

Liberty University School of Divinity

Reading Scripture:

Developing Intimacy with God, the Church, and Community

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Divinity
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

Department of Biblical Studies

by

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

Mentor Name & Title

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT

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By addressing the biblical literacy that results from not reading Scripture, and lack of discipline, Christians will experience spiritual growth, maturity, and a Christian worldview as a result of applying proper exegesis and hermeneutics of Scripture. The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry thesis project is to help Christians read the Bible by engaging in proper biblical interpretation. According to Fee and Stuart, “a text cannot mean what it could never have meant for its original readers/hearers. The interpretation of the biblical text is what the original writer had first spoken or written,” directly from God; therefore, developing the skills to understand and interpret the Scripture in its original context is vital.¹²

This thesis project will identify how people experience personal and communal transformation by engaging in an in-depth individual approach that begins with reading Scripture and results in spiritual maturity. The church mandates teaching Scripture, embrace holiness, and identifies philosophical values from a biblical perspective that result in a psychological/spiritual transformation. Sociologically, the sanctification of the church affects every socio-economical level, ethnicity, gender, and racial construct of the believer.

This project will be divided into four sections:

Part One: The Rationale for Obedience and Holiness

Part Two: The Theological Dimensions and Outcome of Sanctification from Various Themes and Principles.

Part Three: Emphasizing Obedience and Sacrifice

Part Four: Assessment of Questionnaires

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 34-35.

² *Ibid.*, 35.

Contents

Introduction: Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Ministry Context	1
1.1 Culture/Race	4
Problem Statement.....	5
Purpose Statement	7
Reading Scripture Requires “Knowing”	7
Hearing and Reading Scripture Publicly.....	8
Reading Scripture Privately	10
The Qualifications of the Interpreter.....	12
Reasoned Faith, Obedience, and Prayer.....	13
The Role of the Holy Spirit and Church Membership.....	15
Distances.....	17
Geography, Languages, Culture, and Religious Perspective.....	18
Definitions.....	23
Limitations and Delimitations	24
Thesis Statement.....	25
Chapter 2: Theoretical Context	27
Literary Relationships.....	35
Exegesis and Hermeneutics–Original Meaning	42
Theological Foundation.....	54
Doctrine	55
The Modern Reader	58
The Rationale for Obedience.....	60
Sacrifice and Sanctification.....	61
Covenant Relationships and True Obedience.....	62
The Rationale of Holiness.....	67
Ministry and Holiness	71
Pursuit of Holiness	73
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	79
Analysis of the Subject–Antioch Missionary Baptist Church.....	79
1.1 Culture/Race	80
Research Process.....	82

Assessment of Questionnaire for the Study.....	85
Administration of the Pre– Questionnaire and Post– Questionnaire.....	85
1.2 Tally of the Pilot Group.....	86
1.3 Tally and Comparison Chart of Pre–Questionnaire and Post–Questionnaire.....	87
Descriptive Outline and Implementation of the Project.....	87
8–Week Bible Study: My Inheritance.....	87
8–Week Outline of My Inheritance.....	90
Facts.....	93
1.4 Survey Comparison of Pre- /Post Test Results.....	93
Proposed Effectiveness: Pilot, Pre/Post Questionnaire.....	95
Pre–Questionnaire.....	95
Post–Questionnaire.....	96
Chapter 4: Results and Outcome of the Methodology.....	97
Restrictions and Accomplishments: Phase 1.....	97
Restrictions and Accomplishments: Phase 2.....	99
Restrictions and Accomplishments: Phase 3.....	101
Comparison of the Pre– and Post– Questionnaires.....	101
Observations and Outcome: Black–Page 1 of Questionnaire.....	101
Observations and Outcome: Orange–Page 2 of Questionnaire.....	104
Observations and Outcome: Blue–Page 3 of Questionnaire.....	106
Observations and Outcome: Purple–Page 4 of Questionnaire.....	109
Observations and Outcome: Gold–Page 5 of Questionnaire.....	113
1.7 Line Graph.....	117
1.6 Bar Graph.....	118
Observations.....	118
Observed Errors.....	119
Notes.....	119
Conclusion	124
Appendices A – Doctor of Ministry/Application for Candidate Status.....	138
Appendices B – Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Proposal Approval Form.....	139
Appendices C – Abbreviation of Sacred Books of the Bible.....	140
Appendices D – Liberty University Institutional Review Board.....	141
Bibliography.....	147

Tables

1.1	Culture/Race.....	4 and 80
1.2	Tally of the Pilot Group.....	86
1.3	Tally and Comparison Chart of the Pre– and Post– Questionnaire.....	87
1.4	Survey Comparison of Pre/Post Test Results.....	93
1.5	Line Graph.....	117
1.6	Bar Graph.....	118

Chapter 1

Introduction – Ministry Context

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church worships corporately every Sunday at an 8 am and 10 am service. Every Thursday, members are encouraged to participate in intercessory prayer and Bible study that is usually led by the pastor or an appointed staff member. The Sunday school department is undergoing reorganization, and leaders and other qualified church members have volunteered to recruit five or more interested individuals to develop new Sunday school classes and to serve as the lead teachers. The members of the church and individuals in the community participate in the noonday service held on Wednesdays. The most popular groups on campus are the women's group that meets immediately after the Bible study on Thursday, a special prayer and Bible study group for both married and unmarried women that meets on Saturdays at 7 am, and the married couples' group that meets on Sundays. The youth pastor and his staff provide various ministries for babies, children, and teenagers, including Bible study and fun activities that incorporate singing, dancing, and drama.

Every year, the church participates in a two-day conference where gifted preachers and instructors conduct workshops and services that focus on a specific doctrine. The Watchnight community service is another annual event that begins at 10 pm on New Year's Eve. Participants begin to gather at the church at 7 pm, which usually fills before 10 pm. Once the sanctuary reaches its capacity, the ushers redirect the crowd to the overflow room where they can watch and participate in the service.

Every worship service begins with Scripture reading, inspirational songs, and prayer that encourages members to participate physically in the setting, including lifting their hands before

God, clapping, singing aloud, and communicating with those in their proximity. The worship leader reads the Scripture, prays for the corporate needs of the church, and ends with the declaration of the vision statement. Pastor Adolph encourages every church member to bring their Bible or to use the Bible app on their cell phones to read with him during designated times throughout the gospel message.

Most of the ministry organizations begin or end their meetings by verbalizing the vision statement, which declares excellence and encourages meeting the needs of the total person. The pastor or designated person usually welcomes visitors during the service and introduces the pastor, church leaders, clergy family, and members. Then, every member of the church is encouraged to leave their seats and greet at least five people that they have not met before. At the end of the gospel message, individuals who choose to join or need intercessory prayer may come to the altar, where the pastor or preacher continues to exhort and edify the Body of Christ. The deacons, deaconess(es), evangelism workers, and associate preachers meet the individuals who have responded to the invitation to Christ, want to become a member, or need prayer, and exit the service to proceed to the designated area where individuals receive answers and intercession.

A practicing Christian should exhibit kindness and friendliness all the time. Every person should faithfully utilize their ministry gift. Presently, Antioch MBC has one primary campus located at 3920 W. Cardinal Dr. in Beaumont, Texas. The city is approximately twenty miles north of the Gulf Coast of Mexico, approximately 100 miles east of Houston, Texas, and 60 miles west of Louisiana.

The population and demographics of Beaumont, Texas, will aid in the planning and development of this research. The population of Beaumont is 117,729. 49% of the residents are married, and 47% of the population is under 18 years old. The average test score of the

Beaumont schools, peaks at 58%: 19% of the students score lower than the Texas average, and 18% higher than the national average. Academically, 82% of the population completed the 8th grade, 23% completed their bachelor's degree, and 2.1% have obtained a doctoral degree.

According to the statistics, the median household income (2012-2016) is \$42,395. The poverty rate is 20% and ranks 37% higher than the national average. The income per capita is \$25,358, which is 9% lower than the Texas average and 15% lower than the national average.¹

The overall crime rate is 80% higher than the average of crimes committed in Texas. It is also 97% higher than the national average. When it comes to violent crimes, Beaumont, TX, shows a crime rate that is 142% higher than the Texas average. The crime rate is also 178% higher than the national average. When it comes to property crimes, Beaumont, TX, is shown to be 69% higher than the Texas average and 84% higher than the national average.²

The United States Census Bureau records indicate that 7.6% of the population is under the age of five, 25% is under the age of 18, and 13.4% is 65 and above, with 52.2% of the population being female. The chart below provides information regarding various cultures.³:

¹ Beaumont, Texas—Population and Demographics. 2019. Accessed March 8, 2019. <https://www.areavibes.com/beaumont-tx/demographics/>

² Ibid.

³ United States Department of Commerce. “*United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Beaumont City, Texas*,” United States Census Bureau, February 26, 2019, accessed March 8, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/beaumontcitytexas/LND110210>

1.1 Culture/Race	Percent
White Only	45.1
Black/African American	48.4
American Indians/Alaska Native	0.4
Asian	3.1
Native Hawaiian /Other: Pacific Islander	0.0
Two or More Races	1.6
Hispanic or Latino	14.1
White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino	33.1

Statistically, the Black/African American and White populations of Beaumont, Texas, and the surrounding areas will most likely participate in the Bible study, but persons from any culture are welcome to engage in the study. There are approximately 70 ministries within the constructs of the organization, which means there are countless opportunities at the church designed to meet specific demographics, yet most of the morning worshippers are not involved with them.

The researcher is a member of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, and serves as an associate minister, leads devotion and ministers as an intercessor during the Sunday morning worship service. The task of identifying and meeting the needs of the Body of Christ for growth, development, nurture, comfort, edification, and evangelism is a daily objective. Member participation in the project will help one to experience the victory of reading the Bible and implementing new strategies for learning that will result in discipleship, obedience to God, and active ministry.

Historically, Antioch MBC has been a vibrant ministry in the community, focusing on the good news of the gospel, music ministry, Christian education, child-care, outreach, and Sunday school. This research project promotes the growth and development of individual members, to reach faithful members and persons who are uncommitted, and for equipping them for ministry. A topical Bible study from I Peter 2:9-10 will be written for small groups Bible study and the discipleship program utilizing resources from the Department of Christian Education about the believer–priests. The study should promote spiritual growth and ministry effectiveness in every person and division. The biblical knowledge from the original writers of the Bible, applied in a relevant workbook is designed to encourage participants to engage in reading Scripture, and the completion of independent homework and openness to the Holy Spirit should result in spiritual maturity.

The activities that occur at the church regularly include, small group meetings, discipleship courses, Sunday school, and Bible study; however, this project aims to help individuals read Scripture, do their best to live lives of holiness, and become more disciplined.

The members of Antioch MBC practice tithing, which finances the operation of the church and provides for paid staff due to the multitude of needs; however, because of its size, although most members–only attend the Sunday worship service. Individual members make contributions to finance the annual conference or other events.

Problem Statement

This project will address how members of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church are not reading their Bibles and, consequently, may be misinterpreting the Scripture. The aim of proper interpretation is not uniqueness or discovering what no one else has ever seen before. According to Fee and Stuart, “The true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it

to mean when it was first spoken or written.⁴ Unique interpretations are usually wrong, indicating pride, a false understanding, and vested interest of the reader. Correct interpretation pricks or prods the heart and brings liberation to mind. Interpretation of the Bible is necessary for determining the plain meaning of the text because of two vital factors; first, the nature of the reader, and then the nature of Scripture.⁵

The sin nature of man lives within believers. Man is no longer under the bondage of sin, although he still has the propensity to sin and yield to temptation. Therefore, he needs help from the Scripture. Solomon wrote, “Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.”⁶ The Word of God orders the steps of the believer, directs the way he walks, and gives direction according to godly wisdom. Studying Scripture reveals the mind and will of God, who produces transformation in one’s life. According to Paul, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”⁷ Refusing conformity to the world requires renewing the mind and seeking the perfect will of God.

Therefore, the Bible study for this church should possess hermeneutical methods and resources to accomplish the task of helping learners to identify the original meaning of the text and embrace biblical principles.

⁴ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 35.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶ Proverbs 4:10-13 (NIV).

⁷ Romans 12:2 (NIV).

Purpose Statement

In their book, *Biblical Interpretation*, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard indicate that the Bible is God's Word, yet it comes to people through human means that communicate His message of simple commands set in diverse and complex historical contexts, and landscapes over time. The modern reader's proper interpretation of Scripture requires awareness of biases, distortions, and complexities that necessitate the hermeneutical process. "Hermeneutics defines the task of explaining the meaning of Scripture, and in the field of biblical studies involve the task of explaining a piece of writing. The word derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which means to explain, interpret, or, to translate, although the noun *hermeneia* means interpretation."⁸ Therefore, the task of hermeneutics or interpreting involves identifying the principles individuals use to understand what the text means, whether written or oral.⁹

Every day people watch television and read newspapers, articles, and other materials, all the while unconsciously interpreting and apprehending meanings, but the Bible cannot be intuitively or accurately read without using various methods of biblical interpretation.

Reading Scripture Requires Knowing

Vine and colleagues state the verb "Read or reading means *anaginosko*, primarily, 'to know certainly, to know again, recognize' (*ana*'again,' *ginosko*, 'to know') by 'reading' characters."¹⁰ Matthew quotes the words of David, referring to Jewish people who ought to know the Scripture. He said, "He answered, Haven't you read what David did when he and his

⁸ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹⁰ W. E., Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 507.

companions were hungry” (Matt. 12:3)?¹¹ “Or haven’t you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent (Matt. 12:5)?”¹²

Jesus also refers to knowledge of Scripture when the Pharisees ask him, “Do you hear what these children are saying?” “Yes,” replied Jesus, “Have you never read, From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise (Matt. 21:16)?”¹³ When the disciples question Jesus concerning the End Times, he replies, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand” (Matt. 24:15).¹⁴

Hearing and Reading Scripture Publicly

Hearing Scripture is vital for believers so that they know the Word, and hermeneutically understand the Word before the believers proceed to share the Word with others. Paul encouraged the church to read the written Word publicly and exhorted others to listen to that same message. Paul wrote, “After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea” (Col. 4:16).¹⁵

All believers receive biblical instruction and encouragement to engage in public reading, saying, “I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters” (I Thess. 5:27).¹⁶ God promises to bless individuals who read and listen to Scripture and expresses, “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear

¹¹ Matthew 12:3 (NIV).

¹² Matthew 12:5 (NIV).

¹³ Matthew 21:16 (NIV).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Rev. 1:3).¹⁷ According to Hunt, hearing the Scripture reading from taped recordings and reading from the Bible without hermeneutical considerations is spiritually risky, and the listener must consider the presentation and determine if it necessitates a “deeper engagement” with the text. The goal is to communicate the correct interpretation before the message is recorded or read.¹⁸

At the initiation of Jesus’ ministry, he engaged in reading the Word publicly, as recorded in the text, “He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read” (Luke 4:16).¹⁹ The Apostle Luke records the practice of public reading. He stated, “The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath” (Acts 13:27).²⁰ The Old Testament observed the public reading of the Scripture, saying, “For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21).²¹ The New Testament also references public reading in 2 Corinthians 3:15 when it says, “Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.”²²

Publicly reading Scripture means reading the text aloud, and Bible readers should be cognizant that interpretation is both an art and a science. “Every form of communication uses ‘codes’ of some sort—cues in sound, spelling, and tone of voice, to convey meaning.”²³

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cheryl Hunt, “Be Ye Speakers of, and Listeners to, the Word: Promotion of Biblical Engagement through Encountering the Scripture Read Aloud,” *The Expository Times*, vol. 129, no. 4 (2018): 149-157.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Klein, 3-4.

Historians, sociologists, psychologists, and linguists use rules, principles, methods, and tactics to decode messages within their field of study. There is a balance between identifying rules, interpretation, codes, and definitions of words that is necessary for effective daily communication.²⁴ Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. state,

In light of this, how much more must modern biblical interpreters seek to bridge the linguistic, historical, social, and cultural gaps which exist between the ancient and modern worlds so that they may understand what the texts mean. Hermeneutics provides a strategy that will enable us to understand what an author or speaker intended to communicate.²⁵

The interpreter plays a vital role in the hermeneutical process because every biblical text arises from a historical, personal process, and circumstance that mirrors the individual interpreter's situation. People become better readers when they recognize that their interpretation of Scripture is usually based upon their experiences or what they already know, and must consider that in the process of interpretation, one undoubtedly has suppositions and preunderstandings. Likewise, the presupposition of the writer and speaker includes previous experiences, biases, and agendas.²⁶

Reading Scripture Privately

Vine highlights, the New Testament writer emphasizes the practice of reading Scripture privately as an Ethiopian eunuch sits alone reading an Old Testament passage, and reveals the power of Scripture as Phillip reveals the meaning of the text and the Ethiopian eunuch receives revelation that changes his life. In this setting, the gospel mirrors the inclusiveness of both Jews and Gentiles and highlights the work of evangelism. Luke identifies Phillip as the disciple of

²⁴ Ibid., 5-6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.,7-8.

God, who embraces the work of making a disciple, the redemptive act of the Lamb of God and the relevancy of the Word in both of their lives. Luke states an Ethiopian Eunuch was on his way home when Phillip saw him sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah (Acts 8:28).²⁷

Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth.²⁸ (Acts 8:30, 32)

According to Maddix, ...

Many Christians who have been influenced by Western culture believe that faith is private, while other cultures that are more community focused understand their faith to be communal. In cultures where faith is individualistic, Christian educators can develop *small group avenues* for congregants to read and experience Scripture in community. Scripture is not to be read alone, but in community.²⁹

The community of believer–priest living in isolation is not an option in the kingdom. God promises to bless individuals who read, hear and live the Scripture. John wrote, “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near” (Rev. 1:3).³⁰ He contends in 2 Cor. 1:13, “‘We write none other things unto you, than what ye read’ (*anaginosko*) (the Scripture), which signifies that there is not hidden or mysterious meaning behind the epistles.”³¹

The ultimate purpose of reading Scripture is to grow closer to God and to live an abundant life according to his will and eternal blessings. Joshua penned the formula for success

²⁷ Acts 8:28 (NIV).

²⁸ Acts 8:30, 32 (NIV).

²⁹ Mark A. Maddix, “Rediscovering the Formative Power of Scripture Reading for the Church,” *Christian Education Journal* Vol. 15, no. 1 (April 2018): 34-42.

³⁰ Revelation 1:3 (NIV).

³¹ Vine, 507-8.

from an Old Testament perspective, but the Word of God applies to both the Old and New Testaments and is relevant for every generation. He said, “Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh. 1:8 NIV).³² The formula identifies three vital principles: First, God wants his chosen people to talk about the Word. Second, God wants his chosen people to think about the Word. Third, God wants his chosen people to obey and act upon the Word.³³ To accomplish the goal to think, talk, and walk-in obedience to the Bible, it requires receiving salvation through Jesus Christ and allowing the mind of Jesus to govern the natural mind. Paul said to, “[t]ake the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17 NIV).³⁴

The Qualifications of the Interpreter

According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, one must consider the qualifications of the interpreter, in order to acquire an accurate competency in reading and precision in explaining the Bible. The interpreter must work with a detailed methodology for understanding and translating Scripture.³⁵ In addition to proper procedure, the interpreter must be aware of his or her qualifications and presuppositions or convictions about Scripture, which affects the biblical interpretation of the Bible. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard agree that an interpreter should exhibit specific qualifications, including obedience, illumination, church membership, reasoned faith, and an appropriate methodology.³⁶

³² Joshua 1:8 (NIV).

³³ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1985), 329.

³⁴ Ephesians 6:17 (NIV).

³⁵ Klein, 135.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 135-42.

Reasoned Faith, Obedience, and Prayer

As stated by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, theoretically, the more knowledge the listener has about any subject, the more understanding he or she will gain from an environment of learning. Likewise, “[if] the Bible is God’s revelation to his people, then the essential qualifications for a full understanding of this book are to know the revealing God.” To know God, a person must have an individual relationship with him that stems from a reasoned faith. The book of Hebrews notes, “But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (Heb. 11:6 KJV) Therefore, faith is foundational for comprehending Scripture, and only people who believe and trust him can understand what God has spoken in the Bible.

For example, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard stated, the Apostle Paul has explicitly expressed that only the spiritual person can apprehend God’s truth (I Cor. 2:14) because faith in God produces spiritual sensitivity from and to God. The Bible is God’s message to humanity and divine revelation of his perfect and permissive will, but this does not guarantee one’s interpretation is always correct, and one cannot discount the accurate interpretation of unbelievers, who may become believers. Biblical scholars must be cognizant of modern values, and philosophical positivism that skews truth and might lead individuals to deny supernatural phenomena and miracles.³⁷

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard state, “Obedience is the willingness to put oneself under the test, to submit one’s will to hear the text in the way its author intended.”³⁸ Biblical interpretation is never confined as a hidden history because the text is designed to affect the lives

³⁷ Ibid., 136-8.

³⁸ Ibid., 138.

of people. Genuine truth fuses the ancient and modern distance as the interpreter gains meaning from the ancient and better understands himself. Scripture was given to holy men as God-breathed upon them, and they were moved by the Holy Spirit to record the text without error. Peter declared, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”³⁹ Lash speaks of how the meaning of the original text helps the individual hear God speaking to him or her today, and the correct response is to follow diligently and seek to practice the message of the text. Faith establishes a relationship with God, and the Holy Spirit regenerates the life of the believer, who can perceive and hold spiritual truth. This ability is not evident in unbelievers.⁴⁰

Through prayer, a person postures himself to hear and understand the Word, which means asking God to assist one’s study and speak the truth for one’s understanding.⁴¹ Prayer is necessary for developing sensitivity to the Spirit’s direction, which results in obedience. Through prayer, children of God have an opportunity to admit their propensity to sin, faults, self-deception, and finiteness. They can ask to receive the revelation of the text and to learn from the history of interpretation.⁴² Issler states, “Being disconnected prevents fruitfulness. Jesus is dependent upon the Father, and believers are encouraged to be dependent upon him (John 5:19-20, 30).⁴³ He said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in

³⁹ II Peter 1:20-21 (NIV).

⁴⁰ Klein. 138–9.

⁴¹ Ibid., 139-41.

⁴² Ibid., 141.

⁴³ Klaus Issler, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2012), 48.

you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).⁴⁴ Individuals and communities of faith must “grow and increase their connection and intimacy with Jesus. Prayer turns the mind toward God, and as one practices this discipline, one will resist living independently. If a person is disconnected from divine relationship and resources,”⁴⁵ he is unfruitful.

The Role of the Holy Spirit and Church Membership

It is commendable to believe people can understand the Bible by just reading and depending on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the clarity of Scripture.⁴⁶ The Spirit convinces God’s people of the truth of the biblical message, and convicts and enables them to live consistently with that truth, but the Holy Spirit does not inform one of Scripture’s meaning, nor replace the need to interpret biblical passages according to the principles of language communication.⁴⁷ As stated by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr.:

Through the centuries, if people have correctly understood God’s Word, it is because they have employed proper principles and methods of interpretation. Utilizing proper principles and methods of interpretation result in a correct understanding of the Word of God. This does not require formal biblical training, and empowers Bible-readers to become good readers.⁴⁸

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard address the unique work of the Holy Spirit and his ability to provide illumination, along with the dynamic comprehension of the Scripture. Believers can accurately apply the Word of God to his life when he receives the revelation of the text.

⁴⁴ John 15:5 (NIV).

⁴⁵ Issler, 48-9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

The interpreter must seek to hear the voice of God. The Holy Spirit prepares the heart and mind of the believer to receive the illumination of the Word. It is the job of the believer to obey the Word prayerfully; however, the need to study the history and culture of the ancient world and the biblical text is necessary. First, the interpreter needs to identify the original author and recipients, and then utilize historical sources to identify the culture, geography, and other relevant details for biblical interpretation. The literature of the Bible comprises various genres: historical narratives, epics, parables, prophetic denunciations, epistles, and apocalyptic pieces. This process of hermeneutic biblical interpretation is obtainable for the uneducated as well as those with advanced training.⁴⁹

Echoing Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, church membership means recognizing “membership in the Body of Christ.”⁵⁰ The Church is an arena, both local and universal, where the sincere hearing and nurture of the Scripture takes place. The institution of the Church provides Spirit-driven accountability by guarding against private interpretations, and self-centered and, self-serving activity, and provides a place where proper interpretation can take place.⁵¹ The Bible says in the book of Hebrew, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”⁵² The church crosses boundaries and confronts people who limit the interpretation and formulations of God’s truth from personal opinions, all while attempting to understand Scripture. In search of truth, the interpreter must choose an appropriate method for the task of interpretation, which requires diligence, discipline,

⁴⁹ Ibid., 141-2.

⁵⁰ Klein, 141.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Hebrews 4:12 (NIV).

hard work, and commitment. The study of Scripture requires a method for pursuing excellence and learning in language, history, culture, and theology⁵³ as the interpreter observes the ancient worlds and his own.⁵⁴

Distances

According to Stacy, there are gaps or distances in language, culture, geography, religious viewpoints. Stacy notes...

Any time we are reading a document that was originally composed with other people in mind, some distances must be negotiated, distances such as language, culture, geography, religious perspective, and the like. This ‘negotiating of distances’ between those for whom the document was originally intended, and those reading it today, is the task of interpretation.⁵⁵

Distances in time, culture, and geography require negotiation because the meaning may be radically different between what happened there and what is happening now. For example, the phrase “a sabbath day’s journey” for the Jews in the books of Acts and Luke interprets this statement to mean the distance one could travel without violating the Sabbath, but it has no significance for the Christian today.⁵⁶

The effect of distance is the greatest obstacle the interpreter of Scripture will face because it exists between the ancient texts and the modern world, and includes the distance of language, culture, and geography. These factors may frustrate the interpreter, but the divine factor of continued relevancy in Scripture affirms that God, through the matrix of the human world, reported social situations and events through diverse types of literature. Discerning God’s

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Robert Wayne Stacy, “*Negotiating Distances in Biblical Interpretation*,” Filmed March 2016. YouTube video 6:40. https://youtu.be/ADo2Dxh_1mA.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

message requires approaching Scripture through the process of hermeneutics, which ensures the interpreter will arrive at God's intended communication. The hermeneutical process defends against intentional or unintentional misuse or distortion of Scripture and helps avoid and dispel misunderstandings or erroneous viewpoints and conclusions about what the Bible teaches. Proper interpretation leads to the proper application of the biblical text to individual lives, univocally, or analogically."⁵⁷

Geography, Languages, Culture, and Religious Perspective

According to Laney, the geographic location of places in Scripture is important because the physical and climatic features provide a proper intellectual understanding of the biblical narrative. Scripture is the historical record of God's involvement with his chosen people during specific places and times. First, when readers are familiar with geographic circumstance, they can more accurately interpret Scripture.⁵⁸ Considering...

I Samuel 17, one might wonder why the Israelite and Philistine armies were at a standoff, why the Philistines did not simply advance across the Ela Valley to engage the outnumbered and underequipped Israelites? Why did the two forces face each other across the valley for forty days? But a survey of the Ela Valley reveals that it is divided by a deep ravine that the Philistine war chariots could not cross. And, since the ridge on each side was easily defended, making it impossible for either army to attack on foot, it was not until the Philistine champion, Goliath, challenged the Israelite warriors to a contest that the deadlock was broken.⁵⁹

Laney explains that geography⁵⁸ creates a backdrop where events and interrelationships heighten the sensory experience of the reader, especially in a land with various

⁵⁷ Klein, 19-21.

⁵⁸ J. Carl Laney, *Concise Bible Atlas: A Geographic Survey of Bible History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1988), 12.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-4.

features. For instance, a description of the Mount Hermon notifies the reader that it slopes 9,100 feet down toward the Dead Sea, which is 1,300 feet below sea level. Another example is one's theological view of the mighty works of God as the Deliverer of his chosen people, which becomes the foundation of all believers. Furthermore, many people travel to historical places or present visual aids of the Bible lands to enrich their studies and increase their intimacy with God because these aids provide an experience with which others can relate.⁶⁰

According to Youngblood, among the languages of the Bible, the original Hebrew linguistic is the dominant language in the Old Testament and Greek in the New Testament writings. The Aramaic was widespread and shared among other cultures, so it replaced many of the other languages. Individual sections of Ezra (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26) and Daniel (2:46-7:28) were written in Aramaic, and Jesus spoke Aramaic in the New Testament when he declared, "Talitha, cumi," which means "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise" (Mark 5:41). People living east of the Tigris River, now known as Iran, spoke Persian. When God's people went into Babylonian captivity, they were exposed to the Persian language and combined "pictorial and phonetic signs in its alphabet. Several words derived from the Persians in the Old Testament, e.g., *satrap* in Daniel 6:1-2."⁶¹

According to Merrill, the cultural world of the Israelites in the land of Palestine is south of Syria, a crescent-shaped strip of land, located on the bridge of Asia, Africa, and Europe.⁶² The land divides longitudinally into four regions: The Coastal Plains-lie on the Mediterranean, where the land narrows northward and widens south along. This densely populated has an

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ronald F. Youngblood, F.F. Bruce, and R.K. Harrison, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 743-4.

⁶² Eugene H. Merrill, Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti, *The World and the World: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holmen Academic, 2011), 41-2.

abundance of natural springs and high waters, and the temperature remains constant throughout the year. Unlike Tyre and Sidon, the area was not appropriate for harbor accommodations. The major highway linking Egypt to Damascus, the Via Maris, or “the Way of the Sea”⁶³ (Isa 9:1) lies just east of the marshes and dunes and passes through the Coastal Plains.⁶⁴

The Central Mountain Range divides into four areas: Galilee, Samaria, the mountains of Judah, and the mountains of the Negev, which provide support for the breaking point where the 4,000-foot height slopes toward the Jordan Valley. The city of Jezreel marks the entrance to the valley of Megiddo at the western end that became a strategic city, shielding the mountain through Via Maris. The southern Judean hill country was more mountainous than Samaritan’s mountains. The mountains of Judah range through Bethel, Beersheba, Jerusalem, and near Hebron-Jerusalem, comprising of foothills and valleys, where there were many battles between Israel and the Philistines. The summers were hot, but the area cools off at night. The central mountains produced dense areas of oak, cypress, and pine trees that grew in abundance of pomegranates, grapes, olives, and figs.⁶⁵

In the Jordan River Valley, a portion of the land experienced geological faults that caused a depression known as the Rift Valley, approximately 10 miles long and containing three bodies of water. The Jordan River stems from the springs at the base of Mount Hermon, flows into the center of the valley, and drains into the Dead Sea. The Jordan River rushes rapidly north of the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, which is also below sea level at 1,275 feet. This area is the lowest point on the surface of the earth and causes the weather to remain pleasant during the

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 43-4.

winter at 70 degrees Celsius, but the summers are sweltering, commonly over 110 degrees Fahrenheit.⁶⁶

Merrill stated, “The Transjordan Plateau contains the regions of Bashan, Gilead, Moab, and Edom,”⁶⁷ and during ancient times its major road traveled north to south. These regions contain four tributaries of the Jordan: the Yarmek, the Jabbok, the Arnon, and the Zered. The fertile land of Bashan is north of Yarmek, and because of enough rainfall and rich volcanic soil, the Fertile Crescent (Ps. 22:12; Amos 4:1) provides the best pastureland. The book of Deuteronomy (7:8) listed Palestine’s primary “agricultural products: wheat, barley, vines, figs, pomegranate, olive oil, and honey,”⁶⁸ and described “a land flowing with milk and honey,”⁶⁹ resulting from dairy farming and tree cultivation. In Palestine, there are various metals of copper, bronze, iron, gold, silver, and lead.⁷⁰

Youngblood notes the religious perspective of the Israelites and Christians centered around the worship of the true and living God, with solemn consecration and faithfulness. “The English word worship derives from the Old English word ‘worthship,’ denoting the worthiness of the one receiving the special honor or devotion.”⁷¹ Abraham, known as the father of faith, built altars to the Lord and called on his name (Gen. 12:8; 13:18). God called and commissioned Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and instructed Moses to establish the foundation, form, and principles of Israelite worship. (Exo. 25-31; 35-40) After entrance and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Youngblood, 1321.

settlement in the Promised Land, Israel adopts the practices of pagan neighbors, lapsing into idolatry several times throughout history (Is. 41:7).⁷²

Holman states, “Worship [is] “human response to the perceived presence of the divine, a presence which transcends normal human activity and is holy.”⁷³ For example, when Jacob leaves Haran, he perceived the presence of God in a dream. Scripture states, “When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’ He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven” (Gen. 28:16-17).⁷⁴ “In the New Testament, religion derives from the gracious work of redemption through God’s son Jesus Christ. According to Youngblood, true worship occurs under the inspiration of God’s Spirit (John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3) as the recipients of grace respond to God with thanksgiving and joy because of God’s gracious gift of his Son, Jesus. The response to grace by faith establishes a relationship with God, and striving to be faithful to God, guards Christians’ fellowship.⁷⁵

As reported by Youngblood, Jewish worship initially occurred on the Sabbath, but after the resurrection, it was substituted with the first day of the week, called the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev.1:10). The early church initially met in a private home, and then later in synagogues. Some Jewish communities that continued to gather at the synagogues and observed Jewish holidays also met on Sundays. The Apostle Paul clarified his position before the Jewish community and instructed there was no obligation to persuade converts to such practices.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Trent C. Butler, Marsha A. Ellis, Forrest W. Jackson, Phil Logan, and Chris Church, *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1421.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Youngblood, 1321.

Ancient Christians did not annually celebrate the resurrection; however, the New International Version of the Bible mentions Easter (Acts 12:4) as the Passover.⁷⁶

The Scripture does not identify any specific structure of worship, but the elements of prayer, praise, and singing hymns is throughout Scripture (Acts 4:24-30; Eph. 5:14; I Tim. 3:16; Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-13).⁷⁷ The reading and studying of Scripture are standard practices in the church. Observance of the Lord's Supper (I Cor 10:16-28) is also a common practice, as are preaching or 'prophecy' and other ministry gifts (Rom. 11:29;12:6; I Cor. 12:1, 4, 9, 28, 30,31; 14:1, 12). All traditions of the church are under the authority of the Holy Spirit, building the Body of Christ and preparing for ministry service. The giving of a tithe and providing other financial resources are also an act of worship received to meet the obligations and needs of the church (I Cor. 16:2).⁷⁸

Definitions

Klein, Bloomberg, and Hubbard Jr. state, "Hermeneutics describes the task of explaining the meaning of the Scriptures. The word derives from the Greek verb *hermeneuein* that means to explain, interpret or to translate, while the noun *hermeneia* means interpretation, or translate."⁷⁹ Fee states the word "[e]xegesis involves the careful, systematic study of Scripture to discover the original intended meaning, that is primarily a historical task."⁸⁰ Highlighting Pigeon, the word

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Klein, 4.

⁸⁰ Fee, 27.

“Obey (*hupakouo*) means to submit oneself to someone, to execute his will. Obedient or *hupekood* means to submit.”⁸¹ According to Grudem, “Saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God.”⁸² “Worship is the activity of glorifying God in his presence with voices and hearts.”⁸³

Vine, Unger, and White Jr. state, “Holy (*hagios*) is the quality of one who is or the object that is consecrated to God, set apart for Him. Holiness is also an attribute of God himself who is separate from evils; sacred.”⁸⁴ “Sanctification means *hagiasmos*, or the relationship with God into which men enter by faith in Christ or separation from God.”⁸⁵ “Transfigure or *metamorphoo* (Greek) is the obligation of believers who undergo a complete change by the power of God that finds expression in character and conduct.”⁸⁶

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation of the research is that having access to 600 members who participate in the Sunday morning worship experience does not ensure the participation of every person in the study. Data collection may not replicate the responses from the same group that responded to the questionnaires at the beginning versus the conclusion of the study. Moreover, collecting data during a worship service may prove a distraction and omit pertinent data. The questionnaire will not reflect the educational background of the participants. Utilizing video equipment while recording the presentations does not guarantee quality. Participants may not be computer–

⁸¹ E. Richard Pigeon, *AMG Comprehensive Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2014), 714-15.

⁸² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 710.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1003.

⁸⁴ Vine, 517.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁸⁶ Vine, 639.

literate and may need assistance in accessing the presentations. Moreover, the study could be affected if members complete their Bible study assignments in one sitting, which reduces the outcome of the research process. There is an estimated time frame for the small group meeting, but the group might exceed the specified study time.

Excluding data from children or teens, means participants limitations because the study focuses on adults ranging from 18 years of age and older. Although the community has a high population of Hispanic citizens, this research study will not provide lessons in Spanish for this demographic community; however, anyone interested in voluntarily translating the weekly Bible study for Hispanic participants or any other group is welcome to participate in the study.

Delimitations include the participation of young adults and adults ranging from age 18, between the beginning and end date. Questionnaires will be collected before the course begins and at the end of the study. The literature for this research project will be designed to increase the Bible reading and engaging Christians with the written text. Weekly meetings will provide an opportunity for participants to build relationships. They may even discover talent and skill(s) for ministry as a result of participation in the research, but this current study will not include an analysis of these areas.

Thesis Statement

Preconceived ideas, lacking the original meaning of the text, and a deficiency of cultural knowledge, geographic location, language and history of the Jewish community increases the likelihood of misinterpreting Scripture. The Bible is God's revelation to humanity, revealing the mystery of God. The best defense against dispelling erroneous viewpoints, conclusions, and misinterpretation of what the Bible teaches is to approach the text hermeneutically. The modern reader will misinterpret the Scripture when he believes that he only needs to read the Bible to

comprehend the Word of God; however, by utilizing the proper exegetical tools and applying the hermeneutical process to identify the original meaning of the biblical text, one learns that proper interpretation leads to proper application in the lives of believers.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Context

Sanders notes, “Paul’s counsel to Timothy, ‘Give heed to reading’ (I Timothy 4:13) undoubtedly referred to the public reading of the Old Testament. However, Paul’s advice is appropriate for other areas of reading, as well.”¹ Paul’s books—the ones he wanted Timothy to bring along—were probably works of Jewish history, explanations of the law and prophets, and perhaps some of the heathen poets Paul quoted in his sermons and lectures. A student to the end, Paul wanted to spend time in study.² Hawthorne, Martin, and Reid concluded that “of primary importance in the process of building up God’s people is the regular and systematic exposition of Scripture, together with the teaching of ‘sound doctrine’ by those equipped and appointed for the task” (I Tim. 4:6, 11, 13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:1-2, 14-15; 4:1-5; Tit. 1:9).³ Wiersbe discusses how Paul emphasized the importance of reading God’s Word. He states, ‘Give attendance to’ means ‘devote yourself to, be absorbed in’ (I Timothy 4:13),⁴ reading the Bible.

Ministering the Word was not something Timothy was to do after he had done other things; it was to be the most important thing he did. Reading means the public reading of Scripture in local assembly. The Jewish people always had the reading of the law and the Prophets in their synagogues, and this practice carried over into Christian churches” (I Tim. 3:13).⁵

¹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2007), 101.

² Ibid.

³ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 129.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 761.

⁵ Ibid.

According to Phillips, “John ignores all the wonderful stories of the Lord’s birth, recounted by Matthew and Luke. He tells instead of the mysterious significance of Christ’s birth. He says, The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”⁶ The birth of Christ is unique because he existed before eternity.”⁷ John speaks the language of the abernacle, eskenosen, which refers to the concept of pitching a tent, or the incarnation.

The thought has been expressed that the Lord Jesus was actually born on the first day of that joyous annual Jewish feast of tabernacles (the 15th of Tisri, September in the year 4 B.C. by modern reckoning). If that was the case, then his circumcision, which took place on the eighth day, would have fallen on the great day of the feast” mentioned by John (7:37).⁸

As the Shekinah glory of the Lord Jesus was pitched in his tent among Israel in the Tabernacle on the day of the feast, John replies, “[W]e beheld his glory, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”⁹ “John saw God in Jesus Christ, and he looked back in history when God dwelt among his people, and he said, ‘We beheld his glory,’ or etheasametha (gazing with a purpose, the only kind of glory the Son received from his Father. Christ is the Incarnate Son of God, ‘full of grace and truth’—Hebraism for the total of divine revelation.”¹⁰

According to Fee and Stuart, “Historically the Church has understood the nature of the Scripture much the same as it has understood the person of Jesus Christ who is both human and divine, with a dual nature that demands the task of interpretation.”¹¹ Bates states,

Before Adam and Eve eat from the tree, God is described as walking in the cool of the day. Prior to the fall, this divine–human

⁶ John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1984), 26.

⁷ Ibid., 26-7.

⁸ Ibid., 27.

⁹ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Fee, 25.

companionship was the norm. Yet once the camaraderie is disrupted by the desire of humanity to define good and evil for itself (rather than accepting God's superintending moral role) Scripture ceases to describe this direct, unimpeded fellowship between God and humanity.¹²

However, the Good News reveals God's deliberate obligation to himself to redeem humanity by his Son through the Incarnation—the taking on of flesh by Jesus. According to Bates, “[The] Son preexists with God the Father, but the good news, the gospel proper, begins when Jesus is sent by the Father to assume human flesh.”¹³ Jesus' dual nature, both human and divine in the Incarnation, is best understood as the modern reader learns the original meaning of God's message and method of redemption and salvific experience through the Bible.

“The first biblical principle that church people emphasize is faithfulness to the plain meaning of the Bible, our authority. The absolute certainty of the authority of the Word of God recapturing the church is to be healthy and to fulfill its God-given purpose.”¹⁴ The Bible is not a formalized series of propositions, imperatives, or collection of sayings from God, but rather, it is God's message to all humanity. Therefore, mankind must listen and obey. God speaks eternal truths through human words in every book of the Bible, and each book has “historical particularity; each document conditions the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written.”¹⁵ Allen declared, “the human author is the divine author.”¹⁶

¹² Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 136.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 32

¹⁴ McIntosh, 173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 256.

The Bible is an assemblage, exhibiting unity of Scripture, and diversity. “Today, only evangelicals and advocates of canonical criticism defend a unity in Scripture.”¹⁷ Some categorize the Bible as a book with a unifying center, with one central theme: covenant, dominion, justice, or righteousness in the Old Testament. While others identify pairs of themes: law, promise, election, obligation, creation and covenant, the rule of God and communion with humanity, or salvation blessings.¹⁸ Elwell mentions the importance of textual criticism, which is “to determine which variant readings in the ancient manuscripts most likely preserve the original wording and then reconstruct a text that best represents the autographs.”¹⁹ Elwell said one must consider the work of text critics, paleographers, and lexicographers because their effort affects three areas the sovereignty of God determining which text of Greek is reliable, and presents the original word of God, and scribal alterations.²⁰

Grudem said the phrase ‘the Word of God’ has different meanings in different passages, and that the same phrase formulates in three different ways. For example, “the Word of God” in John 1:1 specifies his name, but that same phrase identifies Jesus as the Son of God in John 1:14. The Word of God comes in the form of speech, as a decree of God that causes something to happen, with a personal address by speaking directly to people, or by the human lips of the prophets when he spoke in an ordinary language.²¹ One example of God speaking through personal address²² is the first of the Ten Commandments, which reads, “I am the Lord your God,

¹⁷ Klein, 147.

¹⁸ Fee, 21.

¹⁹ Walter A. Elwell, ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1178.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1178.

²¹ Grudem, 47-8.

²² *Ibid.*, 48.

who brought you out of the land of Egypt. You shall have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:1-3). Matthews adds that God is recognized as Elohim throughout creation, but in the covenant between God and Israel, he is known as Yahweh (Exo. 3:15; 6:2-3).²³ As Yahweh, the chosen people of God recognized that “from the inception of Moses’ ‘Five Books,’ polytheism and idolatry have no ideological or practical place among Israel” (Exo. 20:20:1-6; Deut. 4:12-24).²⁴

At Jesus’ baptism in the New Testament, God the Father spoke with a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). “God’s Word, as Speech through Human lips”²⁵ as observed in Deuteronomy 18, is God speaking to Moses and saying he will put words in Moses’ mouth (Deut. 18:18-20). Jeremiah 1 later declares, “Whatever I command you you shall speak” (Jere. 1:7; Exo. 4:12; Num. 22:38; I Sam. 15:3, 18, 23; I Kings 20:36; II Chron. 20:20; 25:15-16; Isa. 30:12-14; Jer. 6:10; 36:29-31).²⁶ The Bible is God’s Word, which comes in written form on tablets of stone by the finger of God (Ex. 32:16, 18). God instructed Moses to write the law and encouraged the elders of Israel to read the law (Deut. 31:9-13). Joshua obeyed and wrote the words of God on the tablet (Josh. 24:26). Jeremiah followed God’s directive to write his words in the book (Jere. 30:2; 36:2-4, 27-31; 51:60). “In the New Testament, Jesus promises his disciples that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance the words which he, Jesus, had spoken (John 14:26; 1:12-13). Paul can say that the very words he writes to the Corinthians are a command of the Lord” (I Cor. 14:37; 2 Peter 3:2).²⁷

²³ Kenneth A. Matthews, “*Genesis 1-11:26*.” The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 129.

²⁴ Ibid., 127-8.

²⁵ Grudem, 48.

²⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁷ Ibid., 49-50.

The gospel is the gift of grace by God, and salvation is a gift of God's undeserved kindness to humanity, without earnings. While humankind was helpless, new life arrived by faith in Jesus Christ. God's love made provision for the redemption of man through Jesus, and regardless of one's response, he continues to offer extraordinary grace and new life. Man's renewed relationship (Acts 2:22-36) with God leads to the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2) to dwell among God's people. Jesus' resurrection depicts God's power over death, and his "life was living out a program God had previously revealed" (Ps. 16; 110).²⁸ According to Boice, Psalm 110 is the most repeated psalm in the New Testament and reveals the eternal plan of God with Jesus as an earthly king, the Messiah, and the eternal and superior High Priest. Reynolds notes, "[T]his psalm teaches the doctrines of the divine Trinity: the incarnation, sufferings, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Jesus Christ; the communion of saints; the last judgment; the remissions of sins; and the life everlasting."²⁹ This verse identifies two things.

First, we are told that the oracle is something 'the Lord has sworn.' God himself has given it special weight and significance. Second, we are told that 'he will not change his mind.' The words the Lord has sworn and about which he will not change his mind. You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.³⁰

Bock continues his discourse by saying that according to Scripture, Abraham and David are examples of the role of faith and the gift of grace. Paul clarifies that righteousness, not upon works, but faith, like Abraham, who was declared righteous or justified according to works (Gen. 15:6). God's righteousness declares that faith of the righteous signifies forgiveness and justification. "David also speaks of the blessings of the man to whom God credits righteousness

²⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2010), 59.

²⁹ James Montgomery Boice, "*Psalms 107-150*." *An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 892-3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 899.

apart from works” (Ps. 32:1-2).³¹ Galatians 2:16 confirms no one is justified by works of the law, which makes justification impossible and alienation (Gal. 5:4) the only alternative. God’s labor of love expresses the work of grace by grace alone.³² Polhill notes common characteristics of several farewell addresses; “The assembling of the family or followers, the note that the speaker will soon depart or die, sometimes an appeal to the personal example of the speaker, exhortations to desired behavior on the part of the hearers, and often a prediction of coming times of trials and difficulty.”³³

As the modern reader searches, the Scripture, which is the literary context of the gospel, is also the plan of salvation, effecting a reformation, and the interpretation of Scripture. McKnight states...

I believe the Reformation was a profound work of God that both enlivened the church and altered Western European history for the better. The singular contribution of the Reformation, in all three directions—Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist—was that the gravity of the gospel was shifted toward justification by faith, and justification by faith laid bare the importance of faith—even if the modern emphasis on ‘personal’ faith was not yet an emphasis.³⁴

Therefore, emphasizing the literary context of unadulterated Scripture and justification is imperative for readers in every generation.

The literary context is recognizing that words have meaning, and that biblical sentences have a full and clear significance only concerning preceding and succeeding sentences. Fee and Stuart state, “The most important contextual question you will ask—and it must be asked over and

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 62.

³³ John B. Polhill, “Acts.” *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 423.

³⁴ Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 70-1.

over of every sentence and every paragraph—is: What is the point? We must try to trace the author’s train of thought. What is the author saying, and why does he say it right here? Having made that point, what is he saying next, and why?”³⁵ Furthermore, the primary category of questions one needs to ask of any text relates to the author’s actual content.³⁶ According to Fee and Stuart, “[C]ontent has to do with the meanings of words, their grammatical relationships in a sentence, and the original text where the manuscripts (handwritten copies) differ from one another.”³⁷

Merrill states there are four rules of interpretation of the text. First, “any text, ancient or modern, must be identified by genre”³⁸ and recognized as poetry, prose, propaganda, apology, polemic, fiction, biography, narrative, law, business politics, annals, history or chronicle. “These and many other genres and subgenres require interpretive methods unique to each before pressing it into the historian’s service.”³⁹ Second, it is imperative to connect the texts to other texts of the same genre both within the language and culture under review. Third, the texts ought to contain comparative language and kinds of literature. Fourth, the text ought to identify a historical nature that has at least a degree of biased discrepancy of historical reality as Scripture relates to another Scripture by “shedding light on the obscurity of a solitary text originating in a similar milieu.”⁴⁰

According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard ...

The best-known form of Wisdom Literature is the proverb: ‘a

³⁵ Fee, 32.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2008), 23.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 23-4.

concise, memorable statement of truth' learned over extended human experience. Grammatically, a proverb occurs in the indicative mood and thus makes a simple declaration about life as it is.⁴¹

Koptak adds, "The book of Proverbs is a course of study (a collection of wisdom teachings and sayings) designed to foster wisdom (the development of discernment and character) using literary–rhetorical position and metaphor."⁴²

Literary Relationships

The Bible contains a variety of languages and cultures, written over many years and by authors with differing purposes. Sometimes different portions of Scripture so closely parallel each other that most readers assume a literary relationship between themes and accept that their differences are theologically inspired.⁴³ For example, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. discuss how Deuteronomy reforms various laws of Exodus and Leviticus, while Chronicles rehearses portions of Deuteronomistic history of the southern kingdom. The four Gospels record Jesus' ministry from diverse perspectives, while 2 Peter seems to be a revised and modified Jude.⁴⁴ According to Estes, "The worldview of Proverbs begins with the assumption that Yahweh was the sole creator of the universe. Also, it holds that Yahweh's control over the world is continuing, active, and personal."⁴⁵

The Bible comprises various types of books, and God uses every available kind of communication to speak to humanity. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, various writers

⁴¹ Klein, 387.

⁴² Paul Koptak, *Proverbs: From Biblical Text...to Contemporary Life*. The NIV Application Commentary. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁵ Daniel J. Estes, "Hear, My Son: Teaching and Learning in Proverbs 1-9" (Downers Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 26.

utilized different formats to pen narratives, histories, genealogies, chronicles, various laws, poetry, proverbs, and prophetic oracles. The writers also used riddles, dramas, biographical sketches, parables, letters, sermons, and apocalyptic text to convey messages to their audience. Scripture speaks through real people in various circumstances over a fifteen-hundred-year period. God's Word expresses in the vocabulary and thought patterns of those individuals, and has conditionings of the culture of the times.⁴⁶

Schreiner provides insight into the Pentateuch, which consists of the first five books of the Bible. The book of Genesis has three central themes. The first theme of Genesis identifies God as the Sovereign Creator and emphasizes his kingship over the earth. The second theme focuses on rest as man experiences nourishment and joy in the presence of God. The third theme illustrates how Scripture reveals the grace of God through Jesus Christ in the destruction of the serpent; the storyline of Scripture, reversing humanity's transitions from cursed to blessed.⁴⁷ Exodus identifies the theme of God's kingship, Israel's redemption and judgment, their deliverance, and salvation from slavery, and the Mosaic Covenant and Tabernacle.⁴⁸ The book of Leviticus addresses sin-stained humanity, who needs sacrificial atonement, cleansing, forgiveness, laws, and salvation through the only divine Lordship of God.⁴⁹ The first sixteen chapters of Leviticus emphasize holiness as an inspiration for conduct and lifestyle, while chapter seventeen's focus is primarily on how God's people live their lives and worship the Holy

⁴⁶ Klein, 27.

⁴⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 6-10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-41.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 48-65.

God of Israel.⁵⁰ The book of Numbers continues the narrative about Israel as the chosen people of God, the promise of land, Israel's peculiarity and power from the Lord's presence, their encampment, the law, and cultic matters.⁵¹ The book of Deuteronomy is based upon the sovereign grace of God and his covenant with obedient Old Testament believers while rehearsing Israel's historical experience. The instructions of God to Israel expresses the intolerance of idolatry, but promotes a God-centered community that cleaves to him, keeps his commandments, aligns its ways according to his ways. God expects the community of Israel to live faithfully under the authority, rise, and rule of a new king and a new covenant in the future.⁵²

According to Chisholm, the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, Ezra, and Nehemiah all share historical themes of antiquity. The book of Joshua speaks of the faithfulness of God (21:43-45),⁵³ the book of Judges reveals Israel's moral and social failure and need for leadership (3:7-16:31).⁵⁴ The book of Ruth demonstrates that God is concerned about the needy and rewards individuals who are in a relationship with and faithful to God.⁵⁵ I and II Samuel focus on the three kingships and character of Solomon, Saul, and David.⁵⁶ The books of I and II Kings center around tragedy and consequences due to idolatry, which jeopardizes God's covenant with David and divides a nation.⁵⁷ I and II Chronicles trace an overlapping and complex account between I and II Samuel and I and II Kings, where David's

⁵⁰ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1982), 282.

⁵¹ Schreiner, 67-79.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 80-100.

⁵³ Robert Chisholm Jr. and David M. Howard, eds., *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publication, 2006), 89.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

dynasty (the kingdom of Judah) experienced moral and political descent.⁵⁸ The books of Ezra and Nehemiah report the Lord's favor, compassion, and providence. The revival of the covenant community emphasizes God's faithfulness to the exiled community of Israel and his ability to fulfill his strategy and covenant promises and reflects security concerns about the walls of Jerusalem. As community leaders, Ezra and Nehemiah promote social justice (5:1-19) and ethnic purity (13:1-3, 23-31), address anomalies regarding the temple law (Neh. 13:4-14, observe the Sabbath (13:15-22), and promote prayer (Ezra 9:17,19-21, 27-28, 31).⁵⁹ The book of Esther traces a Jewish exile named Mordecai, and Esther, his beautiful cousin, and God's providential protection of the remaining Jewish exiles who live under the rulership of a Persian king.⁶⁰

According to Hester, the book of Job centers around the question: Why do the righteous suffer? Job also "disproves the theory that suffering or misfortune is a sign of divine disappointment and is always brought upon men by their sins."⁶¹ The book of Psalms is a collection of poems that cover the history of Israel. This songbook depicts various purposes and contains hymns that were "set to music that was used in the liturgy of temple worship though naturally the music has not been preserved. They correspond to the hymns and songs of worship used by Christian groups."⁶² The book of Proverbs is a gathering or collection of sayings. "Solomon was known as the greatest maker of proverbs,"⁶³ which are "a useful indirect means of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 118.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 122-6.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 126.

⁶¹ H.I. Hester, *The Heart of Hebrew History: A Study of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1962), 303.

⁶² Ibid., 304-7.

⁶³ Ibid., 309.

handling conflict because of their oblique and suggestive character.”⁶⁴ The book of Proverbs has five distinct divisions: “ the superiority of wisdom (1-9), the practical proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16), words of the wise (22:17-24:22), the proverbs of Solomon which were copied by the scribes of Hezekiah (25-29), and the ‘words of Agur, the words of Lemuel, and tribute to a worthy woman’ (30-31).⁶⁵ The book of Lamentations, written by Jeremiah, is an elegy or funeral dirge about the desolation of Jerusalem after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.⁶⁶

According to Jobes, the book of Hebrews is “the book of the New Testament that is most devoted to explaining the relationship between the old covenant God made with ancient Israel and the new covenant established by the death of Jesus Christ.”⁶⁷ The author of Hebrews records God’s redemptive plan for humanity through his fully human and fully divine Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfills human qualifications for his redemptive work on the cross, a word that describes him as both priest and sacrifice. Jesus’ half-brothers, James and Jude, wrote books that bear their name. James is mostly concerned with the issue of social justice, and “indicates the wrestling that occurred as the apostles came to understand the relationship of the new covenant of Christ’s blood to the old covenant of Sinai as expressed in the Ten Commandments and applied to the Old Testament prophets.”⁶⁸ “Jude was distressed by the immorality and licentious living that he observed in the church by people who called themselves Christians and whom others received in good faith as Christians.”⁶⁹ I Peter addresses “Christology and those

⁶⁴ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Academic, 1993), 104.

⁶⁵ Hester, 310.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁶⁷ Karen H. Jobes, *Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 24.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

addressing the spiritual development of the Christian's identity,⁷⁰ while II Peter mirrors I Peter by identifying God as Creator and Judge.⁷¹ The Gospel of John and I John "share similarities of vocabulary (e.g. truth, love, light), syntax, conceptual structures, and interpretation of Jesus. The dualism of light and darkness, and truth and falsehood"⁷² in both books. I John reference truth, confirms God's sanctifying presence and emphasizes the spiritual importance and impartation by the Holy Spirit.⁷³ I John and III John discuss the topic of Christian hospitality and concerns about spiritual authority and the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁷⁴

The historical context differs from book to book due to the author's cultural background, time, audience, geography, topography, and political factors. Other factors that contribute to historical context include the historic occasion of the book, letter, psalm, or prophetic oracle. In the New Testament, single themes center around the kingdom, gospel, righteousness, justification, reconciliation, faith, new creation, salvation, or salvation history. Other passages point to eschatology, Israel, the new Israel, the cross and resurrection, the love of God, existential anthropology, covenant, and most importantly, Jesus or Christology. The narratives reflect the unfolding unity and diversity of Scripture, and the plotline of the Bible story recognizes the various genres of Scripture that fill the broader historical framework. The major categories in the narrative of the Bible portray the creation, fall, redemption, and consummation of God's purpose, whereas the Law, Prophets, and wisdom and epistolary literature depict how God's people should conduct themselves.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Ibid., 282.

⁷¹ Ibid., 378.

⁷² Ibid., 406-7.

⁷³ Ibid., 415.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 448.

⁷⁵ Klein, 147-8.

In our English Bible the prophetic corpus begins with the four large books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, with the small book of Lamentations inserted on the heels of Jeremiah and before Ezekiel. Often these larger books (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) are referred to as the Major Prophets. Next come twelve smaller books, often called the Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).⁷⁶

The prophets lived during tumultuous times, and their ministries spanned about three hundred years, from around 750 BC to around 450 BC. Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum served under Assyrian Dominance (745-612 BC). Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, and Daniel served during the Babylonian Dominance (612-539 BC), and Joel could have served under the Assyrians or the Babylonians. Daniel, Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi served under Persian Dominance (539-336).⁷⁷

Fee and Stuart discuss how accomplishing proper exegesis with minimal resources requires the acquisition of three primary tools of the highest quality: “a good translation, a good Bible dictionary, and good commentaries for accuracy and right interpretation of Scripture.”⁷⁸ Fee and Stuart proposed that every time a person reads an English Bible, he is already involved in interpretation (which means the reader is discussing the work of a scholar and accepting the scholar’s meanings). These choices affect how one understands Scripture. Good translators consider the problem of language differences and issues within the culture—for example, the idea

⁷⁶ J. Daniel Hays and Tremper Longman III, eds., *The Message of the Prophets: A Survey of the Prophetic and Apocalyptic Books of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 22.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁸ Klein., 30-3.

that women should keep silent in church (I Cor. 14:34-35)⁷⁹; however, Paul also states that men and women should pray and prophesy (I Cor. 11:2-16).⁸⁰

The consciousness of diversity, both within and outside of the church, and the differences among scholars who know the ‘rules,’ makes it easy for some to argue for no interpretation, but just reading. But as we have noted this is a false option. The antidote to bad interpretation is not no interpretation but good interpretation, based on commonsense guidelines.⁸¹

Fee and Stuart state, “... We do hope to heighten the sensitivity to specific problems inherent in every genre, to help the reader know why different options exist, and how to make a commonsense judgment and to discern between good and not-so-good interpretations.”⁸²

Exegesis and Hermeneutics: Original Meaning

As stated by Kelsey, exegesis reconstructs the history of a text and identifies if the biblical text stands as it is or whether it has a different goal. “The aim is not to discover the sources out of which the same text came, but rather what interests shaped the work of the one who put it into its present state and how it was understood by its original audience in its original text.”⁸³ One must identify the interest that shaped the work and determine the meaning of the word in its present form and setting. If the modern reader exegete’s judgment without determining the original meaning of Scripture, then the study of Scripture needs to engage in the theological task of exegeting the Bible. “Theological judgments occur when one interprets

⁷⁹ I Corinthians 14:34-5.

⁸⁰ I Corinthians 11:2-16.

⁸¹ Fee, 25.

⁸² Klein, 23-5.

⁸³ David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 198.

Scripture based upon the nature of the church's task and how Scripture ought to be used in the church's common life to help keep her faithful to the task."⁸⁴

According to Malphurs definition...

[E]xegesis involves the skillful application of basic Bible study methods to Scripture to understand and present its meaning. It takes time and is critical to the teaching and preaching ministries of the church."⁸⁵ The real importance of exegesis is that it helps us both discover and communicate truth. In times when truth is viewed by so many in our culture as relative, the church must articulate and apply the absolute truths of Scripture to the needs and problems of the contemporary world. The postmodern concept of relative truth leads only to loss of hope and despair; the concept of absolute, divine truth brings hope and leads to salvation.⁸⁶

Exegesis helps in the discovery and communication of divine truth, which necessitates the role of the church in articulating and applying Scripture to the needs, problems, and spiritual maturity of the contemporary world.⁸⁷ Fee and Stuart echoed, "The task of interpreting involves the student/reader at two levels. First, one must hear the Word heard, and endeavor to exegete or understand what was said back then and there. Second, one must engage in hermeneutics to hear that same word in the here and now."⁸⁸ Patterson tells the story of Solomon and the Shulamite and discusses how one might question whether it is a waste of time in reading about the affection of a man and woman in the Song of Solomon, while others believe it is an allegory of Christ's love for the church. It is "the exegete that makes a decision about whether to treat the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Guide for New Churches and Those Desiring Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 316-7.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 316-7.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Klein, 27.

book as a literal poem or as a magnificent allegory, and this decision determines how individual passages will be viewed.”⁸⁹

The first step in reading every text is to employ the task of exegesis, which involves the careful, systematic study of Scripture to discover the original intended meaning. This historical task of exegesis attempts to hear the Word as the original recipients heard and determined the original intent of Scripture. The problem with careless exegesis is that one will often read one’s own completely foreign ideas into text and make God’s word something other than what God said. To make a text mean something God did not intend is to abuse the text.⁹⁰ Carson quotes the words of Calvin saying, “Calvin himself indicated that his thought was rooted in two parallel exercises—in the ongoing work of preaching, lecturing, and commenting through the text of Scripture and in the related working of developing disputations and loci based on exegetical insight and presented to particular contexts of positive thought and debate.”⁹¹

Calvin’s “exegesis reflects his polemical and catechetical concerns, and his dogma was grounded on careful study of the biblical text.”⁹² Positioning a text within a literary field that includes comparing languages, then the literature is best understood as part of a broader cultural horizon. “The more pieces available for the puzzle of historical reconstruction, the more likely an accurate picture of the whole can emerge.”⁹³ So when the correlation between ...

the historical writings and the ancient texts record the same events and provide competing perspective the proof of this principle is apparent, however, historical bias is not necessarily the result of a dark plot to mislead but rather reveals a natural intuitive desire to

⁸⁹ Paige Patterson, “*Revelation*.” Vol. 39 The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2012), 27.

⁹⁰ Fee, 29.

⁹¹ Carson, 105.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹³ Merrill, 24.

place one's own people and their character and contributions in the best light possible.⁹⁴

Exegesis at its highest level requires knowledge of biblical languages, including the Jewish, Semitic, and Greco-Roman backgrounds of the written Scripture. The reader must learn how to determine the meaning of the original text when early copies (produced by hand) have different readings. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the historical and literary context of exegesis, along with questions of content.⁹⁵ Carson states, "In short, grammatical-historical exegesis remains the appropriate foundation or starting point for interpreting the Old Testament."⁹⁶

According to Fee and Stuart, studying Scripture requires basic hermeneutics because it is easy to project one's understanding of the authorial intent of the Holy Spirit or human author. Invariably, the reader intentionally brings his experiences, culture, and prior understandings of words and ideas in the text; however, this can lead the reader astray or cause him to read different ideas into the text. For example, when someone in western culture hears the word "cross" or observes Christian art, they often reference a Roman cross (t), but the shape of Jesus' cross was probably the T-shape. When Paul penned the letter to the Church in Rome, he told them to "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lust," (Romans 13:14, King James Version).⁹⁷ English-speaking cultures are prone to believe "that flesh means the body, and therefore that Paul was speaking of bodily appetites."⁹⁸

Sanders states that distinguishing between true and false prophets was difficult because ...

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29-30.

⁹⁶ Carson, 700.

⁹⁷ Romans 13:14 (King James Version).

⁹⁸ Fee, 22-3.

the false prophets not only were sincere but also quite profoundly felt that they were interpreting the Torah correctly while Isaiah and Jeremiah and the others were misinterpreting it. What we moderns have to remember in our study of the prophets is that in their day the true prophets were considered false and the false true. The true prophets and the false prophets cited the same Torah tradition: they had the same gospel story of God's gracious acts in the past in creating Israel. The difference was that the official theologians employed a hermeneutic of continuity, while the canonical prophets (the 'true' prophets whose books we inherit) employed an existential hermeneutic which stressed neither continuity nor discontinuity but rather, on the basis of the Torah (law), raised the probing question as to Israel's true identity.⁹⁹

“According to Boomershine, there is a new paradigm for the pastoral ministry of the proclamation of the Word in and for post-literate, digital culture. The need for this new paradigm grows out of recognition that the present practices of proclamation of the Word of God were developed in and for the literate cultures during the past 2000 years.”¹⁰⁰ The digital generation has labeled many church traditions as dull, while traditional churches are trying to “reach out to the young people; no Scripture reading, only contemporary music, and a rock band, and sermon.”¹⁰¹

Hermeneutics covers the entire field of interpretation to seek contemporary relevance of ancient texts when asking questions about the here and now. The Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible and equally inspired one's reading of it. According to Fee and Stuart, “The only proper control for hermeneutics is to be found in the original intent of the biblical text; otherwise, the biblical text can mean anything to any given reader.”¹⁰² According to Bauer and Traina,

A knowledge of the original biblical languages—Hebrew and Greek—is essential for the fullest measure of rich, penetrating, and

⁹⁹ James A. Sanders, *Torah Canon* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1972), 88.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas E. Boomershine, “The Embodiment of the Word: A Pastoral Approach to Scripture in a Digital Age” *Communication Research Trends*, Volume 37, no. 2 (June 2018): 154.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 33-4.

precise interpretation. Students who have the opportunity should do everything possible to gain mastery of the biblical languages. But students who do not know Hebrew or Greek can do much to make use of Hebrew and Greek resources. Students can employ most major Bible software programs to pursue original-language preliminary definition and word usage. Students who lack proficiency in the languages should consult the instruction manuals or specialist in these software programs to determine precisely how to effectively use particular software programs.¹⁰³

According to Fee and Stuart, when individuals refer to using common sense when reading the Bible, they must know that common sense guard against foolishness, but common sense is not so common.

We want to know what the Bible means for us—legitimately so. We cannot make it mean anything that pleases us and then give the Holy Spirit the ‘credit’ for it. The Holy Spirit cannot be brought into the process to contradict what is said, since the Spirit’s help for us will come in our discovering that original intent and in guiding us as we try faithfully to apply that meaning to our own situations.¹⁰⁴

Kohlenberger introduces the use of the topical Bible, which “combines the most useful features of a Bible Handbook, a Bible Dictionary, and a Bible Concordance. Like a Bible Handbook, this topical Bible introduces the reader to each book of the Bible, surveys its contents, and offers a thorough survey of most biblical topics, people, places, and events.” In an attempt to accommodate modern readers, the indexes are duplicated in the New International Version text, with nearly 33,000 verses to aid in biblical interpretation.¹⁰⁵ Harris, Archer, and Waltke agree that the theological Wordbook of the Old Testament is a resource “to use as a tool

¹⁰³ David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011), 388.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰⁵ John R. Kohlenberger, ed., *Zondervan NIV Nave’s Topical Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), vii-viii.

for studying importance theological words in the Hebrew Bible. The right understanding of the theological terms of the Old Testament is a belief in the Bible's truth."¹⁰⁶

As stated by Fee and Stuart, the aim of hermeneutics is for interpreters to arrive at the meaning of the text that the biblical writers or editors intended their readers to understand. The divine and human dimension of the Bible enables modern readers to understand the meaning of the original text, which is the meaning the people at the time of the texts' composition (author, editor, audience, readers) would have understood.

In some instances, the original meaning is readily apparent. Without much help, a reader of the Bible can understand the narration: One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat (2 Kgs. 4:8).¹⁰⁷ It would fill out our understanding to know more about the prophet Elisha and where Shunem was located, but even apart from such insights the text makes clear sense. In other places we may need a detective's extraordinary skills to discern a text's meaning, as in the section that informs us that Christ 'was put to death in the body, but made alive by (in) the S[s]pirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits' (I Pet 3:18-10).¹⁰⁸

In any case, we seek to understand the text.

Only when we grasp the meaning in the original text, to the best of our ability, may we proceed to the second crucial component of the hermeneutical enterprise: to investigate its significance for us today. It follows as a presupposition for us that God's design in inspiration assures that the Bible spoke not only to its original readers or to hearers, but also to us today.¹⁰⁹

In order to acquire an accurate competency in reading and precision in explaining the Bible, the interpreter must work with a detailed methodology for understanding and translating Scripture.

¹⁰⁶ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), iii.

¹⁰⁷ 2 Kings 4:8.

¹⁰⁸ I Pet 3:18-10.

¹⁰⁹ Klein, 153.

In the proper procedure, the interpreter must be aware of his or her qualifications, presuppositions, convictions about Scripture, and how they affect his or her endeavor to interpret the Bible.¹¹⁰ Evans and Porter remind the modern reader about the...

[c]ommon conventions or the elements. Customs or conventions from the common culture are frequently utilized by the writers of the NT because of their form and function. Among common literary-rhetorical conventions are the household code (Col 3:18-4:1; I Pet 2:11-3:12), catalogues of vice and virtue (e.g. Rom. 1:29-31; Gal. 5:19-21, 22-23; 2 Cor. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:8; I Tim. 1:9-10; 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:2-5; 2 Pet. 1:5-7), the rhetorical boasting (2Cor. 10-13), diatribe (e.g. Ro 2:1-16; 17-29; 1 Cor. 15:19-33, and imaginary dialogue (e.g. Rom. 11:19-21; Tit. 1:13-17; Jam 2:1-9, 14-26).¹¹¹

The hermeneutical approach has two components: recognizing presuppositions and developing a specific strategic method and procedure that identifies viable interpretations and assesses competing alternatives. The interpreter should have an inspired revelation that identifies God as the divine power with a celestial message inscribed by human writers.¹¹²

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. state the Bible is a supernatural and human book written by prepared and select human writers who penned the Scriptures in the center of their cultural environment and circumstances as God superintended the writings. The first supposition is that the Bible is authoritative and authentic, setting the standard for all human beliefs and behavior. The Bible is infallible, reflecting the Spirit-driven ability to achieve God's purpose.¹¹³ The second supposition is that the Bible is...

a spiritual document which manifests unparalleled spiritual worth and a capacity to change lives. The Bible has the unique power to affect the reader spiritually. By terming the Bible 'spiritual,' we

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 135.

¹¹¹ Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 757.

¹¹² Klein, 143.

¹¹³ Ibid., 145

affirm the role of the Holy Spirit who applies its message to readers. With the Spirit's aid we explore the Scriptures and find life-giving and life-changing meaning. As we respond in faithful obedience, we grow in maturity; we worship and praise the God of the Bible. The Spirit-energized reading of the Scriptures gives direction to our thoughts and guidance for our lives. They have an animating and uplifting effect as the Spirit of God uses their truth in the lives of the faithful. To treat the Bible in any other way (merely like an inspiring book) robs it of its central purpose as God's revelation to his creatures.¹¹⁴ According to Young, Gadamer and Fee confirm the relevancy of the hermeneutical circle, which illustrates that the learning process (interpretation) is not linear and sequential, but an integrated series of adjustments in perspective. He uses the terms the "whole" and its "parts." The whole is our concept of what the text means (the thing itself). The parts include all of the parts that make up the whole, including the words and sentences of the text, other similar texts to which the reader is comparing this text, and the reader's presuppositions. As soon as the reader approaches a text the he or she has some idea what they expect from the text (forethoughts) which are then projected onto the text. These forethoughts are based upon one's theological presuppositions and our expectations for the writer and the genre.¹¹⁵

Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. discuss the topic of misunderstanding when they share the story of African students arriving at their seminaries during the winter season. The students were shocked to discover that snow does not rise from the ground but falls from the sky. The undergraduates had only encountered pictures of snow, and it was a logical presupposition that snow forms from the ground like dew. The assumptions were constructed from prior experiences, training, and ways of thinking that influence how to interpret people, places, ideas, and things. One's beliefs and attitudes that are used to construct what shapes one's reality may be true or false or shaded with partial truth or falsity (known as preunderstandings). Everything a person knows molds by preunderstandings of the interpreter and what he or she brings to the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 147.

¹¹⁵ David Young, "Gadamer and Fee: A Dialogue in Hermeneutics," (PhD diss., Regent University, 2018), 38. Proquest Dissertations & Theses Global.

process of interpretation. “Thiselton argues that the goal of biblical hermeneutics is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and text, in such a way that the interpreter’s own horizon is reshaped and enlarged.”¹¹⁶

“The term preunderstanding describes what the interpreter brings to the task of interpretation.”¹¹⁷ According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr., “[P]reunderstanding consist of the total framework of being and understanding that we bring to the task of living: our language, social conditioning, gender, intelligence, cultural values, physical environment political allegiances, and even one’s emotional state at a given time.”¹¹⁸ There are four categories of preunderstanding: 1. Informational (or information one previously possesses regarding a topic), 2. Attitudinal (one’s disposition, prejudice, or predisposition of an issue), 3. Ideological (one’s view of a complex reality or worldview), and 4. Methodological (one’s approach to explaining a particular subject). “Every interpreter comes to study the Bible with preconceptions and prior dispositions. If we ask about the origin or basis of our preunderstanding, we will find it in our prior experiences, conditioning, and training—political, social, cultural, psychological, and religious—in short, all our lives up to this point.”¹¹⁹ The interpreter has some preunderstandings before encountering the text that may distort his or her perception of reality and function and adversely influence his or her ability to observe accurately.

According to Sanders, Jenson considered the doctrine of inspiration at best irrelevant to the task of confessing the authority of Scripture. Jenson felt he had to admit that ‘it has been more and more born in on me that Christian exegesis of the Bible, and specifically of the Old Testament, does not itself work without something like the old doctrine of inspiration.’ Jenson “recognized

¹¹⁶ Klein, 154.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 155.

that he must have been presupposing some such divine action throughout his own constructive theological work: ‘It was—I now have come to see—a function of the old doctrine of inspiration to trump the created author and first readers with a prior agent, the Spirit, and prior readers, the whole diachronic people of God, preserved as one people through time by that same Spirit.’¹²⁰

The reader-oriented approach to Scripture means the contemporary reading of the text is different from the ancient author’s meaning and readers’ understanding. Approaching the Bible as a modern reader who does not interpret Scripture according to the meaning of the original writer can lead to multiple interpretations that are subjective and relative.¹²¹ The process of interpreting and comprehending a hermeneutical spiral or circle that begins with preunderstanding as the interpreter approaches the text, and then the text accomplishes work in the interpreter. Faith comes first, in understanding God’s self-revelation and that development has a circularity or convoluted as the honest and humble interpreter remains open to change that brings transformation to his or her preunderstanding.¹²² Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. concluded:

The hermeneutical spiral can illustrate a very positive experience as God through his Holy Spirit brings new and more adequate understanding of his truth and its application to believers’ lives. If the Bible is true (and this takes us back to our presuppositions), then subscribing to its truth constitutes the most adequate starting point for interpreting its content. But alone that would be insufficient to comprehend the Bible. To understand the Bible’s message adequately demands appropriate methodology and the willingness of the interpreter to allow the Bible to alter or clarify one’s preunderstanding.¹²³

¹²⁰ Fred Sanders, “Holy Scripture Under the Auspices of the Holy Trinity: On John Webster’s Trinitarian Doctrine of Scripture” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* Volume 21, no. 1 (2019):4-23.

¹²¹ Klein, 154.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 161-7.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 168.

Romans 8:22 reads, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Although the world awaits redemption, some believers are concerned about the world and should reorient themselves regarding Scripture and man’s accountability. According to Leese, “Clearly, the most significant development contributing to a reorientation of reading Scripture with ecological sensitivities results from increased scientific findings highlighting the environmental crisis facing the planet Earth. Increased public, political, and scientific consensus on the impacts of global warming and the environmentally related effects (e.g., reduction of biodiversity and ecosystems, deforestation, loss of fertile lands, and so forth) have contributed toward environmental issues becoming a central priority for the international community.”¹²⁴

Therefore, the hermeneutical spiral is the healthiest approach to comprehending what Scripture says. Keller opposes this idea by saying,

[T]he deeper flaw in this hermeneutical circle approach is that it cannot exist in real life. If we state that what the Bible says here is true but what the Bible says over here is regressive and outdated, we absolutize our culture and give it final authority over the Bible. Either the Bible has final authority, and determines what in the culture is acceptable or unacceptable, or the culture has final authority over the Bible and determines what in the text is acceptable or unacceptable. So, the image of the circle (or of a completely symmetrical two-way bridge) falls short.¹²⁵

The opposing principle behind this concern is that the Bible is the supreme authority, and the hermeneutic circle cannot adequately explain the contextualization of Scripture.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ J. J. Johnson Leese, “Ecofaith: Reading Scripture in an Era of Ecological Crisis,” *Religions* Vol. 10, no. 3 (2019): 154, accessed 4 March 4, 2019. [10.3390/rel10030154](https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030154)

¹²⁵ Timothy Keller, *Church Center: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 105.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard Jr. reasoned faith and presuppositions lead to methodology or technique, which enables readers of Scripture to discover the meaning of the text, regardless of who developed or perfected it. The Holy Spirit is the inspiration and originator of the Bible. Scripture is also a personal document read and studied by men. If a method or technique is neutral and productive (distinct and noncontroversial examples are grammatical and lexical analyses), there is no objection to using it to understand the meaning of a text. However, if the use of a method adopts a basic stance or presupposition that is inconsistent with the Christian's view of Scripture, then it becomes unacceptable. Historical and literary methods are crucial to understanding the biblical record.¹²⁷

As Christian interpreters we walk a tightrope, but we do it self-consciously and openly. No interpretation occurs apart from presuppositions or a set of underlying assumptions, therefore one must approach the Bible with commitments, and they influence the choice of methods. Simultaneously, one can drink deeply at the well of rational methods and seek to exegete every passage with integrity, accuracy, and sincerity, to employ whatever techniques help to understand the Bible accurately.¹²⁸

Theological Foundation

Geisler stated, "The original text is without error. The logic of inerrancy is straightforward: (1) God cannot err, (2) The Bible is God's Word, and (3) Therefore, the Bible cannot err. Since the Scriptures are breathed out by God (2 Tim. 3:16-117), and since God cannot breathe out falsehood, it follows that the Bible cannot contain any falsehood."¹²⁹ Zuck states that the concept of biblical theology evolves into "one of two forms: (1) it is the body of truth contained in the Bible, whether systematized at some point or not, or (2) it is truth that

¹²⁷ Klein, 151-2.

¹²⁸ Ibid.,150-3.

¹²⁹ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology in One Volume* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011), 190.

originated in the Bible, but which finds expression in logical and philosophical categories.”¹³⁰
The former is deductive in its method and articulation, while the first form is inductive.¹³¹

Doctrine

Lawrence argues that “every person has a systematic theology.”¹³² Whenever a person makes a statement about the teachings of the Bible, the Christians relate to the world, or a principle that he or she believes, this defines their practice of systematic theology. Paul wrote letters to the churches that encouraged theological mediation and provided practical explanations, instructions, and answers for daily living, conflict, and community. To determine whether a person is a good or lousy theologian, one needs to consider the doctrine.¹³³ “Doctrine is simply a precise and accurate summary of what the Bible says on a topic and is used to define the difference between truth and error, orthodoxy and heresy.” Lawrence states there are three theological ways to determine that “doctrine is precise and an accurate summary of what the Bible says on a topic and can be used to define the difference between truth and error, orthodoxy and heresy,”¹³⁴ which are biblical knowledge, personal knowledge, and situational knowledge for understanding Scripture.

According to Lawrence, “[T]heological knowledge is knowledge of God.”¹³⁵ Although God is divine, he is a person, and he knows people in the same manner human beings know one another. “Knowledge of God will demand reverence, obedience, and sincere worship.”¹³⁶ God

¹³⁰ Roy B. Zuck and Eugene H. Merrill, eds., *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1991), 1.

¹³¹ Zuck, 1.

¹³² Lawrence, 99.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

cannot be comprehended through human will but must reveal himself through the inspired revelation of Scripture. Doctrine begins with authoritative biblical knowledge of God as a person asks questions and seeks answers to know him. “To know God from the perspective of biblical knowledge is to be subject to the Lordship of God, bringing every thought captive to Christ”¹³⁷ (II Cor. 1:5). Among the various ministries of the universal church, the ministry of the chaplains serving on the front lines must contend with the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) is the term commonly used for the policy restricting the United States military personnel from efforts to discriminate or harass closeted homo-sexual or bisexual service members or applicants while barring those who are openly gay, lesbian, or bisexual from military service.¹³⁸ Asking chaplains to minister biblical truth to what the Bible condemns is nothing new.

Asking Chaplains to minister biblical truth to what the Bible condemns is nothing. Asking chaplains to keep quiet about what the Bible condemns is. So far, no agency is trying to stop chaplains from preaching the doctrine their dominations ordained them to teach or obstructing them from counseling homosexuals (or adulterous heterosexuals, for that matter). They will preach the truth in love. They will minister to homosexuals in the same way they minister to all, in the love and grace of Jesus Christ whose commands are life.¹³⁹

Initially, God reveals himself as Creator through creation, giving life (Ps. 139:13-16) and forming humanity in his image (Genesis 1). When an individual speaks of knowing God, he or she is also saying something about himself or herself as one who knows God and is known by God. Knowledge of self plays a vital role in knowing God and understanding one’s purpose and

¹³⁷ Ibid., 102.

¹³⁸ English Language and Usage Stack Exchange, “*Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*,” accessed May 17, 2019. <https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/22479/meaning-of-dont-ask-dont-tell>.

¹³⁹ Michael A. Milton, *Silent No More: A Biblical Call for the Church to Speak to State and Culture* (Clinton, MS: Tanglewood Publishing, 2013), 108-9.

ministry in this life. Lawrence quotes John Calvin and writes, “Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and ourselves.”¹⁴⁰ Knowledge of God should awaken one’s need for his presence and transforming power for fellowship with God and others by submitting to Scripture, obeying his Word, and worshipping him as Creator.

According to Suttle, some people believe the *telos* primarily produces growth in the church, “but a rich ecclesiology teaches us that the *telos* of the church is really about the growth of the world.”¹⁴¹ “The church’s job is to organize our common life together in a way that reflects God, and bearing witness to the new reality that Jesus is Lord and that his everlasting life has broken into the creation and is putting the world to rights.”¹⁴² The Bible uses two words for the church—*qahal* (Hebrew) and *ekklesia* (Greek) both mean assembly.¹⁴³ Initially, both words were used in association with a mob of people in a social or political setting, or a gathering of agitators, later the words were used to describe a religious gathering. *Ekklesia* was a sociopolitical term used to identify the ruling church elders that met to discuss the issues in the community, and to ensure loyalty to its culture, gods, and confession that “Caesar is Lord.”¹⁴⁴ The New Testament Christians used the term *ekklesia* is “expressing their intention to be loyal to the God of Israel who had come to them in the flesh and to their primary confession, Jesus is Lord.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence, 102.

¹⁴¹ Tim Suttle, *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church–Growth Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 81.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

The Modern Reader

“Our knowledge of God through his normative (standard) Word confronts us with knowledge of ourselves as a simultaneously noble image-bearers and ignoble rebels of the Most-High.”¹⁴⁶ According to Purves, “Through union with Christ we are bearers of the presence of God—receiving the mission of Christ, the one who sends the Holy Spirit from the Father and sharing in his life as a responding human being who lives in the power of the Spirit.”¹⁴⁷ Image bearers are made in the image of God and engage in exploring the world and comprehending the aspects of life while desiring the healing power of God. “We are not only image-bearers. We are sinful rebels, even our best of intentions and highest skills are likely to be twisted to selfish and self-serving ends.”¹⁴⁸ Individuals know God and themselves through situational knowledge or reality that is external. Knowing the world and knowing God means knowing about the Creator and sovereign King, who made and ruled his creation. Common grace and saving grace work according to the love and beauty of a person, and simultaneously work with ugliness and hate for developing character.

According to Perman, “First, as we have seen, the character is itself at the heart of what God requires and is the essence of the productive life. By definition, a person of character is someone who walks with God, in Christ, and seeks to live according to justice and mercy (Mic. 6:8). Second, character leads to making the most of our time in the decisions of everyday life.”¹⁴⁹ Scripture is the foundation of productivity for Christians, and this foundation is based

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence, 103.

¹⁴⁷ Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 193.

¹⁴⁸ Lawrence, 103.

¹⁴⁹ Matt Perman, *What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 125.

upon love (Phil.1:9-10; Eph. 5:1-2), wisdom, the transformation of the mind, time management (Eph. 5:15-17), discernment, and prayer. “The essence of the character is walking with God.”¹⁵⁰ “The essence, the heart, and the basic dimension of the Christian life are living in fellowship with God.”¹⁵¹

Humanity’s sin nature assumes God absent and belief in him irrational. Although...

the world is corrupt and relentlessly corrupting, the forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus Christ has penetrated creation. Grace in this age produces newness of life, and peace with God, and in the center of darkness the beauty of holiness transcends its power.¹⁵²

Scazzero states, “The goal was not to change the church but to change us—or rather, to allow God to change us.”¹⁵³ Gorman notes that the *Missio Dei* is God’s mission in the world, which “means salvation is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” “For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). One’s full participation requires faith and “a comprehensive transformation of conviction, character, and communal affiliation”¹⁵⁴ or *koinonia* (intimacy sharing).¹⁵⁵ Full participation also involves sharing various aspects of Christ’s story.¹⁵⁶ “A missional hermeneutic is grounded in the theological principle of the *mission Dei* that summarizes the conviction that both Testaments bear witness to a God who, as creator and

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 126-7.

¹⁵² Lawrence, 104-5.

¹⁵³ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship that Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 33.

¹⁵⁴ Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 23.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 30.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 33.

redeemer of the world, is already on a mission.”¹⁵⁷ God seeks to save souls and restore the entire creative order.¹⁵⁸

Reading Scripture and striving to apply the hermeneutics of Scripture to the lives of people is the responsibility of the church. Those who belong to the church, both Jewish and non-Jewish believers, are those who belong to God; they are God’s “people.” In the first eight chapters of Acts, Luke shows that the first community of believers (ἐκκλησία) was the restoration of Israel. Luke “described the Gentile mission not as a replacement of Israel but as its legitimate continuation.” God shows faithfulness to his promises in doing this. It had always been God’s plan to bless all families of the earth (Gen 12:3), and the offer of salvation through Christ was universal and included the Gentiles.¹⁵⁹

The Rationale for Obedience

According to Butler, Scripture reveals that the believers’ obedience to God’s Word comes through trust in God. Butler suggests that believers are rewarded with blessings when they obey God, but that disobedience to the Word of God results in lack and loss of blessings.¹⁶⁰

Obedience in the Old Testament means...

to hear. In the New Testament, several words describe obedience. One word means ‘to hear or to listen in a state of submission. Another New Testament word often translated ‘obey means ‘to trust.’ The Bible views disobedience as a failure to hear and do God’s Word (Ps. 81:11). Israel’s story was one of a nation who failed to hear or to listen to God (Jer. 7:13; Hos. 9:17). Jesus warned: ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear’ (Matt.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 53.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Albanese, “The Church as the New People of God in Matthew, Luke–Acts, John, Hebrews, and I Peter,” (PhD. diss., Regent University, 2019), 31-40. Proquest Dissertation & Theses Global.

¹⁶⁰ Trent C. Butler, Marsha A. Ellis, Forrest W. Jackson, Phil Logan, and Christ Church, eds., *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1035-136.

11:15).¹⁶¹

Fee and Stuart emphasize that Christians should learn to read, accept, and obey the Bible, recognizing it is not an obscure book if read and studied appropriately. However, the challenge to obey the Bible by putting it into practice remains.¹⁶²

Christians should learn to read, believe, and obey the Bible. The single most serious problem people have with the Bible is not with a lack of understanding but with the fact that they understand many things too well. For example, with such a text as ‘Doing everything without grumbling or arguing’ (Phil. 2:14), the problem is not understanding it but obeying it—putting it into practice.¹⁶³

Sacrifice and Sanctification

Schreiner notes Genesis 4:2-7, where God rejects Cain's offering because it was not offered in faith and did not reflect trust in God. Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God as an offering in faith, which suggests that "Abel sought the Lord for the forgiveness of sin."¹⁶⁴ "We see from the beginning, mechanical obedience is not pleasing to the Lord; he demands obedience that flows from a heart of faith (Rom. 1:5).¹⁶⁵ A God-centered covenant relationship governed Israel's obedience. The Lord demands Israel's obedience stating, "I am the LORD" (Leviticus 18:5,6,21; 19:12, 14, 16, 18, 28, 30,32, 37; 21:12; 22:2, 3, 8, 30, 31, 33; 26:2), and master. The call to obedience is rooted in the grace of God who redeemed and delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery (Lev. 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:28, 42, 55; 26:13) not out of duty, but as an act of grace.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Fee, 21.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Schreiner, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

According to Schreiner, the LORD motivated Israel by recalling his former grace and emphasized that he has sanctified them, saying, “Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you” (20:8).¹⁶⁶ Rooker augments,

The Israelites were to shun the pagan practices of offering children to Molech (20:1-5) and seeking to understand the future through mediums and spiritualists. Israel’s covenant relationship with God mirrors the marriage relationship (Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14) and reflects Jesus’ relationship with the church (I Cor. 6:15-20; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-23).¹⁶⁷

Schreiner notes that Leviticus 22:32-33 echoes some of the major themes (not profaning God’s name; sanctification; obedience), “And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD.”¹⁶⁸ Israel must live in a way that does not profane or debase God’s name. They must do everything that glorifies the LORD. “God is the sanctifier, but Israel must strive for holiness.”¹⁶⁹ The demand for obedience is personal, and individuals who rebel against the directives for the LORD reflect a blatant rejection of the Lordship and holiness of God.¹⁷⁰

Covenant Relationships and True Obedience

The covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel is contingent upon Israel’s obedience, which means blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. “If Israel obeys, the Lord will dwell in their midst and will walk with them day by day as he walked with Adam

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹⁶⁷ Mark F. Rooker, “*Leviticus*.” Vol. 3A The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 266-267.

¹⁶⁸ Schreiner, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 62.

and Eve in the garden. He will satisfy every need since they will be his people, and he will be their God.”¹⁷¹ The book of Deuteronomy records the necessity of Israel’s obedience; however, their obedience is not legalistic or distant. Obedience should be Israel’s sincere response of gratitude to God for his covenant mercy when he delivered them from bondage. In short, “God blesses, Israel obeys, God continues to bless. Israel is blessed if they obey, but they should obey because the nation has been blessed.”¹⁷²

According to Schreiner, “The Lord’s rule over history and his grace is tied to one of the major themes of Deuteronomy: the necessity of obedience. It is imperative to see that the obedience called for in the book is not legalistic or external.”¹⁷³ God’s gracious covenant as the absolute ruler who delivers Israel from Egypt mandates, they must exhibit total allegiance.¹⁷⁴

Repeatedly Moses commands Israel to keep (samar) the Lord’s command (Deut. 4:2, 6, 40; 5:1, 12, 29, 32; 6:2, 3, 17, 25; 7:11, 12; 8:1, 2). The commandments are simply to be contemplated and meditated upon. They must be put into action; they must be done (asa) (1:18; 4:1, 5, 6, 13, 14; 5:1, 27, 31, 32; 6:1, 3, 18, 24, 25; 7:11; 8:1; 11:22, 32; 12:1, 32; 13:19; 15:5; 16:12; 27:10, 26; 28:1, 58; 29:8; 30:12, 13, 14) for they speak to the issues of life in the market and in the family and in the courts, signifying one’s complete and utter devotion to the Lordship of Yahweh.¹⁷⁵ True obedience to Yahweh is expressed not merely in outward obedience but in love.¹⁷⁶ The nation must choose to love God and to demonstrate this love by obedience.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 64.

¹⁷² Ibid., 85.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 86.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 87.

Loving God is not isolated from keeping his commands (7:9; 11:1), fearing him, walking in his paths, and serving him, but is accomplished through obedience because of reverent fear and by walking and serving according to his Word.¹⁷⁸ Schreiner states,

Obedience to the Lord must be concrete and practically worked out in everyday life. Obedience is not merely external conformity to the will of the Lord. True obedience involves affection—loving the Lord and clinging to him, finding him to be the praise and joy of one’s life. Such love and loyalty are never abstracted from walking in his ways.¹⁷⁹ In the New Testament, salvation comes through the work of God—more specifically, the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But John, in accord with what we have seen elsewhere, also calls his readers to obedience.¹⁸⁰ One of the most important themes of the Upper Room Discourse is that Jesus’ approaching departure will enable him to send to them the Paraclete, yet another reference to the Spirit. His presence will free them up to do what God’s people are called to do. The Spirit’s presence is the basis for Jesus’ exhortation to abide in him and bear fruit, abiding in his love. Once again, the gift of the Spirit is what enables righteousness, obedience, and love. The Spirit is given and enables us in our relationships. Thus evidence of spiritual formation will show itself in the quality of our relationships: By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.¹⁸¹

According to Beale and Carson,

This sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2) is not the surrender to God of that which by rights is ours; rather, it is the yielding of the whole of our bodily life in thanksgiving to our Creator, who not only has made us and formed us but also has given himself for us and to us in Christ. This sacrifice is the mere opening of our life to the embrace of God’s love in Christ.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 645.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 107-8.

¹⁸² G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 680.

According to Malone, Paul uses priestly language to define his ministerial appointment by God as a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. The ministry to the Gentiles as an acceptable and pleasing offering to God that results from the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (recognized as spiritual formation). God's holy priesthood is sanctioned to sacrifice (Rom.12), worship (Heb. 12:28), and conduct themselves as priests according to the gospel of God.¹⁸³ Lane states, "Christians under the new covenant are to enter into an experience of maturity in which all of life becomes an expression of worship. Authentic worship is a grateful response to covenantal blessings already experienced and to the certainty of the reception of the unshakable kingdom" (v 28).¹⁸⁴

Spiritual formation is about how to engage the presence of God, walking with him day by day, moment by moment, in worship, prayer, obedience, witness, (and) spiritual disciplines.¹⁸⁵

Pettit quotes Henry Cloud and John Townsend:

Not only does obedience deal with all of life, but it also encompasses all of us, both inside and out. Obedience is far more profound than simply refraining from external sins such as lying, stealing, and committing adultery, though it certainly includes those. Obedience has also to do with submitting our values, emotions, and hearts to Christ's lordship... This external and internal nature of obedience helps us to grow spiritually. It helps us integrate various parts of our character that are either in conflict with or alienated from one another.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Andrew S. Malone and D.A. Carson, eds., *God's Mediator's: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2017), 172.

¹⁸⁴ William L. Lane, David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, John D. W. Watts, and Ralph P. Martin, eds., "Hebrews." Vol. 47B Word Biblical Commentary: Hebrews 9-13 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 491.

¹⁸⁵ Pettit, 64.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

Willard states, “The missing note in religious life today is not spirituality but rather obedience. We have generated a variety of religions to which obedience is not ...essential.”¹⁸⁷ According to Crick, “[S]piritual formation is the process by which one moves and is moved from self-worship to Christ-centered self-denial as a general condition of life in God’s present and eternal kingdom.”¹⁸⁸ Stowell adds that the Christ-centered believer will “know that their character-driven leadership is not about self-advancement, but about stewarding the environment where God has put them, for his glory and gain.”¹⁸⁹

Doriani adds that many gifted preachers use their gifts instinctively, and without thinking about the theory of interpretation. He argues that there are strategies that can determine the significance of one’s exegesis. Doriani states...

The first view is that application is subjective and personal. Teachers apply Scripture through meditation not methods. True application is the result of a ‘direct encounter between man and God.’ God’s grace, not a human plan, lets proclamation produce godliness. A second view opposes methods of application on the grounds that talk of sanctification and morality threatens the gospel of justification by grace alone. If sanctification is ‘the art of getting used to justification,’ then teachers can speak of progress in grace, but not in character or obedience. According to this view, talk of growth and obedience naturally descends into works–righteousness or legalism. It knows that eloquent talk can persuade people to change their behavior, but no human can change the heart. The third view is that application is a divine gift, but not all divine gifts are unmediated. We pray for wisdom and search it out (Prov. 2:1-8; James 1:5; 3:13). So too with application. It is a gift when God makes words strike their target, yet he takes our words for his arrows. Application embraces both method and art, with both technical and creative moments. The art of application involves giftedness, a delight in God and his word,

¹⁸⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Great Commission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2006), 44.

¹⁸⁸ Robert Crick, *Outside the Gates: The Need for Theology, History, and Practice of Chaplaincy Ministries* (Oviedo, FL: Development Services, Inc., 2011), 49.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph M. Stowell, *Redefining Leadership: Character-Driven Habits of Effective Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 34.

and knowledge of ways of captivating an audience.¹⁹⁰

According to Purves, “Through our union with Christ, we share in his threefold ministry of speaking, hearing, and obeying or responding to God’s Word.”¹⁹¹ Pettit states, “Our primary calling is to a living and dynamic relationship with God. Throughout Scripture, the chief concern is always God calling his children to himself and calling his children to live a life of holiness.”¹⁹² Believers are encouraged to think beyond themselves through personal obedience to God, which significantly affects their families, careers, and Christian witness.¹⁹³ Frangipane adds, “The church needs to possess the knowledge of God’s ways, for herein do we enter His rest (Heb. 3:8-12). We gain such knowledge through obedience to God’s Word during conflicts. As we obey God through the testings’ of life, we learn how to deal with situations as God would.”¹⁹⁴ God’s people as a community invoke God to bring about the kingdom, where the sacred name honors God the Great King, where people thoroughly obey God’s righteous will, and where everyone is free of hunger, debt, and he rescues from evil.¹⁹⁵

The Rationale for Holiness

According to Davids, the book of I Peter speaks about personal holiness and states...

The most obvious application of the judgment theme is in the area of personal holiness. In 1:13-2:10 this is developed in general in terms of self-control and abstention from ‘desires,’ the Greek term for *epithynia* being frequently used in the NT for the unrestrained drives of human nature, whether sexual, acquisitive (of money or

¹⁹⁰ Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2001), 27-30.

¹⁹¹ Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 155.

¹⁹² Pettit, 198.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁹⁴ Francis Frangipane, *Holiness, Truth, and the Presence of God* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), 114.

¹⁹⁵ Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 850.

goods), or other. Peter names ‘malice, deceit, insincerity, envy, and slander’ ... (2:1), for the believers have already parted with such typical pagan vices as ‘sensuality, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and idolatry’ (4:3). The Christians are called to be holy above all else because God is holy (1:15-16), and he will show no favoritism in judgment (1:7). Holiness is therefore at the same time both a privilege (2:5, 9—the ‘holy priesthood’ theme) and a call to watch out because of coming judgment. If hope will not serve to motivate, warning must.¹⁹⁶

Wenham interjects, “The Church is now ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’” (I Peter 2:9).¹⁹⁷ The book of Leviticus contains many food laws as a constant reminder to Israel of their calling as a holy people designed to imitate God, and a reminder to thank God for their unique relationship with him. “The New Testament believer is in a very similar position. The Church is now ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’” (I Pet. 2:9).¹⁹⁸ The believer should be motivated to imitate Christ and faithfully live a sanctified life, and not risk judgment.¹⁹⁹

According to Davids, social holiness focuses on “the problems of relating to non-Christians in society, that is obeying the law of the land, submitting to masters (even abusive ones), and being in subjection to husbands.”²⁰⁰ Peter’s concern is for Christians not to offend.

Holiness is thus giving up those natural human desires which would make conformity to such uncomfortable cultural expectations impossible (2:11). At the same time, obedience is not unlimited for part of holiness enjoined is refraining the tongue when persecuted without any hint that one should cease the Christian behavior (including the abstention from pagan vices) that has led to the persecution (3:8-12). The suffering is a test of faith,

¹⁹⁶ Peters H. Davids, “*First Peter*.” The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle of Peter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 17-8.

¹⁹⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, “*Leviticus*.” The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The book of Leviticus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 184.

¹⁹⁸ Davids, 17.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 18.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

so it would be wise not to fail. It is also judgment beginning with ‘the house of God’; thus, one would do well to be found holy. This is the serious side of the Christian life, according to Peter.²⁰¹

Dauids transitions to the idea of communal holiness...

or those virtues which lead to the solidarity of the community. We have already noted that Peter believes that these Christians have given up the normal pagan vices at their conversion. He is far more concerned, even on the personal level, with the vices of the tongue, which are precisely the vices that could destroy the Christian community. In 4:7-11 and 5:1-7, he goes on to explain this concern in more positive terms. He is concerned about love, hospitality, service according to gifts, servant leadership, and humility. They are all community-preserving virtues.²⁰²

Peter is concerned about ...

making the lot of Christians in the world as easily as possible due to the sheer goodness of their lives...and with keeping the community together in the face of suffering, recognizing that individual Christians stand much less chance of surviving with their faith intact than those united in community. The same body of personal virtues supports both goals; thus holiness is a unifying theme in the letter.²⁰³

Willard believes there are...

three substantial elements of evangelical piety across the age...conviction of sin, conversion to a godly life of faith, and testimony to the saving work of God in the soul.²⁰⁴ Now along with these three foundational elements of Christ-centered piety in the evangelical tradition”²⁰⁵ there are some disciplinary aspects – ‘disciplinary’ because they are thought of as ‘means of grace’ or ways of sustaining and developing one’s life, not, certainly, as modes of punishment.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 18-9.

²⁰⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’ Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2006), 162.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 164.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Some disciplines that need development, especially regarding the public ministry of the Word of God, participating in intercession, engaging in an individual Bible study, and embracing the concept of a lifestyle of holiness and daily discipline. Willard declares the purpose of the priesthood of believers “does mean that any believer could do priestly or religious things, but rather that whatever any believer was doing was to be a priestly act unto God.”²⁰⁷

According to Osmer, one task of the priest is the practice of “[g]athering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.”²⁰⁸ In the process of gathering information, the ministry leader asks the question: What is going on?, which involves priestly listening. Osmer agrees with Keck’s observation that

“[I]ntercessory prayer... is a priestly act only when the leader does not merely pray about the people but also offers prayers to God from the people on their behalf.”²⁰⁹ Therefore, praying for the people and offering prayers to God from the people means prayer is “a two-fold movement in intercessory prayer.”²¹⁰ Boda notes “Israel’s abandonment of their god in their worship of the golden calf, when all hope of God ‘tabernacling’ among his people seems lost because of the golden calf; however, it was not their penitence or remorse that saved them before this holy God, it was the intercessory pleas of their mediator, Moses.”²¹¹

Ryrie states, “Holiness in the Bible means separation from all that is common or unclean. In respect to God, holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Osmer, 4.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 35.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Mark J. Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2017), 146-7.

but also that he is positively pure and thus distinct from all others.”²¹² “Hagiasmos is a noun that means holiness (holy) or sanctification, which means separation to God.”²¹³ The concept of separation to God stems from the position of the self-centered sinner coming out of the world and returning to God, his Creator and Savior. The aim is for the person of faith to come from among sinners and returning to God. “Hagiosune denotes the manifestation of the quality of holiness in one’s conduct, while hagiotes means sanctity, the abstract quality of holiness that speaks of God. The holiness of the church is its degree of freedom from wrong doctrine and conduct, and its degree of conformity to God reveals his will for the church.”²¹⁴ The book of Leviticus relates directly to holiness (19:2; 18-27), and summarizes the law where Israel is instructed to “Be Holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”

Ministry and Holiness

According to Lawrence, the ministry is theology in action and teaches the sovereignty of God and his goodness. The goal of every believer or disciple-maker is to equip others to focus their attention upon “God’s plan for holiness and not just instantaneous happiness,”²¹⁵ in every relationship. Although corruption in this world of sin produces hate, death, division, and unkindness, contrarily, the holiness of Jesus brings peace, life, reconciliation, and mercy.²¹⁶ “This world and our lives are a battleground, not a playground,”²¹⁷ where Satan relentlessly deceives people into believing they need to pursue their desires, exercise excessive sin without

²¹² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1999), 42.

²¹³ Vine, 307.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Lawrence, 16

²¹⁶ Ibid., 105.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

accountability, and that they are “better off without God.”²¹⁸ Satan’s trap is designed to enslave humanity by buying into a “false sense of peace, and not the peace of paradise, but peace of the morgue.”²¹⁹

Lawrence observes that God is not responsible for the chaos of the fallen world of humanity. Amid paradise, Adam and Eve yielded to Satan’s deception and exposed their arrogance, and every person born after them is to blame as well. Sin is more than rule-breaking. “Sin is a matter of the heart,”²²⁰ and the effect of sin penetrates all of creation. Sin is an incredible offense to God because it “desires to remove God from his throne, and mankind sits there.”²²¹ “God is holy and has nothing to do with sin, and if the church and preaching allow people to think of God the way they desire to think of him,”²²² then the mission has failed. “People need to think of God as he is, a holy God who judges sin justly. The New Testament takes so seriously the character of our fellowship in the local church.”²²³ According to Lawrence,

God’s people across the covenants are to be known by their holiness, being set apart for God. In the Old Testament this was particularly marked by their distinct ethnicity, their distinct dress, and their distinct food. Under the New Testament, however, holiness is not marked off by the food we eat, but by the lives we live in distinction from the world around us.”²²⁴

“The grand mark of the Christian is not the absence of sin, but perseverance to the end of life, by examining one’s self daily and walking by faith (II Cor. 13:5). Perseverance is not dependence

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 134.

²²⁰ Ibid., 135.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid., 135-6

²²⁴ Ibid., 146.

upon self, but trusting God through one's effort by reorienting hope and growing in holiness.” Paul said, “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil. 2:12-13). According to Bateman, believers should consider the issue of unfaithfulness through the lens of Esau, who “stands under the covenant curse and is cut off from God. A deliberate idolater at the climax of that passage mirrors the severing from God. To be immoral and especially ‘godless’ in a sense here attributed to Esau is the opposite of living in ‘holiness’ and is the essence of rebellion.”²²⁵

Pursuit of Holiness

As stated by Lawrence, God expects every believer to pursue holiness. “It is not simply being set apart from sin. It is being set apart to the glory and love and work of God.”²²⁶ Paul writes, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Moreover, we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (II Cor. 3:17-18).²²⁷ The freedom that God has given to believers is the freedom to glorify God in their everyday lives. Every born-again believer has work to do (Matt. 9:38), mandated marching orders (Matt. 28:19-20), and a message to declare wherever they go (II Cor. 5:14-21). Jesus addresses the attitude and work of two ambitious brothers who wanted glory and

²²⁵ Hebert Bateman, Gareth L. Cockerill, Buist M. Fanning, Randall C. Gleason, Grant R. Osbourne, and George H. Guthrie, eds., *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007), 285.

²²⁶ Lawrence, 175.

²²⁷ II Cor. 3:17-8 (NIV).

a crown, but not the shame and the cross. He teaches that honor and rank is for those who are prepared and work hard to obtain them (Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:40).²²⁸

Lawrence references Leviticus 11:44-45 and states, “The people are to consecrate themselves to God. Because he is holy, they are to be holy and set apart for him, distinct from the surrounding nations. God, his people, is to be visible as God’s people, separated from the surrounding world.”²²⁹ According to Stuart, God challenged the Israelites to enter into a covenant relationship with him. The agreement constitutes an advance obligation in faith to demonstrate loyalty and gratitude by obedience to this law.²³⁰ Lawrence confirms his argument by stating that according to the “redemptive-history in Exodus 19, God promised to make these people a ‘holy nation,’ set-apart.”²³¹ The laws were written to fulfill God’s promise, but it does not mean the believers of the New Testament kept kosher. As it relates to the law, Jesus said, “Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them” (Mark 7:15); therefore, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean. Holiness in the New Testament does not disappear as the rule of law, but a matter of the heart.²³²

The specificity of the various laws in the Bible reflects how much “God cares about every aspect of the believers’ lives: whom they sleep with, how they treat their spouse and children, the ambitions of their hearts, and what they do with their money. We are not as

²²⁸ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2007), 22.

²²⁹ Lawrence, 188.

²³⁰ Douglas K. Stuart, “*Exodus*.” Vol. 2- *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 422.

²³¹ Lawrence, 188.

²³² *Ibid.*, 188-9.

autonomous as we think we are.”²³³ “God’s holiness leads to the judgment of all that’s not holy. As an expression of the entire law of God, the food laws convict us of our unholiness and the justness of God’s judgment and wrath against us personally.”²³⁴ According to Tripp, one is calling is not dependent upon being entirely sanctified. Tripp says, “We are calling people in the middle of their sanctification, still struggling with the seductive and deceptive power of sin.”²³⁵ Towns, Van Gelder, Van Engen, Van Rheeman, and Snyder echo what “Paul asserts in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21: that God as a creating God is also a reconciling God who seeks to reconcile all things in Christ [and] bring redemption to every dimension of life within creation.”²³⁶ According to Gale, the issue of social justice is directly connected to holiness. Gale states,

The founding voice of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, John Wesley, spoke often about justice. In studying Wesley and his writings, one finds the phrase, “justice, mercy, truth” used consistently in his sermons. Its use was not simply as a moralistic expression, like “holiness” became for twentieth century fundamentalists, but instead offered a deeply rooted soteriology to the outworking of justice in the lives of those who called themselves Christians. At this point, one can understand the challenge that the term justice creates. As one reaches the twentieth century, the waters of justice discourse within Christianity are significantly muddied by views of justice that express it only as other-worldly, theologize it into terms of individual salvation, relegate it to a societal issue, or demonize it as anti-Christian in its entirety.²³⁷

²³³ Ibid., 189.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Paul David Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2012), 64.

²³⁶ Elmer Towns, Craig Van Gelder, Charles Van Engen, Gailyn Van Rheen, Howard Snyder, Paul E. Engle, and Gary L. McIntosh, eds., *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: Five Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 159.

²³⁷ M. Andrew Gale, “Practicing Justice: Justice in a Millennial, Wesleyan–Holiness Context.” (PhD diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2019), 379-384. Proquest dissertations & Theses Global.

In society, God uses something unique in the political nation of Israel, setting apart an ethnic family as his visible people in the world. God’s law, including the dietary law, mirrors his character, from which New Testament believers can benefit. Jesus Christ fulfills the laws (Matt. 5:17) through perfect holiness. “He was holy because his heart was characterized by what the external law points to a love for God and a consecration to his purposes” (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1; Matt. 23:37).²³⁸ By fulfilling the law, Jesus Christ sets aside the external law and rituals given at Sinai and offers a new covenant. Christ addressed Peter (Acts 10), and Paul emphasizes this issue by saying, “as ‘Jews by birth,’ they knew full well that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”²³⁹

Martin and Davids make an observation about holiness, stating...

[i]n the Didache (or the teachings of the Twelve Disciples) the church is primarily the whole Christian community on earth. The attributes ‘one’ and ‘holy’ are particularly stressed. In Didache 9 the coming together of believers to celebrate the Eucharist is seen as pointing to the unity of all Christians. As one of the prayers put it: ‘As the broke bread was scattered on the mountains, and then when gathered, became one, so let the church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom (10.4). Remember, Lord, your church, deliver it from all evil and make it perfect in your home in your love, and from the four winds gather it together in holiness to your kingdom which you have prospered for it (Did.10.5)²⁴⁰

Malphurs and Penfold recognize that “[d]etermining your ministry direction involves your mission and vision in addition to your gifts, passions, and temperament. Discovering and

²³⁸ Lawrence, 190.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 201.

understanding one's unique design (spiritual gifts) will guide your life's ministry direction."²⁴¹
"Through the atoning death on the cross, Christ made us clean by eradicating the separation between God and us."²⁴² Just like Israel, the New Testament instructs believers to "live distinct, holy lives that praise the character of God to unbelievers (I Corinthians 1; II Corinthians 6);²⁴³ (therefore), every area of our lives counts whether eating, or drinking, or whatever we do, we should give glory to God."²⁴⁴ Kesler admonishes the church by saying that believers have received grace and that all believers are in the hands of a gracious God. "Christians have always struggled with grace. It is far easier for us to accept the reality that a holy God hates sin than it is for us to believe that he can use flawed instruments to fulfill His perfect design."²⁴⁵

God requires explicitly, the church to grow toward holiness. The church's responsibility is to build others, encouraging them to become spiritually mature, and rebuking one another in the way of Christlikeness.²⁴⁶ The aim is to believe in Jesus, which connects one to belong to God and the church. "Holiness continues to have a corporate character"²⁴⁷ (I Peter 1), teaching Scripture for Christians "to practice biblical membership and church discipline (Matthew 18; I Corinthians 5)."²⁴⁸ The believer's response to the law can produce feelings of defeat, discouragement, justification, or ignorance, and when his or her life mirrors complacency,

²⁴¹ Aubrey Malphurs, and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re: Vision - The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), 63.

²⁴² Lawrence, 190.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Jay Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human: Dealing with the Expectations of Ministry* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 180.

²⁴⁶ Lawrence, 190.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

anxiousness, and self-justification, he or she needs to admit their inadequacy of holiness and trust in the sufficiency of Christ

Chapter 3

Methodology: Analysis of the Subject – Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

The Institutional Review Board will review the application that will grant the researcher permission to research at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church of Beaumont, Texas, under the leadership of Dr. John R. Adolph. The research process will not begin until the researcher receives permission from the Institutional Review Board, and after receiving permission from the IRB, the researcher will begin the research process.

During this phase of development, Dr. Adolph is the chief administrator who will determine the timeframe for conducting the research, consent to the topic of the Bible study and materials available during the learning process, and grant the researcher permission to access the personal data of participants. Dr. Adolph may assign a staff member the task of retrieving historical data from previous small groups and on-campus Bible studies. Implementing a church-wide application and recruiting 100 individuals to engage in the investigation will make it feasible to observe participants in weekly meetings, monitor participation, and obtain feedback. Any person age 18 and above may participate in the research, which includes completing the pre- and post-questionnaires for the research survey. The classes will have a beginning and end date. Questionnaires will be collected before the course begins and after the inquiry. Collecting data from participants in the small group setting will be more comfortable, rather than immediately after the worship service. Every week for 8-weeks, members will participate in four days of an interactive Bible course and a weekly small group meeting. Online video presentation(s) will be accessible to internet users. The development of the literature for the research project will increase Bible reading and engage Christians in biblical studies.

One limitation of the research is that having access to 600 members who participate in the Sunday morning worship experience does not ensure the participation of every person in the study. Data collection may not replicate the responses from the same group that responded to the questionnaires at the beginning versus the conclusion of the study. Moreover, collecting data during a worship service may prove a distraction and omit pertinent data. The questionnaire will not reflect the educational background of the participants. Utilizing video equipment while recording the presentations does not guarantee quality. Participants may not be computer-literate and may need assistance in accessing the presentations. Moreover, the study could be affected if members complete their Bible study assignments in one sitting, which reduces the outcome of the research process. There is an estimated time frame for the small group meeting, but the group might exceed the specified study time. The chart below provides information regarding the various cultures of the subjects.

1.1 Culture/Race	Percent
White Only	45.1
Black/African American	48.4
American Indians/Alaska Native	0.4
Asian	3.1
Native Hawaiian /Other: Pacific Islander	0.0
Two or More Races	1.6%
Hispanic or Latino	14.1
Not Hispanic or Latino	33.1

1

¹United States Census Bureau Quick Facts: Beaumont city, Texas. United States Department of Commerce. February 26, 2019. Accessed March 8, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/beaumontcitytexas/LND110210>.

The researcher will follow the steps below to initiate the process by meeting with Cheryl Williams, the Edification Coordinator at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, to introduce the purpose of the research, making personal contact with potential core team members to introduce the investigation, and confirm their commitments. Cheryl Williams and another contact person will be responsible for providing access to the church database and scheduling meetings with the core team to confirm their responsibilities and provide the checklist of events. The investigator will secure the contact information for the core team, and Cheryl Williams will reserve the data that will be for planning and executing the research process. The thesis project identifies a list of the sequence of events under phase one, phase two, and phase three. Specific details will identify the following headings: Access to Database, Announcements and Other Tasks, Questionnaire, Preparation (and printing lessons), and the 45-Minute Churchwide Weekly Bible Study. The questionnaire will be interpreted using a qualitative standard and hiring a statistician from Liberty University or another qualified person in the community. This process will help the researcher discuss how the sample affects the findings, the strengths and weaknesses of the sampling procedures, and design decisions that are relevant to the interpretation, as well as gain an understanding of the report. The post-questionnaire results will confirm that participants have experienced spiritual growth, gain biblical knowledge, and revelation because of the bible study.

Research Process

Access to Database (Phase One: Needs, Delegated Responsibilities, and Procedures)

- _____ Identify the internal contact person(s) who has access to the database (physical addresses/email addresses).
- _____ Obtain contact information of the contact person: name, address, cell phone number.
- _____ Person(s) responsible for entry of the email or correspondence will use the database to communicate with the congregation.
- _____ Obtain contact information of the contact person(s) responsible for entry and submission of the data using social and other correspondence: name, address, cell phone number.
- _____ Submit a printed copy and an email to the designated person who introduces the researcher, the purpose of the study, and dates for the Bible study. Invite individuals to become participants in Bible study, and identify participant expectations.
- _____ Identify tentative dates for emailing and uploading information using social media.
- _____ Establish small group leader responsibilities.
- _____ Make personal contacts with individuals who can serve on the core team and receive personal contact information.
- _____ Confirm commitment from the core team member in distributing and collecting materials, questionnaires, and printed lessons for the Bible study.
- _____ Identify the director of the media department and the need for videoing the weekly lesson that will be led by Dr. Adolph; discuss archiving the videos.
- _____ Dr. Adolph will identify who needs to be responsible for securing the video ministry activities.

Announcements and Other Tasks

- _____ Review options for inviting the congregation or church members to the research experience.
- _____ Introduce the thesis project objective and review questionnaires.
- _____ Identify tentative dates for advertising.
- _____ Email flyers to participants.
- _____ Submit the announcement, which includes a section introducing the researcher, dates for the Bible study, and participant expectations to Brooklyn Williams for the Sunday Morning Announcement listed in the (appendix).
- _____ Identify and contact former small group leaders and request they make personal contact with former participants in their Bible studies to invite them to this new Bible study.
- _____ Utilize the contact information provided by Cheryl Williams to identify the small group leaders and make personal contact with the new recruitments who will become new small group leaders.
- _____ Conduct the first meeting with small group leaders to introduce the aim of this project, provide materials, and share instructions for the distribution of materials.
- _____ Upon approval of the IRB, the pastor will provide the beginning and end date for the Bible study.
- _____ The investigator will design the weekly Bible study lessons and submit to Dr. Adolph for further development and approval, and to meet any editing needs.
- _____ Upon approval, the researcher will prepare and print a hard copy of the final format of the Bible study lesson and submit the hard copy or jump drive to Cheryl Williams for printing.
- _____ The printing department will print and package the weekly lesson for distribution to the small group leaders and the corporate Bible study lead by Dr. Adolph.

Questionnaire

- _____ The researcher will design and print questionnaires and provide pens or pencils for the pilot group.
- _____ The researcher will analyze the questionnaire data and develop the 8-week Bible study.
- _____ Cheryl Williams will receive a hard copy of the lesson and submit the materials for printing before the scheduled church-wide Bible study.
- _____ A designated core group member will purchase the pens or pencils.
- _____ Another designated core team member will obtain the printed materials and pens/pencils and place them in a designated area for distribution at the Bible study.
- _____ The core team will distribute and collect questionnaires before the Bible study begins and submit them to the researcher for analysis.

Phase 2: Needs, Delegated Responsibilities, and Procedures

Access to Database

- _____ Contact person(s) responsible for preparing the correspondence and flyers. Submit and deliver the flyers using social media.
- _____ The researcher will submit an announcement to Brooklyn Williams to invite participants to the Bible study.
- _____ Brooklyn Williams will read the announcement or produce a special invitation to encourage churchwide participation.

Announcements and Other Tasks

- _____ The 2nd Meeting with small group leaders will be utilized to introduce materials and provide instructions for the distribution of materials.
- _____ Confirm the beginning and end dates with Dr. Adolph.
- _____ Sis. B. Williams will continue to make the weekly announcement during worship service.
- _____ Designated persons will continue to use social media to send weekly reminders of the research project to the church participants.

Questionnaire

- _____ The printing staff will identify when the copies will be available for delivery.
- _____ Core team members will distribute questionnaires, pens, and pencils, and collect the questionnaires before the Bible study lesson.
- _____ Core team members will submit all questionnaires to the researcher for analysis.
- _____ Participants will complete the (Pre) Questionnaire.
- _____ On the designated date participants will receive and sign commitment form.
- _____ The researcher will submit an invitation to the Bible study at the church and the names and locations of the small group meetings to the chief executive of the Ambassador magazine.
- _____ Display names and addresses for the weekly meetings in the lobbies of the church and printed in the Ambassador magazine.
- _____ Participants will be assigned to a small group by the on-site church representative.

Implementation of 45-Minute Churchwide Weekly Bible Study

- _____ Dr. John R. Adolph will introduce the concept of sustained Bible reading during the Bible study as participants read the Bible, chapter by chapter, via a Bible CD.
- _____ Participants will interact with one another and engage with the pastor during a specific period during the Bible study, which includes a 15-20-minute video presentation.
- _____ A weekly Bible study begins churchwide and in small group settings.
- _____ Small groups will sign the sign in-sheet for accountability purposes.
- _____ Small group participants will complete the Pre-Questionnaire.
- _____ The small group leader will submit the questionnaires to the researcher.
- _____ The designated media personnel will access and play the video presentation by Dr. Adolph at the beginning of each weekly meeting.
- _____ Participants will fulfill their commitment to engage in the weekly Bible study activities (45 minutes each day).

Phase 3: Needs, Delegated Responsibilities, and Procedures

Access to Database

- _____ The researcher will submit correspondence to the designated persons who will send an email and correspondence to all participants to convey appreciation for their support and participation.
- _____ The researcher will send a letter of appreciation to Dr. Adolph, Cheryl Williams, Brooklyn Williams, the core team members and other designated persons at the conclusion of the study through written correspondence or email.

Announcements and Other Tasks

- _____ The researcher will provide an announcement for the church to Brooklyn Williams to convey appreciation for their support and participation during the churchwide Bible study at the conclusion of the study.
- _____ At the conclusion of the eight-week Bible study, participants will complete another inquiry to identify growth.
- _____ Group leaders will return the forms to the researcher, tallied, and plotted on a line graph.
- _____ The researcher will form a conclusion based upon the initial questionnaire and responses, the content of the email, fliers, inquiries, and any other documents or correspondence in the appendix of this thesis.
- _____ The researcher will receive the returned questionnaires from the core team.
- _____ The researcher will identify checkmarks, and tally and plot entries on a line graph.
- _____ Pastor Adolph will pre-record all video presentations and submit to the social media ministry to be uploaded and made accessible to the world.
- _____ The researcher will compile the results of the Post-Questionnaires to analyze the data and confirm or reject the hypothesis of the thesis.

Assessment of Questionnaires for the Study

Administration of the Pre–Questionnaire and Post–Questionnaire

The Pre–Questionnaire and Post–Questionnaire consist of 26 statements that can be categorized as biblical, emotional, and social and identifies scriptural resources. Category one focuses on the level of difficulty experienced when reading the Bible, reading practices and habits, biblical principles, resources, facts, and Scripture memorization. Statements in category two addressed awareness of one level of spiritual maturity, spiritual formation, and identified rebellion to God. The next category of statements measured one’s dependency upon and intimacy with God, and his love for God, self, and others. It also measured God’s ability to meet needs, the need for spiritual strength, and how the believer responds to problems. In the fourth category, the participant considered his faith, biblical beliefs, meditation, devotional time, intercession, fasting, emotions, and ambitions. Category five demonstrated concern for social justice, being a peacemaker, participation as a voter, being a promoter of community in one’s actions, attitude, and behavior, church attendance and fellowship, and serving.

The chart located below was formatted to identify the following details: line 1 is the title of the thesis project: Reading Scripture: Developing Intimacy with God, the Church, and the Community. Line 2 indicates the number assigned to the statement and identifies the response that best characterizes how the participant feels about the statement: 1 = Not all true of me, 2 = Somewhat untrue of me, 3 = Neither true nor untrue, 4 = Somewhat true of me, 5 = True of me.

The Comparison chart below identifies a comparison between the pre– and post–questionnaires as an observable assessment of the participants’ growth and development as a result of participating in the 8–Week Bible study entitled My Inheritance. The first line identifies the pre– and post– questionnaires and the second line classify the scored document tht

will range in one of four categories: The Elementary Level (Elem. Level) ranges from a score of 1 to 81, the Youthful Level (Youth. Level) ranges at the score of 82 to 98, the Active Engagement Level (Active Level) ranges from a score of 99 to 115, and the Servant Leader Level (Serv. Lead. Level) ranges from the score of 116 to 130.

1.2 Tally of the Pilot Group

Pre-Questionnaire					
Document # and Score		Elem. Level 1-81	Youth. Level 81-98	Active Level 99-115	Serv. Lead. Level 116-130
1	97		1		
2	78	1			
3	102			1	
4	90		1		
5	97		1		
6	102			1	
7	94		1		
TOTAL		1	4	2	0

1.3 Tally and Comparison Chart of Pre-Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire

Pre – Questionnaire	1-81	81-98	99-115	116-130	Post – Questionnaire	1-81	81-98	99-115	116-130
Document # and Score	Elem. Level	Youth. Level	Active Level	Serv. Lead. Level	Document # and Score	Elem. Level	Youth. Level	Active Level	Serv. Lead. Level
1 108			1		1 106			1	
2 105			1		2 107			1	
3 98		1			3 104			1	
4 109			1		4 104			1	
5 95		1			5 91		1		
6 103			1		6 103			1	
7 95		1			7 102			1	
8 87		1			8 86		1		
9 98		1			9 99			1	
10 94		1			10 93			1	
11 87		1			11 49		1		
12 95		1			12 109			1	
13 113			1		13 94		1		
14 87		1			14 85		1		
15 101			1		15 114			1	
16 66 1					16 98		1		
17 110			1		17 68 1				
18 84		1			18 101			1	
19 106			1		19 112			1	
20 97		1			20 97		1		
21 92		1			21 114			1	
22 98		1			22 102			1	
23 70 1					23 106			1	
24 106			1		24 92		1		
25 107			1		25 97	1			
26 112			1		TOTAL	2	8	15	
27 103			1						
28 97		1							
29 87 1									
30 86 1									
31 92		1							
32 75 1									
33 102			1						
34 106			1						
35 91		1							
36 100			1						
37 102			1						
38 77 1									
39 99			1						
40 107			1						
41 114			1						
42 98		1							
43 98		1							
44 106			1						
TOTAL	6	18	20	0					

Descriptive Outline and Implementation of the Project

8 Week Bible Study: My Inheritance

The topical Bible study entitled, “My Inheritance,” focuses on the believer–priest and his relationship and fellowship with God, Jesus the perfect High Priest (sacrifice and intercessor), and the Holy Spirit, which spans the entire Bible. Every week, the believer will study passages

from both the Old and New Testaments, which will provide spiritual insight and revelation of God's intended purpose and plan for his chosen people in the 21st Century.

The lessons are designed with diversity to meet the needs of various groups, whether one is looking for a churchwide Bible series, a study for small groups, or an independent learning experience. Participants will have access to a review of the lesson in the form of a fill-in-the-blank document (except Week 8). The outline of the weekly study includes a Scripture reading, an introduction to the lesson, an overview of the passage, and essential biblical principles. The details for the review of the churchwide and small group Bible study will come directly from two sections: 1) The Overview of the Lesson, and 2) The Proposition and Points from the Passage sections. Independent work includes completing four weekly assignments.

Every week, participants will receive a copy of the weekly lesson that includes four daily assignments consisting of a chapter of reading and independent learning activity. The chapter reading assignment will correspond to the lesson topic or aim of the study, which requires identifying the book of the Bible in either the Old or New Testament. The participant must then locate the chapter and verses. Howard and William Hendricks' *Living by the Book: The Art and Science of Reading the Bible* and an additional workbook provide several activities for helping individuals to become more observant of verses and passages and more involved in the process of reading by being more thoughtful about the characters and the original writer. Participants may become more in tune with Scripture by reading the verse or passage repeatedly, more patient and prayerful while reading a passage, and more imaginative by considering the culture. Many participants may become more meditative when reading Scripture, more purposefully by remembering the aim of the lesson, and to develop the habit of looking for things that show

emphasis, repeated, related, alike, unlike, and true to life, or become more observant of a verse or passage by making a chart (when applicable).²

The list only identifies resources and examples of how a passage applies in an activity, but the weekly activity will correspond to the lesson and with consideration of the participant's spiritual maturity. The activities include fill-in-the-blanks, multiple-choice questions, comparison charts, and making observations about the passage. The study is designed to help Christians know more about God and discover more about themselves and the power of the Word, which strengthens relationships and fellowship and promotes revelation. This study aims to increase the frequency participants read Scripture and encourage their recognition of the good news in both the Old and New Testaments, all the while providing reinforcement and application for learning. The result is spiritual maturity, to learn to respond to God through prayer, to become faithful readers of the Bible, to possess open hearts for praise and worship, and to engage in independent Bible study and transformation.

Each weekly lesson will help Christian men and women know what the Bible says, recognize the results of obedience and disobedience to God, and exercise the privilege of access to the grace of God in their daily lives. A Bible character will be introduced each week and emphasize at least two main ideas that relate to the study, which will help participants become more familiar with original writers and witnesses. Each week, participants will complete four daily lessons, which require reading one chapter and completing one or two activities per day within a 45 to 60-minute time period. Participants are responsible for reading the assigned chapter and completing the daily activities before the next churchwide or small group meeting.

² Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book: Workbook* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2000), 19-103.

The interpretation of Scripture is the responsibility of the writer, but the application of the text is the responsibility of the learner, who may be required to work through the process of application via four steps.³ First, the participants need to *know* the Scripture text and know himself, second, to *relate* the Word of God to his own experiences, third, to meditate one needs to pay close attention to the Scriptures, or even memorizing them so they will continue to work in his heart and mind. Fourth, the modern reader needs to *practice* truth should be one's primary goal of Bible study.⁴

After the completion of the topical Bible study, participants will have read at least 40 chapters from the Bible from both the Old and New Testaments, and have completed 32 lessons. The opportunity for engagement comes from the writers of the Bible study, but it is the role of the Holy Spirit to produce revelation, insight, and spiritual encounters with God. An outline and an overview of the lessons and assignments are available below:

8–Week Outline of My Inheritance

The subtopic of week 1 of "My Inheritance, The Priesthood of Believers," will address the description of the Priesthood as chosen, royal, holy, and peculiar. The character study of Peter describes God's plan for the Priesthood in the Old Testament and the development of the Priesthood in the New Testament. The four daily topics include the inclusion of Jews and Gentiles, the dynamics of the believer–priest, sincere love, and obeying God.

Week 2, the participants will learn about the High Priest: Relationship and Fellowship, which proceeds the character study of Abraham and Melchizedek. The introduction of the lesson includes Jesus, the Superior High Priest, and the seven distinguishing features of the

³ Ibid., 139.

⁴ Ibid.

Melchizedekian order from a New Testament perspective. The four daily topics include blessings for the man of faith, propitiation, and justification, fellowship, the mercy seat.

The third week's lesson concentrates on the Old and New Testament Tabernacles and the Call of the Priesthood, which focuses on obedience, and highlights the character of Moses. This study on the Gospel regarding Relationship or Fellowship, and exploring the Old Testament and New Testament Tabernacle depict the Call of the gospel in both testaments. The participants will experience the revelation of the Old and New Testament, the Brazen Altar, Brazen Laver (outer court), and the Most Holy Place (inner court). The four daily topics include the obedient priesthood, the obedience of Abraham, the obedience of King Saul, and the obedience of Jesus.

The subtopic of week 4: Holiness—Aaron, His Sons, and the New Testament Priesthood, concentrates on sanctification and character development. The character study of the Tribe of Levi (Simeon, Levi, and Dinah) leads into the discussion of the first High Priest of Israel and the Priesthood. This study highlights sanctification, consecration, and the duties and attire of the High Priest to help modern readers see the relevancy of the priesthood. Discovery of the roles, responsibilities, and duties of the High Priest in the Old and New Testament provides insight into the purpose of the priesthood. The four daily topics include holiness, sanctification; the cost of redemption, and the Eli's Sons, the priests who do not know God.

Week 5 of "My Inheritance" looks at the Attributes of the Priesthood, which include the ministry of sacrifice, blessings, intercession, and mediators (judges). The character study of the apostle Paul and the importance of the sacrifice in the Bible includes the burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, and the sin offering and the trespass offering. The four daily topics include sacerdotal or spiritual duties, blessings, intercessors, mediators/Judges.

The focal point in Week 6 aims at the relevancy of the Word of God in relationships. The discussion on biblical knowledge and Scripture, which governs the lives of the priesthood, provides a foundation and nurture of relationships that include husbands, wives, children, employees, employers, and discipleship. The character study of Ezra and Timothy targets education and what the New Testament commands. The four daily activities include servant leadership (outcome-driven leaders/character-driven leaders), roles and responsibilities of the believer–priest and relationship between parents and children, discipleship, and the ordinances and responsibilities.

During week 7, The King’s Penitence and Praise to God focus on repentance and spiritual maturity with emphasis on penitence, prayer, praise, and worship. The character study of David and An Inheritance of Kingship will also provide revelation on repentance in the life of Zechariah, the High Priest who wear dirty clothes and experienced grace in action. The four daily activities include repentance (penitence/lament) and spiritual maturity, prayer and praise, praise and thanksgiving, and worship.

The "My Inheritance" Bible study concludes with the New Kingdom, the Church in Community, in the present, and the future. The character study of the Holy Spirit as a person, to help the modern reader identify the dynamic of penalty, promise, power, and producing the kingdom. The believer will better identify the anointing, the New Covenant, and his future inheritance at the wedding banquet and honors or crowns for the kingdom priest. The four daily activities include living a spirit-filled life, Christ and the Individual Christian, a worldview and the Church, a different reality–From law to grace, the new kingdom.

Facts

1.4 Survey Comparison of Pre/Post Test Results

(1st Number indicates Pre–Test Results/Second Number Post–Test Results)

Question	Not True	Somewhat Untrue	Neither True nor Untrue	Somewhat True	True
1. I read the Bible every day of the week.	6/1	6/2	4/1	12/8	15/13
2. I believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testament are God’s Word to mankind and it is important to study and apply the entire Bible.	0/0	3/0	0/1	3/0	38/24
3. I never strive to experience intimacy with God.	31/20	7/0	1/1	3/2	2/2
4. God meets all my emotional needs, even when He works through others.	1/0	0/1	3/1	7/4	33/19
5. I actively seek to be a peacemaker in my community, speaking out against violence and injustice.	5/1	0/1	9/0	11/8	19/14
6. I have had people strongly disagree with me or even reject me because of my faith and biblical beliefs.	11/2	2/2	4/5	15/7	10/9
7. I read devotionals and/or Christian Books.	2/0	0/1	1/0	7/5	34/18
8. Jealousy and personal ambition will keep me from witnessing effectively.	26/15	6/2	5/3	4/2	3/3
9. I try to depend upon the Holy Spirit in every situation.	1/0	0/0	1/1	13/6	29/18
10. I actively use my voice and vote in the community to make a difference in the lives of others.	4/1	1/1	3/0	10/5	26/18
11. I meditate upon Scripture and listen to songs which reflect biblical principles and love for God, self, and others	1/0	1/0	2/1	7/2	33/22

12. I use resource materials, like Bible dictionaries, maps, concordances, etc...	6/0	2/0	5/2	13/5	17/17
13. I find prayer helps my attitude toward others when dealing with negative and critical people.	0/0	0/0	2/0	6/2	35/22
14. My response to difficulties, burdens, and pressures reflect my trust in God.	4/2	0/0	0/2	11/4	29/16
15. I do not regularly attend religious services with other believers for fellowship and encouragement.	31/21	3/1	1/0	2/1	7/1
16. If I have the resources (time, money, etc.) I believe it is important to serve others and demonstrate God's love to them.	0/1	2/0	0/1	8/1	34/20
17. I have read an entire book of the Bible. (ex. The Book of James)	7/3	2/0	1/3	8/2	22/16
18. Spending time in the Word of God helps me to grow spiritually.	0/0	0/0	1/0	4/0	38/24
19. I have practiced prayer and fasting when faced with trials or temptations in my life.	0/1	2/0	5/1	10/5	26/17
20. I intentionally rebel against God.	30/18	6/2	1/3	4/0	1/1
21. Intimacy with God gives me strength in difficult times.	1/0	0/0	0/0	5/2	35/21
22. I believe I am regularly growing in spiritual maturity and am more spiritually mature than I was a year ago.	0/0	1/0	0/0	8/2	33/22
23. I do not strive to live in such a way that my actions, attitude, and behavior will positively affect my community.	31/15	3/0	4/1	2/1	2/3
24. I find the Bible difficult to read because I just don't understand what I read and how it applies to me.	19/18	6/1	3/2	13/0	0/1

25. Even if I don't always get what I ask for, I find praying is beneficial.	0/2	0/0	0/1	4/0	38/19
26. Memorizing scripture helps me to respond biblically to situations and problems that arise.	0/1	1/1	4/1	8/3	30/16

Proposed Effectiveness: Pilot, Pre/Post-Questionnaires

The culminating assessment identifies 1 participant scored at the elementary level, 4 participants scored at the youthful level, 2 participants scored at the current engagement level, 0 participants scored at the servant level, with a total of 7 participants.

In an analysis of the pilot-questionnaire, 7 participants were able to apply 26 statements that would help evaluate the need for reading Scripture and increasing intimacy with God, the church, and the community. By engaging in Bible study, and every participant can experience personal spiritual growth and better identify the original meaning of the Scripture within context while gaining biblical knowledge and making a proper application.

Pre-Questionnaire

The pre-questionnaire culminates with 6 participants scored at the elementary level, 18 participants scored at the youthful level, 20 participants scored at the current engagement level, 0 participants scored at the servant level, totaling 44 participants.

In the analysis of the Pre-Questionnaire, 44 participants recognized their need for progressive spiritual growth. According to the chart below, 6 participants scored at the Elementary Level, 18 participants scored at the Youthful Level, 20 participants scored at the Active Engagement Level, and 0 participants ranged at the Servant Leader. Results of the Pre-

Questionnaire revealed that most of the participants involved in the thesis project ranged between the Youthful and Active Engagement Levels.

Post–Questionnaire

The post–questionnaire culminates with 2 participants that scored at the elementary level 8 participants scored at the youthful level 15 participants scored at the active engagement level 0 participants scored at the servant level, which totals 25 participants.

An analysis of the Post–Questionnaire, 25 participants also recognize their need for progressive spiritual growth. According to the chart below, 2 participants scored at the Elementary Level, eight scored at the Youthful Level, 15 scored at the Active Engagement Level, and 0 ranged at the Servant Leader. Results of the Pre–Questionnaire revealed that most of the participants involved in the thesis project ranged between the Youthful and Active Engagement Level.

In conclusion, the post–questionnaire reveals almost half of the 44 participants completed the Bible study entitled “My Inheritance,” and in both the pre– and post–questionnaires, most participants identified in the youthful and active engagement levels. During the initial phase of the thesis project, the scores of the participants in the youthful level (18) and the active engagement level (20) were about the same. However, the final phase scores of the thesis project reveal at the end of the study, 8 participants scored at the youthful level, while 15 participants scored at the active engagement level, which means the participants at the active engagement level outscored the participants in the youthful level. The results of the post – questionnaire prove that more participants experienced significant growth and spiritual formation than the participants in the pre–questionnaire.

Chapter 4:

Results and Outcome of the Methodology

Restrictions and Accomplishment: Phase 1

During phase 1, the checklist identifies needs, delegated responsibilities, and procedures. The researcher received verbal consent from the pastor to work with designated individuals who would assist in the implementation of the proposed thesis project. The Institutional Review Board granted participation to proceed forward with the research project, but every effort to contact the pastor to identify designated individuals for the research project with resistance. The anticipated expectation to work with the designee who would have been responsible for accessing the church database to communicate with potential participants by physical or email address and data entry through social media was unaccomplished. Meeting with the director of the media department for recording and archiving videos for social media to communicate with the congregation was unproductive. The identity and commitment of candidates of the core team and the small group leaders, who were responsible for the distribution and collection of materials was unachieved. The printing of the questionnaires and the weekly lessons for the Bible study by the department leader was also unsuccessful.

The announcement clerks of the church are responsible for informing the congregation about the various events and activities of the church and community by way of a sitcom presentation called Ambassador News. The format for producing an announcement, whether a scripted or unstructured encounter, is unknown to the researcher. The person or ministry that wants an announcement made must complete the specified form or application the Sunday before the Sunday for an announcement. The required form was filled, which included the name and

contact information of the researcher in case there were questions or concerns. Within this short timeframe, the researcher provided a letter describing the purpose and expectations for the research, a letter from the pastor to confirm approval of the thesis project and to encourage members to participate in the study. Both letters were included in the first edition of Week 1 for editing and eliminating materials that did not meet Dr. Adolph's approval.

Submission of a copy of the Bible study booklet and another copy emailed without response to Dr. Adolph. The submission of two letters and a flyer for Dr. Adolph and Ms. Brooklyn Williams for assessment and further directives for the announcement. After Ms. Williams' announcements, the researcher removed the letter written on behalf of Dr. Adolph and continued to complete the final layout for Weeks 1 through 8 Week (see appendix). The flyer that had been approved by the IRB provided sufficient information to petition the participation of the congregation. However, the two letters were included to provide additional details regarding the Bible study and emphasis upon the pursuit of holiness, obedience, spiritual growth, and intimacy with God, self, and others. Highlighted details in the document specified the expectations of the participants and the thesis project to help the announcers target the needs and desires of the thesis project. The congregation was not aware of the purpose of the study, and the announcement did not communicate that the Bible study was a research project, nor did it identify participant expectations. Although there is one accomplishment in this section, the researcher submitted a printed copy of the documents that would be used to introduce the researcher, state the purpose of the thesis project, identify the goals, and details of the participants' expectations.

Attempts were made to review options for encouraging members of the congregation to participate in the research experience, properly introduce the thesis project objective, the review

of the questionnaires, prompted and identifying the tentative dates for advertising or emailing data was unaccomplished. Dr. John Adolph and Brooklyn Williams both received a folder containing two letters and a flyer to identify details for the announcements. The former small group leader no longer held the same position and is presently reassigned to another ministry. Telephone attempts and text messages were sent to Pastor Adolph to identify concerns and obtain answers regarding tentative dates, the Bible study, and printing. His suggestion and commitment to write assignments were unrealized. Upon approval of the IRB, receipt of the text message to Pastor Adolph came by text message. He responded, stating he was excited and ready to proceed forward.

The researcher received assistance and recommendations from Mr. Randy L. Miller, Graduate, and Faculty Research and Instruction Librarian at Liberty University, regarding the design, format, and statements that were in the printed questionnaire. The researcher will design and print the questionnaires and provide pens or pencils for the pilot group and participants. Approximately ten participants will receive a request to complete the survey in an informal setting. The responses from the questionnaire will be analyzed to determine the accuracy of the data that will be included in the development of the 8-week Bible study and measure the spiritual growth of the participants. The researcher is responsible for providing the printed materials and pens/pencils and placing them in a designated area for distribution at the Bible study.

Restrictions and Accomplishment: Phase 2

During Phase 2, the needs, delegated responsibilities, and procedures stated in the checklist were to be monitored by the designated personnel and the researcher to ensure that Brooklyn Williams would receive the correct documentation. During the Ambassador News, Ms. Williams said, “Minister Jacko is conducting a research project and is asking for 50 persons

who are willing to participate in the research project to meet her on Thursday. The young man replied, "I'm going? Are you?" Williams replied, "I don't know. I don't know." He replied, "What do you mean?" Williams says, "I don't know. I have to talk with Minister Jacko first." Williams proceeded to tell the congregation that Pastor Adolph would be teaching Bible study this Thursday and encourages everyone to come and be a part.

Dr. Adolph received the tentative beginning and ending dates for the Bible study and texted, "Great," "I'm excited." Questionnaire: 7 pilot questionnaires were returned to the researcher to identify problems with ratings on statements #1 through #26 before printing the final copy. Participants completed the pre-questionnaire before Dr. Adolph began Week 1 of the Bible study entitled "My Inheritance."

Implementation of 45-Minute churchwide weekly Bible study requires the pastor or an appointed leader to share the concept of sustained Bible reading through a chapter reading that links to the four weekly activities. The concept of sustained Bible reading was designed to encourage participants to read one chapter as a part of the daily activities each week. Pastor Adolph used this concept during the annual church conference in January, introducing the concept of reading one chapter of the Bible before the doctrinal sermon. In observation, people appeared interested, but the pre-recorded text seemed distorted, and when presented at the end of the sermon, the ecstatic environment resonated throughout the worship experience, and the people seemed disengaged.

Members responded to God in expressive praise and worship, and the recording was ineffective. Leadership omits small group meetings and video presentations. The persons who attend Bible study regularly and the persons who responded to the announcement were the willing participants. The Bible Study participants filled out the commitment forms in the

booklets, where they promised to fulfill participant expectations, engage in the weekly Bible study, and complete all homework assignments. The activities were designed to be completed in approximately 45 minutes each day for four days. The researcher noted the omission of the chapter reading when the Bible study began in June.

Restrictions and Accomplishment: Phase 3

Phase 3 identified the conclusion of the Bible study entitled "My Inheritance." Considering the announcement that was made by Ms. Williams, the researcher opted to not expose any facet of the project with any expressions that were less than excellent. Participants received written correspondence from the researcher to express appreciation and gratitude for their participation. The letter was placed in an addressed envelope and distributed to the participant after the post-questionnaire was received. The researcher mailed Dr. Adolph (certified), and Rev. Moore, a letter of appreciation for their participation. The researcher mailed a card of appreciation and gratitude were to Ms. Williams was given a card of gratitude for her announcement. After the 8 Week Bible study, participants completed the post-questionnaire that identified growth. The researcher tallied, assessed, the pre- and post-questionnaires and summarized the score sheets and summary page to analyze the data and confirm or reject the hypothesis of the thesis. A comparison chart between the pre- and post-questionnaires, and plotted the individual entries on a line graph to identify spiritual growth and intimacy with God (see appendix: ex. letters).

Comparison of the Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

Observations and Outcome: Black-Page 1 of Questionnaire

Question #1 reads, "I read the Bible every day of the week." Pre-Questionnaire #1 identifies that 15 of 44 participants read the Bible every day, 12 of 44 participants read the Bible nearly every

day, and 16 of 44 struggle with reading the Bible every day or not reading the Bible at all. Post-Questionnaire: 13 of 25 participants read the Bible every day, 8 participants read the Bible nearly every day, and 4 participants struggle with reading the Bible or not reading the Bible at all. According to the pre-questionnaires, less than half of the participants read their Bible consistently. The post-questionnaire identified that more than half of the participants were reading their Bible.

Question #2 reads, "I believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testament are God's Word to mankind, and it is important to study and apply the entire Bible." (Participants responded to the question, but it should have read, "I believe the 66 books of the Old Testament and New Testament are God's Word to mankind, and the believer should apply the Word to his life." The pre-questionnaire identified 38 of 44 participants believed the Old and New Testament are God's Word to humanity, and it is vital to study the Bible and apply it to the believer's life. Three participants were less convinced the Old and New Testament are God's Word to humanity and that the entire Bible applies to their lives and is essential to study. Three other participants did not believe the Old, and New Testament is God's Word to humanity and the entire Bible applicable to his or her life and is essential to study. At the end of the Bible study, 24 of 25 participants believed the Old and New Testament are God's Word to humanity, and the entire Bible applies to their lives and is vital to study. In the ratio of 24:1, except for one participant, the post-questionnaire revealed the remaining participants believed the Old and New Testament are God's Word to humanity, and the entire Bible applies to their lives and is vital to study.

Question #3 reads, "I never strive to experience intimacy with God." The pre-questionnaire identified that 31 of 44 participants were striving to experience intimacy with God, 7 participants recognized that they lacked the consistency to strive for intimacy with God, and 6

admitted neglect of intimacy with God. The post-questionnaire indicated that 20 participants were striving to experience intimacy with God, and 5 participants admitted neglect of intimacy with God. Both the pre- and post- questionnaire have about the same ratio of participants who need to prioritize and strive for intimacy with God.

Question #4 reads, "God meets all my emotional needs, even when He works through others." 33 of the 44 participants believe that God meets all of their needs, which includes working through others. Seven of the participants mostly believe that God meets their needs and works through works to meet their needs, but 3 of the participants doubt God meets needs and works through others to meet requests. 1 participant does not believe that God meets his or her needs. The post-questionnaire identified 19 participants believed that God meets needs and meets their needs through others, and 4 participants reflected a little doubt that God uses all resources to meet their needs, but no one completely mistrusted God to meet their needs. The questionnaires revealed that most of the participants trust in God to meet needs, but the post-questionnaires reflect one participant mistrusted God. The participants' willingness to engage in Bible study provides opportunities for increased faith in God.

Question # 5 reads, " I actively seek to be a peacemaker in my community, speaking out against violence and injustice." According to the pre-questionnaire, 19 out of 44 participants identified completely active peacemakers, 11 participants reflected missed opportunities to engage in social justice actively, nine were not opinionated, and five were unconcerned about injustices. The post-questionnaires identified 14 of 25 participants as fully engaged in social justice, and eight other participants were almost as committed, while 3 of the 25 participants were not respondents to injustices. The post-questionnaires reflected more awareness and

support of social justice, and fewer participants seemed to be unconcerned about inequality compared to the pre-questionnaire participants.

Observation and Outcome: Orange–Page 2 of Questionnaire

Question #6 reads, "I have had people strongly disagree with me or even reject me because of my faith and biblical beliefs." According to the pre-questionnaires, approximately 25 participants experienced strong rejection because of their faith and biblical belief, while the remaining 15 participants were unaware of or unaffected by rejection because of their biblical convictions and trust in God. Sixteen participants expressed strong disagreement or rejection because of their spiritual conviction and faith in God, while 9 participants denied concerns or experiences of rejection because of their faith and biblical beliefs. Data from the post-questionnaires reflected that more than half of the participants experienced strong disagreement or rejection because of their faith and biblical beliefs compared to participants in the pre-questionnaire.

Question #7 reads, "I read devotionals and/or Christian Books." Approximately 41 of 44 participants actively read devotionals and/or Christian books according to the pre-questionnaires, while 3 participants appear to be either uninterested in or not prioritizing reading Christian literature. The post-questionnaires found 23 of 25 participants read devotionals and/or Christian books, while only 1 participant appeared uninterested in or not prioritizing reading Christian literature. Documentation reflects 1 participant did not respond to the statement. The participants in both the pre- and post-questionnaires prioritized reading devotionals and Christian books, which means that almost all of the participants recognized the relevancy of reading devotions and Christian literature.

Question #8 reads, "Jealousy and personal ambition will keep me from witnessing effectively." Seven participants believed that Jealousy and personal ambition affect their witness. Eleven participants seemed uncertain as to how personal ambition and Jealousy affects one's testimony. Twenty-six participants were completely cognizant of the vices of Jealousy and personal ambition. According to the pre-questionnaire, 5 participants were aware that Jealousy and personal ambition affects their testimonies as a Christian, and approximately 7 participants were unaware of the destructive effects of Jealousy and personal ambition and its effect upon one's Christian character. Based on the post-questionnaire, 15 participants were fully aware of the effects of Jealousy and personal ambition upon their ministry. Both questionnaires reflected the reality that Christians experience Jealousy and are tempted to pursue personal ambition, but more than half of the participants on both questionnaires were cognizant of the vices of personal ambition and jealousy.

Question #9 reads, "I try to depend upon the Holy Spirit in every situation." The pre-questionnaire reflects that 42 or 44 participants were trying to depend upon the Holy Spirit in every situation or were striving toward being dependent upon the Holy Spirit in every situation. Three participants were unconscious of their need to depend upon the Holy Spirit in everything. The post-questionnaires identified 24 participants actively try to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in most situations, but 1 participant appeared neutral about the need to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. The pre- and post-questionnaires reflect that most participants were led by and striving to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Question #10 reads, "I actively use my voice and vote in the community to make a difference in the lives of others." According to the pre-questionnaire, 26 participants stated they were trying to improve the quality of life for all people and consistently exercise their right to

vote. Ten other participants seem to reflect concern about injustices in the community and the need to vote but noted there is room for improvement, and four more participants admitted they were not concerned about issues in the community and voting. The post-questionnaire identified that 18 participants were actively involved in fighting for equality within the community and vote because they believe it voices their opinion, while 5 participants were actively motivated to speak against inequalities and vote, but not consistently. According to the post-questionnaire, 2 participants admitted a lack of commitment to engage in the equality of all people and were non-voters.

Question #11 reads, "I meditate upon Scripture and listen to songs that reflect biblical principles and love for God, self, and others." Based upon the pre-questionnaire 33 of 44 participants meditate upon Scripture and listen to songs that reflect biblical principles and love for God, self, and others, while 4 participants were not practicing these principles. Seven participants also listen to songs that reflect biblical values that encourage a love for God and self and meditate on Scripture, with consistency. The post-questionnaire identified 22 of 25 participants consistently meditate upon Scripture and listen to songs that mirror biblical principles, whereas 3 participants share identical activity but need to increase these practices. The participants that completed the biblical study were involved in the mediation of Scripture, listening to songs that mirror biblical values and demonstrating love for God, others, and himself, and no one was void of these practices. Studying the Bible compels the worshipper to grow closer to God, others, and himself, and requires meditation upon the Word of God, which instructs the Christian to listen to songs that mirror God's Word.

Observations and Outcome: Blue-Page 3 of Questionnaire

Question #12 reads, "I use resource materials, like Bible dictionaries, maps, concordances, etc..." Results confirm that 17 participants use Bible dictionaries, maps, and other materials, while 13 other participants utilize the same resources, but not as often and depending on the need. Scoring identified 13 participants were not utilizing concordances, maps, and dictionaries.

The post-questionnaires identified 17 participants were utilizing resources, such as, Bible dictionaries, maps, and concordances, and five other participants were using the same resources but not as frequent. 2 participants responded as if they are aware of biblical resources but may not perceive the relevancy of using biblical materials. The exegesis and application of hermeneutics require consideration of utilizing biblical resources to help identify the culture, geography, familiarizing himself with various religions, gaps in time, places, and things to reveal the author's original meaning of a text. As a modern reader, he should utilize all available resources to help exegete the Scripture and identify how the text applies to Christians.

Question #13 reads, "I find prayer helps my attitude toward others when dealing with negative and critical people." Thirty-five participants considered prayer an essential and necessary practice that helps them maintain a positive, godly attitude, and Christian character when dealing with negative and critical people, and six more participants, though not as dedicated, noted that prayer is a critical practice. Only 2 participants indicated that prayer has a positive effect on their life when handling difficult circumstances with other people. The pre-questionnaire identified 22 participants' dependency upon prayer, especially when dealing with difficult and critical opinions of others, and two other participants agreed, but not on the exact level of dependency. The results of the study indicate that all participants recognize the need for the effectiveness of practicing prayer. Biblical principles govern the life of Christians and are

under spiritual attack by the enemy, and Scripture teaches every believer that prayer plays a vital role in living an abundant and victorious Christian life.

Question # 14 reads, "My response to difficulties, burdens, and pressures reflect my trust in God." In the initial survey, 29 participants recognized that their response to difficulties, burdens, and pressures were directly related to how much they trusted God, while 11 other participants indicated that their endeavoring to trust God during various difficulties, burdens, and pressures. 4 participants admitted that they do not trust God through problems, complications, and pressures. The post-questionnaire shows 16 participants actively trusting God during times of difficulty, pressures, and burdens, which mirrors dependency on him. 4 other participants recognized the need to trust God, but they struggled with believing that God would meet these needs and might demonstrate a propensity to trust in themselves to handle problems. Also, 4 participants seemed to be struggling with the concept of trusting God with their problems, burdens, and difficulties. Both questionnaires reflect that most participants trust God when faced with difficulties, problems, and burdens, but 4 participants either trust themselves when faced with problems, difficulties, and burdens or lacked faith in God.

Question # 15 reads, "I do not regularly attend religious services with other believers for fellowship and encouragement." The pre-questionnaire identified 31 of 44 participants attend religious services regularly to obtain encouragement and experience fellowship with other believers, and two other participants attend religious services for the same purpose, but occasionally miss a religious service. Approximately 10 participants did not seem to link attending religious services consistently with fellowship and encouragement. The post-questionnaire recorded 21 of 25 participants regularly attend religious services to obtain encouragement and to fellowship with other believers, and one other participant shared the same

purpose, but occasionally missed a religious service. According to the post-questionnaire 2 participants disassociated attending religious services with fellowship with other believers and to gain encouragement. The pre-questionnaire indicates that 10 participants disassociated regular attendance at religious service with fellowship and encouragement. The analysis of the post-questionnaire revealed that biblical studies contribute to regular church attendance and links to receiving encouragement from and fellowshiping with other believers. Regular church attendance directly links to the inspiration of Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit, and fellowship with God and others.

Question # 16 reads, "If I have the resources (time, money, etc.) I believe it is important to serve others and demonstrate God's love to them.) According to the pre-questionnaires, 34 of 44 participants believe that if resources, like time, money, and more are available, it is essential to use those resources to serve others, which is a reflection of one's love for God. 8 more participants agreed, but may not practice this principle as often. Only 2 participants seemed to struggle with the practice of using their time and money to serve others and demonstrate God's love. The post-questionnaire identified approximately 21 participants who willingly use their available resources to help people in need because it is also a reflection of their response to God. Only 2 participants did not directly link giving or serving others with their resources as a reflection of their love for God. In conclusion, both questionnaires reflect the importance of serving others with one's resources, which is a scriptural principle of the Bible that demonstrates one's love for God, self, and others.

Observations and Outcome: Purple-Page 4 of Questionnaire

Question # 17 reads, "I have read an entire book of the Bible (ex. The Book of James)." In the pre-questionnaire, 22 participants stated that they had read one entire book of the Bible, and 8

participants seem to have tried to read an entire book of the Bible, but for some reason, we are unable to reach the goal. Approximately 10 participants had no interest in reading an entire book of the Bible, found the Bible difficult to read, or encountered tragic circumstances that prevented his or her pursuit of reading Scripture. According to the post-questionnaire, 16 participants successfully read one book of the Bible, and 2 participants set a goal to read an entire book of the Word, but he did not complete the Scripture reading. Six participants reflect that reading one book of the Scripture seemed challenging to read, or they became disinterested. Otherwise, the post-questionnaires identified a larger group of believers that might avoid or not have an interest in reading Scripture.

Questionnaire # 18 reads, "Spending time in the Word of God helps me to grow spiritually." 38 of 44 participants believe their growth is dependent upon spending time in the Word of God, and four more participants also believe spiritual growth connects to the time one spends in Scripture. One participant did not reflect his understanding of spiritual growth and how it is related to spending time in the Word. The post-questionnaire identified 24 of 25 participants believed there is a direct link between spiritual formation and the time one spends in the Word of God. 1 participant did not rate his or her opinion, either overlooked by accident or because he or she did not want his or her opinion to be known. Most of the participants in the post-questionnaire documented the importance and necessity of spending time in the Word of God, and believed spending time in the Word is linked to spiritual growth. Scripture provides the principles for studying and meditating on the Word of God, which is a spirit, truth, and life for the believer.

Question #19 reads, "I have practiced prayer and fasting when faced with trial or temptations in my life." The pre-questionnaire identified 26 participants who fast and engage in

prayer, especially when they are persecuted or tempted to disobey God, and 10 more participants have made attempts to fast and pray when faced with obstacles and temptations. 2 participants admitted they have not fully committed to fasting and prayer, and 5 participants confessed to indifference toward fasting and prayer when faced with difficult life situations and temptations of the flesh that lead people away from God. The post-questionnaire identified 17 participants who fast and pray during difficult times and when facing various trials and temptations, and five other participants seem to have made attempts to fast and pray but lacked faithful commitment. 2 participants mirrored an unfaithful commitment to prayer and fasting, especially during times of temptation and difficulties in life. The pre-questionnaire identified that 36 out of 44 participants engaged in prayer and fasting because they needed strength and victory through and from God, and 22 out of 25 participants shared the same response to fasting and prayer they believed themselves to be victorious through him. 2 participants seemed to lack interest in fasting and to pray during a trial or temptation. Believers are instructed biblically to trust in the Lord with all thine heart and not try to understand the details of one's circumstances, and practicing the principles of fasting and engaging in prayer undergirds the believer during any trial or test.

Question #20 reads, "I intentionally rebel against God." According to the pre-questionnaire, 30 of 44 participants stated they do not intentionally rebel against God, and six other participants admitted to some level of nonconformity to God. 6 participants seemed to be in denial of open rebellion, one admitted to occasional rebellion, and 5 denied open rebellion against God. According to the post-questionnaire, 18 out of 25 participants deny intentionally rebelling against God, and two more participants resisted intentional disobedience toward God. Three participants were not aware of intention rebellion against God, while 1 participant admitted to purposefully rebelling against the command of God. All Christians are tempted to

trust in their ability during various struggles, problems, failures, and temptations, and acknowledging this weakness should support a believer's spiritual choice to fast and pray, which plays an intricate role in seeking God. Both questionnaires identified the participant's responses to God ranged from full denial of deliberate rebellion to complete rebellion. On any level, the Word of God through Jesus Christ is available to humanity, and the Word is faithful to forgive, merciful and willing to forgive, and gracious to anyone who comes for salvation, health, strength, and deliverance.

Question # 21 reads, "Intimacy with God gives me strength in difficult times." The post-questionnaire revealed that 35 participants declared that intimacy with God gives them strength during stressful times, and five more participants state that the love between them, and God offers provisional strength. Only 1 participant stated that intimacy between God and the believer produces strength. The post-questionnaire identified that 21 out of 25 participants receive strength because there was an experience of intimacy between themselves and God, and two other participants experienced the same effects of intimacy, but they welcome the pursuit of greater intimacy. According to the questionnaires, some ratings were unscored by the participants. Both questionnaires reflected an awareness of and the need for intimacy, and every believer is admonished to pursue greater intimacy with God. The believer should be cognizant of the enemy's aim, which is to lead the believer away from God and tempt him to disobey God's Word; therefore, the Devil will tempt the believer, the believer's carnality leads away from God, and the world is designed to doubt and walk away from God. Experiencing intimacy through sanctification is the process where one grows closer to God, and the image of Christ forming within. Intimacy at its highest level is the portrait of perfect union and intimacy between God

and the believer, and in this life, that process continues to increase through the process of sanctification, and cannot be fully achieved, but only in eternity.

Question #22 reads, "I believe I am regularly growing in spiritual maturity and am more spiritually mature than I was a year ago." Statement #22 asked every participant to measure his or her spiritual growth, and according to the pre-questionnaire 33 out of 44 participants identified as having spiritual growth and maturity characteristics. Eight more participants identified these spiritual growth and maturity characteristics, but confessed the need for increasing growth; however, 1 participant acknowledged a lack of spiritual growth and maturity. 22 out of 25 participants also acknowledged spiritual formation and maturity over the past 12 months as the Holy Spirit worked in their lives, and two other participants agreed that maturity and growth occurred, but maybe not as progressively. It appears that 3 participants did not respond to the statement regarding spiritual growth and maturity. Both questionnaires reflected successful growth and maturity, but the post-questionnaire mirrors success regarding spiritual growth and formation as a result of biblical study. The Holy Spirit is the faithful companion of the believer, and by cooperating with the Holy Spirit, the believer increases in spiritual ability and effectiveness.

Observations and Outcome: Gold–Page 5 of Questionnaire

Questionnaire #23 reads, "I do not strive to live in such a way that my actions, attitude, and behavior will positively affect my community." 31 out of 44 participants disagreed with not living in a manner that their actions, attitude, and behavior positively affect their community, and 3 more participants share the same principles of activity but lack total commitment. Four participants acknowledged a lack of consistency of positive actions, attitudes, and behavior, but not to an extreme. Four participants declared that their negative behavior had not positively

impacted the community. The post-questionnaire identified 15 out of 25 participants were living positively successfully based upon their actions, attitude, and behavior. One participant identified his character in the community is questionable, and four other participants acknowledged his or her negative actions, behavior, and attitude in the community. Five participants did not record a response to the statement; the statement might have overlooked because of time, frustration, or indifference. At least 8 participants reflected a lack of positive behavior, attitude, and actions known within the community, and they are not in denial regarding the effect these actions have on the community. Both questionnaires reflect three distinct groups: Christians who strive to live positively, Christians who are aware of their negative behavior, but may not be concerned about how behavior affects the community, and Christians who deny the effect of their behaviors on the community.

Question # 24 reads, "I find the Bible difficult to read because I just don't understand what I read and how it applies to me." The pre-questionnaire identified 19 out of 44 participants who said the Bible is not difficult to read because they understand what they read and how it applies to their lives. Six more participants agree with that statement less than 100 percent because the Bible is sometimes difficult to read, and they cannot comprehend what the original author means according to the text, which makes it impossible to apply to their lives. Sixteen participants stated the Bible is difficult to read and comprehend, which results in the misapplication of the Word. The post-questionnaire identified 18 out of 25 participants who said that the Bible is not difficult to read or comprehend, and who successfully apply the Word to their lives. One participant shared the same success for reading and knowing the meaning of the text, but occasionally had trouble in reading, understanding, and applying the Scripture. Three participants acknowledged difficulty reading and comprehending and could not apply the Word

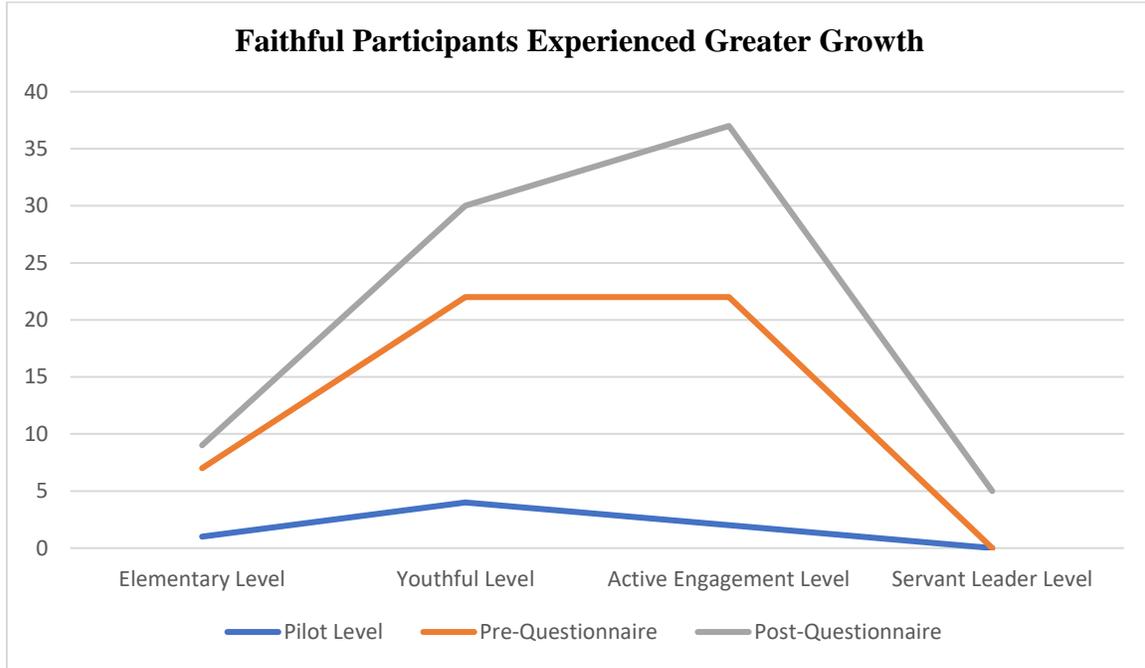
of God to their lives, and another participant admitted total difficulty in reading, receiving the knowledge, and making an application to his or her life. The participants who completed the post-questionnaire appear to have been able to read the Bible, comprehend the message of the original author, and apply the lesson to their lives. The believer can best apply the lesson of the Bible when writing a lesson that comes after the exegetical and hermeneutic process has been applied.

Question #25 reads, "Even if I don't always get what I ask for, I find praying is beneficial." Forty-two participants recognize the benefits of prayer, although the answer is not always what they expected, which reflects trust in the wisdom of God, 4 of the 42 participants indicated that they sometimes doubt God's response to prayer. No participant believed that prayer was unhelpful. 19 of 25 participants acknowledged prayer as an act of unwavering faith in God regardless of the outcome, and 3 participants admitted to some level of doubt of God's answer to prayer. Prayer is the privilege of talking to and listening to God, but when God's answer to prayer stands contrary to a believer's thoughts or counsel of an issue, person, or circumstance, he will either doubt or believe in God. Scripture established the ways of God and was written to inspire his people to trust in him and not the will and actions of humanity.

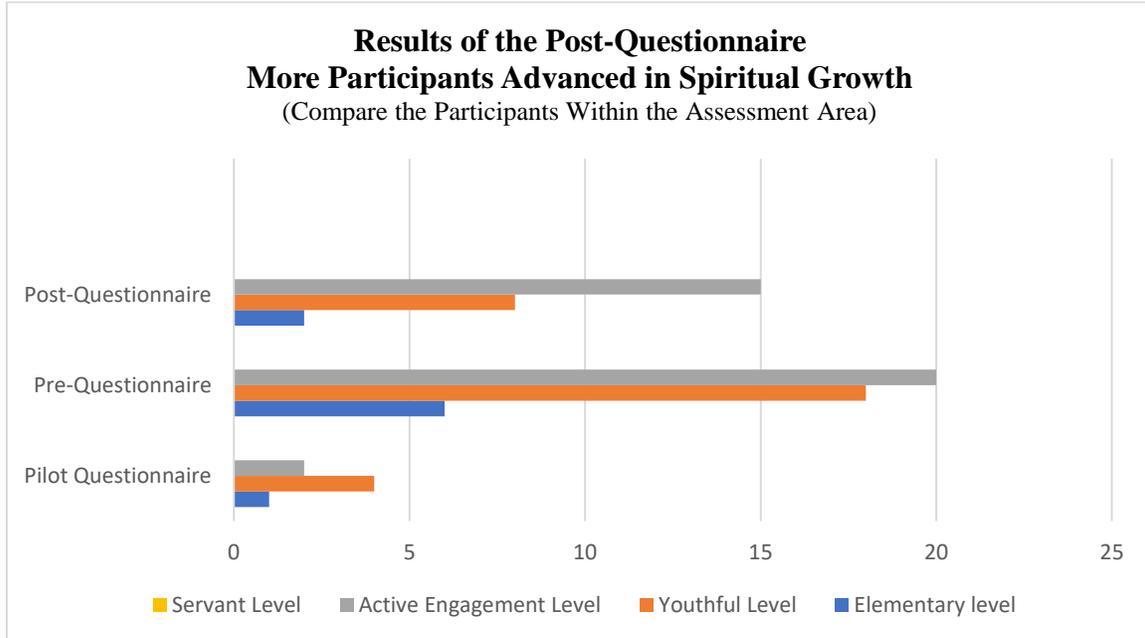
Question #26 reads, "Memorizing Scripture helps me to respond biblically to situations and problems that arise." The pre-questionnaire identified approximately 38 participants who believed that memorizing Scripture helped them to respond biblically to circumstances and difficulties they had to face, but 8 of the 38 participants expressed less than absolute confidence in responding to memorized texts. One participant indicated that he understands that memorizing the Word of God to apply the biblical principles to his situation is essential, but he did not remember the Word during that time of difficulty or ignored the voice of God. The post-

questionnaire indicated 19 participants had experienced the blessing of memorizing Scripture and recalling biblical principles during a crisis or stressful situation, but 3 of the 19 participants appear to have been more reluctant to memorize or remember the Scripture, especially during the time of trouble. Three more participants indicated doubt, lack of memorization, or failure to apply the text at the appropriate time. Being prepared for spiritual warfare means knowing and comprehending the weapons of warfare and knowing how to use this weapon skillfully. Ephesians 6 describes the whole armor of God and emphasizes prayer and supplication. The weapons are to pull down strongholds, and God had already given the believer victory before the questionable circumstances or problems occurred.

1.5 Line Graph



1.6 Bar Graph



Observations

To improve the accuracy of the questionnaire assessment, the research recalculated the score range by identifying the highest rating of 5 times the number of statements of the pre- and post-questionnaires, which equated to 130 points. This point total was 130 divided by two and equaled 65 points to serve as a baseline. Then, 65 points were divided by 4 to represent the four categories: The Elementary Level, Youthful level, Active Engagement Level, and Servant Leader Level, which equaled 16.5 points. Each level increased by 16 points to reflect the 16 points increment per level.

The researcher changed the Elementary Level score range (from 1–170) to the updated score range 1–81, the Youthful Level score range (from 171–340) to the updated score range 82–98, the Active Engagement Level score range (from 341–510) to the updated score range 199–115, and the Servant Leader Level score range (from 511–675) to the updated score range 116–130.

Observed Errors

Noting that some participants did not rate their responses to a question, and that accounts for different totals.

During phase one, the researcher assumed that Dr. Adolph would not have enough time to construct a letter to encourage the members' participation and confirm support for the thesis project, which identified the problem of members who do not read Scripture and the need for intimacy. The layout of the booklet included a cover page, and then the following documents: "My Inheritance" leaders guide, a letter from the pastor, a letter from the researcher, the expectations of participants page, and a commitment page. After accessing the resistance and inaccessibility from leadership, the researcher removed the letter entitled "From the Desk of the Pastor." As requested by Dr. Adolph, Week 1 was emailed and delivered to the church, and after that, delivers 1 or 2 copies to the church for Dr. Adolph and Rev. Moore.

The approval of the Institutional Review Board yielded a 2-week opportunity to begin the "My Inheritance" Bible study at the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church. Based upon the IRB's recommendation, the researcher failed to change the second page of the pre- and post-questionnaire from green to orange.

Statement #23 on the questionnaire appeared to be a problem for 1 participant in category 1, which states, "Not at all untrue to me," and the last category, "True of me," means the same thing. The statement reads: "I do not strive to live in such a way that my actions, attitude, and behavior will positively affect my community." Dr. John Adolph taught lessons 1, 2, 4, 7, and 8, and Minister Moore taught lesson 3, 5, and 6.

Notes

Classes were postponed for two consecutive weeks and resumed on July 11. Cancellation of the first study occurs June 27 through 28 because of the previously scheduled 2-day Leadership Conference that scheduled three seminars during the day and a community service held each night and featured two doctrinal messages. Postponement of the second week occurs because of a national holiday, the 4th of July 4.

The Bible study was held in the main sanctuary during lessons 1 through 6 but relocated to the chapel, and the Youth ministry uses the main sanctuary during the annual Vacation Bible School on July 29 through August 2. Without notification, most of the participants were redirected from the main sanctuary to the chapel upon arrival.

Week 1–June 6, 2019

Pastor Adolph requested three actions: to give him the Bible study “My Inheritance” on a jump drive and a hardcopy and to give it to Brooklyn Williams at the church, and send the third copy to his email: djadolph4581@gmail. Pastor Adolph confirmed receipt of the documents.

Pastor Adolph stood in the pulpit and asked the researcher when the Bible study would start. Standing at the rear of the church, the researcher replied that he had said the Bible study would begin on June 6, 2019. Dr. Adolph told the participants the researcher was attending Liberty University and in the doctoral degree, and the project is a pedagogy for the church Bible study. Pastor Adolph beacons for the researcher to approach the pulpit and asked how he was to proceed forward. The researcher briefly reviewed the need for the participants to complete the pre-questionnaire and the layout of the Bible study, which he initially had advised at the beginning of the Spring semester.

Three participants volunteered to give a pre-questionnaire and black ink pens to the participants, while Pastor Adolph instructed them to complete the survey and honestly respond to

each statement. Pastor Adolph turns through pages of the Bible study and questionnaire; Pastor Adolph states the researcher is the only clergy who has developed pedagogy under his administration of 23 years, and the church has not engaged a Bible study written by anyone under his leadership for several years. Dr. Adolph references the researcher as a doctor several times, and when the questionnaires were collected, he told the participants the Bible study was going to a publisher after the study. When every participant had received Week 1—"My Inheritance" workbook, Dr. Adolph asked every participant to lift the workbook toward heaven and prayed for the success of the project. At the end of the lesson, Dr. Adolph encourages the participants to complete the daily activities. Dr. Adolph read portions of the Bible study and made random comments, while the participants followed along. The following Sunday, some participants expressed appreciation and excitement about the study, and several participants asked for an additional copy for either a loved one who was disabled or could not physically attend the class.

Week 2—June 13, 2019

Brooklyn Williams had not returned the jump drive; therefore, the researcher emailed Week 2 of the Bible study "My Inheritance" to djadolph4581@gmail.com and a white envelope addressed to Pastor Adolph, in care of Brooklyn Williams containing a hard copy of Week 2 was delivered a hard copy at the church. Pastor Adolph did not confirm receipt of the Bible study by email, phone call, nor text message. During the introduction, Pastor Adolph stated that the Bible study was great and encourage participants to complete the weekly assignments. Dr. Adolph read the entire section of the character study and seems more familiar with the lesson as he instructs the participants to turn to specific pages, paragraphs, and expounded specific principles or

characteristics from the study. Three participants asked for and received an additional copy of the study.

Week 3–June 20, 2019

The researcher delivered one hard copy of the Bible study, “My Inheritance” at the church, for Dr. Adolph, in care of Brooklyn Williams. Minister Moore called the researcher on June 20, 2019, at 4 PM, stating Pastor Adolph was out of town and told the researcher to teach the lesson. Dr. Stacy had already advised the researcher only to observe the implementation of the Bible study. Although the Bible study class would begin in two hours, Minister Moore volunteered to present the lesson and states he will use Pastor Adolph’s copy of the Bible study to prepare for the class. The researcher expressed words of gratitude and thanks and delivered an individual copy of the study to Minister Moore at the church. Minister Moore was enthusiastic and inspirational during the lesson and directed attention to specific passages and principles of the study.

Week 4–July 11, 2019

The researcher delivered two hard copies of Week 4 are delivered to the church for Pastor Adolph (in the care of Brooklyn Williams), and Minister Moore, in case the pastor is out of town or on an assignment. The Bible study resumes after two weeks, and the area is under a hurricane watch, which is called Barry. Pastor Adolph leads the Bible study with enthusiasm, shares revelation of certain passages, and directs participants to observe specific details (e.g., God lights the fire or the anointing in our lives, but it is each man’s responsibility to keep the fire burning) of the study. Pastor Adolph concluded the lesson and prayed for the people.

Week 5–July 18, 2019

Two hard copies of the weekly Bible study are delivered to the church for Pastor Adolph and Minister Moore (as in prior weeks). Pastor Adolph is absent, but Minister Moore conducts the Bible study. Minister references specific passages and Scripture with great enthusiasm and highlights details that reinforce the attribute of the priesthood.

Week 6–July 25, 2019

The researcher completes the same procedure for delivering hard copies of the Bible study. Minister Moore was present to teach Week 6 of “My Inheritance” and emphasized the need for all believers to know that the Word of God governs their life. Minister references the Scripture and expounds upon the passage when Jesus instructs his disciples to board a ship and to cross over to the other side, but in the middle of the journey, they encounter treacherous winds. As disciples, it is crucial to keep their eyes on Jesus.

Week 7–August 1, 2019

Two hard copies of the weekly Bible study are delivered to the church for Pastor Adolph and Minister Moore (as in prior weeks). The Bible study relocates to the chapel, and Pastor Adolph taught the lesson with great inspiration, emphasizing the life of David, and takes the participants on a journey through the Psalm 22, 23, and 24, and proceeds to highlight details in the character study. Pastor Adolph highpoints the life of Judah, whose name means praise, and the experience of Leah, who was hated, but favored by God. With much enthusiasm, Pastor Adolph references the Scripture and stresses the power of God and the blessings of restoration in the life of Zechariah, the priest in chapters one through three.

Week 8–August 8, 2019

Two hard copies of the weekly Bible study are delivered to the church for Pastor Adolph and Minister Moore (as in prior weeks). The researcher sent a text to Pastor Adolph to tell him

the lesson provides general information regarding details of the priesthood as well as crowns and rewards. The lesson also includes two sensitive topics and concerns that exist in the community: Muslims and Homosexuality. Neither topic reflects judgmental comments but provides a contrast between Christianity and Muslims and attention to the Scripture, which references homosexuality. If there were concerns, Pastor Adolph is asked to bring it to her attention and to please provide enough time for the participants to complete the post-questionnaire. Pastor Adolph placed particular emphasis upon the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, that was not researched but provided insight into the character of the Holy Spirit. He concludes the lesson by stating every participant to complete the questionnaire. The researcher and two volunteers provide the participants with a post-questionnaire. Upon completion of the assessment, the participant received a letter of appreciation and gratitude for their sacrifice and willingness to participate in the Bible study entitled, "My Inheritance."

Conclusion

The researcher is a member of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, and serves as an associate minister, leads devotion and ministers as an intercessor during the Sunday morning worship service. The task of identifying and meeting the needs of the Body of Christ for growth, development, nurture, comfort, edification, and evangelizing is a daily objective. Member participation in the project will help one to experience the victory of reading the Bible and implementing new strategies for learning that will result in discipleship, obedience to God, and active ministry.

Engaging in biblical studies, heightens awareness of sin, temptation, and trials of life as one increases in spiritual knowledge gains an understanding of the text and applies biblical principles to his life. Gathering aggregated data from the questionnaire is without risk because it

secures privacy and ensures confidentiality because names and other identifying information are not necessary. Participants will be fully informed about the purpose of the research project and can choose whether they want to participate or not. The development and distribution of materials for members will reflect respect for every person and reinforce beneficence and justice throughout the study.

In the New Testament, the Lord instructed Philip to rise and travel southward from Jerusalem to Gaza, and as he journeyed he discovered a man of Ethiopia, a high-ranking eunuch of great authority, managing the treasure of Queen Candace, who went to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27–32). The Ethiopian eunuch sat upon his chariot reading the writings of the prophet Isaiah, which read, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth (Isaiah 57:3).” Philip ran toward him and asked the man if he understood what he was reading, and in honesty, the man confessed that he needed a leader to explain or exegete the Scripture. The Ethiopian eunuch heard the Old Testament author’s original meaning of the text from Philip and comprehended the original interpretation of the passage, preached Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God who did not resist injustice and obtained salvation for humanity. When the Ethiopian eunuch received the real revelation of the text, the Lord sent a Jewish believer to expound upon the Scripture, and the man received salvation. Tesfaye agrees with Hays’ idea that “using visual imagery as an entryway to his view of theological interpretation. Hays affirms that faith is a necessary ingredient in reading Scripture. Hays defines theological interpretation as ‘a way of approaching Scripture with eyes of faith and seeking to understand it within the

community of faith.”¹ This passage of the Bible provides a portrait of the modern reader who is engaged in reading but faced difficulty in interpreting the authentic meaning of the text; thankfully, the Lord sent a servant who comprehended and understood the dynamics of interpreting Scripture.

The researcher’s approach to dispel erroneous viewpoints, conclusions, and misinterpretations was to develop biblical pedagogy that would help the modern reader embrace the truth about God, himself, and others. When a believer–priest reads the written text, he must recognize that preconceived ideas, lacking the original meaning of the Scripture, and insufficient knowledge of geography, language, and antiquity of the Jewish community increases the likelihood of misinterpreting the Bible. Philip did not need to exegete the passage or seek to apply the hermeneutic process for correct interpretation because he and the other disciples were well acquainted with the Old Testament, and as disciples of Jesus Christ, Philip knew the author’s original meaning of the text. The modern reader does not have the privilege of being taught by Jesus during his earthly ministry, but the modern has God’s Word and access to various resources about the culture, geography, language, and history of Israel to provide insight into Scripture. According to Rees,

If the first object of studying the scriptures is to understand what they say, then access to understanding has to take priority over other considerations. That is, revelation comes to our hearts and our minds and when we do not know what a scripture means or even if we have only a vague comprehension of its meaning, its full cognitive, emotional and spiritual import are not accessible to us. We might feel good about reading or speaking the words, but without knowing their meaning, without specific connotative and denotative connection to the intent of the writers of scripture, we might as well be babbling-which, I'm afraid, is what sometimes

¹ Leulseged Philemon Tesfaye, *Pneumatic Hermeneutics: The Role of the Holy Spirit in Theological Interpretation of Scripture.* (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2018), 32. Proquest Dissertations & Theses Global.

happens in our classes and pulpit presentations.²

The modern reader is also responsible for living under grace and conforming to the New Testament Scripture, which means the Word of God governs the life of the New Testament modern reader as a priest, in relationships, giving, and ministry service.

The results from the post-questionnaire provide confirmation that proper exegesis and the hermeneutical application of I Peter 2:9–10 impacted the spiritual lives of the participants, which demonstrates the effects of reading Scripture. Most of the participants believed they could read the Bible and comprehend the original writer’s message, resulting in the right application to their lives. The participants believed studying the Bible compels the worshipper to grow intimately with God, and requires meditation on the Word and listening to songs that reinforce biblical principles. The post-questionnaire established that more participants were reading the Bible consistently after the biblical study entitled, “My Inheritance” they were in the time during the pre-questionnaires. Many of the participants believe that Scripture is God-breathed and links to regular church attendance. Both questionnaires identified that participants utilized their resources to help people in need because it validates one’s love for God, self, and others.

The modern readers had opportunities to identify basic knowledge of the Bible, prioritizing reading the Bible, devotionals, and Christian literature. The post-questionnaires noted that most of the participants strove to be active readers of Scripture. The Bible study did not emphasize or require the believer to read an entire book of the Bible; however, many participants did not indicate that they had read an entire book of the Bible. Most of the participants in the post-questionnaire believed that the 66 books of the Old and New Testament

² Robert A. Rees, “Reading Scripture.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 45. no. 3 (2012): v-vi.

are the Word of God to humanity and applicable to their lives. Almost all participants identified that they were actively reading devotionals and Christian books, and should utilize available resources to exegete or identify the original meaning of the text. Reading Scripture in the community is an Old and New Testament practice, and scholars note that there are creative ways to read Scripture in the West and other cultures in the world, for instance, the Koreans have recited Scripture by incorporating the liturgical readings of the Scripture. Lim agrees...

[T]he ways in which Korean Christians read (and listen to) the Bible in its entirety is called TongDok (TongDok) in Korean. TongDok can be simply defined as a Christian way of reading through the Bible from cover to cover. As mentioned, above, the Jewish and Christian scriptures were originally recited before audiences. TongDok may well be seen as a continuation of the Jewish and Christian liturgical readings of the scriptures. However, it should be remembered that Western missionaries rarely, if ever, introduced such a Jewish and Christian oral performance to Korean Christians. When seen in this way, TongDok is undoubtedly a unique tradition in the history of Korean Christianity.³

Regardless of the presentation in reading Scripture, the only obligation is to communicate the original meaning of the writer. Davie–Kessler argued,

Redeemers (Redeemed Christian Church of God) themselves denied a direct connection between born-again Christianity and local history. They asserted that conversion to a global Christian community allowed them to shed the sinful shackles of a 'pagan' past (cf. Meyer 1998). In fact, globally circulating Pentecostal media did shape Redeemers' discourse. Redeemers bought and borrowed Christian guides from Ghana, Britain, and the United States. But Redeemers' view of destiny also developed in local and regional contexts. Their notion of joint divine-human responsibility for destiny demonstrates some parallels with indigenous Yoruba

³ Sung Uk Lim, "Performing the Bible in the Korean Context: Korean Ways of Reading, Singing, and Dramatizing the Scriptures," *Religions* 9, no. 9 (2018): 268. Accessed December 8, 2018. <https://doaj.org/article/141c86af1d994a4cb4d529ca57b7a702>

spiritual practice and other sub-Saharan and diasporic groups.⁴

According to Robinson, “Whole books, as well as sections within books, were written to make something happen in the thinking and the actions of the reader.”⁵ Schwanda, Wilhoit, and McGinn suggest, “Scripture was employed both personally in reading and meditating and communally in preaching and teaching. Clearly, from the beginning, Christians read the Bible both intellectually for growing in the knowledge of biblical truth and experientially so that the biblical truth might be applied to their daily lives.”⁶ In some settings, adults were instructed to read a passage and interpret the text without exegeting the Scripture, and in a study conducted by Rackley, youth were asked to interpret the Bible in the same manner. Rackley argues...

[L]earning to read scripture within any faith means one must be socialized over time into the history of meaning-making practices that include observing and eventually taking on certain ways of reading, talking, thinking, and being...In this study, the Methodist youth used a number of practices—reading, asking questions, visualizing, making comparisons, drawing out lessons, and applying passages to their lives—that represent just a handful of the possible ways to read and construct meaning from scripture.⁷

The task of identifying and meeting the needs of the body of Christ for growth requires an assessment of the believer's faith in God, his rebellion against God, his character, spiritual warfare, influence, comfort, and edification. Both questionnaires identified three primary responses, which means the study did not affect participants' attitudes, actions, or behavior in the

⁴ Jesse Davie-Kessler, “Discover Your Destiny: Sensation, Time, and Bible Reading Among Nigerian Pentecostals” *Anthropologica* 58, no. 1 (2016): 1-14. Accessed September 4, 2019. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1805465462?pq-origsite=summon>

⁵ Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014),73.

⁶ Tom Schwanda and Jim Wilhoit, “Introduction to the Special Theme Issue: The Formative Reading of Scripture” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul* 5, no. 1 (May 2012): 3-4. Accessed September 14, 2019. <http://studentlife.biola.edu/news-views/news-summary/2008/04/14/journal-of-spiritual-formation-launched/>

⁷ Eric Rackley, “Scripture Reading Practices of Methodist Youth” *Religious Education* 112, no. 2 (2017): 136–148. Accessed August 27, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2016.1224008>.

community. One group identified that they were striving to exhibit Christ-like behavior. The second group had an awareness of ungodliness or unbiblical actions without regenerating or promoting spiritual formation. The last group of participants did not recognize their actions, attitudes, or behavior as relevant to or affecting the community. The participants in both the pre- and post-questionnaires reflected faith in God and engaged in the study to increase their trust in God, but only 1 participant indicated total distrust in God. Participants in both questionnaires experienced strong disagreements and rejection because of their faith and biblical beliefs but noted there was a higher percentage of the participants in the post-questionnaire experiencing these negative responses. Mutually, most of the participants in both groups indicated they trusted God when they experienced problems, burdens, and difficulties; however, 4 participants in each assessment identified a lack of faith in God during times of adversity. Spiritual warfare against sin is the pursuit of holiness, which is the spiritual position of being separated from the world and closer to God. Van der Merwe stated,

John regards holiness as (1) a matter of identity (to be identified and united with a specific God), (2) a matter of character (to imitate the life of a specific person, the Son of this God) and (3) an empirical matter of revelation, salvation and glorification (in which the holiness of Christian believers has a revelatory-salvific effect, through the critical involvement of the Holy Spirit).⁸

Many participants recognized that Christian character is a witness and testimony of their discipleship, and how they conduct themselves in the community will either attract others to God or distract them from becoming a disciple of Christ. Faraoanu declares...

Faith is a foundational response to God that begins when the sinner hears the gospel by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, and should continue throughout one's life. Abraham's faith, a faith

⁸ Dirk Van der Merwe, "Conceptualizing Holiness in the Gospel of John: The Mode and Objectives of Holiness (Part 1)," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73, no. 2 (2019): 9, Accessed September 14, 2019, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4102/hts.v73i3.3421>.

that is concretized in obedience to the Word (he does just as he is ordered to do) and in fear of the Lord: the reverential fear that places God above all, even above his only beloved son who was the guarantee of the promise. True faith is to trust God even when he seems to take everything from you. Faith implies dying to be born again. Faith is based on the Word of God. It is a 'yes,' an 'amen' to God who, sooner or later, will make His word come true. Faith involves the idea of faithfulness: God is always faithful to his word and promises, and man, in turn, has to prove his loyalty to the covenant, to the Word. True faith means to trust God even when He seems to take everything from you. Faith means to die in order to be born again. Finally, an urge to imitate Abraham's example of faith, the example of a man who believed. Just like him, today's man must believe and hope beyond any hope in trust and total obedience to God's will and plan.⁹

Another task of the Bible study was to recognize and meet the needs of the body of Christ for spiritual growth and nurturing, and one responsibility of the Holy Spirit is to achieve the same goals. According to both questionnaires, most of the participants acknowledged the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, wanted to be led by the Holy Spirit and actively seek the leading of the Holy Spirit. As a result of participating in the Bible study, more participants in the post-questionnaire believed spiritual growth links directly to spending time in the Word of God and meditating on the Scripture than in the pre-questionnaire. Participants from both questionnaires indicated an awareness of and the need for intimacy with God and prioritized intimacy with God above everything else. Both pre- and post-questionnaires mirror growth and maturity, but the results of the post-questionnaire illustrated that participants experienced spiritual growth. The spiritual work of sanctification in the life of the participant and the Holy Spirit equates to active spiritual development, which manifests in manners and ministry. Smith states,

Transforming the way people think and act is not easy, especially

⁹ Julian Faraoanu, "Abraham's Faith In and Obedience to God" *Romanian Journal of Artistic Creativity; Woods* 6, no. 1 (2016): 49-58. Accessed September 4, 2019. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2123019992?pq-origsite=summon>

when everything seems stacked against you. One may seek to know God's will, but in time of spiritual persecution, powerlessness, and defeat, a person often does not know what God's plans are. Although the present reality of evil may contradict the hope that believers derive from faith, God's character is sure foundation for trust and encouragement. God's goodness may not fit (one's) limited perspective, but His character does not change.¹⁰

This study distinguishes whether participants were voicing beliefs against discriminations in the community, as a result of the Bible study. Scripture reveals the superiority of God over the universe, earth, state, city, home, and person, which represents places of dominion, power, and influence. The gospels reveal the kingdom of God, and every believer is a representative of God's kingdom and has become God's hands, feet, heart, and voice in the community. The post-questionnaires revealed that reading Scripture and learning biblical principles more participants were exercising their right to vote, and their choices reflected a stand against inequalities and atrocities within the community. Readers must realize there are consequences to disobedience. Estes agrees with Hubbard, "The 'perversion of justice takes place not in spite of government officials but because of them. They are supposed to be checking on each other to make sure that the law is upheld and the rights of the citizens guarded.'"¹¹

As representatives of God's kingdom, the Scripture establishes Christian beliefs, which command awareness and involvement in social justice. The post-questionnaire reflected that fewer participants seemed to be unconcerned. The participants assessed their disobedience to God, which also reflects the way they treat other people in the home, church, and community. Both questionnaires reflected the participants' responses to God, which ranged from full denial of and deliberate rebellion against God to full surrender of obedience to God and mirrored

¹⁰ Gary V. Smith, *The Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Academics, 1994), 164-165.

¹¹ Daniel Estes, *Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2005), 329.

minimal growth in the post-questionnaire. Regardless of the participants' level of obedience or disobedience, repentance from sin means access to the Word of God through Jesus Christ for salvation, forgiveness, healing, and deliverance. Pink argues,

Are your thoughts, my reader, concerning this world and God's relation to it, based upon what you see? Face this question seriously and honestly. And if you are a Christian, you will, most probably, have cause to bow your head with shame and sorrow, and to acknowledge that it is so. But what does 'walking by faith signify? It means that our thoughts are formed, our actions regulated, our lives molded by the Holy Scriptures, for 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing the Word of Truth, and that alone, that we can learn what is God's relation to this world.¹²

Bing points to Acts 2:37-38, "For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation." From their sorrow the Jews are led to the point of repentance, and being repentant they believed in Christ (v.44). Repentance, though motivated by their remorse over the sin of crucifying Christ, focuses more on their thinking about Christ than on their sin."¹³

The kingdom of God is an enduring theme throughout the Old and the New Testaments, even though the concept does not appear in the Old Testament (though the idea is imminent or forthcoming). John the Baptist declared the imminence of God's kingdom, which was a familiar concept to the Jewish people. The Bible proclaims the sovereign and universal dominion of God over every nation.

This kingship is founded on the creation of heaven and earth. The history of the kingdom of Israel is used as a historic symbol of the reign of God and God's communion with God's people. The reign of God is also an important topic in the prophetic books and wisdom literature, as is evident from Psalms 22:28, 47, 93, 96, 97, 99, 103, and 145. God is not only the God of Israel (present kingship), but of all nations and it is proclaimed as a reign that will

¹² Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 13.

¹³ Charles C. Bing, *Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response* (Maitland, FL: Zulon Press, 2014), 76.

be manifested with the coming of the Messiah.¹⁴

Another theme of the Bible is God's grace to humanity and his dual nature, which begins in the Old Testament and continues throughout the New Testament. According to Parker, the covenant of grace has a dual characteristic and declares...

Alongside the unity of the covenant of grace is another important theological consideration that will be surveyed briefly: the parties of the covenant of grace. [T]he covenant of grace is conceived as being both unconditional—God unilaterally establishes the covenant and meets the conditions himself through grace in Christ—and conditional—based on the suretyship of the last Adam (who fulfills the covenant of works).¹⁵

The vice of jealousy and personal ambition were identified and manifested in both the pre- and post-questionnaire, reflecting that participants were struggling with jealousy and tempted to pursue personal ambition without the leading of the Holy Spirit. However, the power of prayer makes a difference. Ortberg said,

Prayer, more important than any other activity, is what places us in the Spirit. When we pray, hearts get convicted, sin gets confessed, believers get united, intentions get encouraged, people receive guidance, the church is strengthened, stubbornness gets melted, wills get surrendered, evil gets defeated, grace gets released, illness gets healed, sorrows are comforted, faith is born, hope is grown, and love triumphs.¹⁶

The results of the study indicated that all the participants recognize practicing the need and effectiveness of prayer. Christians governed by biblical principles believe that prayer played a vital role in dealing with negative attitudes and critical people. Both the pre- and post-

¹⁴ Koos Vorster, "Kingdom, Covenant, and Human Rights" *In die Skriflig* 51, no. 2, (2017): 6-8. Accessed September 15, 2019. <https://doaj.org/article/3d96cb0e2f28419aafde56d9ae2cfd58>.

¹⁵ Brent Evan Parker, "The Israel-Christ-Church Typological Pattern: A Theological Critique of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies." (PhD diss. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), (2017): 108-115. Accessed December 18, 2018. <https://repository.sbts.edu/handle/10392/5352>.

¹⁶ John Ortberg, *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 108.

questionnaires indicated that most of the participants prayed when they were faced with criticism and negativity spiritually, but the post-questionnaire identified that all of the participants prayed in response to spiritual attacks. Both questionnaires identified that most participants know about fasting and engaging in prayer when faced with a trial or temptation, but more participants participated in prayer and fasting as a result of the study. The pre- and post-questionnaires reflected that many participants pray and trust God to answer their prayer, even though God's answer may stand contrary to one's desire. The post-questionnaire identified a few participants struggle with God's decisions and find them difficult to accept. To adequately address one's struggle to trust God's answer to a problem, specific lessons can be researched and formatted to strengthen one's faith in God and trust him because he knows best. Placher reflected on Origen's writing saying...

From earliest childhood, Origen devoted himself to the study of the Bible. Even as a boy, his student and biographer reported, 'he was not satisfied with reading the sacred words in a simple and literal manner, but sought something further, and busied himself, even at that age, with deeper speculations, troubling his father with questions as to what, could be the inner meaning of the inspired Scripture. He continued to cause trouble by pursuing the inner meaning of Scripture all his life. Partly (perhaps Gnostics influence was at work here) he suspected that the deepest truth always remain hidden at first and reveals itself only to long reflection.¹⁷

God Almighty, resides in and beyond the heavens, watching creation and surpassing the boundaries of what is known among humanity while taking great delight in his relationship with humanity. Durand said, "The true God is both very high and very near, different and intimate, free and committed, especially toward those who are humble. God alone is holy, undoubtedly;

¹⁷ William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1983), 62.

but God invites the members of his people to become holy as well, through all kinds of practices and observances.”¹⁸ The Bible teaches the believer can learn more about God by reading Scripture, but the premise for understanding Scripture needs the correct interpretation of the author’s original meaning of the text.

When Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch on the road that leads to Gaza, Philip did not endeavor to define the words in the passage or provide a personal interpretation of the passage. Philip provided the original meaning of the verse that had been recorded in the Hebrew language and made available in the Greek language. The passage from Isaiah was prophetic, which had been spoken in antiquity, for the chosen nation of Israel and identifies distances in time, geographic location, and culture. Philip was empowered by the leading of the Holy Spirit to accurately interpret the Scripture because he understood the cultural context of the passage and had encountered the manifested Word of God in the life of Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch wanted to know the full revelation of the Scripture, and the Lord used the ministry of Philip to provide a proper exegesis and hermeneutic approach to provide full revelation of the text. The researcher’s task in this thesis project was to provide an exegesis and hermeneutic application for developing a biblical study that helps the modern reader read Scripture and increase in intimacy with God, the church, and the community. The modern reader, biblical teachers, and communicators of the gospel are held accountable to God to search for the true meaning or interpretation of Scripture. The quest for biblical truth begins with reading Scripture and requires proper exegesis and the hermeneutic process, which reflects in the Bible study of this thesis project.

¹⁸ Durand, Emmanuel, “God’s Holiness: A Reappraisal of Transcendence” *Modern Theology*, Vol. 34, no. 3 (2018): 419-433. Accessed February 19, 2019. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/moth.12426>.

After the Bible study, the researcher assessed the questionnaires and identified that the participants comprehended truth and demonstrated practices of faith, obedience, and holiness. The modern reader might believe that he only needs to read the Bible to comprehend the Word of God; however, one must learn to exegete the text and apply the hermeneutic process or engage in a study where the author takes responsibility for proper interpretation of Scripture. By utilizing the proper exegetical tools and applying the hermeneutical process to identify the original meaning of the biblical text, the participant read the Scripture and by doing so, experienced the revelation of the Word of God. Ultimately, the proper interpretation of the Scripture has helped participants to properly apply the biblical principles of Scripture to their lives, the church, and the community.

Appendix A
Doctor of Ministry
Application for Candidate Status

Date	October 1, 2019
Name	Tammy J. Jacko
Liberty ID	22423333
Liberty Email	tjacko@liberty.edu
Thesis Proposal Title	Reading Scripture: Developing Intimacy with God, the Church, and Community

DMIN 890 Instructor Endorsement: _____

Date: _____

Doctor of Ministry Director Endorsement: _____

Date: _____

DMIN OFFICE ONLY:
Faculty Mentor Assigned:
DMIN 889 Section:
Date _____

Appendix B

Doctor of Ministry Thesis Project Proposal Approval Form

Researcher Name:

Tammy J. Jacko

Title of the Thesis Project Proposal:

Reading Scripture: Developing Intimacy with God, the Church, and Community

Thesis Project Faculty Mentor:

Dr. Robert Wayne Stacy

Thesis Project Faculty Mentor Approval Signatures:

Thesis Project Faculty Mentor

Date

Doctor of Ministry Program Director

Date

Appendix C

Abbreviation of Sacred Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen. Genesis	Eccl. Ecclesiastes
Exo. Exodus	SS /Song of Solomon
Lev. Leviticus	Isa. Isaiah
Num. Numbers	Jer. Jeremiah
Deut. Deuteronomy	Lam. Lamentations
Josh. Joshua	Ezek. Ezekiel
Judg. Judges	Dan Daniel
Ruth	Hos. Hosea 1-2
I Sam. I Samuel	Joel
II Sam. II Samuel	Amos
1 Kings	Obad. Obadiah
2 Kings	Jonah
1 Chron. 1 Chronicles	Mic. Micah
2 Chron. 2 Chronicles	Nah. Nahum
Ezra	Hab. Habakkuk
Neh. Nehemiah	Zeph. Zephaniah
Esth. Esther	Hag. Haggai
Job	Zech. Zechariah
Ps. Psalms	Mal. Malachi
Prov. Proverbs	

New Testament

Matt. Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Rom. Romans
1 Cor. 1Corinthians
2 Cor. 2 Corinthians
Gal. Galatians
Eph. Ephesians
Phil. Philippians
Col. Colossians
1 Thess. 1Thessalonians
2 Thess. 2 Thessalonians
1 Tim. 1 Timothy
2 Tim. 2 Timothy
Titus
Philem. Philemon
Heb. Hebrews
Jam. James
1 Pet. 1 Peter
2 Pet. 2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Rev. Revelation

Appendix D

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 23, 2019

Tammy J. Jacko

IRB Exemption 3759.052319: Reading Scripture: Developing Intimacy with God, the Church, and Community

Dear Tammy J. Jacko,

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 that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

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

Research Ethics Office

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

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