters must investigate the text linguistically, that is, they must conduct word studies. This involves identifying key words and defining them, making note of verbs, and cross-referencing. Next, Dr. Akin mentioned examining the form of the material, noting the literary type, or genre, of the passage, as well as any literary devices used. Finally, Dr. Akin concluded with analyzing the passage’s structure. This step entailed identifying the literary unit, finding the logical sequence of ideas, isolating themes or emphases, and outlining the passage. The guiding principles
presented included recognizing the importance of context; interpreting Scripture in light of all Scripture; realizing Scripture will never contradict itself; interpreting Scripture literally, or naturally, according to its genre; not developing doctrine from difficult or obscure passages; honoring the author’s intended meaning; and checking conclusions by consulting reliable resources.

The video also included a discussion on commentaries in which Dr. Akin recommended certain series and authors and discouraged the use and purchase of others. The project facilitator eliminated this portion of the video to make the session shorter. He included Dr. Akin’s suggestions and advice concerning commentaries at the end of the session four listening guide.

Session Five

On October 18, 2015, two participants attended the fifth session of the study. Because the third participant had not communicated his absence in advance, the session started several minutes later than 6:30 PM, as all waited for the last group member to arrive. After viewing the video, the participants had no questions or comments and the group adjourned. In keeping with the established practice, the project facilitator sent Dropbox links for the handout and video to the absent participant.

Dr. Akin’s next lecture lasted just over 43 minutes. The video was a continuation of the previous lecture content, which focused on providing an overview of the interpretive process. It began with some introductory matters addressing the task of the interpreter, which focused on bridging the cultural gaps between the Scriptures and today. Dr. Akin emphasized principlizing

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6 Walter Kaiser developed this method. See his *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1981), 149-163, with a definition on page 152: “to
in application, with the interpreter looking for principles that are true anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstance. Dr. Akin then spoke on how to study and teach the Bible. In the original lecture notes, Dr. Akin included a diagram; however, the listening guide presented the main points in list form. The process entailed four steps: (1) study the Scriptures, (2) structure the Scriptures, focusing on analyzing and outlining, (3) identify the main idea of the text, or MIT, and (4) bridge the cultural gaps by asking application- and theologically-oriented questions of the passage. Next, Dr. Akin discussed how to analyze a text, providing nearly a dozen practical steps and tips. These repeated themes mentioned in other lectures included tracking verbs, looking for key words, noting repetition, identifying the text’s natural divisions, paying attention to context, cross-referencing, consulting reliable resources, etc. Lastly, Dr. Akin reviewed how to outline the study, which focused on preparation for teaching the passage and was more application oriented.

Session Six

The sixth session was on October 25, 2015, with all three participants in attendance. Prior to the start of this session, there were several discussions. A church member came by the classroom to inquire about the study being offered in the future. The project facilitator found this interest encouraging. It was also the pastor’s desire to offer the course regularly as part of the church’s on-going discipleship program. In addition to this inquiry, one of the study participants asked about receiving links for all the videos and handouts, not just those for sessions he had missed. The project facilitator created a public folder on Dropbox to which he could post all the

state the author’s propositions, arguments, narrations, and illustrations in timeless abiding truths with special focus on the application of those truths to the current needs of the Church.”
handouts and videos. All the participants received the link to this folder. After viewing the video, the participants commented that a lot of material was covered very quickly. One even likened the experience to running a marathon. However, the overall impression was that the material was engaging and the study enjoyable.

The sixth video was approximately 40 minutes long. Much of the content presented by Dr. Akin focused on the rationale for studying the Bible. He began this discussion by offering reasons why people do not engage the Bible, which he followed with scripturally-supported reasons for why people should study the Bible, citing Hebrews 5:11-14, 1 Peter 2:2, and 2 Timothy 2:15. During this discussion, Dr. Akin introduced a concept he called the “grand redemptive story line” of the Bible as something interpreters should learn in order to practice correlation. Correlation is a secondary step in the inductive Bible study method that seeks to fit a particular passage within the context of the entire Bible. This redemptive story line comprises creation, the Fall, redemption, and new creation. The remainder of the video focused on the first step of the inductive Bible study method, observation, which led into the second step, interpretation. Much of the content was not new; however, Dr. Akin did introduce recommendations on how to read. The repetition of content served to emphasize important steps and concepts, which included asking the six basic questions of every passage studied (who, what, when, where, why, how?), noting key terms and verbs, paying attention to context, and considering genre. Dr. Akin then transitioned into discussing interpretation. He posited that meaning is to be found in a passage’s details and is best derived by a process of asking questions, answering those questions, analyzing the answers, and applying the answers. The questions posed to any text focus on locating the original meaning. These answered questions provide the plain, natural, or literal meaning. The answers must be analyzed in order to insure the accuracy
of the interpretation. To accomplish this goal, Dr. Akin provided several tests the interpreter should use to validate—and correct, if necessary—his interpretation.

Session Seven

Session seven was scheduled for November 1, 2015. Because of a special missions event at the church, the pastor requested that all evening discipleship activities be cancelled to encourage attendance at the event. As a result, the class did not meet. The project facilitator informed the participants that he had added the handout and video to the shared Dropbox folder for them to view. As had been done previously, the project facilitator decided to have participants continue with the lesson on their own in order to keep the class on schedule so that it would be completed prior to the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

A guest lecturer, Dr. Tony Merida, was featured in the seventh video, which was approximately 32 minutes long. The content focused on the process of biblical interpretation, emphasizing the second step of the inductive Bible study method. Of particular note, this video included two definitions of hermeneutics and provided several words of advice for interpreters about the time and work it requires to engage successfully in biblical hermeneutics. The remainder of the lecture consisted of two parts: (1) basic principles of interpretation, and (2) ten interpretive rules. Seven alliterative cues formed the first section. These were content, clue, context, comparison, culture, consultation, and construction. In total, these concepts emphasized the importance of the step of observation to the step of interpretation, the importance of context, the need to compare Scripture with Scripture, the need to understand background information, the importance of consulting reliable resources, and the importance of allowing the passage to determine the structure of any teaching or preaching outline. The interpretive rules included
previously mentioned concepts, but also mentioned subjecting personal experience to Scripture, avoiding proof-texting, and understanding the nature of wisdom literature (in particular, proverbs).

Session Eight

All three participants were present for the eighth session, which occurred on November 8, 2015. The session started several minutes prior to 6:30 PM and ended well within the hour. The listening guide was distributed and the group watched the video. Several issues arose from this session, which are detailed below.

This video was 35 minutes long and featured a new guest lecturer, Dr. Michael Guyer. As had come to be expected, the lecture included some material that had been presented in other lectures. Thus, the lecturer reviewed the three-step inductive Bible study method, drawing particular attention to the gaps the interpreter bridges in the step of interpretation. He then reviewed a Bible study process, which focused on how to read and organize the passage. The bulk of the lecture emphasized figurative language. This included defining the term, providing examples of figures of speech, demonstrating how to distinguish between the figurative and the literal, and summary principles for interpreting figurative language. Dr. Guyer’s lecture concluded with a discussion on defining, identifying, and distinguishing typology and illustration.

As previously mentioned, several problems were encountered in this session. Although one participant still expressed gratitude for the Bible study, it was pointed out that (1) the lecturer was a guest and less engaging than the regular lecturer, Dr. Akin, and (2) the topics were covered to a depth that was not in keeping with the other lectures. Much time was devoted to
figurative language and typology. While important, these two concepts are not well-suited for an introduction to the topic of biblical interpretation, at least not in depth. The listening guide proved somewhat problematic, as well. Not every item on the guide was addressed by the lecturer and some blanks were provided to be filled in which corresponded to content not mentioned. Participants were very gracious and simply asked for the missing words in order to complete the handout.

Session Nine

The ninth session was on November 15, 2015. All participants were present. The session started several minutes late, but still concluded within the hour. In addition to the listening guide, the project facilitator distributed copies of an article mentioned in the video. The instructor preceded the viewing by acknowledging that the video would be better than the previous week’s video in terms of the practicality of the content. The session materials were added to the shared Dropbox folder.

Dr. Guyer lectured in the ninth video for 43 minutes. The content of this video focused on the final step of the inductive Bible study method, i.e. application. The lecture started with providing a definition of application, which entailed emphasizing the scope of application to include belief and behavior, as well listing five essential elements of application. This preceded a section on the six steps of application, all of which was prefaced with a disclaimer that application must never precede the steps of observation and interpretation. The first step of application highlighted the potential problems of application. The second step reiterated the nature of application in bridging gaps. Next came the admonition to remember that a text has

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only one meaning, but can have many applications. Fourthly, the lecture emphasized the need to principlize, stating application in the form of universal principles that are true anywhere, anytime, under any circumstance. Fifth, interpreters were encouraged to consider various interpersonal relationships when determining application. Finally, the sixth step took a very practical tone, reminding interpreters that they must live the application they discover. The remainder of the lecture reviewed the article by Haddon Robinson on the heresy of application. The handout drew participants’ attention to the explanation of the article’s title, stating the heresy as a good truth applied in the wrong way.

At the conclusion of the video, one participant made an interesting comment. He said he felt like “a frog in a frying pan.” He further explained that each video was getting longer and going more in depth. In an attempt to encourage all the participants, the project facilitator stated that the next video was much shorter. The project facilitator noted that despite only having watched a few lectures, participants were beginning to understand the depth of the discipline of hermeneutics. He thought it necessary to remind participants that the study was meant to serve as an introduction to the methods and principles of interpretation and that much more could be learned.

Session Ten

The final session of the study took place on November 22, 2015. Two participants attended. Since it was the last session, light refreshments were served. As the participants received the listening guides, the project facilitator mentioned that there were some lines that had a lighter font. These were important pieces of information not directly mentioned during the lecture. Upon completing the video, the posttest and survey were distributed and completed.
Finally, each participant received a book on Bible interpretation. The reason for providing a book was twofold: (1) it served as a token of appreciation for participating in the study, and (2) because the study provided only a basic introduction to hermeneutical methods and principles, the pastor suggested providing a resource that participants could consult if they wanted to learn more about hermeneutics than what the course covered. The handout and video were added to the Dropbox folder. In order to include the absent participant in assessing the program, the project facilitator intended to send the posttest and survey to him via an electronic survey; however, given the limitations of the software selected, the posttest was sent via mail with a requested deadline to return the completed test by December 1, 2015. The materials were returned within days, well before the deadline.

The final video featured Dr. Akin and was approximately 28 minutes long. The stated topic was correlation, a step in the inductive Bible study method that is often not presented; however, the majority of the lecture simply served to reiterate key principles and rules already presented. These included honoring the author’s intended meaning, considering the context, being attentive to patterns, paying attention to literary forms, locating natural divisions in the biblical text, conducting studies on key words, investigating the cultural background of texts, and engaging in theological analysis. This final principle contained additional steps and tips, which had also been covered in previous lectures, including remembering that Scripture interprets Scripture, considering the context, and noting key words.

While participants were taking the posttest, the facilitator took a few moments to reflect upon the study and highlight positives, as well as to consider any room for improvement. The

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course setting was very informal and the group quickly developed a bond. The facilitator also enjoyed being able to provide instruction from renowned theological scholars and, hopefully, encourage and inspire participants to continue their own study of hermeneutics. In terms of improving the sessions, keeping them low commitment with no preparation required before, or homework assigned after, remained important, but it would be beneficial to make the sessions themselves more engaging and to create opportunities for participants to implement what was learned.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The project facilitator used three tools to collect relevant data: a pretest-posttest, two brief surveys, and field notes. While all the tools utilized during the program resulted in the collection of useful information, the pretest-posttest and second survey were the subject of in-depth analysis.

**Pretest-Posttest**

In pretest-posttest design, dependent variables, such as the ability to correctly answer test questions, are measured before and after an intervention, or program, via the pretest and posttest, respectively. The assessment tools used are typically the same, and changes in the dependent variables (i.e., test performance) indicate the effectiveness of the intervention. If a change in the test performance follows the intervention, then the intervention is sufficient for the change in test performance.

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performance or may be the cause of the change. However, any conclusions must be carefully
drawn, as many other factors could impact change. Pretest-posttest design is often used in
education to determine the effectiveness of educational programs. “Typically, a pretest is given
to students at the beginning of a course to determine their initial understanding of the measures
stated in the learning objectives, and [a] posttest is conducted just after completion of the course
to determine what the students have learned. Ideally, there will be a positive change in
outcomes.”

Gain scores are used in the analysis of pretest-posttest design data. The evaluation of
the difference between pretest and posttest scores is used to determine the effect of a treatment
on the difference in scores. Gain scores analysis permits the researcher to assess whether an
intervention improved performance and “should be employed whenever the goal is to determine
the influence of a treatment or intervention on the change from pre- to posttest.” A positive
difference between pretest and posttest scores indicates a positive performance gain, and a
negative score indicates performance decline. Gain scores analysis is well-suited to measure
individual differences in pretest and posttest performance.

The pretest-posttest comprised 25 questions of true/false and multiple choice questions
and was used to measure program participants’ knowledge of basic hermeneutics. The pretest
established the baseline from which to measure any change resulting from the intervention. The
pretest was administered at the beginning of the first class session. The posttest was given at the

10 Ibid., 1293.

11 This synopsis of gain scores came from Immanuel Williams and Steven Andrew Culpepper, “Gain

12 Ibid., 716.
end of the last class session. Gain scores analysis was used to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. They analysis evaluated performance changes for each question on the test, as well as for the test as a whole. Analysis was conducted for each individual participant and for the entire group. The pretest-posttest design was used to determine the success of the intervention in meeting participant learning outcomes 1 and 2 as stated above.

Survey

Surveys are used to solicit self-reported responses to a set of established questions.\(^\text{13}\) Self-reporting requires respondents to be introspective when responding to the survey. They must think about the question posed and then report an answer. Survey questions are used for a variety of topics, including behaviors, intentions, and perceptions. The researcher decides what to measure and then must create the best question to assess the topic. A key advantage of using surveys is that it allows for the direct measurement of participants’ thoughts. The researcher does not have to rely on observational inferences. “Thus, surveys are particularly useful when the goal of a study is to measure participants’ perceptions, attitudes, emotional state, or other thoughts.”\(^\text{14}\) Despite several disadvantages, surveys are especially useful when complemented by other data collection tools.

The survey that was analyzed used Likert scaling for recording responses.\(^\text{15}\) Likert scales are commonly used for measuring self-reported attitudes or beliefs by levels of agreement. They

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\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 1643.

are frequently used in fields or situations that seek to examine attitudes, values, beliefs, dispositions, etc. Likert scaling is effective for measuring the intangible, such as attitudes or values, which is the method of analysis employed in this study.

The posttest, distributed at the last class session, included a survey comprising a combination of six statements and questions. The statements and questions were as follows:

1. My knowledge and understanding of how to interpret the Bible have improved as a result of these sessions.
2. I will use the methods and principles I have learned in my personal Bible study and/or teaching preparation.
3. The format of the sessions was well-suited to the purpose of the study.
4. I plan to pursue additional church-related MOOC learning opportunities.
5. What did you like about the study?
6. What suggestions do you have for improving the study?

The first four statements used a five-option Likert scale of agreement, and the final two questions were open-ended, permitting free-text responses. The first statement served as a self-reported data point to determine the effectiveness of the program to impart knowledge of basic hermeneutics to participants and was not mapped to any of the participant learning outcomes. The second survey statement measured participants’ behavioral intentions to use their new knowledge and skills and was mapped to participant learning outcome 3. The final two statements gauged the effectiveness of the format utilized to deliver the content and were mapped to the fourth participant learning outcome. The two survey questions allowed participants to provide any desired feedback concerning the sessions. Analysis of survey responses was conducted for each participant, as well as for the aggregate group.
Field Notes

Filed notes are first-hand recordings of research participants and activities based on the researcher’s observation. They often serve as a means to validate information gathered from other methods of data collection. While there are three types of field notes (descriptive, inferential, and evaluative), most field notes are both descriptive and inferential, meaning they include both neutral observations and descriptions, as well as researcher interpretations and assumptions. The process for writing filed notes begins with brief notes, or “jottings,” made in the field at the research site during the research activity. After leaving the field, the researcher forms these brief notes into a fuller written account of his observations. These fuller notes are written as close to the time of the events as possible to increase their reliability.

The field notes captured as part of this program were both descriptive and inferential. The project facilitator’s jottings were reviewed and fuller notes created within 24 hours of each session. These notes were incorporated into the detailed session records and were not subject to further analysis.

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CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter four provides the results of the intervention described in chapter three, beginning with the presentation of pretest and posttest results. Results are provided for each individual participant, as well as for the collective group. The test analysis focuses primarily on gain scores. The survey results and analysis follow the pretest-posttest evaluation. The analysis of both the pretest-posttest results, as well as the survey results, incorporates an assessment of the established participant learning outcomes. Ultimately, the analyses determine if the program’s purposes were met successfully.

Pretest-Posttest

Pretest Results

Participants took the pretest at the beginning of the first class session. The pretest consisted of a combination of 25 true/false and multiple choice questions. Performance on the pretest served to establish a baseline of participants’ knowledge of basic hermeneutical principles and methods. Figure 1 below displays the pretest results for each participant, as well as the pretest results for the collective group. Participant numbers (i.e., P1, P2, P3) were randomly assigned to the test takers. Two of the three participants scored well, with one marking 21 correct responses (84%) and the other marking 20 correct responses (80%) on the test. The third participant marked 16 responses correctly (64%). The combined group average was 19 correct responses (76%).
Figure 1. Pretest results

Pretest Analysis

The pretest yielded two interesting results related to test performance. One participant’s performance was noticeably lower than the others’. Although poor test design could account for the lower score, this seems unlikely given the performance of the other participants. Any number of potential internal or external factors could have contributed to the lower score of the other participant, as well. The impact of the lower test score was greater given the small sample size. The other interesting result was the overall high performance on the test by the participants as a whole. Collectively, the group marked three-fourths of the answers correctly. Since none of the participants had indicated he or she had received prior instruction in hermeneutics, the result was unexpected. However, the research from chapter two yields a possible explanation. Because people engage consistently in the interpretation of communication (oral, written, and otherwise), many interpretive principles become intuitive. The interpretation of meaning occurs naturally or
unconsciously. As a result, many hermeneutical principles become common sense.\textsuperscript{1} If many basic hermeneutical methods and principles fall within the realm of common sense, this could explain the overall high performance on the pretest by the group.

**Posttest Results**

The posttest was administered during the last session of the study. One participant was absent and took and submitted the posttest at a later date. The posttest content remained unchanged from the pretest. Figure 2 provides an overview of the pretest results, posttest results, and gain scores. Gain scores were calculated by subtracting the pretest score from the posttest score for each participant, as well as for the group average.\textsuperscript{2}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{pretest-posttest_gain Scores.png}
\caption{Pretest-posttest results and gain scores}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{1} Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 4; Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 22, 25.

\textsuperscript{2} Williams and Culpepper, “Gain Scores, Analysis of,” 716.
The first participant’s score increased from 21 correct responses (84%) on the pretest to 24 correct responses (96%) on the posttest for a gain score of 3 (12%). Participant 2’s score rose from 20 correct pretest responses (80%) to 25 correct posttest responses (100%), resulting in a gain score of 5 (20%). The final participant’s score improved from 16 correct responses (64%) on the pretest to 17 correct responses (68%) on the posttest for a gain score of 1 (4%). As a composite, the group’s average pretest score improved from 19 on the pretest (76%) to 22 (88%) on the posttest for a gain score of 3 (12%).

Posttest Analysis

As indicated in chapter three, the purpose of gain scores analysis, as part of pretest-posttest design, is to assist in determining the effectiveness of an intervention to improve performance. A positive change indicates performance gains, whereas a negative change indicates performance decline. Since each participant experienced a positive change in pretest-posttest scores, it can be concluded that the implemented program was effective in imparting knowledge of basic hermeneutic principles and methods. However, such a conclusion requires further elaboration that investigates the program’s purpose and specific learning outcomes.

The stated purpose of the program was to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. Moreover, this program sought to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches. In order to assess the effectiveness of the program in achieving these stated goals, four learning outcomes were established. Table 1 maps the participant learning outcomes to

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3 Ibid.
corresponding assessment items on the testing and survey instruments. The test performance is linked to the achievement of the first two learning outcomes, with the results of the posttest given greater consideration. Survey responses gauge the success of the program to meet the remaining two learning outcomes.

Table 1. Map of learning outcomes to assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Assessment Item(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to define hermeneutics.</td>
<td>Test question 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to identify basic interpretive methods and principles.</td>
<td>Test questions 2 through 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to apply basic interpretive methods to personal Bible study and teaching preparation.</td>
<td>Survey statement 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be able to assess the effectiveness of MOOCs as a means for equipping believers for ministry</td>
<td>Survey statements 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the posttest, only one participant answered the first question correctly (33%). The same response distribution was present on the pretest, as well. Given the lack of change in low performance on this question from the established pretest baseline, the attainment of the first participant learning outcome was unmet. Possible reasons for the failure to achieve this initial outcome are inconclusive and conjectural. The low performance may be attributable to flawed question design. The distinction between answer options A and B may not have been as clear in the minds of the participants as they were in the mind of the project facilitator, resulting in more incorrect responses than correct responses. Perhaps the use of the coordinating conjunction “and” in option A rendered the two correct answers ambiguous, and thus more likely to be incorrect, in the minds of the participants. With its focus on a lower-level order of thinking, the achievement of the first outcome, when compared to the others, may be of lesser significance overall. However, the same could be said of the second learning outcome, as well.
Performance on questions 2 through 25 on the posttest was markedly different and thus more significant. Table 2 depicts the posttest performance. All the questions were answered correctly by at least two participants (67%), with many questions answered correctly by all participants. Given the high performance on this subset of questions, the second learning outcome was achieved.

Table 2. Posttest performance for questions 2-25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Question</th>
<th>% Correct Posttest Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>67% (n=2)</td>
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Survey

Survey Results

During the final session of the program, participants were invited to complete a brief survey consisting of a combination of six total statements and questions. The statements utilized Likert scaling to capture respondents’ level of agreement with each statement. The questions were open-ended and space was provided for respondents to record their thoughts. The survey was appended to the posttest. The results of the four statements are provided in Figure 3 through Figure 6 below.

All the participants self-reported that they benefited cognitively from the program. This statement was not connected to any of the established participant learning outcomes. However, the self-reported gain in knowledge was confirmed by the pretest-posttest design, wherein all
participants experienced a positive change in test performance. Thus, the program was effective in imparting knowledge of basic hermeneutics to those who participated.

Two participants indicated on the second survey statement that they would use the knowledge and skills they gained as a result of the sessions. The other participant indicated that he or she was unsure of his or her future use of the material in Bible study and/or teaching preparation.

![Survey statement 2 responses](image)

**Figure 4. Survey statement 2 responses**

The final two statements on the survey were intended to gauge the effectiveness of the delivery format of the content, that is, the effectiveness of the modified MOOC. All participants agreed that the format of the program was well-suited for the purpose of learning hermeneutics (see Figure 5).
When presented with the notion of participating in future MOOCs within the context of local church discipleship, all participants were clearly undecided (see Figure 6).
The survey concluded with two open-ended questions not directly related to the participant learning outcomes. The project facilitator included these questions to inform future program design and implementation. The results of the two questions are provided in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. Survey question 1 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did you like about the study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>“The fellow students”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“It removes scales from your eyes!”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“The videos were well put together and even with much context [sic] easy to follow. I enjoyed having outlines to go back to later.”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Survey question 2 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What suggestions do you have for improving the study?</th>
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<td>“It would be better to be able to work through them at my own pace (give me all the videos up front). I can then schedule them when I see fit and rewind the videos when I have trouble. Maybe some sort of interactive work, too, though it would be difficult to put that online unless it was simply some automatically-graded multiple choice pop quizzes [sic] from time to time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe more introduction (where needed)”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Analysis

As indicated in Table 1 above, three items on the survey were linked to the program’s established participant learning outcomes. The third program learning outcome stated that participants would be able to apply basic interpretative methods to personal Bible study and teaching preparation. The corresponding survey item requested that participants rank on a Likert scale their level of agreement with the statement that they would use what they learned as a result of the study in their own personal Bible reading and teaching preparation. Two of the three
participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would in fact use their knowledge in future Bible study and teaching preparation. The other participant was unsure if he or she would apply his or her knowledge in future situations of study or preparation. Two potential flaws could impact the validity of this item on the survey. First, the statement contained inherent ambiguity since it included two potential realms of application that could be separated: Bible study and teaching preparation. Participants could agree that they would apply their knowledge to Bible study, but not to teaching preparation, especially if they were not engaged in teaching at the time of their involvement in the program. While the language of the statement sought to account for such potential logic, it was not completely failsafe. Secondly, the statement itself expressed intentions and not necessarily a participant’s actual ability to apply hermeneutic principles and methods. However, given that the majority of participants affirmed to some extent they would use what they learned in the future (and that none indicated they would not), and assuming their ability to do so, the program was successful in meeting the third learning outcome.

The final program learning outcome sought to assess the effectiveness of the format, i.e. the MOOC, used in the study both for the present program and for future programs, utilizing survey items three and four, respectively. There was general consensus that the format used for the present program was well-suited to the purpose of the study. All participants agreed to some extent with the survey statement. The project facilitator’s efforts, informed primarily by the research of Hew and Cheung,⁴ to alleviate frustrations and challenges commonly associated with MOOCs, resulted in a positive experience for the participants.

Although participants unanimously found the modified MOOC an acceptable approach for learning basic hermeneutics, they were also unanimous in expressing their uncertainty about

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⁴ Hew and Cheung, “Students’ and Instructors’ Use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs),” 45-58.
using other church-related MOOCs in the future, as represented by their responses on the fourth survey item. Many factors play into deciding whether to pursue additional training or learning. Participants might, in fact, enroll in MOOCs in the future if the content area were of great interest, they felt a need to learn the topic, or there were some other incentive. Of course, the level of demand would be a significant consideration, as well. Participants might also be more likely to be involved in a MOOC that was facilitated and modified, such as was the case with the present program. It could also be that the survey respondents were not familiar with the terminology used in the survey item, in particular the acronym “MOOC.” Their potential confusion or uncertainty related to the term itself may have impacted the indecisive response.

Overall, the project was successful in determining that MOOCs are an effective method in the local church context for equipping believers. Thus, the fourth and final learning outcome of the program was achieved. This statement recognizes certain conditions and limitations, as it is based upon the present intervention’s implementation. The program minimized the challenges, frustrations, and demands often associated with MOOCs and incorporated a group study approach. With some effort, other relevant MOOCs could be modified to be used in the local church setting in order to prepare members for various ministry opportunities.

Additional Survey Insights

The final component of the survey was two open-ended questions allowing participants to comment on their experience with the study. These questions permitted participants to indicate areas of enjoyment, as well as areas needing improvement. Although the number of participants was small, the feedback provided proved informative and useful for future implementations of the program. Responses are provided in Tables 3 and 4 above.
One participant found the interpersonal relationships formed as part of the study to be a particularly enjoyable aspect. In fact, it was the only comment made by that participant. This highlights the value of modifying the approach of the MOOC to be viewed in a group setting, which is affirmed in the research. Another participant found the course to be enlightening. The comment affirms the knowledge of hermeneutics gained as part of participating in the study. The comment is validated by the data collected from the pretest-posttest, as well as the information obtained from the survey, both of which confirm that the program successfully achieved its purpose in part. A final comment affirmed the delivery and design of the program. This comment affirmed the success of the program to achieve its other purpose related to the viability of using MOOCs in the local church context.

Participants were asked to provide any suggestions for improving the study as part of the survey, as well. Two participants chose to contribute feedback. One participant only suggested providing introductions, where needed. Whether this referred to an introduction to the course overall, or to specific sessions is unclear, although the latter is more likely. Providing brief introductions to sessions would serve to orient participants before viewing content, which can only be beneficial. The other participant had much to contribute:

It would be better to be able to work through them at my own pace (give me all the videos up front). I can then schedule them when I see fit and rewind the videos when I have trouble. Maybe some sort of interactive work, too, though it would be difficult to put that online unless it was simply some automatically-graded multiple choice pop quizzes [sic] from time to time.

Creating the public Dropbox folder partially addressed the participant’s first concern. Although all the content could have been posted in the folder initially, the project facilitator found it preferable to upload the content after the group convened to encourage attendance and to

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promote greater engagement through active listening and group interaction. At the very least, the folder served as a resource to allow all participants to review the materials again at their own pace. Perhaps this participant would have benefited more from a traditional MOOC format. The participant’s concern about the interactivity level is one also noted by the project facilitator and is addressed to a greater extent below.

Unforeseen Issues

Attendance presented several challenges to the implementation of the program. Given the small pool of participants, the project facilitator should have anticipated the possibility of sessions where no one would be able to attend, despite the fact that participants did agree to attend all the sessions by signing informed consent documents. Non-attendance by all participants did in fact occur. Similarly, the project facilitator did not anticipate a church-wide special event for which the pastor would request cancellation of other activities and studies. Despite the attendance challenges, the course remained on schedule by using Dropbox. Each session’s handout and video were added to a public folder so that participants could access those materials when they were unable to attend a session in person. This also served to provide a resource for participants to consult in the future once the study had ended.

In the summer of 2015, the MOOC changed considerably and ceased to be offered through SEBTS’s learning management system. The course was migrated to the Ministry Grid platform and greatly condensed from over 40 lectures to 27, organized into ten parts. The videos contained updated content from the fall of 2014.6 Although readings were still required as part of

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6 SEBTS MOOC Admin, e-mail message to the author, May 8, 2015; Joy Lind, e-mail message to the author, June 3, 2015.
the course, the unit quizzes were not merely reading checks. Despite the update, the project facilitator elected not to change his approach or materials for several reasons. First, a considerable amount of time and energy had been invested in designing the course and materials. Secondly, the nature of the topic did not necessitate using more recent information. The basic principles of hermeneutics remain unchanged. Third, the project facilitator found the new platform’s interface entirely unfriendly to use and was not comfortable directing others to the site.

Finally, the project facilitator became concerned about the level of interactivity and opportunity to apply the content of the course. Although the videos were engaging and listening guides further aided in keeping participants active in interacting with the content, as one participant mentioned on the survey, the lack of variety in the handouts was evident to the project facilitator. Even though discussion was encouraged, rarely did conversations arise during the sessions. To add variety and encourage more discussion, some listening guides could have been formatted to be discussion-based with question prompts. Additionally, participants did not have directed opportunities to immediately implement what they had learned from the lectures. This would have necessitated adding to the level of demand of the study. Application-oriented exercises could have been completed during the study time. In order to accommodate this activity, participants would have either had to stay for longer sessions or watch video content prior to the session. Otherwise, application exercises would have to have been completed outside the session timeframe.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The final chapter provides a conclusion to the thesis project.\(^1\) An overview of summative conclusions of the program precedes a discussion of the trustworthiness of the intervention, focusing on its applicability, reliability, and credibility. The significance and impact of the program highlights its sustainability and various categories of importance. Finally, considerations are offered for future implementations and research.

Conclusions

As indicated in previous chapters, the purpose of this project was to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. Moreover, this program sought to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches. In order to aid in assessing the effectiveness of the program to achieve these goals, the project facilitator developed four participant learning outcomes. The analysis of the data collected through pretest-posttest design and surveys served to qualitatively determine the program’s success.

Based upon the data analysis in chapter four, the program was successful in equipping participating members with basic hermeneutic principles. The pretest-posttest design and

\(^1\) This chapter follows a slightly modified form of the outline presented in chapter eight of Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 212-234.
subsequent gain scores analysis demonstrated that the intervention resulted in increased knowledge of basic hermeneutic principles and methods for all participants. This data corroborated the self-reported gain in knowledge provided by the participants on the survey. Although most participants were not able to precisely define the term “hermeneutics,” which represented one question on the assessment tool, the majority of participants were able successfully to identify interpretive methods and principles, which accounted for 96% of the content on the test. It may be argued that the ability to identify principles and methods is of greater practical value than the ability to articulate an exact definition of a term.

Chapter four’s analysis confirms that program participants affirmed they could, and would, apply their knowledge of hermeneutics to their own personal Bible study and/or teaching preparation. The underlying assumption was that the application of the participants’ knowledge of hermeneutics would logically result in enriched personal Bible study and the ability to better instruct others when facilitating Bible study. In this regard, the program intervention met with success.

Finally, the program validated the viability of the use of MOOCs in the context of local church discipleship. Although the program participants were uncertain about their participation in MOOCs in the future, they all affirmed that the format of the present program served the purpose of the study well. An important disclaimer concerning the use of MOOCs in the local church, especially in light of the present project, is that care should be taken to eliminate common frustrations and challenges typically associated with MOOCs. With some effort, MOOCs can be modified and leveraged to provide high quality, enjoyable, instruction for the benefit of congregants. Thus, the program successfully validated the viability of using MOOCs for equipping opportunities in the local church.
Trustworthiness

Applicability

Chapter one framed the context of this ministry project by articulating its specific limitations. Chapter two delineated the specifics of the intervention’s design and its implementation. Focused on teaching general hermeneutics, the study was conducted at a Southern Baptist church, utilized dated resources from a Southern Baptist seminary, and engaged a small number of dedicated adult church members during a specified time frame. Effort was expended to remove barriers typically associated with the use of MOOCs. Sensing notes that despite the invariable differences that naturally exist from one setting to another, certain degrees of similarity are likely present to allow for the contextualization and interpretation of the present findings to make them useful for other situations.¹ This project relies on the principle of proximal similarity to demonstrate its applicability. This principle establishes confidence in application based upon conditions that are most similar to the original research.²

The intervention presented in this project is eminently reproducible in contexts where similar shared values, needs, and goals exist. As indicated in chapter one, Calvary Baptist Church holds to a high view of Scripture. The Bible is central to the life of the church. Since the Bible is the single authoritative source and guide for Christian faith and practice, it must be regularly read and studied by all believers. Because the Bible is a work that is far removed in space and time from today, hermeneutics is necessary to better understand and more effectively use the Bible. The grammatical-historical approach to biblical interpretation is best suited to

¹ Ibid., 215-216.
² Ibid., 217.
achieve these goals. The aforementioned values are also shared by the project facilitator and the seminary through which the MOOC was obtained and used.

Philosophical acknowledgment of the importance of pursuing enriched personal Bible engagement and/or improved teaching preparation through better Bible study informed by a basic knowledge of hermeneutics must be followed by practical efforts to reinforce such commitments. Classes, or other similar educational programming, are typical avenues for meeting practical training needs in the local church. However, many congregations face limited resources (temporal, financial, personnel, etc.) which prevent them from being able to offer needed training to equip their members in basic hermeneutics. The SEBTS MOOC presents an ideal solution for providing cost-effective, interesting, engaging, and theologically accurate instruction in hermeneutics. The limited costs associated with its use focus primarily on preparation time for the class leader. The course content provides conservative evangelical teaching from well-trained, seasoned seminary professors directly to congregants, instruction which traditionally had only been available to those preparing for full-time vocational ministry.

The goals of training focus on content delivery and results. The program format should facilitate learning rather than inhibit it. MOOCs present many frustrations and challenges associated with their use. Modifying delivery to reduce common use barriers is essential to success. With its 2015 revision, the hermeneutics MOOC offered by SEBTS helps streamline the process of making any alterations. The videos are shorter, lecture notes are readily accessible for download, existing discussion guides are readily available, and assessments have been devised that are related to the videos rather than course readings. However, the interface remains challenging for those less technologically savvy, especially as related to initial access and registration. The expected results of completing a course in basic hermeneutics are enriched
personal Bible study and better teaching. These are precisely the stated goals of the SEBTS MOOC.

Reliability

Despite the challenges inherent in ascertaining reliability in socially-oriented research, the program described in this project is dependable. Sensing highlights the volatility of human behavior, which results in the potential for any measurements, observations, etc., to be consistently erroneous. Thus the test of reliability does not entail the ability to reproduce the same findings, but to validate the soundness of the methodology employed. Using the methodology presented in chapter three, the intervention can be replicated with little variation over time. Although room for creativity, and even improvement, in the process is permissible, adhering to the essential design and implementation can be expected to produce results consistent with those found in the present project. The project facilitator was careful to ensure the methodology was simple and straightforward, yet sufficient to achieve the established goals of the program.

Credibility

Sensing indicates that “credibility is the degree of confidence that others can have in the findings of a particular project.” Questions of credibility answer whether the study measured or

3 Ibid., 218.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 219.
described what it was intended to, whether the conclusions were reasonable and whether another researcher would be able to come to the same or similar conclusions, and whether those who participated in the study could recognize the experiences described as their own. Sensing provides several means to use to demonstrate the credibility of a project, several of which were employed in this study. Although triangulation as precisely prescribed by Sensing was not used in this project, several tools were used to validate the research findings. Pretest-posttest design results and subsequent analysis confirmed self-reported survey data, as well as information recorded in the project facilitator’s observational-inferential field notes. This multi-faceted approach closely approximates data triangulation, as presented by Sensing. The project facilitator sought to develop and use more than one source of data to validate his findings and conclusions, which increased the project’s credibility. Although the project facilitator did not follow the method of reflective confirmation, or member checking, delineated by Sensing, he did collect participant impressions via the survey provided at the end of the program. The feedback obtained from the participants served to validate the project facilitator’s determination of the program’s success in meeting its goals. The thorough descriptive analysis of the data findings and conclusions offered in the previous and present chapter, respectively, also serve to increase the project’s credibility. The project facilitator was transparent about offering alternate explanations when the review of the data or its analysis presented findings that were inconsistent with, or that challenged, the overall expected outcomes of the program. Two examples illustrate

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7 Ibid., 218-219.
8 Ibid., 74.
9 Ibid., 73.
10 Ibid., 220-222.
11 Ibid., 222.
the incorporation of this method. When the majority of program participants failed to define correctly “hermeneutics,” the project facilitator acknowledged the possibility of poor question design on the testing instrument. He also questioned the significance of the question in relation to the others posed on the assessment tool, highlighting the greater practicality and value of the remaining question set. Also, when participants were undecided about their future use of MOOCs, the project facilitator offered several suggestions for such feedback, including a lack of understanding of MOOCs and the greater significance of the survey item related to the appropriateness of the delivery of the present project’s intervention. Such honesty and searching for possible explanations increased the project’s credibility. ¹² Finally, the project facilitator stated his own assumptions and worldview at the beginning of the study in chapter one, which also serves to increase the project’s credibility. ¹³

**Significance and Implications**

*Sustainability*

The program sought to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. It also sought to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches. In so doing, the program capitalized on an unprecedented opportunity to meet an expressed local need. The pastor of Calvary Baptist Church desired to offer instruction in hermeneutics for the congregation by using a MOOC from a trusted source. Through the intervention designed and implemented as part of

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¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 223.
this project, the aforementioned interrelated goals and objectives were met. Even before the conclusion of the course, others expressed interest in participating in any future offerings of the study. This communication served not only to encourage the project facilitator, but also indicated the impact of the course in the life of the church. Others desired, and perhaps even expected, the study to recur. The value of the study had been confirmed. The combination of these attitudes and experiences seemingly ensured the program’s sustainability and continuation well into the future, with the study assured to be embedded in the overall discipleship strategy of the church. Because the design work had already been accomplished, future iterations would require practically no preparation, except for printing of materials and setting up equipment. However, obstacles to the program’s sustainability cannot be ignored. The potential pool of participants was small and the possibility exists for all potential participants to become actual participants, eventually resulting in a non-existent pool of participants. The addition of new members, or the participation of existing members not typically present on Sunday evenings, could mitigate this problem. The sustainability of the program is also dependent upon a leader to facilitate it. At the time of implementation, the project facilitator did not envision moving away from the area, thus jeopardizing the program’s continuance. A new leader would have to be identified to continue the program.

Personal Significance

The project facilitator engaged in the project with established knowledge and experience in theology and education. He had earned an advanced degree in divinity, which included training in hermeneutics and exegesis, and had often found himself in the context of a classroom in a local church. While the experience of designing and implementing a course was not
particularly challenging, albeit certainly demanding, the project facilitator experienced personal
growth primarily related to social science research. His understanding of and competencies in
research methodologies, particularly data collection and analysis, increased as a result of the
study. He found this particularly valuable in an age of data-driven and evidenced-based decision
making, which increasingly affects all aspects of life, including personal, professional, and
ministerial. Even in the context of local church ministry, having data and its correct
interpretations to advocate for a new program or initiative, is almost expected. The project
facilitator is better equipped to understand and produce such information as a result of this
project.

Ecclesiastical Significance

As indicated in chapter two, the church is responsible to teach hermeneutics. Although
some may argue that the academy has assumed its rightful position in leading the task of biblical
interpretation,\textsuperscript{14} others posit that the local church is able, and obligated, to teach basic
hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, others view the church’s mission as inherently instructional.\textsuperscript{16} In the
Great Commission, Christ’s mandate to make disciples is accomplished by going, baptizing, and
teaching. The teaching component may be viewed as the weightiest, since it requires sustained
interaction throughout the life of the believer. The focus of instruction in the context of the local
church is the Word of God. Since the Bible is central to the church’s educational efforts,

\textsuperscript{14} Braaten and Jenson, “Introduction: Gospel, Church, and Scripture,” x.

\textsuperscript{15} Osborne, \textit{The Hermeneutical Spiral}, 27.

\textsuperscript{16} Erickson, \textit{Christian Theology}, 974-975.
believers must know how to study it and teach it. The goal of Bible-centric instruction is understanding and subsequent obedience, which can only occur through knowledge and application of hermeneutics.

Most churches typically use in-person, small group classes to facilitate their teaching initiatives. However, scholars have advocated that the church should leverage applicable technologies, such as the Internet, to assist in its instructional efforts, highlighting their distinctive advantages. James Flynn noted the obvious opportunities and implications of using MOOCs in the local church. MOOCs would allow lay leaders to receive cost-effective, expert instruction in targeted areas of study.

This project helps local churches fulfill the Great Commission by leveraging innovative educational technologies. As congregants learn how better to understand the Bible through instruction in hermeneutics, they engage it and, hopefully, obey it. The instructional program of the church is enhanced by using free online courses from reputable, authoritative sources. Such opportunities allow the church to expand its educational offerings beyond its own financial, temporal, and personnel limitations.

Theological Significance

The Bible is central to the life of the church and the life of the believer. Although the Bible’s importance is quickly acknowledged by most throughout Christendom, its use is often

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17 Esqueda, “How to Study the Bible,” 217.
18 Turner, Matthew, 690.
19 Erickson, Christian Theology, 976; Stephenson, Web-Empowered Ministry, 163-164.
neglected. Barriers produce frustrations that prevent the Bible’s regular reading and study.\textsuperscript{21} These include barriers associated with the limitations of human communication, as well as gaps in understanding related to the Bible’s language, historical context, and cultural context.\textsuperscript{22} Believers must seek to understand and obediently apply Scripture correctly so that they may obtain God’s approval, among other results.\textsuperscript{23} In so doing, they demonstrate a respect and love for God’s Word.\textsuperscript{24}

The present project emphasizes the importance of the Bible for believers. It assumes their regular engagement with the Bible. However, it also acknowledges the hurdles modern readers encounter when interacting with the biblical text. The need to equip believers with tools to engage the Bible effectively, to understand it, and obediently apply it, are addressed with the intervention proposed in this project. As a result, believers’ lives are transformed by the Word of God, which they respect and love, and they obtain divine approval.

**Future Considerations**

In future implementations of the program, the project facilitator would recommend incorporating the changes listed here. The updated videos should be used. Although the content of the videos remains relatively unchanged, the videos have already been edited to remove irrelevant portions of footage. The actual lecture notes should be provided to participants for reference at the time they view the video. The project facilitator would take several approaches

\textsuperscript{23} Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 60-61; 2 Tim 2:15.
\textsuperscript{24} Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 58-59.
to developing handouts for the study group. He would either distribute a quiz, which would be created using the quizzes within the MOOC, or a discussion-based handout, which is available with the revised iteration of the MOOC. Another alternative to these two formats would be to select a passage that the group could work through, immediately applying principles learned in the videos. Another approach is to use the passage work as an external assignment. Using quizzes, discussion questions, or exercises may require the length of the study sessions be extended beyond one hour. These are but a few exploratory ideas for increasing interaction and engagement that seek to maintain low levels of advanced preparation for participants.

Since the time of this project’s implementation, SEBTS has increased its MOOC offerings. Additional targeted training opportunities now exist for the local church. In addition to MOOCs on missions, evangelism, theology, etc., the rest of the content of the biblical interpretation MOOC could be used to develop courses on special hermeneutics, such as Old Testament interpretation and New Testament interpretation. Continuing to break down large MOOCs into smaller courses helps to keep demand low for participants. Modifying the delivery as presented in this project seeks to achieve the same purpose.

With the increasing number of available MOOCs, these courses could also be utilized in teacher training or certification efforts within the local church. The completion of a formal program making use of MOOCs could be established as a prerequisite for being permitted to teach in a particular congregation. The same, or similar, courses could also be implemented to provide continuing education opportunities to those already teaching. MOOC trainings could be used in combination with other instruction that is deemed important but that would not be available via this technology, such as denominational structure, or the history of the local church.


Green, Joel B. “Reading the Bible as Wesleyans.” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 116-129.

Gunn, Bryan S. “Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Teaching the Members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama to Properly Interpret Wisdom Genre through Preaching from the Book of Ecclesiastes.” D.Min. thesis, Samford University, 2008.


Appendix A: Church Permission Letter
Calvary Baptist Church
20957 TIMBERLAKE ROAD
LYNCHBURG VA 24502
434-239-9133
Rev. Louis Beckwith, Jr., Pastor

August 18, 2015

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in reference to Howard Tryon’s Doctor of Ministry project. In business session on August 5, 2015, the congregation approved his use of the congregation for purposes of his project. The church unanimously affirmed our support and participation. Please feel free to contact us if there are any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Rev. Louis Beckwith, Jr.
Calvary Baptist Church
Appendix B: Pretest and Demographic Survey

Name: ____________________

TEST: Please circle your answer(s).

1. Hermeneutics can be defined as
   A. the art and science of interpretation
   B. the study of methodological principles of interpretation
   C. both A and B
   D. none of the above

2. The purpose of hermeneutics is to _________ the meaning of a passage.
   A. apply
   B. obscure
   C. debate
   D. make clear

3. The interpreter seeks the _________ meaning of the passage.
   A. reader’s preferred
   B. author’s intended
   C. interpreter’s own
   D. listener’s received

4. A common three-fold method of Bible interpretation is
   A. reading, reflecting, responding
   B. observation, interpretation, application
   C. study, scrutiny, solution
   D. analysis, inquiry, answer

5. Observation answers the question
   A. What do I see?
   B. What does it mean?
   C. How does it work?
   D. How does it fit together?

6. Interpretation answers the question
   A. What do I see?
   B. What does it mean?
   C. How does it work?
   D. How does it fit together?
7. Application answers the question
   A. What do I see?
   B. What does it mean?
   C. How does it work?
   D. How does it fit together?

8. The first step of the hermeneutical process is to
   A. read commentaries
   B. pray
   C. read the passage
   D. outline the passage

9. When observing a text, the interpreter should ask which of the following questions?
   A. who and what?
   B. when and where?
   C. why and how?
   D. all of the above

10. In observation, the interpreter is looking for and making note of (choose all that apply)
    A. repeated words, phrases, etc.
    B. only very minor theme(s) of the passage
    C. changes in location, time or setting
    D. transitional words, such as then, therefore, but, etc.

11. The context of a passage is unimportant to its interpretation.
    A. true
    B. false

12. Using Bible introductions and commentaries to learn the background of a passage is essential to interpretation.
    A. true
    B. false

13. A text can often mean today what it did not mean originally.
    A. true
    B. false

14. Which of the following is a valid principle of interpretation?
    A. It is best to interpret a text in isolation from the rest of Scripture.
    B. Scripture should never be interpreted literally, or naturally, according to its genre.
    C. It is sometimes necessary to develop doctrine from obscure or difficult passages.
    D. Scripture will never contradict itself.
15. Which part of speech is especially important to track when interpreting Scripture?
   A. noun
   B. pronoun
   C. verb
   D. preposition

16. When interpreting Scripture, it is important to look for principles that are true anywhere, anytime, under any circumstance.
   A. true
   B. false

17. Interpretation bridges the gap between the culture of the Bible and today’s culture.
   A. true
   B. false

18. The meaning(s) of a text is/are __________; the application(s) is/are __________.
   A. one, one
   B. many, one
   C. one, many
   D. many, many

19. It is not necessary to understand the literary genre (prose, poetry, historical narrative, wisdom literature, apocalyptic literature) of a passage when interpreting.
   A. true
   B. false

20. Which statement is important to remember when interpreting the Bible?
   A. Cross-referencing allows you to learn all the Bible has to say on a particular topic.
   B. Note the natural divisions in a text to locate and follow its argument.
   C. Check interpretive conclusions against reliable resources.
   D. all of the above

21. The application of a passage must appeal to
   A. the mind
   B. the heart
   C. the will
   D. all of the above

22. Application must (choose all that apply)
   A. never be based on biblical truths gained by examination of the passage
   B. relate the relevance of biblical truths to today
   C. exclude practical examples and suggestions
   D. persuade and encourage adaptation to biblical truths
23. Application is __________ built on interpretation and should __________ be attempted before observation and interpretation.
   A. never, always
   B. always, never
   C. always, always
   D. never, never

24. An application can never be out of harmony with the totality of Scripture.
   A. true
   B. false

25. The heresy of application is a __________ truth applied in the __________ way.
   A. good, right
   B. wrong, wrong
   C. good, wrong
   D. wrong, right

SURVEY: Please circle your response.

Gender:
   A. Male
   B. Female

Age:
   A. Less than 20
   B. 21-30
   C. 31-40
   D. 41-50
   E. 50 or more

How long have you attended Calvary Baptist Church?
   A. Less than one year
   B. 1-5 years
   C. 6-10 years
   D. 10 years or more

Are you a member of Calvary Baptist Church?
   A. Yes
   B. No

Do you currently teach, or have you taught previously, in some capacity at Calvary Baptist Church or another church?
   A. Yes
   B. No
What other learning opportunities have you participated in related to the topic of interpreting the Bible?
A. College/seminary course
B. Read a book
C. Participated in a Bible study
D. None
E. Other (please list)
Appendix C: Posttest and Exit Survey

Name: ______________________

TEST: Please circle your answer(s).

1. Hermeneutics can be defined as
   A. the art and science of interpretation
   B. the study of methodological principles of interpretation
   C. both A and B
   D. none of the above

2. The purpose of hermeneutics is to __________ the meaning of a passage.
   A. apply
   B. obscure
   C. debate
   D. make clear

3. The interpreter seeks the __________ meaning of the passage.
   A. reader's preferred
   B. author's intended
   C. interpreter's own
   D. listener's received

4. A common three-fold method of Bible interpretation is
   A. reading, reflecting, responding
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24. An application can never be out of harmony with the totality of Scripture.
   A. true
   B. false

25. The heresy of application is a __________ truth applied in the __________ way.
   A. good, right
   B. wrong, wrong
   C. good, wrong
   D. wrong, right

SURVEY: Please circle your response.

1. My knowledge and understanding of how to interpret the Bible have improved as a result of these sessions.
   A. Strongly Agree
   B. Agree
   C. Undecided
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree

2. I will use the methods and principles I have learned in my personal Bible study and/or teaching preparation.
   A. Strongly Agree
   B. Agree
   C. Undecided
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree

3. The format of the sessions was well-suited to the purpose of the study.
   A. Strongly Agree
   B. Agree
   C. Undecided
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree
4. I plan to pursue additional church-related MOOC learning opportunities.
   A. Strongly Agree
   B. Agree
   C. Undecided
   D. Disagree
   E. Strongly Disagree

5. What did you like about the study?

6. What suggestions do you have for improving the study?
Appendix D: Session Video Links

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Which of the following is/are true about presuppositions?

A. They can never be changed.
B. They are a particular way of looking at life.
C. They are a particular approach or mindset to how we come to the Bible.
D. Both B and C

There are 5 essential precommitments of a faithful interpreter of Scripture:

1. Commitment to a __________ __________ of Scripture.
   
   What the Bible says, God says. What God says, we must say.

2. Conviction of the profitability of __________ Scripture.
   
   No one area of the Bible is any more inspired than another. There is equal inspiration, but degrees of importance.

3. Calling to __________ __________ the Word of truth.
   
   The purpose of hermeneutics is to make clear the meaning of a passage.

4. Commitment to do some clear, __________ thinking about what Scripture means, and how it applies.
   
   Sometimes what you say is not what people hear.

5. Willingness to be confined to the intention of the __________.

Where is meaning found?

A. Author
B. Text
C. Reader

The ultimate author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit.

The __________ author’s meaning is the __________ author’s meaning is the meaning the __________ should adopt and proclaim.

___________ is king. No text is to be understood outside of its immediate context.
INTREPRETING AND TEACHING THE BIBLE: SESSION 2 LISTENING GUIDE

Three basic steps to interpreting the Bible:

1. ______________ – What do I see?
2. ______________ – What does it mean?
3. ______________ – How does it work?

The meaning of the text is __________, but the applications are many/unlimited.

A text cannot mean __________ what it did not mean then. It may apply differently today.

Honor the historical meaning and the grammatical meaning deposited in the text.

The interpreter has a spiritual and moral obligation to honor what the Bible says.

Haddon Robinson’s interpretive method:

1. Choose the passage to be taught.
2. Study your passage and gather your notes. Read it repeatedly in multiple English translations and the original language, if possible.
3. Relate the parts of a passage to each other to determine the exegetical idea and its development.
   Find the text’s natural __________ or __________.
4. Submit the exegetical/main idea to three development questions:
   a. What does it mean?
   b. Is it true?
   c. What difference does it make?

David Allen’s interpretive method:

1. Observation – What do I __________?
2. Investigation – What is the background?
   The question of context (passage, chapter, book, books, testament, Bible)
   You cannot rightly interpret a text unless you consider __________ the Bible has to say about that particular subject.
3. Interpretation – What does it __________?
4. [Illustration]
5. Application – How does this __________ in life?

In all preaching/teaching, appeal to the total person: mind, emotions, will.

Two primary methods of studying the Bible:

1. __________/Analytic – Begin with the parts and move toward the whole
2. Deductive/Synthetic – Begin with the whole and move toward the parts
A crucial key in Bible study is asking the right questions: what, where, when, how, why and who?

Procedure for biblical exegesis:

A. Observation
   a. __________
   b. Read the text several times in English
   c. Read the text in Greek or Hebrew
   d. Make notes on what you observe in the text:
      i. __________ – Who are the people in the text?
      ii. __________ – What type of discourse (literary genre) is the text? What are the major chapter divisions? What are the major paragraph divisions? What are key themes, words, doctrines, etc.?
      iii. __________ – Why is the author writing to the recipients? What does he tell the readers to do? What command forms appear?

B. Investigation

Study the __________ of the text. Read a good introduction. Note the author, recipients, occasion, purpose, etc.

C. Interpretation

LINGUISTIC
   a. Begin at the __________ level.
      i. What are the main thoughts of the paragraph?
      ii. How many sentences are in the paragraph?
      iii. What is the relationship among the sentences?
      iv. How many paragraphs are in the text?
      v. What is the relationship of the paragraphs?
      vi. Which paragraphs convey the most important information?

GRAMMATICAL
   b. Move to the __________/clause level.
      i. Diagram the sentence to determine subject, main verb, object.
      ii. Identify independent clauses and dependent clauses.
      iii. Determine grammatical relationship of clauses to one another.
      iv. Decline nouns and parse verbs.
         TRACK THE __________! They are action words
      v. Compare different translations of the text.

LEXICAL
   c. Move to the word level
      i. Do ________________ of important nouns and verbs.
INTERPRETING AND TEACHING THE BIBLE: SESSION 3 LISTENING GUIDE

As restated by Dr. Akin, Jerry Vines recommends looking for the natural divisions of a text.

Jerry Vines’ interpretive method includes three steps:

1. Investigation/Observation – What does the Scripture passage really say?
   a. Read _______________
   b. Read _______________, asking six key questions:
      i. What
      ii. Why
      iii. When
      iv. How
      v. Where
      vi. Who
   c. Read _______________, with a sanctified imagination
      i. If imagination is used properly it can make the passage come alive.
   d. Read _______________
      i. Look for the theme and the _________ points
      ii. Pursue several clues
      iii. Look for ________________ of terms, phrase, clauses or sentences.
      iv. Be aware of ________________ words: then, therefore, wherefore, but, nevertheless, and meanwhile
      v. Pay attention to rhetorical questions
      vi. Note a _________ in location, time, or setting
      vii. Recognize when the writer gives a clue as to the meaning of the passage.

2. Interpretation – What does this passage mean?
   a. _________ the passage
   b. Do _________ studies
   c. Study the _________ – Context is king.
      i. 5 basic literary forms in the Bible per Kaiser
         1. Prose
         2. Poetry
         3. Historical narrative
         4. Wisdom writings
         5. Apocalyptic literature
      ii. 4 connections between a passage and its context per Kaiser
         1. Historical (events or facts)
         2. Theological (doctrines)
         3. Logical (arguments)
         4. Psychological (expressions)
   d. Gather the ________________ data
      i. From introductions or commentaries with introductions
      ii. Who wrote the passage?
      iii. Who is the speaker?
iv. Who is the audience?
v. Is the time of year relevant?
vi. What is the stage of revelation of the particular passage?
e. Do cross-reference work and let __________ interpret Scripture
f. Determine the theological significance
g. Consult _______________
h. Apply proper principles of interpretation
   i. First mention
   ii. Full mention
   iii. Proportionate mention
   iv. Repeated mention
   v. Gap
   vi. Salvation/fellowship
   vii. Threefold
   viii. Recurrence
3. Application – What does the passage tell me to do?

Summary Observations

1. Examine __________ words or phrases in the text.
2. Look for themes that emerge as you read the text.
3. Investigate verb tenses in the original language. Track those __________.
4. Watch for questions asked and answers given in the text.
5. Look for warnings.
6. Watch for cause and effect relationships that may not be set off by a key word or phrase.
7. Look for promises (noting their general or specific nature).
8. Look for __________.
9. Watch for __________.
10. Look for explanations.
11. Look for commands.
12. Look for the important descriptions given by the text.
13. Watch for, and interpret carefully, ________________.
Suggestions for interpreting the text of Scripture

I. Study the book as a __________.

A. Consider the questions of date, authorship, recipients, and purpose (general matters of introduction.)
   Use OT/NT introductions or good commentaries with introductions
B. Develop an __________ of the entire book (study Bibles and commentaries will be helpful).
C. Examine the relationship of the passage under consideration in both its near and far __________.

II. Establish the best __________ possible.

A. Use the ______________ if you can.
B. Compare various versions and translations.

III. Investigate the text linguistically (e.g. word by word).

A. Make a lexical (definitional) study of __________ words.
B. Research the passage for __________ words, phrases, and ideas.
C. Track the __________!
   “Weight”/Significance of verb types:
   1. Imperatives
   2. Main tense
   3. Participles
D. Cross reference.

IV. Examine the __________ or __________ of the material in the passage.

A. What is the literary __________ (history, poetry, prophetic, apocalyptic)?
B. What literary __________ are used?
C. Is there any indication of the life situation from which the material came?

V. Analyze the __________ of the passage.

A. Determine if the material constitutes a literary unit.
B. Is there a logical sequence of ideas present?
C. Isolate the basic __________ or emphases.
D. __________ the passage you are studying. Use the outline as the framework for your teaching.

Guiding principles for interpretation:

I. The __________ rules when interpreting the text.
2. The text must be interpreted in light of __________ Scripture.
3. Scripture will _________ contradict itself.
4. Scripture should be interpreted literally (or naturally according to its genre).
5. Do not develop doctrine from obscure or _________ passages.
6. Discover the _________ original intended meaning and honor that meaning.
7. Check your conclusions using reliable _________.

Dr. Akin’s Commentary Suggestions

Top Picks:
- Tyndale Old Testament/New Testament Commentaries
- Expositor’s Bible Commentary
- New American Commentary
- NIV Application Commentary
- MacArthur New Testament Commentary
- New International Commentary on the Old Testament/New Testament
- Be Series by Warren Wiersbe
- Preaching the Word Series
- Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
- International Critical Commentary

Also these authors:
- Packer
- Stott
- Bruce

Do not buy:
- Matthew Henry’s Commentary
- Word Biblical Commentary set
- (New) Interpreter’s Bible
- Broadman Bible Commentary
INTERPRETING AND TEACHING THE BIBLE: SESSION 5 LISTENING GUIDE

The task of the interpreter:

The interpreter must _________ the _________ or horizon between the cultural elements that are present in the text of Scripture and those in our own times.

“Ethnohermeneutics,” one proposal to bridge his gap, recognizes three horizons in cross-cultural interpretation:

1) the culture of the _________
2) the culture of the _________
3) the culture of the _________

Care must be exercised not to let the second and third horizons dictate the message of the first horizon.

In the view of the early church fathers, the cultural aspects of the Scriptures were meant to make the truth more accessible and to assist us in _________ the text to our own day.

When interpreting cultural aspects of Scripture, three options are available:

(1) retain the theology taught along with the cultural-historical expression of that principle
(2) retain the theology of a passage, but replace the expression of the behavior
(3) replace both the principle and the practice.

Five guidelines for doing this are:
(1) observe the reason given in the text for a cultural element, (e.g. why is there a head-covering required in 1 Cor. 11:2-16?)
(2) modify the cultural form but retain the content
(3) avoid all practices integral to pagan culture
(4) retain practices grounded in the nature of God
(5) adjust when the circumstances alter the application of a law or principle.

*Look for the principle that is true _________, _________ and under _______________.

HOW TO STUDY AND TEACH THE BIBLE

1. _________ the Scriptures
   a. Observation – What do I see?
   b. Interpretation – What does it mean?

2. _________ the Scriptures
   a. Find the seams (natural divisions)
   b. Analyze the argument
   c. Outline the text
3. Main Idea of the Text (MIT)
   a. What was the _______ _______ ________ then?
      What does the author want his hearers to know, do, or know and do?
      i. Theme: What is the biblical author talking about?
      ii. Complement: What is the biblical author saying about what he is talking about?

4. The _______
   a. 5 application-oriented questions to ask during observation and interpretation:
      i. What does this text teach about God?
      ii. What does this text teach about fallen humanity?
      iii. What does this text teach about Christ?
      iv. What does God want my people to ________?
      v. What does God want my people to ________?

ANALYZING A TEXT:
1. ________.
2. Track the verbs and parse them (if you can).
3. Look for key words needing definition.
4. Look for ________ of phrases and words.
5. Look for ________ in the text which will inform the number of points and the nature of the teaching outline.
6. Note the near and far ________.
7. Search for helpful and supporting Scripture (cross reference).
8. Write out any and all observations and applications you see in the text.
9. Examine your study aids and write out any helpful insights (note the source for future reference when appropriate).
10. Look for theological truth and avenues the text logically supports.
11. Merge your exegesis into the outline structure of your teaching.

OUTLINING THE STUDY:
1. ________.
2. Let your exegesis drive and determine the outline.
3. Have as many major points as the text naturally demands (locate the seams).
4. Make sure major points and sub-points arise clearly and ________ out of the text. Be able to see your outline in the text.
5. State your points in the present tense and complete sentences. Be clear, concise and true to the text.
6. Make your points the ________ of the message. (Let them inform, instruct and inspire your people as to what they should do.)
7. Make sure your major points connect with the title and the MIT and MIM.
8. Make sure your sub-points connect with the major point they support.
9. Do not overload your people with more than they can intellectually digest! (Teaching outlines are a great idea.)
10. Cover and fill the skeleton of your outline with the meat and marrow of the exegesis.
11. Write out your study merging all aspects of your preparation with a view of exalting our Lord and edifying your audience here and now.

12. Practice reading your text repeatedly and out loud. Remember: it is a sin to read God's Word poorly.
INTERPRETING AND TEACHING THE BIBLE: SESSION 6 LISTENING GUIDE

Reasons why people aren’t “in” the Bible:
Problem of __________: we don’t have the energy or see the necessity of why we should study.
Problem of __________: too busy, lack of time.
Problem of __________: we don’t know how.
Problem of __________: we just don’t get around to it.

Why study the Bible:
A. Hebrews 5:11-14 - It is the means to develop spiritual __________ and Godly __________ - the ability to see life from God’s perspective and react and respond to it with His mind.

B. 1 Peter 2:2 - Scripture is the primary means of spiritual __________. Our aim as believers should be to be like Jesus (Rom. 8:28-30).

Howard Hendricks says, “There are three kinds of Bible students:
1. To the first it's like castor oil – bitter and hard to take.
2. To the second it’s like shredded wheat – dry but nourishing.
3. To the third it’s like peaches and cream – can’t get enough.

C. 2 Timothy 2:15 - The Bible gives the only guidelines to follow for presenting ourselves to God in a manner __________ by Him (Rom. 12:1-2)

The bottom line of Christian experience is how we answer three questions we should ask ourselves daily:
1. Is the __________ well pleased?
2. Is the __________ well done?
3. Is the __________ well used?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us that all Scripture is profitable for:
1. Doctrine (for teaching)
2. Rebuke (for where you’re out of bounds)
3. Correction (for conforming to image of Christ)
4. Training in righteous living
The overall purpose - so we may be thoroughly equipped for God’s work (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).

D. Study is a necessary means of being able to __________ Christ.
We need to develop four basic skills in order to read the Bible and it mean something in our lives! The skills are:
1. __________ – “What do I see?”
2. __________ – “What does it mean?”
3. Correlation – “How does it fit together (integrate)?”
4. __________ – “How does it work? How can I translate it to my own experience?”

The first major step in Bible study is __________.
I. Developing the ability to see and determining what the text __________.
Observation is taking a __________ __________ look at what is in the text.

Why don’t we get more out of God’s Word?
1. We don’t know __________ to read.
2. We don’t know __________ to look for.

A. Learn to read intelligently, intentionally, and interactively.
Observation requires __________. It is not a difficult procedure. It is not a complicated process.
It can be mastered with practice and __________.

Rules for reading the Bible
Learn to read better or faster.

Learn to read as for the _________ time (the advantage of reading the text in the
original language).
Learn to read as a _________ letter (personal).

B. We need to read the Bible:
thoughtfully
repeatedly
often at one sitting
start at the beginning
patiently
sometimes selectively

C. When we read the Bible we need to ask these six questions:
1. __________?
2. __________?
3. __________?
4. __________?
5. __________?
6. __________?

As we read, we are to read:

__________ recall God’s promises and claim them.
Imaginatively identify with it.
Reflectively meditatively; take time.
Purposefully what’s the purpose in light of...
Acquisitively how can I hold on to it?
Telescopically in light of the whole.

II. Learn what to look for
To see the text is to observe what information God has put in a biblical passage. See the details
and seek meaning from those details. Make all possible observations from a text.

1. Look for __________ terms.
   (i.e., the verbs, significant concepts, repetition)
Look for:
things that are __________
things that are __________
things that are __________ and how
things that are __________ (uses words like “as” or “like”)
things that are __________/unusual (contrasting words such as “but”)
things that are true to life

2. Look for __________.
Last words are lasting words. Last words usually flow from a deep concern.

3. Observe __________
Some kinds of relationships you will observe are:
a. __________ relationships - How are words put together in the text?
b. __________ relationships - How are thoughts put together in the text?
c. __________ relationships - Are there any psychological aspects to this text, which are stated or implied in the words?
d. __________ relationships - In what context does this text occur?
The context of the Bible
The context of the book
The context of the text
e. Relationships in __________
Teaching - didactic or discourse material like Jesus' sermons or the epistles.
Narratives - narration of historical events.
Poetry - Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and others.
Parables - primarily in the parables of Christ.
Miracles - primarily found in three periods of biblical history (Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, the Lord and the apostles).
Prophetic - futuristic books like sections of Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation, and also the major and minor prophets of the Old Testament.
Apocalyptic - prophetic imagery depicting end time events.

4. Seek meaning from the __________ of a passage.
Seeking meaning deals with interpreting the observations, and seeing and seeking are most often and best done simultaneously. Interpretation is basically __________ __________ of your observations and answering them.

Seeking meaning from the details
1. Asking Questions
2. Answering Questions
3. Analyzing Answers
4. Applying Answers

A. Asking questions
You must ask many good questions. Ask questions of the words. Ask questions of the relationships between the words.

1. Ask what the words meant __________ they were written.
2. Ask what the words mean __________.
3. Ask how the Bible or the author used these words elsewhere and how other biblical authors used them.

B. Answering questions
The plain, __________ interpretation of Scripture (some call it “literal,” and others call it “grammatical-historical interpretation”) is what the expositor is after.

C. Analyzing answers
Three dangers in interpreting Scripture:
1. Misinterpretation - assigning the __________ meaning to a passage.
2. Subinterpretation - the failure to ascertain the __________ meaning of a passage.
3. Superinterpretation - attributing __________ significance to a passage than is actually implicit in it.

You will analyze your answers with the following tests:
The test of __________ - Can you make a good case that your interpretation is authentic?
The test of __________ – Is there unity of meaning between the terms, affirmations, and interpretation of the text? Is there a contradiction or discrepancy in my interpretation?
The test of __________ – Is your interpretation consistent with the rest of the chapter, book, and the Bible? Can you explain an apparent difficulty?
The test of __________ – Is your interpretation simple or contrived? Plain or mystical? Easily stated and understood or heavily supported by allusions and concoctions or arguments?
The test of __________ - Have you been careful not to read yours or others’ prejudgments and preconceptions into the text?

*Since our interpretations are not __________ we must always leave open the possibility for change, as new evidence and/or questions are brought to bear on the interpretation.
The Process of Biblical Interpretation

Hermeneutics is the ________ and _________ of interpretation. It is a science because it follows certain _________. It is an art because it is a _________ one develops with practice.

Hermeneutics is the study of ________ _________ of interpretation which allows us to take what we see and determine what it means.

Three truths to remember:
1. It takes _________ - to expose oneself to the brilliance of revealed truth.
2. There is more _________ in the Bible than we can grasp in one or many readings.
3. It takes _________ and experience - skills to develop an understanding of the text with accuracy.

A. Some Basic Principles of Interpretation – Answering the Question: What Does it Mean?

_________ - What is actually before you in the text. It is discovered by the results of your observational study. How to read and what to look for is the key (there is a huge difference between seeing and reading).
Be _________ in your observations.

_________ - The more time spent in observation, the less time you will spend in interpretation and the more accurate will be the results of your interpretation.

_________ - What goes before and after? (There is both a near and a far context).

_________ - Compare Scripture with Scripture.
*Remember the parts always take on meaning in the light of the whole.

_________ - What was the social setting at that time? What was the historical situation?
What was the ________________? language, customs, political environment?

_________ - Use resource tools (after you have done personal study). This includes dictionaries, atlases, concordance, commentaries, etc. Check your interpretation with other great women and men of God. If you are the only one to see the text a certain way, you are probably wrong.

_________ - Build an exegetically and homiletically sound outline that arises clearly out of the text. Let the text determine the structure of your outline

B. Ten Interpretive Rules

1. Work from the assumption that the Bible is _________.
2. Interpret difficult passages in the light of clear passages. Let the Bible _________ itself.
3. Interpret personal _________ in the light of Scripture and not Scripture in the light of personal experience.
4. Remember that Scripture has only _________ meaning but _________ applications.
5. Interpret words and passages in _________ with their meaning in the time of the author. Peeling back layers to get to the meaning of the text.
6. Interpret Scripture in light of its _________ revelation.
7. Remember you must understand the Bible ________ before you can understand it ________.

8. A doctrine cannot be considered biblical unless it includes ________ that the Scriptures say about it. Do not practice “selective citation” or “proof-texting.”

9. Distinguish between the ________ and the ________ of God.

10. When two doctrines taught in the Bible appear to be ________, accept both as Scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves in a higher unity.
MacArthur: Because the Bible is God’s Holy Word, it must be treated with __________, not expounded flippantly or carelessly. An effective method is based on general rules for Bible study.

Three Basic Principles for Bible Study

1. Observation: What does the passage __________?

3 “Be”s for Reading

- Be __________
- Be __________
- Be __________

2. Interpretation: What does the passage __________?

It is concerned with bridging the gap between the __________ _________ and the __________ _________.

- The __________ gap
- The __________ gap - understand the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.
- The __________ gap - understand the culture of the time.
- The __________ gap - essential in understanding a passage like 1 Thess. 1:8.
- The __________ gap - often the key to interpretation.

3. Application - How does the passage __________ to me?

Study Process

1. Read the __________ - become familiar with the theme, understand the context, put together a general outline and identify key verses.
2. Read the __________ - familiarize yourself with the passage, try to memorize it.
3. Find the __________ __________ - the ‘big idea’ or ‘the proposition.’ It is often connected with the main verb.
4. Write it out in a complete __________.
5. __________ the passage - Look for the subordinate points (support the main clause). This is the first step in outlining the passage.
6. Analyze the __________ - Work through the passage in detail in the original language. Use study tools. Diagram the passage. At this point consult good commentaries.
7. Put together an exegetical __________ - The final step in the process is to put together a preliminary outline. This is not alliterated. This outline is drawn from the passage.
8. Add illustrations.

Three Key Words

Inductive - approach the text to find out what it says and means.
Exegetical - Follow solid hermeneutical principles for interpretation.
Expositional - Open up the Word and make clear its meaning.

Figurative Language
“The representation of one concept in terms of another because the nature of the two things compared allows such an analogy.”

An expression that at its base is to be understood __________. This is often done to express emphasis, clarity or freshness of thought.

A. Some figures of speech:

1. _________: using “like” or “as” to draw a comparison
2. _________: a direct assertion or description
3. _________

10 Rules for Recognizing Hyperbole (or Exaggeration) in Scripture
It is probably a hyperbole if:
1. The statement is literally impossible.
2. The statement conflicts with what the speaker says elsewhere.
3. The statement conflicts with the actions of the speaker elsewhere.
4. The statement conflicts with the teachings of the Old Testament.
5. The statement conflicts with the teachings of the New Testament.
6. The statement is interpreted by another biblical author in a non-literal way.
7. The statement has not been fulfilled.
8. The statement would not achieve its desired goal.
9. The statement uses the literary form prone to exaggeration.
10. The statement uses universal language.

4. _________: using language in an opposite or different meaning than stated for the purpose of ridicule
5. Paradox: a statement of truth in what appears to be a contradiction of ideas.

B. Distinguishing the Figurative and the Literal
1. Always use the _________ sense unless there is some good reason for departure.
2. Use the figurative sense when the passage is _________ to be figurative.
3. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves an _________.
4. Use the figurative sense if the literal commands _________ action.
5. Use the figurative sense if the expression fits into one of the classes of the figures of speech.
6. Use the figurative sense if the literal is contrary to the context and scope of the passage.
7. Use the figurative sense if the literal is contrary to the general character and style of the book.
8. Use the figurative sense if the literal is contrary to the plan and purpose of the author.
9. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves a contradiction with a parallel passage.
10. Use the figurative sense if the literal involves a contradiction of doctrine.

C. Summary Principles for Interpreting Figurative Language
1. Determine if a _________ ______ ______ is used.
2. Determine the _________ and _________.
Example: Psalm 1:3
Figure of speech: Simile
Image: tree
Referent: believer
Point(s) of comparison: growth, fruitfulness, stability
3. State the purpose for the figure.
4. Don't assume a figure always means the same thing.
5. Place limits of control by the use of logic and language.

The __________ method of studying the Bible is rooted in a strong desire to __________ the Bible to one’s everyday life.

Central to the devotional method is the act of __________ on the Word of God. Biblical meditation seeks to establish communion with and the worship of the living God by involving the entirety of one’s person - body, soul, and mind. It uses the Scriptures as the place where meditation is centered.

TYPOLOGY
The vocabulary of typology in the New Testament:
- Type
- Antitype
- Example
- Shadow
- Figure

The definition of a type:
A type is a person, event, or thing, which while having a historical reality in the Old Testament was designed by God to __________ (foreshadow) in a preparatory way a real person, event, or thing so __________ in the New Testament that it corresponds to and fulfills the type.

An illustration is not explicitly __________ in the New Testament as a type.

Principles for the Interpretation of Types
a. Identify the __________ meaning of the item in its historical context.
b. Look for the major area of resemblance between the type and the antitype.
c. Ascertain the purpose and function of both the type and the antitype in their respective contexts.
d. Recognize the points of difference and contrast between the type and the antitype.
e. Guard against overpressing the analogy in seeking what is farfetched and vague (allegorization).
f. Distinguish between types and illustrations.
g. Avoid using types to prove doctrine.
h. Recognize that types look back from the __________ __________ advantage as a way of bringing into sharper focus the person and work of Christ.
INTERPRETING AND TEACHING THE BIBLE: SESSION 9 LISTENING GUIDE

As we apply Scripture:

- the __________ must be educated (discernment).
- the __________ must be motivated (desire).
- the __________ must be activated (decision).

I. Defining Application

Application developed into the idea of joining something in such a way as to __________ or __________ that to which it was joined.

In application we deal with both __________ and __________, and look at both __________ and __________.

Application must include at least 5 essential elements:

1. Application must be based on biblical truths gained by a __________-__________-__________ examination of the biblical text chosen. Interpretation must precede application.
2. Application should be related to the __________ __________ purpose for the text or portion of the text.
3. Application must relate why the biblical truths are __________ for the listeners in their contemporary lives.
4. Application must include practical __________ and __________ of how listeners can adapt their lives to the biblical truths presented.
5. Application must __________ listeners that they should adapt their lives to the biblical truths presented and encourage them to do so.

Application is the process whereby the expositor takes a biblical truth from his sermon and applies it to the contemporary context of his audience, prophetically relating why it is __________ for their lives, practically showing how it should __________ their lives, and passionately __________ them to make necessary changes in their lives.

By the end of the sermon/lesson the audience must have the answers to three important questions:

1. __________ did the preacher/teacher speak about?
2. __________ __________ difference does or should it make?
3. __________ __________ do I do with God’s claims in this sermon?

II. The Steps to Application

Application is always built on __________. If the interpretation is wrong, the application will be wrong. Caution! Never attempt to apply before observing and interpreting.

1. Be aware of the __________ to application.
A. Some stop the hermeneutical process before it is complete! Howard Hendricks says, “Observation and interpretation without application is abortion! Let the baby go full term.”
B. We substitute knowledge for experience.
C. We rationalize the process to fit our present lifestyle.
D. We allow an emotional experience to be substituted for a volitional decision.
E. Pressures from society cause us to compromise what we know to be true.

We should look to the original audience of the text, then to ourselves, then ask 4 key questions:
1. How are we _________ them?
2. How are we _________ them?
3. How should we be _________ them?
4. How should we be _________ them?

2. Know the interpretation of the text ___________ the hermeneutical horizons or gaps.

3. Know your applicational situation. Remember: the interpretation is _________ but the application is _________.
   • Know yourself.
   • Know your people.

4. State your application in the form of a universal principle.

The principle is true ________, ________, ________ ________ ________.

The ultimate principle to remember: the solution to your problem is a person (Jesus Christ).

A. Be in line with the needs, interests, questions, and problems of today. This is the key to _________.

B. Be in harmony with the general tenor of Scripture. The analogy of faith: Scripture will never ________ Scripture.

C. Be specific enough to indicate a course of _________.

13 questions to ask:
1. Is there an example for me to follow?
2. Is there a sin to avoid/confess?
3. Is there a promise to claim?
4. Is there a prayer to repeat?
5. Is there a command to obey?
6. Is there a condition to meet?
7. Is there a verse to memorize?
8. Is there an error to avoid?
9. Is there a challenge to face?
10. Is there a principle to apply?
11. Is there a habit to change, i.e. start or stop?
12. Is there an attitude to correct?
13. Is there a truth to believe?

5. Saturate your mind in terms of __________.

- God
- Self
- Others
- Satan

A. Plug into real life.
   Be realistic; concentrate on the __________ vs. abstract thinking.
B. Take the leash off your mind and let it run freely. (See how many relationships can be affected by this truth.)
C. Forget the critical. Examine every possible area even if it seems trivial.
D. Plug into real life.
   Think vicariously: see through the eyes of others.
   Expose yourself to people and life.

6. Consciously __________.
A. You have not applied until you have practiced.
B. There is great danger of trafficking in unlived truth. Vance Havner said, “What we live is what we believe. Everything else is just so much religious talk.”
C. You cannot be diligently applying everything but you should be consciously applying something.

Concluding Questions:
1. What am I trusting God for right now?
2. What is my plan of action?
3. In what ways are you looking to Christ to appropriate His grace?
4. What is your plan of action for applying God’s truth to your life?

In summation, “How should my __________, __________, or __________ be effected by the Word of God?”

Application requires a decision and a specific plan of __________ in order to allow the Holy Spirit to make scriptural principles part of us.

The Heresy of Application

I. “Most heresy is preached in application rather than in Bible exegesis.”
A. Preachers want to be faithful to the text. While in seminary they learned exegesis but not how to make the journey from the biblical text to the modern world.

B. In order to make the jump from text to the world we have to deal with the preacher’s question which is application. If we have used the wrong application then the heresy is a __________ truth applied in the __________ way.
II. What does heresy look like?
“You’re saying what God doesn’t say.”

III. What is the effect of this kind of preaching on one’s congregation?
You undermine what the Scripture is actually saying and you give people the idea anything with a biblical flavor is what God says.

IV. What makes Bible application so prone to error?
Because we are taking the eternal truth of God given in a particular time, place, and situation and trying to apply it to a modern world living in different context.

V. What is the best way to avoid error?
A. One way is to bring the text straight over to the modern situation.
B. Some texts are not able to come directly over to the modern situation. In order to avoid this the preacher must understand both the circumstance of the text and the modern situation.

VI. How to know if we are confusing the questions?
A. “A text cannot mean what it has not __________.”
B. “The Ladder of Abstraction” - Picture a ladder which comes up from the biblical world, and crosses over to the modern setting. Robinson says, “I want to make sure the biblical situation and the current situation are analogous at the 5 points I am making them connect. The center of the analogy must connect not the extremes.”
C. Example - boiling a goat in its mother’s milk is actually a prohibition about being involved in pagan practices. Climb the ladder until you reach the principle.

VII. How do you climb the ladder if the text cannot come straight over?
Ask:
1. What does this teach about God?
2. What does this teach about human nature?
A. Abstract up to God. Find the vision of God in the passage.
B. Depravity factor. What in humanity rebels against that vision of God?

X. What do you say when something is not a matter of obedience?
A. We can’t always have a “thus saith the Lord” about everything so you have to distinguish between various types of implications.
   1. Necessary implication - you shall not commit adultery.
   2. Probable implication - Be careful about strong bonding friendships with the opposite sex.
   3. Possible implication – Don’t travel regularly, or at all, to places with the opposite sex.
   4. Impossible implication – Don’t have dinner with another couple because you are at the same table with a person who is not your spouse.
B. “One way to phrase these distinctions in the pulpit is to say, ‘This is the principle and the principle is clear. How it applies in our lives may differ with different people in various situations’.”

XI. Different genres affect our application.
XII. What is the best use of increased time in sermon/lesson preparation? Spend time on what you usually don't focus on.
Because Scripture is the Word of God written in the words of men we operate from the premise that it is both __________ and __________. Because it is the Word of God, there is an expected __________ and harmony to all its parts. Because it is the words of men, at least 40 authors writing over a 1500 year period, there is progression and __________. Putting all of this together presents a significant challenge to the expositor.

Theological exegesis is a badly missing element in much modern teaching. To overcome this weakness, preachers and teachers of the Word must discover and declare the __________ which naturally arises from the exegetical study of the text. We must also work to see the over-arching theological development across the whole of the Bible. Several principles should guide us in our hermeneutical/homiletical process. These observations will tie together some of our previous discussion.

1. Honor the __________ __________ of the text.
The ultimate author of Scripture is __________. We want to know what God says and we want to teach what God says.
Walt Kaiser notes four ways to ascertain the intention of the writer:
a) See if the __________ __________ clearly sets forth his purpose in the text.
b) Study the paranetical sections in order to determine the author’s own applications of his writing.
c) Observe what details the author selected for inclusion and how he arranged them.
d) When no other clues are available, the interpreter must develop his own purpose statement for the passage.

2. Carefully consider the __________.
This includes the near and immediate context, but it also includes the total canon in light of the “grand redemptive storyline of the Bible.”

3. Be alert to __________ and __________ patterns in the text.
A. Narrative patterns
Various cultures have different ways of telling stories.

These patterns are part of the inspired text. They help us understand the dynamics of the conversation and the theological and personal issues.

Work to identify with people, situations, and feelings of the text.

Haddon Robinson provides some additional assistance as we consider narrative text of Scripture.

He notes that a series of different questions must be raised when trying to understand a story. These include:
a) Who are the __________ in the story and why did the author include them?
b) Do the characters contrast with one another?
b) How do these characters __________ as the story develops?
d) What does the __________ contribute to the story?
e) What __________ holds the story together and provides its unity?
f) How do the __________ episodes fit into the __________ framework?
g) What ________ develop and how are they resolved?
h) Why did the writer ________ telling the story?
i) What ________ lie behind the story, implied but not stated?

B. Compositional patterns
These are patterns that lie more on the _________ of the passage. They may occur in narrative or logical arguments. Some are marked by specific words or constructions. Often these are marked by semantic patterns.

1. _________ or _________
2. _________
3. Continuity
4. _________
5. Cruciality
6. Interchange
7. _________
8. _________
9. Cause to effect
10. Substantiation
11. Radiation
12. Progression

4. Give careful attention to the particular _________ _________ under consideration.

Five basic literary forms used by Biblical writers are:
1. _________ - the basic model of Biblical communication
   This includes description, explanation or exposition, emotive prose and polemical prose. Common features are speeches, records, and historical narratives.
2. _________ - composes one-third of the OT
3. _________ _________
4. Wisdom Writings
5. _________
   a) Rich symbolism involving heavenly and earthly creatures
   b) Formalized phraseology indicating the revelation came by a vision or dream
   c) Frequent conversations between the prophet and the heavenly being who discloses God’s secrets to him
   d) Cosmic catastrophes
   e) The radical transformation of all nature and nations
   f) The imminent end of the present age

5. Locate the _________ in a text which will mark off paragraph or section divisions. Seams will reveal themselves through:
   a) _________ terms, phrases, clauses, or sentences
   b) Grammatical clues
   c) Rhetorical questions
   d) _________ in time, location, or setting
e) Vocative form of address showing shift of attention between groups
f) Change in tense, mood, or aspect of the verb
g) Repetition of the same key word, proposition, or concept
h) A new theme

6. Carefully define __________ words. Words, then, are the basic building blocks for building meaning. We repeat, they must not be torn from their contexts. They will become untrustworthy guides if this happens. But when they are viewed and treated in their distinctive roles as part of the larger context, they serve the exegete well.

7. Give due attention to __________ context and its clues.
a) The exegete must try to determine when the writer is merely __________ something and setting a background for his abiding principle, and when he is __________ something for his time and afterwards.
b) If a reason for a practice or for what might appear to a culturally-conditioned command is given and that reason is located in __________ __________ __________, then the command or practice is of permanent relevance for all believers in all ages.

“The historically or culturally conditioned nature of some of the Bible’s ethical demands or general teachings should not embarrass the interpreter. Particularity is often nothing more than a specific application or illustration within the universal to which it belongs. Thus the exegete may not, and in a fair number of cases should not, universalize or ‘principalize’ every injunction or description in Scripture.” - Kaiser

8. Engage in __________ analysis.
A. Remember, __________ Scripture. It is its own best interpreter.
B. Examine explicit theological affirmations found in the text.
C. Compare with similar affirmations found in passages that have preceded the text under study.
D. Study the clues to the antecedent theology within the text:
   1. The use of certain terms which have already acquired a special meaning in the history of salvation and have begun to take on a technical status
   2. A direct reference or an indirect allusion to a previous event in the progress of revelation with a view to making a related theological statement
   3. Direct or indirect citation of quotations so as to appropriate them for a similar theological point in the new situation
   4. Reference to the covenant(s), its contents of accumulating promises, or its formulae.
E. Consider again those __________ __________ that bear theological weight.
   1. Select those words which are significant.
      • It plays a key role in the passage.
      • It occurs frequently in previous contexts.
      • It is important in the history of salvation up to this point.
   2. Define the word selected in terms of its function in the immediate context.
   3. Examine the usages of the same word in other authors from the same period.
   4. Use lexical tools to examine word roots and variations in meaning.
5. Consult an exhaustive concordance for the following:
   • The total number of times it appears in the Bible.
   • The period in which there is the highest concentration of usage.
   • Any limited context that exhibits an extraordinary number of usages.
   • Those contexts that illustrate its usage prior to the selected text being exegeted.

6. Consult various cognate languages to find additional usages, especially for words which occur infrequently in the Bible.

“Simply to impose a theological grid on a text must be condemned as the mark of a foolish and lazy exegete. Further, the facile linking of assorted Biblical texts because of what appears on a prima facie reading to be similar wording or subject matter (usually called the proof-text method) must also be resisted since it fails to establish that all of the texts being grouped together do indeed share the same theological or factual content.” – Kaiser

“...the discipline of Biblical theology must be a twin of exegesis. Exegetical theology will remain incomplete and virtually barren in its results, as far as the church is concerned, without a proper input of ‘informing theology’.”
CONSENT FORM

Leveraging a Massive Open Online Course in the Local Church to Teach Hermeneutics

Howard “Rusty” Tryon
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study of using a massive open online course (MOOC) in a local church setting to teach basic principles and processes of Bible interpretation in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a member or regular attender of Calvary Baptist Church. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Howard “Rusty” Tryon, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to facilitate participation in a MOOC to equip members of Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA, with basic hermeneutic principles in order to enrich personal Bible study and prepare for teaching the Bible. This project seeks to affirm the viability of using MOOCs for various equipping opportunities in local churches.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1.) Attend 10 one-hour sessions
2.) Complete listening guides for video lectures during sessions attended
3.) Contribute to group discussions as desired during sessions attended
4.) Complete a pre-test and survey. The pre-test and survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Data collected with be confidential. Although I will know what data belongs to whom, I will not disclose identities.
5.) Complete a post-test and survey. The post-test and survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Data collected with be confidential. Although I will know what data belongs to whom, I will not disclose identities.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

The benefit to participation is learning to better read and interpret the Bible, which will enrich your own Bible study and teaching preparation.

Compensation:

You will receive no compensation for taking part in this study.
Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Data will be stored on an external computer storage drive and all files will be locked with a password that is only known by the researcher. The data will be kept for three years and then permanently deleted.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Calvary Baptist Church, Lynchburg, VA. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Howard “Rusty” Tryon. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at hdtryon@liberty.edu or (434) 592-6229. You may also contact the research’s faculty advisor, Dr. Charlie Davidson, at cdavidson@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(Note: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________

Signature of Investigator: ___________________________ Date: ______________
September 3, 2015

Howard "Rusty" Tryon
IRB Exemption 2283.090315: Leveraging a Massive Open Online Course in the Local Church to Teach Hermeneutics

Dear Rusty,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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