



ONE WORD

STUDY GUIDE

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FROM THE ONE WORD TEAM

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Thank you for picking up this study guide. Over a year ago, we began asking ourselves some questions: “What would it be like for a congregation to spend every week for a year learning more about Biblical concepts? How could that improve our Biblical vocabulary?” We decided to design an easy way for a church to study 53 Biblical words, and those discussions eventually resulted in the One Word project. As we began dreaming and brainstorming, we immediately knew we wanted to provide a resource for preachers. While we invite anyone and everyone to use this guide, you will notice that it is designed with preaching in mind. If you are interested in purchasing devotional books that serve as a companion to this guide, you can find order them at www.onewordstudy.com.

We invited over 20 authors to join us in preparing a different study guide for each week’s word, and we think you will agree that their contributions have made this an excellent resource. We are also thankful for Ed Gallagher (Heritage Christian University) and Jesse Robertson (Harding University), who reviewed and edited the “Understanding the Word” sections. These entries are not designed to take the place of the serious study needed to prepare a lesson. Instead, they are designed to “jump-start” the study process and provide guidance and ideas along the way. Each entry is made up of three sections: Understanding the Word, Reading the Word, and Preaching the Word. In each “Understanding the Word” section, the author provides information on Hebrew and Greek terms that aid our understanding of that week’s word. Every “Reading the Word” section provides passages of scripture, from both the Old and New Testaments, which describe that week’s topic. The “Preaching the Word” sections include various sermon ideas from the author, including suggested songs to be used in worship when the lesson is preached.

Feel free to use this guide in whatever way is the most helpful for you. If you want to preach on the topics in a different order that better fits your plans or ministry context, go ahead. If you want to use this for a class instead, or even just save it in your library for the next time you preach on one of these subjects, that is fine with us. Our goal is simply to provide something helpful in the study of God’s Word; however you use it, we hope it will bless you and your congregation. God bless you as you share His Word!

And now I command you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

In His Service,
Chad, Dale, Philip, Andrew, and David



BIG PICTURE



WORDS

AN INTRODUCTION BY
RALPH GILMORE

THE POWER OF WORDS - it would be difficult to overestimate it. Although I am honored to be writing this introductory article, I can claim no credit for the concept or initiation of this project. In my opinion, this “One Word” project can be one of the most important projects I have been a part of to help congregations of God’s people, and their preachers, at the local level. I can envision that enhanced Bible understanding and increased commitment to Jesus will result when this project is begun. In this lesson, we will examine the general power of words, the power of His Ancient Words, the Word of Life, and what the Words means to me.

The Power of Words

My wife and I were discussing the power of words in a major restaurant in our city. When our waiter Richard arrived at our table, I told him that before we left after the meal, I would be asking him to give me the most powerful words he had ever heard. To my surprise, he actually accepted the challenge. True to his word, just before we left, he said to me, “My wife is pregnant and due to have our baby in a few months. So, I guess the most powerful words I have heard are, ‘You are going to have a baby.’” These were words of wisdom from a young man. Immediately my mind went to the scene of a young virgin who heard from the angel Gabriel that she was going to have a baby (Matthew 1:21). These were powerful words because as mother of the Messiah, she was genuinely blessed among women (Luke 1:28). Given a few moments to think about it, many of the readers of this article would also be able to pinpoint specific times in their lives where the power of words was particularly poignant. Solomon knew this when he wrote, “There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18). Again, he says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and

those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21). It is belief and trust in the power of words that prompted this “Words” project.

The Power of His Ancient Words

I wonder if Michael W. Smith, Ronnie Freeman, and Tony Wood knew the power of their written words about the Written Word when they penned, “Holy words long preserved for our walk in this world, They resound with God’s own heart, Oh, let the ancient words impart.”¹ The words to the entire song are worthy of being noted, but these will suffice.

The Bible is by far the most thoroughly documented ancient document of all time surpassing in evidence exponentially more than all other documents of similar age put together. I would personally be ashamed to own allegiance to a religion that has a primary so-called “divine” document(s) that is/are so poorly attested as most of them are. That is **not** true of God’s Ancient Words - the Bible. Daniel Wallace, established authority on New Testament Greek manuscripts, lists 5,837 of this manuscripts on his website entitled “Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts.”² Never in this world has there been such a reliable, accurate, moving, and powerful document as your Bible.

His Ancient Words, filled with His Spirit, can pierce deep into the depths of the human spirit in such a way that God reveals that His knowledge of each of us far surpasses what we actually know about ourselves (Hebrews 4:12).

The Word of Life

The ultimate of all words is, of course, Jesus who is **the** Word – the *logos* (John 1:1-3,14; Revelation 19:13). Although the Greeks may have thought of the *logos* in an abstract, impersonal way as a guarantor of order and purpose in the universe, in Hebrew thought the *Logos* is personal.³ Many linguists and Bible interpreters have noted the inadequacy of translating the word *logos*. The way that John uses the word has such richness that any single English word cannot render its fullness. Sproul asserts, correctly so, that “the cosmic Christ enters our humanity. It is the supreme moment of visitation of the eternal with the temporal, the infinite with the finite, the unconditioned with the conditioned.”⁴

¹ “Ancient Words,” Universal Music Publishing Group.

² www.csntm.org.

³ R.C. Sproul, “Interpreting the Logos,” available at www.ligonier.org/blog/interpreting-logos.

⁴ Sproul, “Interpreting the Logos,” www.ligonier.org/blog/interpreting-logos.

A good summary of Jesus as the preexistent *Logos*, as seen through the early Christian apologists and “church fathers” is that He: 1. reveals the Father to mankind (John 1:15), 2. is the divine reason (i.e. the “logic”) of the revelation of God’s will, and 3. is the divine will by which the worlds were made.⁵

To me personally, Jesus is the reason and revelation of God to mankind (Colossians 1:24-27). He is the sum total of the reason for our being on this planet to begin with. Without Him, we are nothing. It is appropriate from the viewpoint of religion, philosophy, and every other legitimate point of view that Jesus should be the foundation of the “Words” project. Without the Word, all other words pale in significance.

The Words

So, why should we be excited about the yearlong, one-word-per-week One Word project? First of all, we must not underestimate how powerful understanding is in our relationship with God. If the preacher at your congregation accepts the challenge of studying one Bible word per week, it will deepen, enhance, and embellish his own appreciation for the word of the week. If he studies this particular word and prays for his own understanding of this word (James 1:5) every day that week, then he will be more ready to preach about that word than perhaps ever before. If he is able to translate that appreciation of the word into his sermon and transmit this appreciation to the audience, then that word will be on the minds and hearts of the hearers in such a way that spiritual growth is inevitable. This growth in turn will positively impact the local congregation in innumerable ways. The head must lead the heart and not the other way around. Solomon said, “Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools” (Proverbs 14:33). Paul prayed for the brethren at Colossae, Laodicea, and other places “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3).

A second advantage of working the One Word project is that it will enrich our hearts spiritually. Jesus knows how to help us find genuine treasure when He encourages us to search our hearts, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abun-

⁵ “Logos: Philosophy and Theology,” www.Britannica.com.

dance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45, NKJV). If your hearts are touched by this One Word study, it is our belief that Jesus will be magnified because the church will be spurred on to greater Bible study and more conscientious Christian living.

Therefore, it is our desire that your understanding and your hearts are more in tune with God’s grace through this study. May God bless you as you engage in this study of Words in God’s Word--the Ancient Words. To God be the glory.

CREATION

BART WARREN



Understanding the Word

The term creation refers to the unique action of God. It refers to all that was brought into existence by God. Thus the word primarily refers to the initial act by which God caused all things (both spiritual and material) to come into existence. Such is the foundation for our understanding of everything relating to God and man. “Unless we know God as the Creator of all things, we do not know the true God.”¹

There are four Hebrew terms and four Greek terms that are pertinent to our study.

Hebrew terms:

‘āśâ – vb. “to do or make. Refers to doing or making in general”² (Genesis 1:7, 16, 25; Deuteronomy 32:6; Nehemiah 9:6; Proverbs 8:6; Psalm 95:5, 6).

yāšar – vb. “to form, fashion. To form from clay, molten metal, or other materials”³ (Genesis 2:7, 8, 19; Isaiah 43:7, 9, 21; 54:17; Jeremiah 10:16; 51:19).

qānâ – vb. “to acquire, create. Refers typically to acquiring something through purchase or labor. May refer to creating, not just acquiring, in certain contexts”⁴ (Genesis 14:19, 22; Deuteronomy 32:6; Psalm 139:13; Proverbs 4:5; 8:22).

bārā – vb. “to create. Used only of God creating, never of humans making things”⁵ (Genesis 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3, 4; Isaiah 4:5; 40:28; 45:7, 8, 18; 65:17; Psalm 89:12, 47; 148:5). This is the most significant of our four Hebrew words, as it appears in some of the most crucial passages and has far-reaching implications. The root *bārā’* has the basic meaning “to create.” It differs from *yāšar* “to fashion” in that the latter primarily emphasizes the shaping of an object while *bārā’* emphasizes the initiation of the object.⁶ God is always the subject of the expression. In fact, it is always the God of Israel, never a foreign deity who creates in this way.⁷

Greek terms:

poieō – vb. “to make, do. Describes the act of making, producing, or creating.”⁸ This is a very general and frequent word for making and doing. It is only occasionally used for God’s act of creation (Acts 4:24; 17:26; Romans 9:20; Hebrews 1:2).

ktizō – vb. “create or establish. To create something.”⁹ Like the Hebrew term *bārā*, this Greek word is only used of the creative acts of God in the New Testament (Matthew 19:4; Romans 1:25; 1 Corinthians 11:9; Ephesians 2:10; 3:9; 4:24).

κτίσις (*ktisis*). n. fem. “creation. Usually refers to what is created; occasionally refers to the

act of creation”¹⁰ (Mark 13:19; Romans 1:20; 8:19-22; Colossians 1:23).

κόσμος (kosmos). n. masc. “the created world, the universe, all created things. Refers to all that exists”¹¹ (Luke 11:50; John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 4:3; Revelation 13:8; 17:8)

Reading the Word

1. Genesis 1:1, 27
2. Genesis 2:1-3
3. Matthew 19:3-6
4. Romans 1:24-25
5. Ephesians 3:8-10

In Genesis 1:1 and 27, we read, “In the beginning, God **created** the heavens and the earth... So God **created** man in His own image, in the image of God He **created** him; male and female He **created** them” (emp. added). In the next chapter, Genesis 2:1-3, we find this description: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in **creation**” (emp. added).

Matthew 19:3-6 states, “And Pharisees came up to Him and tested Him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that He who **created** them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh.

What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (emp. added).

Romans 1:24-25 warns us, “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the **creature** rather than the **Creator**, who is blessed forever! Amen” (emp. added).

In Ephesians 3:8-10, Paul writes, “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who **created** all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places” (emp. added).

Preaching the Word

Principle: It is imperative that we be able to engage both the skeptic and the misguided Christian when it comes to the ultimate origin of all things. Our existence is not an accident. Further, the existence of mankind is not a recent phenomenon; we have been here from the beginning. We know this to be the case scientifically, philosophically, and most importantly, Biblically. We can know that God exists, that the Bible is His inspired Word, and that Jesus of Nazareth is the divine Son of God. The truth has nothing to fear. We can examine the evidence, and then by proper reasoning, we can marshal powerful arguments that prove the veracity of our claims (for example, the cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God).

Quote: Wayne Jackson highlights some of the important lessons learned from the Biblical account of creation: 1. Dignity, worth, value, etc. are all inherent in humanity as we are made in the image of God. 2. Humanity (the creature) is responsible to its Creator (Romans 9:21); man is required to obey God. 3. Creation establishes the foundation of the home—the exclusively male / female relationship that constitutes marriage, along with the one-man-for-one-woman arrangement. 4. The origin and consequences of sin. 5. The first glimpse of Heaven’s plan of redemption in Genesis 3:15. 6. The creation account reveals the utter foolishness of Darwinism.¹²

Principle: The description of creation in Scripture is *ex nihilo* – which means God created the material universe without the use of pre-existing materials. He did not use anything that was already in existence. The doctrine of creation out of nothing has numerous important theological implications. First, creation *ex nihilo* emphasizes God’s necessary existence. God is uncreated. He is eternal which means He has no beginning or ending point. He is uncreated and all other things are created. All other things in the universe are contingent upon His existence. Anything and everything is grounded in God’s creative act. Second, creation *ex nihilo* highlights the doctrine of divine freedom. God freely chose to create something distinct from Himself. He freely created finite persons in His image to invite them into a loving relationship with Himself. Third, creation *ex nihilo* exhibits God’s supreme power. If God desired to create but could only do so if there happened to be some preexisting matter, then He would not be all-powerful. However, His ability to simply speak the world into existence is a stunning display of His majestic power.¹³

It boggles the mind to attempt to grasp just how big and powerful God must be to speak the world into existence. It is irrational to say “nothing” created “everything.” It is unscientific to say that this world has always been here (that the universe is eternal).

Hebrews 3:4 states, “For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.” We don’t have to see the architect or construction crew to know they exist; all we have to see is the structure they built.

Songs Suggestions: “Our God, He Is Alive,” “Awesome God,” “How Great Thou Art,” “We Bow Down,” “Blue Skies and Rainbows.”

Song of Encouragement: “Create in Me.”

¹ Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. 2002) 100.

² Michael E. Peach, “Creation,” Ed. Douglas Mangum et al. Lexham Bible Reference Series, available through Logos Bible Software. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014) n. pag.

³ Peach.

⁴ Peach.

⁵ Peach.

⁶ Thomas E. Mccomiskey, “אָרַב אֵלֶּיךָ.” Ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1999) 127.

⁷ W.H. Schmidt, “רַב אֵלֶּיךָ to create” Ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997) 255.

⁸ Peach.

⁹ Peach.

¹⁰ Peach.

¹¹ Peach.

¹² Wayne Jackson, “Creation,” *Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy* (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications. 2002) 38.

¹³ Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004) 25.

SIN

CHUCK MONAN



Understanding the Word

“Sin is any attitude of indifference, unbelief or disobedience to the will of God revealed in conscience, law, or gospel—whether this attitude expresses itself in thought, word, deed, or settled disposition and conduct.”¹

The Old Testament employs a number of words that connote the concept of sin: *hat-tath* – a missing or offense; *pasha* – rebellion, transgression; *awon* – perversion; *ra* – evil; *resh* – a wrong, iniquity, impiety. Similarly, the New Testament uses a number of words for the same purpose: *hamartia* – a missing the mark; *parabasis* – transgression; *adikia* – unrighteousness; *asebeia* – impiety, wickedness; *anomia* – contempt and violation of the law; *porneia* – depravity; *epithumia* – desire for what is forbidden, lust.

The variety of description of sin in the Bible requires a gathering together of the various terms used to explain this problem of the world: namely, the rebellion of human beings against their Creator. That sin takes on a multiplicity of forms makes it necessary to trace sin’s history, consequences, and antidote—the salvific work of Jesus at Calvary.



Reading the Word

Narrowing down the significant Biblical passages dealing with sin is a challenge as the problem of man’s disobedience of God echoes from virtually every page. But a careful reading of the following Scriptures will be helpful.

1. Genesis 3:1-19
2. Matthew 23:23-28
3. Galatians 5:19-21
4. Romans 3:21-26
5. Revelation 21:6-8

The problem of sin and need for redemption is the theme of the Bible. It is the reason God sent His Son to earth (John 3:16-21). But even the casual observer sees the words of Paul coming to fruition as churches and preachers proliferate where people gather to hear what their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3-5). Sin isn’t a popular theme for many today as they replace the Gospel with self-help, feel-good platitudes. Yet the stain of sin and cleansing blood of Christ permeates the pages of God’s Word. We cannot appreciate the good news of salvation unless we understand the bad news of sin.



Preaching the Word

Illustration: Leonard Cohen’s song “The Future” features the following lyric: “And when they said, ‘Repent,’ I wonder what they meant.” Increasingly, people dismiss the idea that they have sin for which they need to repent. Fewer Americans each year acknowledge that they are in need of saving as a Biblical view of sin wanes. Sin and repentance are becoming antiquated notions.

Quote: “Because sin is in the world, God wars against us. The Bible says, ‘For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience’ (Ephesians 5:6). God’s wrath is an objective force now working against the sons of men. Because of sin the angels war against us executing God’s judgment. The earth wars against us in its barrenness, floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes. God said, ‘Cursed is the ground’ (Genesis 3:17). The atmosphere wars against us in its storms, lightnings, and winds breathing pestilence. The beasts of the field war against men—thirsting for their blood and pursuing them as prey. Our fellows war against us in slander, robbery, oppression, and murder. We even war against ourselves. Our passions enslave and destroy us. Our consciences torment us with stinging remorse. Peace! Peace! If there ever was a time when men needed peace, it is now!”²

Idea: Several New Testament passages like Romans 1:28-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-21 name a litany of sins. Not a single one of us are innocent of all of these. After reading these verses and making this point emphatically, the powerful Isaac Watts’ hymn “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” could be sung as an invitation as all are called to recognize the role our sins played in Jesus’ death, and

pledge to give Him “my soul, my life, my all.”

Illustration: Michael E. Hardin writes: “In 1991, a judge fined brothers Geno and Russell Capozziello, owners of a Bridgeport, Connecticut, wrecking company, nearly \$900,000 for operating an illegal dump. In 1986, on the empty lots surrounding their facility, the brothers began dumping debris from buildings. Eventually the mound of rubble and muck covered two acres and reached a height of thirty-five feet, the equivalent of a three-story building.

The state ordered them to clean it up, but the brothers claimed there was no place to dump it legally in Bridgeport, and they could not afford to have it hauled away. While spending more than \$330,000 the previous year to have debris hauled away, they barely dented the pile. According to Geno, “It was never supposed to get this high.”

Like garbage, the effects of sinful habits have a way of accumulating beyond our plans and beyond our control.

Songs: I Stand Amazed; Nothing But the Blood
Song of Encouragement: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, Jesus Paid It All

¹ John E. Kuizenga, “Sin,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol. 4*, Ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960) 2978.

² Jimmy Allen, *The American Crisis* (Searcy, AR: Harding College, 1971) 97.

WRATH

DENNY PETRILLO



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, the word *wrath* is found 155 times, and the word *anger* another 264 times.¹ That means that as we read the Old Testament, we will encounter *anger* or *wrath* an astounding 419 times! Out of that number, around 300 times it is the wrath or anger of God that is being described. Different Hebrew words are used to describe these two emotions. The word commonly translated *anger* is the Hebrew word *'ap*. The word *wrath* is frequently the Hebrew words *hēmâ* or *qāšap*. Deuteronomy 9:19 is a good verse to illustrate these words. There Moses says, “For I was afraid of the anger (*'ap*) and hot displeasure (*hēmâ*) with which the Lord was wrathful (*qāšap*) against you in order to destroy you” (NASB). Obviously the making of the golden calf greatly displeased the Lord! When one has feelings of wrath or anger, it is describing a fury or rage at what someone has said or done.²

In the New Testament the word translated *wrath* is *orgē*. It means “strong indignation directed at wrongdoing, with focus on retribution, wrath.”³ This word is found 49 times in the Greek New Testament. The word translated *anger* is frequently *thumos*, meaning “a state of intense displeasure, anger, wrath, rage, indignation.”⁴ This word is found 18 times in the Greek New Testament. Ephesians 4:31 serves as a good illustration of these words: “Let

all bitterness and wrath (*thumos*) and anger (*orgē*) and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (NASB).

The variety of words used in both Testaments and the meanings of these words should encourage us to use caution. Wrath is found as both an admirable trait and a sinful one. A person, zealous for the will of God, might be filled with “righteous indignation.” This is an admirable trait (especially with all of the passiveness we see today in God’s people). Yet a person might also be filled with a hot temper or rage when someone does something to upset him. This would be a sinful trait, and one that is condemned by God.

When the wrath of God is described, it reveals the true heart of the Lord. He is the almighty God, and His Word should reign supreme in the hearts of men. When mortal men shun or speak against the words of the Lord, it provokes Him! Who do they think they are? While God is a God full of lovingkindness and compassion, all of that disappears when men arrogantly defy Him and His holy Word (Exodus 34:6-7).



Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand wrath.

1. Deuteronomy 9:7-22
2. Ezekiel 7:7-19
3. Romans 2:5-8
4. Ephesians 4:26-31
5. 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; 5:9

While many Old Testament texts could be considered, the book of Ezekiel seems to be a predominant place to consider the word wrath (used 35 times). Many times God will say that He will “spend” His wrath (Ezekiel 5:13; 6:12; 13:15; 24:13) or He will “pour out” His wrath (Ezekiel 7:8; 9:8; 14:19; 20:8, 13, 21, 33, 34; 22:22; 36:18). Both of these present powerful images in our mind. God, being a God of mercy and patience, does not immediately punish when men sin (See Ecclesiastes 8:11). Instead, that sin and its punishment accumulate. It is like water poured into a cup. When the cup is full, there is nothing left to do but empty it. So also is it with God’s wrath. God’s people have filled the cup with sin after sin, and now God is going to “spend” or “pour out” His wrath.

In the New Testament the book of Romans is a good book to consider the concept of wrath. In Romans 1:18-19, Paul notes that “wrath of God” is directed toward ungodly and unrighteous men. These men have defied God, and have chosen a life of impurity and rebellion. They even “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Such choices provoke the wrath of God. In Romans 2:5, Paul, using language similar to that of Ezekiel, says that they are “storing up wrath.” The Jew, living in sin, is thinking that he had escaped God’s wrath (because nothing

bad has happened to him). Yet he is “storing up” that wrath. Paul says that this wrath is being saved for the “day of wrath.” God has picked a day in which His accumulated wrath will be poured out upon sinful mankind (Acts 17:30-31).

Jesus teaches that we should “fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell” (Matthew 10:28, NASB). The Hebrews writer says, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31, NASB). The “good news” of the Gospel is that through the redemptive work of Christ we can “be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Romans 5:9, NASB).



Preaching the Word

Illustration: In a lecture given at Washington University in St. Louis, renowned atheist Richard Dawkins, professor of zoology at Oxford University, said in defense of Darwinian evolution, “We don’t need evidence. We know it to be true.”⁵ Such ignorant statements illustrate what Paul means when he says that the wrath of God is poured out on those who “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). We are constantly surrounded by examples of lies being told to promote ungodly beliefs (i.e. the Nebraska Man was the “missing link,” but it was just a pig’s tooth; homosexuality is not a choice but genetic; a woman has the right to choose what to do with her own body, etc.).

Quote: “In order for Biblical universalism to work, eschatological wrath must be an aspect of God’s love. Wrath in the eschaton must have a remedial sense; it must seek to reform. Otherwise it remains undiluted anger. But as we have seen, Paul never hints that eschatological wrath reforms or functions as a part of God’s love. He never says, for instance, that the wicked will suffer *orgē* in order to bring them to repentance. Rather, one gets the impression that those who fall under eschatological wrath are forever cut off from God’s love.”⁶

Quote: “Paul never says explicitly that God’s wrath is eternal, but it is clear that he intends it nonetheless. Sometimes wrath is poured out in the present, sometimes at the close of the age. Once under eschatological wrath, however, the plight of the wicked appears to be hopeless. God no longer acts on their behalf but has withdrawn His love from them. His wrath is permanent and eternal.”⁷

Idea: Romans 5:9 connects several significant terms with the concept of God’s wrath. He mentions our being “justified,” and our being “saved,” as a result of the “blood” of Christ. That blood is how we escape the “wrath of God.” Have the congregation think about the significance of Christ’s blood in this context by singing “Nothing but the Blood,” “Sinners Jesus Will Receive,” and “Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed.”

Illustration: Rob Bell made himself famous (and rich) with his book entitled *Love Wins*. The concept is that God loves everybody, and therefore everybody will escape the wrath of God. While the notion sounds pleasing, it is yet another example of “suppressing the truth in unrighteousness.” There is a “great day com-

ing,” and there will be a separation of the righteous and the unrighteous (John 5:28-29).

Song Suggestions: “Jesus Is Coming Soon,” “In Christ Alone.”

Song of Encouragement: “There’s A Great Day Coming.”

¹ These numbers are from the New American Standard Update edition.

² “2058 קָצַף,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999) 808.

³ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 720.

⁴ Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 461.

⁵ Richard Dawkins, *World Magazine*, 22 March 1997, 10.

⁶ William V. Crockett, “Wrath that Endures Forever,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 2 (1991) 200.

⁷ Crockett 201.



GRACE

ANDREW PHILLIPS



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, the term translated *grace* is *hên*, and it describes favor shown by one person to another. In fact, the term is translated *favor* more often than *grace*. It is used 69 times in the Old Testament, and in 53 of those times it is part of the phrase “to find favor” in someone’s eyes. Eleven times it is used to describe an individual’s charm.

In the New Testament, the word translated *grace* is *charis*. It refers to favor or a gift of benevolent goodwill. In the New Testament, grace is sometimes used to express the effect of generosity, and it occasionally refers to gratitude for generosity.

Jack Lewis provides an important reminder about the different ways the word *grace* is used: “The wide span of meanings that this word has then makes it imperative that one give special attention to any particular passage that he is dealing with that makes use of that word. Otherwise, he may be attributing to a writer an idea that the writer did not have in making use of that word.”¹

Because there is some variation in meaning, we need to be careful not to interpret every occurrence of *grace* in Scripture as a reference to God’s saving grace. Jack Cottrell provides a helpful list of three connotations for the term

grace as it relates to salvation: 1. The source of salvation (an attribute of God’s nature), 2. The content of our salvation (the gift we receive), and 3. The way God saves us (His plan of salvation).² He points out that in contemporary Christian usage, *grace* usually indicates “saving” grace.

More than any other writer, Paul uses the term to describe the salvation event. Grace is not just a quality possessed by God, but it is actually a message proclaimed in the crucifixion of Jesus (Galatians 2:21). In Romans 5, Paul emphasizes that salvation comes from grace and not our keeping of the law, but he is careful to stress in 6:1 that receiving grace does not allow us to do whatever we would like to do. For Paul, grace means that we don’t rely on our own works, but it also means that we are not free to do whatever we would like. The Giver of grace has authority in our lives.



Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand grace:

1. Genesis 39:21
2. Psalm 84:10-12
3. Romans 3:23-26
4. Ephesians 2:8-9
5. Hebrews 4:16

One of the most vivid illustrations of grace is found in Romans 3:23-26. In it, Paul uses powerful imagery to highlight how far humanity is from the righteousness of God. In verse 22, he reminds us that every single person has sinned and falls short of God's glory. In Job 9:5, Job asks, "How can man be in the right before God?" In Romans 3, Paul is asking the same question. His answer is not the Law, since no one will be justified through it (Romans 3:20). His answer is not mere intellectual assent, because he emphasizes obedience later (Romans 6:1). The way we can be in the right before God is through grace that was expressed to us while we were still weak, sinful enemies (Romans 5:6-10).

In this passage, Paul also uses the term *redemption*, a word borrowed from the marketplace. Just as someone might pay the price of redemption for a slave, Paul says that the blood of Christ redeems us. This is also seen in Hebrews 9:15—God's grace allows us to be "bought back" with the precious blood of Christ. In this discussion, Paul mentions that Jesus is a "propitiation" (atoning sacrifice) for us. This reminds us that because of God's holiness, His wrath is set against sin, and our problem of sin must be dealt with for us to receive grace.



Preaching the Word

Illustration: In 1998, an employee of Terra-mundo Drilling named Ed Leonard accepted a new assignment in Colombia. He was taken hostage by armed rebels and lived the life of a prisoner in the Andes Mountains. He lost 21 pounds and lived out of a tent, as his captors demanded \$500,000 from his employer Norbert Reinhart. Leonard had never met Reinhart until October 6, when the boss was exchanged for the employee. Reinhart said, "You must be Ed Leonard. Your shift is over. It is time for you to go home." Leonard told reporters, "There is no way to put it in words, when somebody basically gives his life for you." That kind of exchange can be put into the word *grace*. (Reinhart was eventually returned home safely to his family.)³

Quote: "Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man His life; and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son: 'ye were bought at a price,' and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us."⁴

Idea: Romans 3 uses various images to describe God’s grace in salvation. Romans 3:20 mentions justification, 3:24 mentions redemption, and 3:25 mentions propitiation (atoning sacrifice). The congregation could sing a song that relates to each of these terms. After discussing justification, you could sing “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less.” After describing redemption, sing “He Paid a Debt,” and after explaining propitiation, sing “In Christ Alone.”

Illustration: The 2000 movie *Mercy Streets* revolves around the lives of twin brothers, John and Jeremiah. Jeremiah is a criminal, and his brother John has the opportunity to take the fall for one of Jeremiah’s crimes and serve the time for him. His friend disagrees with this plan, saying, “Jeremiah deserves to go away.” John replies, “That may be what he deserves, but it is not what he needs.” Grace does this for us—it does not give us what we deserve, but it gives us what we need for eternal life.⁵

Songs: Marvelous Grace; His Grace Reaches Me

Song of Encouragement: Amazing Grace

¹ Jack Lewis, *Basic Beliefs* (Nashville, TN: 21st Century Christian, 2013) 74.

² Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002) 307-308.

³ This information is taken from “Trading Places” in *People*, November 30, 1998 and *The National Post*, October 5, 1998.

⁴ Dietrich Bonehoffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* 2nd ed. Trans. R. H. Fuller (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1959) 45.

⁵ The *Mercy Streets* movie trailer is on youtube.com, and the exchange between John and his friends takes place at around the 0:58 mark.



CHRISTIAN CHARACTER



MERCY

WALT LEAVER



Understanding the Word

Mercy is a term God uses to describe Himself (e.g. Exodus 34:6) and one that is used by Jesus to describe those who are blessed (e.g. Matthew 5:7). Several Greek and Hebrew words are translated *mercy* or *merciful*, and numerous synonyms are also used in the translations to express the various dimensions of this term (e.g. compassion, kindness, lovingkindness, goodness, etc.).

In the New Testament, *eleos* and its derivatives are the most frequently used Greek words translated *mercy* or *merciful*.

- *Eleos* is a noun used to describe an outward demonstration of pity, sympathy, or compassion. It is assumed that the recipient is in need of mercy, and that the one showing it has adequate resources to meet the need. It is used to describe both God (e.g. Ephesians 2:4) and man (e.g. Luke 10:37).
- *Eleeo* is a verb used to describe sympathy or compassion that is demonstrated in actions. It is used in both the active voice (“to show mercy,” e.g. Matthew 18:33) and the passive voice (“to be shown mercy,” e.g. Matthew 5:7).
- *Eleemon* is an adjective used to describe someone who is actively compassionate, not merely filled with pity (e.g. Matthew 5:7). Note: This is the root of the English word

eleemosynary which is defined as “of, relating to, or supported by charity.”

- Another Greek word in the New Testament, *oiktirmos*, is typically translated *compassion* or *pity*, but occasionally as *mercy* (e.g. Romans 12:1).

In the Old Testament, two Hebrew words are translated *mercy* or *merciful*.

- *Raham* and its derivatives appear in the Old Testament about 125 times. This term is used as a verb to describe having compassion or being merciful (e.g. Exodus 33:19). The noun forms of this term are sometimes translated *womb* or *bowels*. The words convey deep emotion and feelings (e.g. Genesis 43:30; 1 Kings 3:26).
- *Hesed* and its derivatives appear in the Old Testament about 240 times. Although this word is translated *mercy* in some passages, it is more frequently translated *lovingkindness*.



Reading the Word

Reading these passages will help us reflect on and understand various aspects of mercy:

1. Hosea 6:6
2. Matthew 9:9-13 and Matthew 12:1-8
3. Psalm 4:1 and Matthew 9:27
4. Matthew 18:21-35
5. Luke 10:25-37
6. James 2:1-13

On at least two different occasions in Matthew (Matthew 9:9-13; 12:1-8), Jesus refers specifically to what God says through Hosea in Hosea 6:6, “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” Once it was like a homework assignment, “Go and learn what this means,” and on another occasion He seems to note that they had failed to fulfill that previous assignment, “If you had known what these words mean” In both situations Jesus is addressing Pharisees who are unwilling to accept the way Jesus is dealing with people.

The verses in Psalm 4:1 and Matthew 9:27 represent the first of many times David cries out for mercy in the Psalms and the first of many examples where Jesus is approached by people who are asking for mercy. Do I pray that way, or am I too proud to ask for mercy?

The parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:21-35 provides a graphic reminder of God’s mercy towards us, the response His mercy should produce in us, and the tragic consequences of failing to allow His mercy to flow through us.

Luke 10:25-37 is the parable of the Good Samaritan: the classic example of what mercy looks like. We cannot prove it, but it is cer-

tainly possible that the priest and Levite could have felt some pity in their hearts as they each “passed by on the other side.” However, it is only the Samaritan who stops and becomes personally involved. This story also provides a dual example: how Jesus has shown mercy by rescuing us from Satan’s attempt to destroy us, and how we can show mercy to others, even strangers, when we see them in need.

James 2:1-13 addresses what the attitude of Christians ought to be towards those the world may choose to ignore—the same type of situation that created problems between Jesus and the Pharisees. “Mercy triumphs over judgment” is the summation James uses to conclude this discussion (See N.T. Wright’s comments below).



Preaching the Word

Listed below are several items to help us understand how to more effectively communicate the message of mercy from God’s Word:

Illustration: A young man had been arrested for stealing from the royal palace twice. Sentenced to hang, the boy’s mother sought mercy on behalf of her son from Napoleon I of France, who reigned from 1804–1814. Napoleon answered the mother’s plea, “This boy has stolen from my palace twice now; he deserves justice and that justice is death.” The mother replied, “But I don’t ask for justice,

your highness. I seek mercy.” “He does not deserve mercy,” replied Napoleon. The mother passionately begged, “It would not be mercy if he deserved it.” Touched by the mother’s grief and passion, Napoleon consented and released the boy.¹

Illustration: Charles Swindoll’s article “Magnificent Mercy” provides a good overview of mercy in the Old Testament. The article concludes with this analogy (Exodus 25:17; Leviticus 16:14-15):

“When God commanded the Israelites to build the tabernacle, He had them construct a special piece of furniture for the holiest place of all. Not simply a holy place, but the holiest of all, the Holy of Holies, hidden safely behind the thick-veiled curtain where God’s presence rested. This piece of furniture was a sacred box called an ark, in which the Israelites were to place the tablets of the Law and Aaron’s rod that budded.

On this ark was a lid, and over this lid they placed two hand-carved golden angels called cherubim, one at each end, their strong, solid gold wings reaching out toward each other. And the place over which the cherubim hovered was the most intimate place in the tabernacle because it was the lid over the box where the blood was poured century after century. Appropriately, this most intimate part has come to be called ‘the mercy seat.’ When the blood was poured out onto the Ark, God was satisfied because it represented the sacrifice Jesus Christ would later make to atone for sin. His anger abated as His mercy emerged.

Francis Schaeffer writes, ‘It was (Martin) Luther, when translating the Old Testament into

German, who first used the term ‘mercy seat.’ It is a beautiful, poetic phrase—but it also accurately communicates what the lid on the Ark really was, a place of mercy.’ It wasn’t simply a place of rigid, demanding Law; it became a place of tender, forgiving mercy.

As people of God, we must be people of mercy. We must lessen our demands and increase our compassion, just as our God so often does with us. His tender mercy so beautifully balances His sovereignty and His justice and His holiness.

What a mystery! God, who has every reason to judge us for our iniquities, graciously grants us His mercy. Mercy full of forgiveness. Mercy wrapped in love. The magnificent mercy of God, which we do not deserve...but from which we find great relief.”²

Quote: In Warren Wiersbe’s book *Be Loyal*, he comments on Matthew 12:1-8: “The Sabbath law was given to Israel as a mark of her relationship to God (Nehemiah 9:12-15; Exodus 20:9-11, 31:13-17). But it was also an act of mercy for both man and beast, to give them needed rest each week. Any religious law that is contrary to mercy and the care of nature should be looked upon with suspicion. God wants mercy, not religious sacrifice. He wants love, not legalism.”³

Quote: James 2:13 – “God’s mercy is sovereign. It will triumph. But the minute you say, ‘Oh well, that’s all right then; God will forgive, so it doesn’t matter what I do’--and in particular, when ‘what I do’ includes discriminating against the poor--then, precisely because God is the God of mercy, He must act in judgment. He will not forever tolerate a world in which mercy is not the ultimate rule of life. ‘Mercy’ isn’t the same as shoulder-shrugging ‘tolerance,’ an ‘anything goes’ attitude to life. ‘Anything’ doesn’t ‘go.’ ‘Anything’ includes arrogance, corruption, blasphemy, favouritism, and law breaking of all kinds. If God was ‘merciful’ to that lot, He would be deeply unmerciful to the poor, the helpless, the innocent, and the victims. And the whole Gospel insists that in precisely those cases His mercy shines out most particularly. So must ours.”⁴

Additional References to Consult: *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*.

Suggested Songs: “Wonderful, Merciful Savior,” “O Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” “Beautiful Lamb of God.”

Song of Encouragement: “Softly and Tenderly.”

¹ Paul Chappell, “Mercy and Grace,” available at <http://www.dailyintheword.org/content/mercy-and-grace>.

² Charles Swindoll, “Magnificent Mercy,” <http://articles.ochristian.com/article10694.shtml>.

³ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Loyal* (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1980) 76.

⁴ N.T.Wright, *The Early Christian Letters for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011) 16.



LOVE

BILL WATKINS



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, the verb form for the word love is *'ahab*. The word means to have a strong emotional attachment or desire for someone or something. The word is used to describe the affection between parents and children (Genesis 22:2). It also sometimes described the attachment of a slave to a master (Exodus 21:5). The word is used at times to describe very close friendships (1 Samuel 18:1). It is sometimes used in the sense of unflagging loyalty (1 Kings 5:1).

The noun form of *'ahab* is *'ahabah*. This word appears 55 times in the Old Testament and represents several kinds of love. It can describe the love between a man and a maid (Genesis 29:20), love between friends (1 Samuel 18:3), and God's love for man (Deuteronomy 7:8).

While there are more terms in the Greek language, the New Testament uses only two in both their verb and noun forms. Both are used to refer to godly love and ungodly love. The "love of God" is a concept with certain qualities, but the word love is used to refer to all kinds of love.

One of the verbs is *agapao*. Its corresponding noun is *agape*. It is used in the New Testament to describe the affection and bond God has with His Son (John 17:26), the attitude He has

toward mankind (John 3:16), and particularly, the attitude He has toward His people (John 14:21). It describes the bond that we are to have toward fellow Christians (John 13:34-35), and our attitude toward those who are not (1 Thessalonians 3:12). It describes the essential nature of God (1 John 4:8). This love is not simply passive—it is expressed (1 John 4:9-10). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). It expresses itself toward God by obedience to His commands (John 14:15-21). This love is selfless and therefore selfishness is the negation of love. Love does not occur because the one we love is loveable or worthy. It is a decision of the will. If this were not so, God could not have loved us.

The other verb that is used for love in the NT is *phileo* with its corresponding noun *philanthropia*. It describes the feeling of the Father toward His Son (John 3:35), and His feeling toward the obedient believer (John 14:21).



Reading the Word

1. Genesis 22:1-2
2. Deuteronomy 7:7-8
3. Ruth 4:14-15
4. John 13:34-35
5. John 17:25-26

ing heart.”¹

Quote: “Love is more than three words mumbled before bedtime. Love is sustained by action, a pattern of devotion in the things we do for each other every day.”²

Quote: Karen Sunde has famously written, “To love is to receive a glimpse of heaven.”³

Quote: One of the songs in Rogers and Hammerstein’s musical classic *Cinderella* asks this question: “Do I love you because you’re beautiful, or are you beautiful because I love you?”⁴

In his discussion of the bonds felt by soldiers who fight together, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote these words: “Life has taught us that love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking outward together in the same direction.”⁵

Suggested Songs: “The Greatest Commands,” “Come, Let Us All Unite to Sing,” “Oh, How I Love Jesus.”

Song of Encouragement: “I Love You, Lord.”

¹ Margaret Walker, *Jubilee* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966) 457.

² Nicholas Sparks, *The Wedding* (New York, NY: Warner Books, 2003) 63.

³ Torion Kent, *Love Always. Love Daily. 365 Love: Daily Notes, Music, and Quotes for Personal Growth in Love* (Norcross, GA: 365 Love Publishing, 2012) 139.

⁴ Rogers and Hammerstein, “Do I Love You Because You Are Beautiful?”

⁵ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wind, Sand, and Stars*. Trans. Lewis Galantière. (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1967) 215.

— — **FORGIVENESS**

KIRK BROTHERS



Understanding the Word¹

The noun for forgiveness in the Old Testament is *celiychah*. It means “abundant forgiveness.”² “Never does this word in any of its forms refer to people forgiving each other.”³ The first Old Testament verb for forgive is *calach*. It is translated as “to forgive, pardon” and is used only of God.⁴ W. E. Vine notes that while other terms may be translated as “to forgive,” *calach* is the only Old Testament verb with this as its primary meaning.⁵ The next term for forgive in the Old Testament is *nasa'*. Its basic meaning is “to lift, to raise high, to bear, to carry.”⁶ It is worth noting that *nasa'* is used of both divine and human forgiveness.

Two other verbs with similar meaning are used in conjunction with the verbs listed above. The first is *kaphar*, often found hand in hand with the term *calach*. The verb *kaphar* means “to cover, to purge, to make an atonement, to make reconciliation, to cover over with pitch.”⁷ Atonement (*kaphar*) makes pardon (*calach*) possible. Another related term is *kacah*. This word is usually used with the literal meaning of “to cover” (can also mean “to conceal, hide”).⁸ Yet, there are a few places where it is used with the sense of “forgive.”⁹

A key noun in the New Testament is *aphesis*, and it means “the act of freeing and liberating from something that confines; release” or “the

act of freeing from an obligation, guilt, or punishment; pardon, cancellation.”¹⁰

The noun *paresis* is used only in Romans 3:25. Paul uses *paresis* instead of the usual *aphesis*. *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* comments on *aphesis* and *paresis* as follows: “The forgiveness denoted is almost always that of God. It is constantly needed, and is granted when requested so long as there is a readiness to forgive others. Its basis is the saving act of Christ...”¹¹

The key verb in the New Testament is *aphiemi*. This is the favorite verb in the Gospels for “to forgive.” It is frequently used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew verb *calach*.¹² It has the basic idea of “to dismiss, release, let go, send away.”¹³ It is used for the cancelling of sins and debts.¹⁴

The next verb is *charidzomai*, “to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing; forgive, pardon.”¹⁵ This is Paul’s favorite verb for “to forgive,” often translated simply as “to give” or “to grant” (See Romans 8:32). Another verb to note is *apoluo*. It means to “grant acquittal, set free, release, or pardon.”¹⁶ A verb that sounds similar to *apoluo* but is different in meaning is *apolouo*. This verb means to “wash something away from oneself, wash oneself, used in imagery of purification.”¹⁷

Reading the Word

Some key passages that can help us to understand the concept of forgiveness (in addition to those referred to above) are these.

1. Exodus 34:9
2. Nehemiah 9:17
3. Matthew 26:28
4. Ephesians 4:32
5. Luke 6:37

Moses uses the word *calach* in Exodus 34:9. Moses is asking God to spare them. He is asking God not to treat them in the way that they deserve. Notice also the relationship between “go among us” and “pardon our iniquity.” Sin damages the relationship between God and man. Forgiveness restores that relationship. Nehemiah uses the term *celiyachah* in Nehemiah 9:17. Nehemiah reveals that forgiveness is treating with mercy one who deserves anger.

Jesus uses *aphesis* in Matthew 26:28. The idea is that the blood of Christ makes it possible for us to avoid the punishment we deserve for our sins. It is as if our sins had never been committed. This relates to the idea of the blotting out of sin in Psalm 51. The punishment is removed because the crime is removed.

Paul uses *charidzomai* in Ephesians 4:32. It is not surprising that this would be a favorite term of Paul, in light of the emphasis he places on God’s grace (See Romans 3:24; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2, etc.). “It expresses, as no other of these words does, his conception of the graciousness of God’s pardon.”¹⁸ The only time it is translated as “to forgive” in the Gospels is in Luke 7:42-43 when Jesus is responding to the Pharisee’s comments about

the sinful woman who washed Jesus’ feet.

The term *apoluo* is found in Luke 6:37. This is the only place where it is translated as “forgiven.” It is used here “because of the analogy of sin to debt, and denotes the release from it.”¹⁹ One finds *aphiemi* and *apoluo* used together in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18:26-28, “Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released (*apoluo*) him, and forgave (*aphiemi*) him the debt.”

Preaching the Word

Illustration: NHL star Dany Heatley, MVP of the 2003 NHL All-Star game, was driving over 80 miles per hour in a 35-mile-per-hour zone when he lost control of his Ferrari convertible and slammed into a brick pillar and an iron fence. It resulted in the death of his teammate, Dan Snyder (age 25). He was sentenced to a three-year probation, ordered to give 150 speeches on the danger of speeding, and limited to driving a vehicle to work, the store, a doctor, and speaking engagements. He was also not allowed to own a car that would drive over 70 miles per hour. One of the main reasons he was not given a harsher sentence was the forgiveness of Snyder’s family. Dan’s father Graham Snyder said, “As a parent, it’s hard to explain how you feel about losing your son. My pride in Dan was immeasurable. We will miss him. So how do we move on from here? Forgiveness in our hearts has helped us to move on. We forgive because Dany has shown remorse to his family.”²⁰

Quote: “Forgiveness is the fragrance that the flower leaves on the heel of the one who crushed it.” – Anonymous²¹

Idea: A powerful passage on forgiveness is the parable in Matthew 18.

1. Seven (Matthew 18:21-22). Focus on Peter's question.

2. Story (Luke 18:23-34). Focus on the difference between the value of 100 denarii and 10,000 talents. A denarius is what a common laborer would make for one day's work. It takes 6,000 denarii to equal one talent.

3. Self (Matthew 18:35). Ephesians 4:32: We will be forgiven if we forgive.

4. Savior (Luke 23:33-34; John 21). Peter witnessed Jesus living out this parable.

Suggested Songs: "Because He Lives," "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," "Happy Am I," "O to Be Like Thee," "Bring Christ Your Broken Life."

Song of Encouragement: "Just as I Am/ I Come Broken."

¹ Portions of the following are drawn from the author's book: *A Glimpse into God's Heart: Learning Forgiveness from the Father* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 2006).

² Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Dictionary, Abridged*, Accordance Software, n.p.

³ John T. Willis, David E. Green, and Douglas W. Stott, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Accordance Software, n.p.

⁴ Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

⁵ W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, PC Study Bible, Version 5, 2008 n.p.

⁶ William Mounce, *Mounce's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan,

2006) 266.

⁷ Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

⁸ Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

⁹ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, PC Study Bible, Version 4.2, 2004, n.p.

¹⁰ Frederick W. Danker, et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed., Accordance Software, n.p.

¹¹ Willis, Green, and Stott.

¹² Willis, Green, and Stott.

¹³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Accordance Bible Software, Ver. 11.3.1, 2016, n.p.

¹⁴ Mounce 267.

¹⁵ Danker.

¹⁶ Danker.

¹⁷ Danker.

¹⁸ Morro, PC Study Bible, n.p.

¹⁹ Morro.

²⁰ Associated Press, "Felony Charge Dropped for Thrasher Star's Plea," ESPN 5 February 2005. Web. 2 August 2016.

²¹ This quote has been attributed to many individuals over the years, most notably Mark Twain. However, the origin of this quote is uncertain.

KINDNESS

JEFF JENKINS



Understanding the Word

In a world of partisan politics, war, anxiety, broken marriages, and ruined relationships we are in desperate need of kindness. Kindness is not only one of the fruits of the Spirit that must live in Christians, but it also makes us more like God. If we really want to be like God, we will develop a heart of kindness.

Without a doubt, one of the most recognizable words in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *hesed*. The word appears nearly 250 times in the Old Testament. It is translated primarily in our Bibles with the words *mercy*, *kindness*, and *loving-kindness*.

The power of the word is that our God has always desired a people who can be recipients of His *hesed*. It is His desire to establish a holy nation of people from every tribe, clan, language, and culture to be the objects of His *hesed*. Forty-two times specifically the Old Testament states that God's *hesed* endures forever.

Our word *kindness* appears twelve times in the New Testament. There are four different Greek words that translate our word *kindness*. The word *agathos* that is also translated to mean "good," or "that which is good." The word *epieikei* carries with it the idea of mildness, gentleness, and fairness. The word *philanthrōpia* is the word from which we get our word

philanthropist. The idea in this word is benevolence toward others.

The final word translated kindness is *chrēstos* meaning "gracious or goodness." This is the word most often translated *kindness* in our New Testament. This word refers to God's kindness toward man (Romans 11:22; Titus 3:4; 1 Peter 2:3). This word is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit that must be a part of the life of every Christian (Galatians 5:22).



Reading the Word

1. Ruth 2:20
2. Proverbs 3:3; Ephesians 4:15
3. Proverbs 31:26
4. Micah 6:8
5. Colossians 3:12

"Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, 'May he be blessed of the Lord who has not withdrawn His kindness to the living and to the dead.' Again Naomi said to her, 'The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives'" (Ruth 2:20). One of the great narratives in Scripture is the picture of devotion in the life of Naomi and Ruth. This passage shows both the power and the importance of kindness toward others. We must be kind to everyone, both living and dead!

"Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind

them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart” (Proverbs 3:3). The proverb from the wise king is reminiscent of the apostle Paul’s admonition to us all, “Speak the truth in love...” (Ephesians 4:15). May our words always be filled with kindness as well as truth.

Another passage from Proverbs with a similar tone is a part of Solomon’s description of the worthy woman. “She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue” (Proverbs 31:26). Wouldn’t it be wonderful if all of God’s people were like this worthy woman!

A part of the triad of traits that is required of God’s man is to love kindness. “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

If we are truly a part of the family of God, kindness will live in our hearts and will be displayed to everyone around us. “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (Colossians 3:12). Each of these character traits begins in our hearts and is recognizable to everyone around us.

Preaching the Word

Illustration: (Borrowed from Jerry Jenkins’ sermon on kindness) One cold, wintry night a little boy and a little girl, poorly clad, made their way up to a big, old farm house. Cold knuckles wrapped on that door and after a while, a rather large lady with a smile on her face came to the door. She saw two little children outside. They were cold. She brought them in before the big fire burning in the fireplace. She hurried off and got a big glass of hot choco-late. She came and put a blanket around their shivering shoulders. The little girl looked up into her face and said, “Are you God’s wife?” Our God is a God of great kindness.

Sermon Idea: There are a number of passages in Scripture that offer reasons for God’s people to show kindness to everyone around us. 1. God is kind, and if I want to be like God, I will be kind (Genesis 39:21; Psalm 117:1-2), 2. The Bible commands me to be kind (Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:32), 3. Kindness will help win others to Jesus (1 Peter 3:1-4), 4. Kindness has a way of coming back to us (Galatians 6:7).

Quote: “Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind.”

Illustration: (Borrowed from Jerry Jenkins – Sermon on Kindness) There was a man who drove his Lincoln Continental home from work. He saw a little boy standing outside of a grocery store crying. He pulled over to the curb, touched the button, and the power window came rolling down. He said, “What's wrong, son?” “Nothing mister,” he said, but he knew little boys did not cry unless something was wrong. The big man got out of his car and said, “Son, tell me what's wrong.” He said, “Mister, my Dad sent me down here to buy some things and on the way down here, I lost my money. I have looked everywhere to find that money, but I cannot find it. I have been back and forth several times, but it is not there.” The man said, “Well tell your Dad what happened. Everything will be alright.” The boy said, “Mister, you do not know my Daddy; he will beat me.” The big man took the little lad by the hand and went into the grocery store. He bought the necessary items. On the way out, he stopped and bought a big ole candy bar. He gave it to the little boy. The little fellow went running out the front door of the store, but just in a few minutes, he came running back. He threw his little arms around the big man and said, “Mister, I wish you was my Daddy.” The big man said he must have driven 25 blocks looking for that lost money. If you are unhappy, why not extend kindness to others?

Song Suggestions: “A Beautiful Life,” “Angry Words,” “Lord, Speak to Me.”

Song of Encouragement: “God Is so Good.”

¹Jeff and Dale Jenkins, *The Living Word: Sermons of Jerry A. Jenkins* (Spring Hill, TN: The Jenkins Institute, 2016) 7-8.

²Henry James, “Quotes” *Guideposts*, April 10, 2013, <https://www.guideposts.org/three-things-human-life-are-important-first>, Web April 2016.



SELF-CONTROL

HOWARD NORTON



Understanding the Word

In both the Old and New Testaments, the Holy Spirit speaks through His spokesmen and leaves no doubt concerning the importance of self-control in the life of human beings. Unfortunately, many people do not seem to understand what self-control is, and many who know what self-control is fail to see its importance—especially in their own lives. The purpose of this article is to help us understand both the meaning and worth of self-control in our own lives and then enable us to teach these truths about self-control to others.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Eleventh Edition says that the English word self-control means “restraint exercised over one’s own impulses, emotions, or desires.” People who practice self-control do not require a parent, teacher, armed guard, sheriff, or any other government official to make them behave. They behave correctly because they have disciplined themselves to be true to the moral and spiritual values they have chosen to follow. They are skilled in the art of self-denial, delayed gratification, and respect for others.

The word *self-control* does not appear in the King James Version (KJV) of the Old or New Testaments. This is for good reason, since the word *self-control* is believed to have first appeared in 1711, which is about a century

later than the KJV edition that is still used by many. The concept of self-control was present through the ages in both the Hebrew and Greek languages, of course; but the KJV used English expressions such as *temperance* (2 Peter 1:6), *sober* (1 Thessalonians 5:8), *discreet* (Titus 2:5), and *sober-minded* (Titus 2:6) to convey the idea of a people exercising sovereignty over themselves. Greek words that came eventually to be translated as self-control in more modern translations include such words as *egkrateia*, *sophrosunei*, *nepho*, or their cognates.

In the New Testament, Paul describes self-control as a fruit of the Spirit. The kind of control over self that Christians need and are able to gain requires more than pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps. It is made possible by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we receive at the moment of our baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit lives within us and enables us to do more than we can do for ourselves. The paradox is that self-control is not attainable by ourselves; rather, we must diligently seek to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-26) to develop it. The Holy Spirit does not force self-control on the Christian or anyone else who is unwilling to cooperate with the Spirit to produce this quality in his life.



Reading the Word

1. Proverbs 15:18
2. Matthew 26:53
3. Acts 8:32
4. Ephesians 4:26-32
5. 1 Peter 2:23

In 2016, I am planning to read through Proverbs once per month. It is the main book on daily living that I would have wanted my children to read regularly had I died during their childhood or adolescence. It is full of fatherly advice and powerfully emphasizes the importance of self-control whether or not that specific term is used. Notice some of these bits of wisdom:

“A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention” (Proverbs 15:18). “Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (16:32). “...He who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding” (17:27). “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense” (19:11). “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine” (23:29). “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls” (25:28).

Self-control is also at the very heart of Paul’s teaching about Christian living. He writes one of his most moving exhortations to the Ephesians when he says, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief

no longer steal but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (4:26-32). Self-control calls us to go against our earthly nature and think of the effect of our words and actions on others. Self-control calls us to a much higher standard of conduct than any constitution or set of laws.

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of self-control in the Scriptures. His suffering is indescribable. However, Peter says, “When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

Isaiah had prophesied the Messiah’s behavior, and Jesus lived up to it. “Like a sheep He was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opens not His mouth” (Acts 8:32).

What makes His suffering all the more remarkable was that He had the power to end it. As He says to Peter at the moment of His arrest, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send Me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53). What self-control!!!



Preaching the Word

Principle: Lack of self-control brings serious problems. In applying the words and examples about self-control to those who are listening to us preach, it is important to mention how many personal and societal problems exist in our world today because of an absence of self-control. People willingly give their consciences a vacation. Consequences seem endless when self-control goes out the door, but here is a partial list of the damages that stem from a lack of self-control on the part of care-less human beings: wars and rumors of wars, drug and alcohol addictions, domestic violence, all forms of abuse (physical, mental, emotional, sexual, etc.), broken homes, abortions, abandoned and neglected children, bullying and unsafe neighborhoods, road rage, mass killings, sexual immorality of every kind, racism, government corruption, greed, gluttony, lying, cheating, and the list goes on. Get to the bottom of most of the worst stories reported daily, and the investigator will find individuals and/or groups who abandoned what they knew was right, deadened their better senses, and committed evil and unspeakable deeds while out of control.

Principle: Lack of self-control brings serious consequences. Americans are paying enormous penalties for failing to control themselves and failing to inspire their offspring to get control of their passions and desires. American homes are falling apart. American children feel unloved and unwanted. Great numbers of public schools are in shambles. Civility in America is fading before our eyes. Our streets are unsafe. Prisons are full and running over. No wonder that our fellow Westerners and we are viewed by a large part of the world

as “The Great Satan.” In the words of Paul concerning people in the last days, many today are “heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Sermon Topics: Here are a few possible sermon ideas to develop:

- o “Are We Having Fun Yet?”
- o “Does Self-Control Really Matter?”
- o “Self-Control: What It Is and How to Get It”
- o “Jesus Christ: Our Greatest Example of Self-Control”
- o “The Rise and Fall of People Who Lost Control of Themselves”
- o “Regaining Self-Respect Through Self-Control”
- o “The High Price of Low Living” (this title not original)
- o “How Self-Control Can Improve Your Marriage”

Song Suggestions: “Angry Words,” “All to Jesus I Surrender,” “Lord, Take Control.”

Song of Encouragement: “None of Self and All of Thee.”



HUMILITY

DAVE PHILLIPS



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, the word *anawah* is translated *humble*. The noun only occurs in Psalm 18:35; Proverbs 15:33, 18:12, and 22:4; and Zephaniah 2:3. The adjective for humble appears more frequently. The same term is ascribed to God Himself (translated as gentleness or condescension in Psalm 18:35 and 2 Samuel 22:36) and is required of men as essential to be “right with God.” Isaiah says it is with the humble in heart that “the High and Lofty One...whose name is Holy” dwells (Isaiah 57:15, NKJV).

In the New Testament, the word *tapeinophrosune* does not imply a place of deserved grace or self-hatred and condescension. Rather, it describes the state of gratitude where one understands the reception of gifts are by the grace of God—and as such—undeserved by human accomplishment. The truly humble man is not the one who exalts himself or belittles himself, but rather the one who doesn’t think of himself at all.

Jesus is the prime example of humility in that He intentionally humbles Himself for the needs of others. His example becomes our goal. W.L. Walker accurately warns against a “false humility,” as exemplified in Colossians 2:18-23.¹ This misguided practiced of asceticism is not an act of true contrition, but rath-

er an exalted form of arrogance against the worship of the true God. Walker stresses two dangers in the act of humility. One is the danger of believing that only the sense of sin leads to humility. Jesus has no sin and yet dutifully humbles Himself. Secondly, there is the danger of being proud of one’s humility. Genuine humility is the way to true greatness—and the “coachableness” of a little child becomes our divine objective.

There is an obvious difference in the concept of humility and humiliation. Humility is an inward submissiveness, a modesty in self-perception that is evidenced by a marked change in behavior toward others. To be humiliated is an outward circumstance that results in a forced embarrassing consequence. The Bible is filled with both instances of humility and humiliation, and sometimes the latter leading to the former. Nebuchadnezzar is humiliated before he is humble (Daniel 4:28-37). Hezekiah humbles himself (2 Chronicles 32) before God, a fact that alters God’s timetable for the expression of His wrath. King Saul is humiliated before the people because of his lack of respect for God’s commands (1 Samuel 15).

The New Testament evidences our need for humility in all our actions (Matthew 11:25; 18:4; 23:12; Luke 10:21; 14:11; 18:14; John 13:1-17, as well as others), thus following the example of Jesus. This difficult but necessary task chal-

lenges every believer.

Reading the Word

Micah 6:8 contains another form of the word for humility. The word *tsanua* is translated as humbly, circumspectly, and modestly. The context of the word compares the attitude of one who delights the Lord and the nation of Judah, who have infuriated the Lord with their behavior. The contrasts between the desired will of God, that of acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly, are contrasted with the actions of Judah, which are best described as profiteering, living unmercifully, and behaving arrogantly.

In the New Testament, Paul recalls a familiar Christian song to the citizens of Philippi, as he directs them to imitate Jesus Christ in their behavior. This behavior is to be characterized by selflessness and sacrifice. The specific word in Philippians 2:8 is *tapeinoo*, meaning “to bring low, depress, or descend.” Jesus is described as voluntarily leaving Heaven, the throne room of God, and a position of equality with God. The reason for coming to earth is both voluntary and substitutionary. The specific acts of Jesus are enumerated so that the Christians might understand the magnitude of the sacrifice and the divine expectation of God’s people. “Have this attitude in yourselves...” (Philippians 2:5, NASB) reminds the readers of these specific expectancies.

Luke gives a beautiful description of an act of humility as well as a contrast with arrogance when he describes Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the publican going to the temple to pray. The arrogance of the Pharisee juxtaposed to the shame of the publican highlights

the divine perspective toward those who exalt themselves. Not only does this arrogance bring about an inflated self-opinion, but it also displays a repulsive disregard for a potential follower of God. As Luke describes the teaching of Jesus on the road, he groups similar attitudes at various levels of intensity expressed by others along the way. The rich young ruler, the Apostles surrounding blind Bartimaeus, and the conversion of Zaccheus are each dealing with various stages of attitudes regarding submission.

The obvious passage representing humility at its finest must be the example of Jesus praying three times for the cup to pass from Him, then, finally and determinedly, facing the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane and ultimately the agony of the crucifixion. Though told in an economy of words, the suffering from the scourging and the agony of the crucifixion indicate the care and concern that God has for His creation. Walker says, “The rendering... ‘He humbled Himself’ has given rise to the designation of the Incarnation as ‘the Humiliation of Christ.’”²

Preaching the Word

Idea: Luke 5 describes Peter fishing on the Sea of Galilee, explaining to the Lord that he assuredly knows about the business of fishing, and has found that no success is possible. But, in deference to Jesus, he would submit to His request to fish a different way. When he is so successful he can’t draw all the fish in his nets, he is immediately penitent and begs for forgiveness. Does Peter think Jesus knows anything about fishing? Do we think Jesus knows anything about our struggles—or the source of the problem?

Illustration: A lady moving into a home found a cider cask in one corner of her basement. She thought it was empty and clean, so she would just leave it there. She liked the look. Soon after, moths started showing up in the house. She blamed the carpet and had it cleaned. She then blamed the furniture and had it reupholstered. She finally removed the cask and had it taken outside and opened it—releasing more than a thousand moths into the air. Moral? Some unimportant and safe thing (like our pride?), about which we have little twinges of consciousness, needs to be brought out into the light.³

Illustration: The late Dave Thomas, founder of the Wendy's Restaurant chain, illustrates the learning value of humility in his book *Well Done: The Common Guy's Guide to Everyday Success*. He writes, "I got my M.B.A. long before my G.E.D." (Thomas never graduated from high school.)⁴ He says, "I even have a photograph of me in my M.B.A. graduation outfit—a snazzy knee-length work apron. I guarantee you that I'm the only founder among America's big companies whose picture in the corporate annual report shows him wielding a mop and a plastic bucket. That was a gag. It was a case of leading by example. At Wendy's, M.B.A. does not mean Master of Business Administration. It means Mop Bucket Attitude. It's how we define satisfying the customer through cleanliness, quality food, friendly service, and atmosphere."⁵ Sounds like humility to me.

Idea: Moses striking the rock rather than speaking to the rock—and the penalty inflicted upon him because he does not exalt God. It seems to me this is an excellent example of allowing external pressures to impact internal attitudes.

Illustration: A young college graduate was asked to speak at the small congregation. He was prepared and poised to "mount the pulpit," sure to impress God's people. His self-confidence was equaled only by his smugness. After his introduction, he started into his sermon, quoting his sources and citing multiple passages from memory. The congregation, however, looked perplexed at his points, and couldn't understand exactly what he was trying to say. Realizing, after five minutes, that even the main point of his sermon was not even being understood, he began stammering and stuttering. His frustration turned into fear, then into panic. He ended up stopping short of his ending, apologizing and slowly coming down to sit on the front row next to the older preacher. The preacher leaned over and said, "If you had gone up like you came down, you could have come down like you went up." Humble yourself and be exalted. Exalt yourself and be humbled.

Song Suggestions: "Humble Yourselves," "Come, Let Us Worship and Bow Down."

Song of Encouragement: "On Bended Knee."

¹ W. L. Walker, "Humility" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol. 3*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956) 1440.

² W. L. Walker, "Humility" in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol. 3*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956) 1440.

³ Hannah Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2012) 76.

⁴ Dave Thomas, *Well Done: The Common Guy's Guide to Everyday Success* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) 159.

⁵ Dave Thomas, *Well Done: The Common Guy's Guide to Everyday Success* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994) 159.



PEACE

JOHN DALE



Understanding the Word

In the Hebrew text the term translated *peace* is *shalom*. The etymological concept underlying *peace* is of “fastening,” as to achieve a “stable” condition. The Old Testament writers used *shalom* 302 times in 281 verses. The word translated *peace* not only implies the absence of combat and conflict, but includes the qualities of wholeness, tranquility, stability, spiritual soundness, and good health.

As beautiful as the word *shalom* is, and as much serenity as it implies, twice Jeremiah used the term as a rebuke, warning the people of God whose hearts had turned from Him. They had a counterfeit sense of security and soundness: “Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:13-14; see 8:11).

The writers of the New Testament, all of them, used the word *eirene*, which we have translated in English as *peace*. According to the ISBE, *eirene* has much the same meaning and usage as *shalom*, with a higher spiritual fulfillment because of the coming of Christ into the world.¹ The word is used 95 times in 88 verses and is found at least once in each of

the New Testament books except for 1 John. It describes a harmonious relationship between God and men, between men and men, among nations, as well as order in the state and in the churches. It addresses friendliness and freedom from molestation.²

While *eirene* is always important wherever it is used, it is included in the common greeting in all thirteen of the epistles that are attributed to the apostle Paul. Keep in mind that there is no “filler” material in Scripture, so every time Paul wrote, “Grace to you and peace from God...,” it had, and has, incredible meaning!



Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand and appreciate peace even better than we might have done before.

1. Genesis 15:15
2. Isaiah 55:12
3. Psalm 4:8
4. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
5. Acts 12:20
6. Romans 5:1
7. Ephesians 2:12-17
8. Philippians 4:6-9
(See Acts 24:2: “great quietness”)

Abram sought peace between his herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen (Genesis 13:7-12). It took a

magnanimous spirit on Abram's part, but it encourages us today to give and forgive, to bear and forbear, even if for the moment we seem to be losing. God promised Abram that the day would come when he would die and go to his "fathers in peace" (Genesis 15:15).

Jesus extended peace to new heights when He gave reassurance to His frightened disciples just before His death: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.... These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 14:27; 16:33). He did it again just after His death and resurrection: "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, ... Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ... So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' ... And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!'" (John 20:19, 21, 26).

The pre-conversion state of the Gentiles was one of hopelessness and doom. But Paul reminds and assures them that while that was their plight, real peace has come through the blood of the cross. Read (more than once) all 22 verses of the second chapter of Ephesians, and pay particular attention to **who is** our peace, **who made** peace, and **who preached** peace.

No doubt, mankind's greatest search is to find peace with God, peace with others, and peace within.

The peace described in Romans 5:1 is solely applicable to our relationship with God. It comes when justification by faith is fully appropriated. It can't be earned by meritorious works about which we would be tempted to boast (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor is it thrust upon us against our volition, as hyper-Calvinism would teach. That precious salvation peace between our Creator and us is imputed to us, having been bought by Jesus' blood as He was delivered up for our offenses and by His resurrection for our justification (Romans 4:24-25). And, yes, "Jesus paid it **all!**" Therefore, "**All** to Him I owe!"

The peace we seek between others and ourselves (Mark 9:50; Hebrews 12:14) involves our activity as "peacemakers." It will see us pursuing "...the things that make for peace..." (Romans 14:19) and being called "children of God" (Matthew 5:9). It isn't the "peace-talkers," nor is it the "peace-lovers," or even the "peace-marchers," but the "peacemakers" who will be blessed. We can find peace with others when we follow the Prince of Peace, even when the sacrifice is great for the moment (See Isaiah 9:6). Through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and even between Jews and Gentiles, peace can be found (See Acts 10:34-38).

Peace with God, and peace with others, though precious and costly, are often easier to procure than peace with self, peace within, having a conscience that is void of offense (See Acts 24:16). But when we are willing to come to the cleansing fount, the "blood drawn from Immanuel's veins," and fully yield to the One who makes salvation possible, we can bask in "Blessed Assurance" that salvation and peace are ours now and forever! "Now may the God

of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Preaching the Word

Quote: As the Vietnam nightmare was coming to a close, President Nixon addressed the nation from the Oval Office on radio and television. One of the most memorable statements he made indicated his knowledge that peace is more than simply stopping combat and conflict. He said, “We must recognize that ending the war is only the first step toward building the peace. All parties must now see to it that this is a peace that lasts, and also a peace that heals, and a peace that not only ends the war in Southeast Asia, but contributes to the prospects of peace in the whole world.”³

Object Lesson: When the storm was raging on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus spoke stability and tranquility, saying simply, “Peace, be still!” The response of the disciples who saw the miracle was, “Who can this be that even the winds and the waves obey Him?” (Mark 4:35-41). When the storms of life are raging, and they’re all around us and the people we are trying to help, let’s tell them who this Man is and what He can do to calm our fears and bring stability and tranquility where it is needed most. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15).

Songs: In 1988, Dick and Melodie Tunney wrote the words to the song “In His Presence”: “In His presence, there is comfort, in His presence there is peace. When we seek the Father’s heart we will find such bless’d assurance, in the presence of the Lord. Cover me Lord with Your

presence.” Over a century earlier, Mary A. Baker in 1874 wrote the song “Master the Tempest Is Raging,” which says, “Master, the tempest is raging...peace, be still!” Edward H. Bickersteth in 1875 wrote, “Peace, perfect peace...the blood of Jesus whispers peace within” in his song “Peace, Perfect Peace.” Peter P. Bilhorn in 1887 wrote the song “Sweet Peace, the Gift of God’s Love.” These and many other hymns we sing give a powerful and personal message for people of all ages, and people of varying preferences in music design. May we be open to traditional, contemporary, or any other hymn style that can teach and comfort our unsettled world, and that can point the young and old alike to the Prince of Peace!

Benediction: “The Lord bless you and keep you...and give you peace!” (Numbers 6:23-26).

Song Suggestions: “Peace, Perfect Peace,” “Peace Be Still,” “You Are Holy (Prince of Peace).”

Song of Encouragement: “Hark! The Gentle Voice.”

¹ W.L. Walker, “Peace” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol. 4*, Ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960) 2293.

² W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1966) 169-170.

³ “Peace with Honor,” Broadcast on Vietnam: President Richard M. Nixon, January 23, 1973.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

C. MICHAEL MOSS



Understanding the Word

Dictionaries typically define *righteousness* as “behavior that is morally justifiable or right.” The behavior of a righteous person is characterized by accepted standards of morality, justice, virtue, or uprightness. The English word goes back to a base meaning *rightwise*, “in the straight (or right) way.”

The Hebrew words used in the Old Testament for this behavior/attitude are *tsedeq* translated *righteous* and *ts^edaqah* translated *righteousness*. The word *ts^edaqah* is translated in various ways: *honesty, justice, merits, right, righteous, righteous acts, righteous deeds, righteously, righteousness, rights, and vindication*. It is seen clearly as a divine attribute and one that humans should strive to develop.

The Greek word translated *righteousness* in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the New Testament is *dikaioσunē*. It is used in secular Greek literature primarily to describe conduct in relation to others, especially regarding the rights of others in business, in legal matters. It is frequently used as the declaration that one is innocent of a crime for which he has been accused. It is used contrasted with wickedness. The person who lacks righteousness is self-centered and neither reveres God nor respects man. The complexity of the Greek word may explain

the occasional instances when the Septuagint used *dikaioσynē* to translate not only *tsedeq* and its cognates but other roots such as *hesed* (loving kindness, grace, covenant mercy), and *mišpāt* (judgment, justice)

Unfortunately in English we may fail to see the connection between *righteousness* and *justification*. English translations use two different roots to translate the same Semitic and Greek root: *right, righteous, righteousness, and just, justice, justify, justification*.

Interestingly, the Bible deems that true, perfect righteousness is not possible for man to attain on his own. Only God attains the idea. In a law court setting, *righteousness* indicates the standing of a person in relation to the court’s decision. God saw Abraham’s faith and reckoned it to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God declared him righteous even though he was not.

The New Testament uses the term *righteousness* in one form or another no less than 228 times. It appears at least 40 times in Romans.

The standard which God has set is simply too high for human beings. True righteousness is possible for mankind, but only through the cleansing of sin by blood of Jesus Christ, and pursuing a righteous life is possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 6:11).



Preaching the Word

Illustration: An Old Chinese Proverb

If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.

If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in each nation.

When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world!¹

Illustration: 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Imagine: The mailman arrives, and there’s a fancy envelope with a coat-of-arms. I open it up, and it’s from the Queen. I’ve been invited to meet with her. I’m in the middle of celebrating when I open another envelope. Same fancy deal. It’s a list of requirements for seeing the Queen. And one is that even though I have an invitation, I have to wear a \$10,000 suit from the best tailor in London. “What!” I exclaim. “I can’t afford a \$10,000 suit. Where am I going to get \$10,000? My suit’s worth \$100 maybe \$150.” And just when I’m thinking I’m never going to get to see the Queen, I get a call: “You don’t know me, but I know you and that you’ve been invited to see the Queen. I also know that you can’t afford a \$10,000 suit, but I have one that’s never been worn that would fit you. You can have it.” So I turn up at Buckingham Palace wearing my \$10,000 suit. And just as I’m about to go in, I see another guy saying, “But I have an invitation.” “I’m sorry, sir. Even with an invi-

ation, you can’t see the Queen in that suit.” I can have either of two responses: *You pathetic slob! Imagine trying to see the Queen dressed in that suit!* But if I respond like that, haven’t I forgotten something? That I’m actually wearing somebody else’s suit? Sure it’s mine now, but I didn’t pay for it. Shouldn’t I rather respond with compassion: *Oh, that poor guy. What a pity he didn’t have a generous benefactor like I’ve got.* Let’s go back to our verse: “He made Him...who knew no sin...” This verse is telling me: God made Jesus who knew no sin to be treated as if He were sin, so that I could become the righteousness of God. You want to see the righteousness of God? You’re looking at it. It’s me. Not because of anything I’ve done, but because God gave me His righteousness. Just like the guy with the suit, I can stand tall and hold my head up high in the presence of God, because I am clothed in a suit that Jesus paid for. Isaiah 61:10 says, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” I am now clothed in God’s righteousness.²

Song Suggestions: “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less,” We Will Glorify.”

Song of Encouragement: “Seek Ye First”

¹E.F. Harris, “A Message for Myself and Perhaps You,” *Rotarian* (May 1948) 6.

²<http://hotsermons.com/sermon-illustrations/sermon-illustrations-righteousness.html>



HOLINESS

DANIEL OVERTON



Understanding the Word

Many a Bible class teacher has asked his or her pupils some version of the troublesome question: “What is holiness?” Frequently, the response that comes first is something like: to be holy is to be set apart. Scripture repeatedly affirms this essential definition; God’s people should be different from the world: sanctified. Tabernacle and temple furnishings were considered holy since they were set apart for sacred usage (See Exodus 40:9). Still, defining holiness as being set apart can have some undesired consequences. Namely, it can provide Christians with the misunderstanding that true believers must totally separate themselves from the world for the sake of holiness. Christians sometimes view holiness like a fancy suit or “Sunday clothes,” something to be protected for fear of contamination. As such, some disciples feel the need to retreat from culture, and holiness gets reduced to personal piety, turning morality into a dull list of commands.

To the contrary, God consistently expresses His holiness in the midst of His often unholy people, pitching His tent within Israel’s camp, and Jesus expresses holiness by walking and living among brokenness, touching lepers, attending parties, and eating with tax collectors. Thus, holiness might not best be conceived as being “set apart,” but instead, holiness is

about **distinctiveness**. God does not sanctify His people for their own benefit, but God sanctifies His people to bear and display the markings of His grace for everyone to see. *Holiness* refers to the distinctiveness of disciples who serve a God that is both near and totally unapproachable.

God, then, is holy in two primary ways. First, God is ontologically unique or distinct, unlike anything or anyone else. He alone is the transcendent, sovereign Creator of all things. Theologians have dubbed God as “wholly other,”¹ that He is entirely separate from humankind. In our finitude, we only know God through His grace and revelation. Second, God is holy through His attributes, perhaps particularly His righteousness, justice, and love (See Isaiah 5:16; Exodus 34:6). Christian holiness, then, is also twofold. First, Christians are positionally holy as we have been brought near to the Father through Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30), and second, Christians are conditionally holy as we strive toward a holy lifestyle, empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out godly virtues for His glory (Hebrews 12:14).

In the Old Testament, holiness is expressed through many concrete laws, a holiness code, wherein God’s covenant people are instructed regarding the daily minutiae of holiness, the everyday expressions of living a distinctive life in the service of God among the nations.

The term translated *holy* is *qodesh* and its cognates, meaning sacred, consecrated, or set apart/distinct. A person, place, or thing is holy if it is wholly devoted to the service of the Lord (See Leviticus 27:28).

In the New Testament, *hagios* and related terms represent the idea of holiness or distinctiveness, denoting full dedication to the Lord. The word translated *saint* means “holy one,” a term applied to ordinary Christians called holy by virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (See Ephesians 4:12). Stanley Hauerwas wisely said, “The first task of the church is to be the church.”² The church only has a witness to the world insofar as it is distinct from it, insofar as it is holy. If the church and the world are indistinguishable, then the church has no witness to the world.

Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand holiness.

1. Exodus 19
2. Leviticus 11:44-45
3. Leviticus 19:1-18
4. Psalm 99
5. Isaiah 6:1-7
6. John 14:15-26
7. John 16:7-15
8. 1 Corinthians 6:9-20
9. Colossians 3:5-15
10. 1 Peter 1:13-2:12
11. Revelation 4

The Levitical Law directly deals with the mundanity or the small details of holiness. John Goldingay summarizes the spirit of these laws: “[The Israelites] were called to point toward

God, and their distinctiveness was one way they could do that. They did not have live separately from the people, but their customs meant they were always distinguishable from other peoples.”³ Then, the holiness code (Leviticus 17–26) contained a series of customs and moral prerogatives meant to designate Israel as Yahweh’s people among the nations. Jacob Milgrom notes that this code is not simply a list of negatives or don’ts, but the law contains several positive admonitions, instructing Israel not simply to abstain from evil but to be productive of good and godliness (See Leviticus 19).⁴ The laws concerning food prohibition or sexual protocol are means of reminding Israel that God must reign in every area of their lives, and His reign should be obvious to Israel’s every observer.

Interestingly, in Jesus purity laws seem to reverse direction. In the Old Testament, a clean person who touched an unclean person or thing became unclean him/herself (Leviticus 11:40). However in the New Testament, when Jesus touches unclean people like lepers or the dead, the unclean are purified and rendered clean (Matthew 8:1-3). Christ transformed darkness into light, the unclean into the pure. Holiness flowed from Him as one full of the Holy Spirit. For Christ, the “new” distinguishing mark of discipleship is love, transformative compassion (John 13:35), and thus, Christian holiness or distinctiveness is marked by love that reaches out without fear of uncleanliness or contamination. In the cross and resurrection, Jesus has proclaimed an end to purity laws as they had been (See Acts 10:15), so through the indwelling Holy Spirit, disciples are empowered with holy love, love capable of transforming both the self and the other.

As God's final and full revelation of Himself, Jesus is ultimately the best answer to the troublesome question, "What is holiness?" Holiness is God's fundamental quality, and Jesus is God's fundamental and final revelation of Himself (Hebrews 1:1-4). As disciples of Jesus, we are called to live as He did, to follow His distinctive teachings, to live lives of witness to His way and ministry. The distinctiveness required by God's character is impossible through human effort. The only way Christians can be holy is to trust in the power of God's Spirit to transform them. Paul declares the Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave lives in His disciples, raising them to walk in newness of life (Romans 8:10-11). The process is referred to as sanctification (See 2 Thessalonians 2:13). To that end, Dallas Willard wrote, "Grace is not opposed to *effort*, but is opposed to *earning*."⁵ We cannot earn salvation or sanctification, yet nonetheless, holiness is hard work, something to be strived toward (Hebrews 12:14). No matter the effort, genuine holiness is impossible apart from God, so like any spiritual fruit, holiness is ultimately a gift made possible in Jesus and made present through the Holy Spirit in our feeble efforts.

In Zechariah's eschatological vision of the Day of the Lord, everything will become "holy to the Lord" (Zechariah 14:20-21), so God's ultimate work will redeem His cosmos so that everything will be as Jesus is now: holy and wholly devoted to the Lord (Romans 8:20-22; 1 John 3:2). Paul refers to this as the day when God will be "all-in-all" (1 Corinthians 15:28), and similarly in Revelation, John depicts the New Jerusalem as a perfect cube, reminiscent of God's Holy of Holies (Revelation 21:9-27). In anticipation of that day, we are called as disciples to devote our full lives to God in

the proclamation and proliferation of His holiness, trusting in the power of God's Spirit to complete the good work He began in us.

Preaching the Word

Illustration: Father Cavanaugh from the film *Rudy* said to a despondent Rudy, "Son, in thirty-five years of religious study, I've come up with only two hard, incontrovertible facts; there is a God, and I'm not Him." God is holy and wholly other. Much of the Christian faith is wrapped up in that statement: "There is a God, and I'm not Him." In affirming this, we trust that God is at work in the world and in us despite seemingly contradictory evidence, and we give up our notions of control to receive His freely given gifts, gifts made manifest through His Holy Spirit in our lives.

Quote: Mark E. Powell wrote, "God the Father makes us holy through the Son and by the power of the Holy Spirit. First and foremost, holiness is the gift of the Father who is at work within us by the indwelling Spirit to transform us into the image of His Son. Christians are called to pursue holiness, but we have not been left alone. God is with us, and God is the one who will bring to completion what He has already started in our lives."⁶

Concept: God is holy beyond comprehension, and likewise, humanity is sinful or depraved beyond imagination. The gap between human

sinfulness and God's holiness is humankind's fundamental predicament. As God's gift, Jesus acts as the bridge between the Father's holiness and human sinfulness. Accordingly, if we see ourselves as largely good and godly people, capable of righting our lives with willpower and hard work, then we do not desperately need Jesus after all. Our need for Christ is small if we overestimate our holiness or if we underestimate God's. Instead, if we rightly realize that God is infinitely holy and we are unimaginably flawed, fallen, and depraved, then our need for Jesus is infinite, beyond imagination. Our situation rightly conceived should force us to our knees in praise of the God who met us and saved us "while we were still sinners," completely incapable of saving ourselves (Romans 5:8). The cross, then, is the cost of the deficit between God's holiness and our sinfulness.

Illustration: Joan Chittister tells the story of a Chinese warlord who was rampaging through the mountains destroying every village in his path. As the word spread up the mountain of his coming, villagers began abandoning their homes, hoping to escape. Finally, when he got to the small village at the top of the mountain, he said to his lieutenant: "Has everyone fled the village before me?" His lieutenant responded, "Yes, lord, all have fled, except for one elderly monk." Upon seeing the old monastic, the warlord screamed: "Why are you still here? Do you not know who I am? I am he who can run you through with a sword and never even bat an eye."⁷ And the old monk lifted his head, looked into his eyes and said with a quiet smile: "Ah, but do you not know who I am? I am he who can let you run me through with your sword and never even bat an eye." Here is an example of holiness, of distinctive-

ness. May we be so at peace and so trusting in God that we can stay planted in His presence without fear, no matter the company.

Quote: Dave Bland wrote, "When we come into the presence of the sovereign, transcendent God, all bases for boasting are destroyed. All have sinned and fallen short of God's holiness. Maybe we should begin worship the way Alcoholics Anonymous teaches its members to introduce themselves, 'Hi, I'm Jane, and I'm an alcoholic, but by the help of a higher power, a recovering one.' This is the only posture in which I can stand before God and you today: 'I'm Dave, and I'm a sinner. But by the amazing grace of God, I'm a recovering one.' Only then can worship begin."⁸

Song Suggestions: "Holy, Holy, Holy," "O to Be Like Thee."

Song of Encouragement: "Holy Ground."

¹ Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960) 42.

² Stanley Hauerwas, "Radical Hope" in *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2001) 517.

³ John Goldingay, *Exodus and Leviticus for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010) 147.

⁴ Jacob Milgrom, "Holy, Holiness, O.T.," in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2009) 851.

⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission* (New York, NY: Harper-Collins, 2006) 166.

⁶ Joan Chittister and Rowan Williams, *Uncommon Gratitude: Alleluia for All That Is* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014) 123-124.

⁷ Dave L. Bland, "Worshipping God," in *Preaching the Eighth Century Prophets* (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 2004) 205.



LAST THINGS

JUDGMENT

BART WARREN



Understanding the Word

The Bible is clear: Judgment is coming. In fact, the “eternal judgment” is one of the foundational teachings of Christianity (Hebrews 6:1-2). In both the Old and New Testaments, the reality and certainty of the final judgment is revealed. For the unrighteous, those who do not know God and have not been purchased by the blood of Jesus, this day will be permanently terrifying and horrible. For those who have been saved by grace through faith, this very same day will be one that is marked by eternal joy and praise.

Numerous words and phrases are utilized in Scripture to describe the way in which God will judge the world. Judgment is variously described. It is a day of calamity as well as a day of deliverance. It is a day of legal sentencing: Some are pronounced guilty while others are set free.

Hebrew terms:

šhāphaṭ vb. “to judge, govern, to uphold justice, to enact righteous decisions.” The verb is commonly used to describe the carrying out of judicial decisions (Isaiah 2:4; Ecclesiastes 3:17).

šhepeṭ n. masc. “judgment.” The noun denotes a judgment or punishment in a judicial

context (Exodus 6:6; 7:4; Ezekiel 14:21).

mišhpāṭ n. masc. “judgment, justice.” The term is often used to express both the attribute of justice as well as the execution of judgment in litigation (Isaiah 32:1; Micah 3:1; Psalm 1:5; Isaiah 34:5).

yôm yhw̄h n. masc. “Day of the Lord, Day of Yahweh” (Isaiah 2:12-14; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:7-2:3; Zechariah 12-14) The term “day of the Lord” occurs throughout the Bible referring both to impending historical judgments from God and to His final judgment at the end of time. At the heart of the term is divine action. The “day of the Lord” is indicative of those times when God would break into time and act in human history. Israel viewed this day as a time when God would come to the aid of those who are His. It was thought to be a time when all enemies would be put down and Israel and her God would be exalted. It was seen as a day in history in which a nation would receive its doom.

Greek terms:

eschatē hēmera n. fem. “last day, eschatological day.” This phrase is used to indicate the final day when God will judge the world (John 6:40, 44; 12:48).

hēmera kyriou n. “Day of the Lord.” The phrase

refers to the time when the Lord appears to carry out final judgment and vindication (1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

kritēs n. masc. “judge.” Used in reference to someone who has authority to render legal verdicts (Hebrews 12:23; 2 Timothy 4:8).

krinō vb. “to pass judgment, to make a judgment.” This verb describes the act of carrying out a judicial process or making a judgment. This is the most widely used term in the New Testament to describe the act of judgment. Additional terms such as the nouns *krima* and *krisis* are derived from this verbal stem and essentially overlap in meaning (John 5:22-30; 1 Peter 1:17; 2 Peter 2:3-16; Matthew 5:21, 22; 7:2; 10:15; 11:22, 24; 12:36, 41, 42).

bēma n. neuter. “judgment seat; judgment bench.” The term refers to a raised platform where officials conduct judicial matters (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

aphorizō vb. “exclude; separate.” Used to indicate the separation of the wicked from the righteous at the return of Christ (Matthew 13:49; 25:32).

Reading the Word

1. Psalm 96:11-13
2. Exodus 6:5-6
3. Acts 17:30-31
4. Romans 2:15-16
5. 2 Timothy 4:1, 8

Psalm 96:11-13 tells us, “Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and every-

thing in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for He comes, for He comes **to judge** the earth. **He will judge** the world in righteousness, and the peoples in His faithfulness” (emp. added).

In Exodus 6:5-6 God says, “I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, ‘I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of **judgment**’” (emp. added).

Acts 17:30-31 warns us, “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which **He will judge** the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead” (emp. added).

Romans 2:15-16 states, “They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, **God judges** the secrets of men by Christ Jesus” (emp. added).

In 2 Timothy 4:1 and 8, Paul tells Timothy, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is **to judge** the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom... Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, **the righteous judge**, will award to me on that Day, and not

only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing” (emp. added).

Preaching the Word

Quotes: “It will serve the purpose rather of displaying before all rational creatures the declarative glory of God in a formal, forensic act, which magnifies on the one hand His holiness and righteousness, and on the other hand, His grace and mercy. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the judgment at the last day will differ from that at the death of each individual in more than one respect. It will not be secret, but public; it will not pertain to the soul only, but also to the body; it will not have reference to a single individual, but to all men.”

“No one will be able to accuse God of being unfair, nor have any basis for complaint about his fate. Everyone will be “without excuse” (Romans 1:20; 2:1); every mouth will be closed (Romans 3:19). God will be glorified in His justice because it will be made clear that those who are lost are getting what they deserve, and He will be glorified in His grace because it will be made clear that those who are saved are getting the opposite of what they deserve.”

Points to consider: There is only one day of judgment in the future (1 John 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:12; Matthew 7:22; Revelation 11:18). Christ will be the Judge (John 5:22, 27; Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 17:31; John 12:48). All people will be there (2 Timothy 4:1; Romans 3:6; Matthew 25:32). Our actions will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans

14:12). God is kind and gracious (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Jeremiah 31:34).

Exhortation: Let us long for His return and place our confident trust in Him as we wait for and watch His plan unfold. If we will live this way, we can join with Paul and say that we long for and love His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8)! J. I. Packer once wrote, “Run from Him now, and you will meet Him as Judge then—and without hope. Seek Him now, and you will find Him (for “he that seeketh findeth”), and you will then discover that you are looking forward to that future meeting with joy, knowing that there is now ‘no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus’ (Romans 8:1).”

Invitation: If we know that judgment is certain and that it awaits each and every one of us, shouldn’t that compel us to examine our lives with honesty? (2 Peter 3:11-18).

Song Suggestions: “Where He Leads Me I Will Follow,” “Are You Ready?”

Songs of Encouragement: “There’s a Great Day Coming,” “Prepare to Meet Thy God,” “When He Comes in Glory,” “When Jesus Comes.”

¹ All Hebrew and Greek definitions are taken from Matthew Aernie, “Final Judgment” *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Ed. Douglas Mangum et al. Lexham Bible Reference Series, available through Logos Bible Software. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014) n. pag.

² L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1938) 731.

³ Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 2002) 556.

⁴ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993) 147.

RESURRECTION

TIM MARTIN



Understanding the Word

Let's define what we mean by the word *resurrection* for the purposes of this study. We are not discussing the resuscitation of deceased people in the Bible who still eventually die. Examples of this would be Elijah and the widow of Zarephath's son (1 Kings 17:17-24), Elisha and the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:18-37), the man thrown in Elisha's grave (2 Kings 13:20-21), Jesus raising Lazarus (John 11:38-44) and the ruler's daughter (Matthew 9:18-26), and the story of Peter and Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43). The context of our discussion is the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of deceased believers at the Parousia (Second Coming). These two events are intimately connected: the latter is impossible if the former never occurred and our belief is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). We will, therefore, be confining our discussion to the New Testament. This particular concept of resurrection is not present in the Old Testament with perhaps the exception of Daniel 12:1-4. No particular Hebrew word for *resurrection* is used in the Bible, but there are terms that address a return from death (See Psalm 88:10; Isaiah 26:14, 19). These omissions may be the reason why the Sadducees denied the reanimation of the dead (Matthew 22:23-33; Acts 23:6-10). There are Old Testament passages that would not have signaled anything about the resurrection to the original audience, but

which later readers interpret in terms of resurrection.

The Greek noun translated resurrection is *anastasis*, which literally means "a raising up, a rising," like an event or occurrence. This noun is pervasive in the New Testament, occurring in passages such as Mark 12:18, 23; John 5:29; 11:24, 25; Acts 1:22; 4:2; 17:18; 24:21; Romans 1:4; 6:5; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 13, 21; Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 2:18; Hebrews 6:2; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:21; and Revelation 20:5-6 (also Philippians 3:11, where *exanastasis* is the term). The verb form *anistemi*, as applicable to our discussion, is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:14 ("rose again") and 4:16 ("rise first"). Additionally, we see other Greek terms relating to our topic: *zao* ("lives," Romans 14:9; 2 Corinthians 13:4); *zōopoieō* ("give life," Romans 4:17; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:22); *egeirō* ("raised," Romans 4:24, 25, 6:4, 9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:4, 12-15) and *anagō* ("lead/bring up," Romans 10:7; Hebrews 11:19; 13:20).



Reading the Word

1. Acts 2:31; 4:2, 33; 17:18; 23:6; 24:15, 21
2. 1 Corinthians 15
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

It is impossible within the confines of this lesson to cover every single passage that deals with Christ's resurrection or the future resur-

rection of the dead. The above section, while certainly not exhaustive, gives an indication of just how often the subject is discussed. We will examine some of the primary passages about resurrection that could be used as the foundation for a sermon.

Used together and contextually, these passages in Acts (and many in the previous section) can show that Christ's resurrection was the cornerstone of evangelistic efforts by the early church. Preaching that Christ rose from the dead was the reason many rejected the Gospel message. Even some of the Greeks in Athens didn't believe Paul, even though they were generally an open-minded people whose culture included the concept of an afterlife and resuscitation from the dead. We must keep in mind that despite our best efforts and sincere hearts, some will not accept that the resurrection of Jesus occurred.

In addition to the other destructive practices Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, a dangerous heresy circulating is addressed in chapter 15: the denial of resurrection (vs. 12). Paul emphasizes the critical nature of having faith in the Gospel preached to them (15:1-3). If the resurrection is denied, nothing else has purpose (vs. 29-30).¹ This heresy is a direct denial of Christ's resurrection. The Corinthians might

as well "party away" (vs. 32). Paul goes on to let his audience know that the things of this life cannot be eternal--this body will perish. Christ will, upon His return, place us in a spiritual body. Paul's illustrations in verses 35-41 are helpful in visualizing the natural/spiritual differences. The list of juxtapositions in verses 43-44 should also be used to reinforce the difference between the corruptible flesh and the eternal housing of the soul. Verse 58 stresses that by keeping our side of the salvation covenant, we can know our labor will be eternally fruitful.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18: Paul is encouraging the brethren in Thessalonica that Jesus will keep His promise (John 14:1-3) and return to deliver the church back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). They need not be concerned about Christians who have preceded them in death. The dead will rise to meet Christ first! The apostle gives an inspired promise we all hold dear: "We will always be with the Lord" (4:17). Paul gives them a job: Do something with this knowledge--encourage one another and help them to keep the faith.



Preaching the Word

Sermon Idea: One of the most often debated "conspiracy theories" is whether or not we actually landed people on the moon. There are many who say we didn't due the technical issues that were impossible to overcome. They say, "Why hasn't anyone gone back?" and use that to prove that we didn't go. Photographic and video evidence are scoffed at as forgeries. Likely, this debate will never end until we send someone there or another planet. Interestingly enough, those who dispute this event are calling the eyewitnesses (the astronauts) liars.

They don't believe them although some are still alive to be cross-examined. It should be no surprise that people today reject the eyewitness testimony of Christ's resurrection and the idea that the dead will rise again in the future. It is technically impossible. There is no hard evidence. To those without faith, the concept is foolish (See 1 Corinthians 1:20-25). Many who heard the Gospel firsthand from eyewitnesses such as Peter and John didn't believe them. How can we encourage and instill faith in something so absurd by worldly standards?

Jesus cites His ability to bring life back to the deceased as evidence of Him being the expected Messiah (Luke 7:18-23).² Based on this claim, which He certainly fulfilled while in an earthly body, can we refuse to believe He can do the same thing in His eternal form at the conclusion of time? To deny one is to deny the other; to accept one is to accept the other.

For Further Study: Will only the saints, both alive and dead at Christ's Second Advent, receive immortal bodies? There are different schools of thought on this. Consider carefully and explain your answer. If the unsaved do not have immortal souls, if they will not be given imperishable bodies, then is there any reason for them to fear eternal punishment in Hell? This discussion should involve Luke 16:19-31.

In 1 Corinthians 15, is Paul excluding the unsaved from the discussion? Or is he simply emphasizing the wonderful concept of "eternal life" in contrast to "eternal death"?

If you want to set the background for the New Testament concept of resurrection, the concept (as we think about it) begins to surface in Second Temple Judaism. This is why we see the topic debated among the Jewish sects. The idea is indicated in the apocryphal books of *Sirach*, *4 Maccabees*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *4 Ezra*, and the pseudepigraphical works *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *Testament of Benjamin*.³ A restoration of life to the dead/immortality of the soul also existed in Hellenistic thought from the works of Homer, Plato, and Virgil.

Song Suggestions: "Low in the Grave He Lay," "He Lives," "In Christ Alone."

Song of Encouragement: "Because He Lives."

¹ The vicarious baptism debate centered around 1 Corinthians 15:29 is a vigorous one, but not suited to this lesson. The point is made: Nothing else has a purpose if Christ was not raised and there is no hope that we will be.

² The origin of this expectation comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QMessAp or 4Q521).

³ For further reading on this topic, I suggest G. R. Osborne's article on resurrection in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (c. 2000, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL)

HEAVEN

STAFFORD NORTH



Understanding the Word

“Heaven is a wonderful place! Filled with glory and grace. I want to see my Savior’s face. Heaven is a wonderful place!”¹

Easton’s Bible Dictionary online suggests that *shamayim* is the most frequently used Hebrew word for heaven and it appears in three senses: 1. The sky where birds fly (Genesis 7:23), 2. The heavens where stars are (Deuteronomy 17:3), and 3. The dwelling place of God, the highest Heaven (Deuteronomy 10:14). Another word *marom* is sometimes used as an equivalent and also speaks of heights.

Not much is said in the Old Testament about the resurrection of the dead to go to a place where people would be eternally with God in an afterlife. Peter quotes David as having written in Psalm 16:10 about the resurrection of the Messiah from the dead although we don’t know how much David understood about this prophecy. Psalm 73:24 speaks of being guided by God’s counsel and then being “received into glory.” Hebrews 11 gives the clearest expression of what the ancients knew about a future life with God. Verse 16 says, “They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them” (NIV). To some extent, therefore, some knew of something better than this earth as a place to

live.

In the New Testament, the principle word translated heaven is *ouranos*. It can mean the space above the earth (Acts 1:10) or it can mean the place where God dwells (Revelation 4:2). Of course, there are many other expressions in the New Testament describing the ultimate reward of the righteous. Jesus speaks of some going away into eternal punishment while others go into eternal life (Matthew 25:46). Peter speaks of the destruction of the present heavens and earth and of the coming of a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:7-13). Paul calls the ultimate reward “His heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18). And John provides a beautiful figurative description in Revelation 21 and 22 calling it “the new heaven and the new earth” and “the new Jerusalem.”



Reading the Word

Reading these passages will help us understand Heaven.

1. Psalm 23:6
2. John 14:1-6
3. Matthew 25:34
4. Revelation 20:12
5. Revelation 22:14-15

In Psalm 23:6, David climaxes the “Shepherd” psalm saying, “And I shall dwell in the house

of the Lord forever.” Here “house of the Lord” must refer to an eternal dwelling place with God because it will last “forever.” From this high point of the psalm, we look back to see its progression: 1. The proclaiming of the trust, 2. The demonstration of the care, 3. The protection from harm, 4. The pouring out of the blessings, and 5. The reward from trusting.

John chapters 13–17 relate what Jesus shares with His apostles on the last night of His life. He tells them He would be with them only a little longer (John 13:33) and He knows they would find the coming events difficult to comprehend. In John 14:1 He tells them, “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many rooms.” Then He says He is going there to prepare a place for them and someday will come back and take them to the place He has prepared. Jesus here is helping His apostles find a way to look beyond His death and His resurrection and even past the persecutions they will suffer for Him. He says they can endure all these things because He is preparing for them a place. From this passage we learn: 1. Trust God to take care of you, 2. Believe Jesus has a prepared a great place for you, 3. Long for Jesus’ return to take you there. Since Jesus has gone away to prepare the place and since He says He will come back to take us to be with Him, it would appear that our ultimate dwelling place is not on a renovated earth.²

Another passage about Heaven is found in Matthew 25 where Jesus tells the parable of ten virgins and the parable of the master giving money to his workers to teach that we should all stay ready for His second coming. Then Jesus tells of the judgment day when all will be separated as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. To those who have

served the hungry, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited the prisons, Jesus will say, “Come, you who are blessed by My Father, take for your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world” (Matthew 25:34, NIV). Note the following topics for preaching: 1. The Lord has been preparing a reward since before creation, 2. The Lord says we can qualify for this reward by serving others, 3. The Lord invites those qualifying to live with Him.

Paul’s great message about the resurrection from the dead in 1 Corinthians 15 also tells us about Heaven. One may approach this chapter by the questions it answers: 1. Was Christ raised? Yes, according to the Scriptures and the eyewitnesses. 2. Will everyone else be raised? Yes, we have hope and Christ will undo the damage of the sin of Adam. 3. What will our bodies be like? Our new bodies will be imperishable, spiritual, and immortal. 4. What awaits following our resurrection? Victory over death through Jesus. 5. How should we live as we anticipate the resurrection? We should stand firm, immovable, giving ourselves to the work of the Lord.

The passage with the most detailed view of



HELL

ED GALLAGHER



Understanding the Word

The second Greek word sometimes translated Hell is *tartarus*, appearing only once in the New Testament (2 Peter 2:4, where the verbal form appears). It is difficult to determine the precise connotation of this word, whether it refers to Hell proper (the eternal abode of the wicked), or whether it refers to the negative side of Hades.

Finally, the word all translations render as Hell is *geenna* (sometimes in English: *gehenna*), appearing twelve times, all but once on the lips of Jesus. The Greek word itself is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase *gē ben-Hinnom*, valley of Ben Hinnom, which is an actual valley south of Jerusalem associated with child sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31-32; 19:6; 32:35; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). Jesus uses the terrifying associations of this valley as an image of the awful fate awaiting the wicked.



Reading the Word

The following passages shed some light on the concept of Hell and Hades.

1. Isaiah 5:14
2. Matthew 10:28
3. Matthew 25:41
4. 2 Thessalonians 1:9
5. Revelation 20:13-14

Isaiah 5:14 presents *Sheol* as a monster that is never satisfied (See Proverbs 1:12; 30:16). All people go to *Sheol*, the place of the dead; death and taxes are guaranteed to everyone. People exist there as “shades” (Isaiah 14:9). Jacob will go there to meet Joseph (Genesis 37:35), and there is no coming back (Job 7:9). These Old Testament passages do not imagine *Sheol* as a place of punishment or as a place of reward (See Psalm 6:5), but as merely the place where all dead people exist. In the New Testament, the monster that devours everyone is now called by the Greek term *Hades*. In Revelation, he follows behind Death (think the Grim Reaper) eating those “reaped” by the horseman (Revelation 6:8). Hades is the place to which Jesus went before His resurrection (Acts 2:27, 31). But this monster’s days are numbered, because Jesus holds the keys to Hades (Revelation 1:18) and it will be cast into the lake of fire, but not before it gives up its dead (Revelation 20:13-14). Jesus abolishes death (Hebrews 2:14) and offers the hope of a better future. The gates of Hades cannot prevail over Christ’s church (Matthew 16:18).

To learn about the eternal abode of the wicked, one must read more widely than passages that actually use the word Hell (*gehenna*). Such passages tell us little about Hell except that it is extremely unpleasant and associated with fire (Matthew 5:22; James 3:6). Other images of Hell (without that word) involve weep-

ing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42; 24:51; Luke 13:28) and darkness (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:50). The word eternal is associated with punishment in fire in Matthew 25:41, 46. In Revelation 20:10, the lake of fire—another term for Hell (Revelation 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8)—is described as a place of torment “day and night forever and ever.”

Perhaps most terrifyingly, Paul describes the fate of the wicked as “separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might” (2 Thessalonians 1:9), a truly dreadful thought when one considers that Scripture characterizes God by love, light, compassion, and goodness.

Preaching the Word

Quote: “Never fear. There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek, find. To those who knock, it is opened.”

Illustration: Sometimes people that we know seem to have a good life, a good family, a good job, and good relationships at church, but give it all up for sin and misery. I have known people who seemed to have heaven-on-earth, but exchanged it for drugs and prostitutes. Nobody forced them into this life of misery; they walked right into it. They chose Hell. There is a long Christian tradition of regarding Hell as a choice that people make. Dante’s *Inferno* is filled with people who chose their own punishments: bloodthirsty people spend eternity drowning in boiling blood, for instance. While

Scripture does not contain such a description of Hell, Dante’s point is that the choices we make now determine our future destiny. We can choose God, or we can choose Hell.

Idea: Design a sermon on Hell around the concept that Hell means “separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Emphasize the characteristics of God—perhaps based on Exodus 34:6-7, or the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) as modeled by God—and how “we live and move and have our being in Him” (Acts 17:28). We could do nothing, not even rebel against Him, without His providential care. God does not delight in casting accidental sinners into flames (1 Timothy 2:4), but He does grant the wish of those who insist on living without Him. Even this allowance God only grants after repeated attempts to reach a person (See Romans 1:19-20; Amos 4).

Song Suggestions: “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” “Is Thy Heart Right With God?”

Song of Encouragement: “I Gave My Life for Thee.”

¹NKJV: 32 times; ESV: 14 times; NASB: 13 times.

² See the *Oxford English Dictionary* on hell.

³ Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14.

⁴ Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.

⁵ There is no evidence that it was a garbage dump. A quick search for gehenna on Google Maps will show the location of the modern valley, which still retains its ancient name.

⁶ The character George MacDonald in C. S. Lewis’ *The Great Divorce* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1946) 72-73.



HOPE

JESSE ROBERTSON



Understanding the Word

Several words are translated as hope in the Old Testament, but the two most common Hebrew terms for hope come from the verbal roots *qavah* and *ʿachal*, both of which can be translated as “to wait” or “to hope.” The difference between hoping and waiting is whether or not there is an expectation and an optimistic outlook.¹

In the New Testament the Greek noun for hope is *elpis* and the associated verb is *elpizō*. In almost every context, these convey the meaning of confident expectation and anticipation of a good outcome. In pagan literature these words are used similarly for the prospect of a good future, but there are also contexts in which they refer to the anticipation of a future that is foreboding. In the New Testament the object of the hope is frequently the promises of God, resulting in a confident and joyful connotation.² The fundamental meanings of the terms used for hope in the Bible bring to light some points for consideration:

- hoping always entails waiting, though not all waiting is done in hope
- the object of the hope determines the quality of the hope
- Christian hope is not just a “maybe,” but an expectation

Therefore, hope for Christians means waiting with joyful optimism and confident trust for the fulfillment of the promises of God.



Reading the Word

1. Jeremiah 29:10-14
2. Job 19:1-12
3. Luke 24:13-27
4. Acts 23:6-10
5. Romans 8:18-25

In Jeremiah 29:10-14, verse 11 has become a favorite verse for many people: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (RSV). The context of this passage is critical for understanding the point. The majority of chapter 29 of Jeremiah constitutes a letter written from Jerusalem by Jeremiah to exiles who have already been transported to Babylon. It is his unhappy duty to tell them that the exile will last seventy years, and that the prophets who are saying that the trouble will soon pass are false prophets. Facing such a long period of exile threatens to dishearten the people. Jeremiah urges them to settle down, build homes, and raise families in order to survive as a nation. The promise of restoration at the end of seventy years is the basis of the hope he gives them. They must wait, but the promise of God gives them the assurance that they need in order to encourage one an-

other as well as each future generations while they wait with anticipation.

In the book of Job, hope is often the subject of the discussion. Although Job may muster the strength to assert his hope occasionally—"Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15)—he frequently laments that his hope is gone. Job 19:10 states, "He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone, and my hope has He pulled up like a tree." Job undergoes a transformation in the course of his trial. Initially he believes as his friends do that good people are blessed and wicked people suffer. When suffering comes to him, however, he is thrown into disorientation in relation to the laws of the universe. He questions the justice of God and his hope is threatened. If our hope is rooted in the promises of God, when our faith is shaken so is our hope. The test for Job is to wait through a period of suffering without losing his hope.

The crucifixion of Jesus undermined the hope of the disciples, but that hope was restored by His resurrection. In Luke 24:13-27, two disciples on the road to Emmaus say about Jesus, "But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel." Like Job, they misunderstand the plan of God, and when their own expectations are dashed, their hope is lost. When the incognito Jesus reveals Himself to them, their hope returns with new joy and power. The good news of the resurrected Jesus still has the power to restore hope. After all, it is the ultimate victory over the final enemy.

After the resurrection of Jesus, the topic of hope in Christian circles is centered on the promise of resurrection to eternal life. In Acts 23:6-10, Paul has been arrested in Jerusalem

and is on trial before the high priests and Jewish council. Noting that the group is a mixture of Sadducees and Pharisees, he shouts, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial" (Acts 23:6). Since Sadducees deny the possibility of resurrection, and Pharisees affirm it, immediately the council members begin to disagree with one another. It is fascinating to consider the idea that people might be thoroughly religious without holding onto the hope of a resurrection. Could it be that people today still go through the motions of religion out of tradition or politics but without any real hope?

The relationship between suffering, faith, and hope is the topic of discussion in Romans 8:18-25. Paul uses the fundamental definition of hope in order to encourage Christian faithfulness. If hope means waiting with eager expectation for a joyful promise to be fulfilled, and if we define ourselves as a people of hope, then we should not be surprised to find ourselves waiting. Paul reasons, "Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience" (vs. 24-25). In a sense, Paul draws a picture of hope's timeline, and then reminds his audience of where they are on that timeline. We look forward to the time

when faith gives way to sight and hope is fulfilled and only love remains (See 1 Corinthians 13:13), but for now we are still in the age of faith and hope, so we wait with an anticipation that helps us through our suffering.

Preaching the Word

Idea: The recent bestselling book *Unbroken* and the movie by the same name tell the real-life story of World War II prisoner of war Louie Zamperini. He and two other airmen, Phil and Mac, survived a plane crash in the Pacific and drifted for weeks without adequate supplies in a rubber life raft. Louie and Phil survived, but Mac did not. The author Laura Hillenbrand puts Louie's story into words: "Though all three men faced the same hardship, their differing perceptions of it appeared to be shaping their fates. Louie and Phil's hope displaced their fear and inspired them to work toward their survival, and each success renewed their physical and emotional vigor. Mac's resignation seemed to paralyze him and the less he participated in their efforts to survive, the more he slipped. Though he did the least, as the days passed, it was he who faded the most. Louie and Phil's optimism, and Mac's hopelessness, were becoming self-fulfilling."³

The present and the future of hope might be visually depicted with a timeline, a football field, or a map of a marathon. The features to be highlighted include:

- We are in the waiting period presently
- The time/distance is getting shorter
- "Eyes on the prize" is very motivating
- Others have finished their race and are waiting at the finish line

Idea: Polish the hope. Silver tarnishes over time, and our hope can also become less bright. Draw a picture of our hope of resurrection. Describe what it will be like to see Jesus, heroes of old, and loved ones. Rehearse again the things we will be free from, like death, tears, fatigue, temptation, and suffering. Tell the story as if you are there; make it personal.

Song: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." This song has a tremendous message about the nature of Christian hope. It is not based in our merit or our smarts. It is based on the promises that we have in Christ. One way to build up hope is to remind people of what God promises us in Christ.

Song Suggestions: "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less," "Firm Foundation," "Whispering Hope."

Song of Encouragement: "In Christ Alone."

¹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, תַּקְוָה, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 1782.

² Frederick W. Danker, et. al., ἐλπίζω, ἐλπίς, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 320.

³ Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken* (New York; Random House, 2014) 155.



OUR RELATIONSHIPS

MOTHERS

JOHN DALE



Understanding the Word

The Dictionary of Word Origins summarizes the various linguists' theories as to the origin of the English word *mother* this way: "It was probably based on the syllable *ma*, suggested by the burbling of a suckling baby, which also lies behind English *mama*, *mamma*, and *mammal*." The Latin *mater* (*alma mater* means "fostering (or kindly) mother") and Greek *meter* (*metropolis* is "mother city") indicate relationship, even an emotional tie, as well as beginnings and the producing of offspring. Contrary to widely held beliefs, the love of offspring was deeply embedded in the heart of Hebrew women, and thus motherhood was highly respected. Jacob "obeyed his father and his mother" (Genesis 28:7).

In the Old Testament, the term *mother* is used 168 times, both symbolically and literally. The context will help us easily distinguish between them. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living," "[Sara] shall be a mother of nations," "Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau..." (Genesis 3:20; 17:16; 28:5). In the New Testament, where the word is found 90 times, it is used both literally and figuratively: "His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph," "Who is my mother?," "Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother," "Jerusalem...is the mother of us all" (Matthew 1:18;

12:48, 50; Galatians 4:26).

It is generally assumed that women, especially in the Old Testament, were degraded and devalued, probably in large measure based on their mistreatment by some of the world's major religions of today. However, in Rebekah's marriage, her mother seems to have had an equal voice with her father and Laban her brother (Genesis 24:28, 50, 53, 55). The Law places children under obligation of honoring both father and mother alike (Exodus 20:12; see 21:15, 17; Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

The greatest comfort imaginable is the comfort a mother gives her son (Isaiah 66:13). A mother's unconditional, sacrificial love leads her to exhibit a compassionate heart and loving and kind words and deeds. *Mother* implies to feed, nourish, protect, sacrifice, teach, forgive, give, empower, launch, and much more.

Reading the Word

Reading these passages will help us to understand and appreciate the unique position of mothers within the plan of God:

1. Exodus 2:1-10
2. 1 Samuel 1:24-28
3. Ruth 1:1-4:18
4. Matthew 1:18-2:23 (see also John 19:26-27)

Pay particular attention to Hannah’s vow (1 Samuel 1:11) to give to the Lord her male child if God would bless her to give birth. Samuel is born, and when he is weaned, Hannah presents him to the Lord. Her prayer song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) bears a striking resemblance to that of Mary’s (Luke 1:46-55). How appropriate are the words of Tennyson as we think of Samuel and his godly mother: “Happy he with such a mother! Faith in womankind beats with his blood, and trust in all things high comes easy to him, and tho’ he trip and fall he shall not blind his soul with clay.”¹

Solomon demonstrates great wisdom and insight into motherhood when he settles the dispute between two prostitutes, one of whom has smothered her baby (1 Kings 3:16-28). The real mother wants the baby to live; the conniving mother is willing to see the child die to bolster her lie.

Naomi is a mother who is best known for her role as mother-in-law. Her husband and sons had died, and her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, love her deeply. In fact, Naomi refers to them as “my daughters” (Ruth 1:11). Ruth’s immortal words are spoken to Naomi: “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your peo-

ple shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die” (Ruth 1:16-17).

When Mary is given the word that she would bear the Christ child, she asks (quite naturally), “How can these things be, since I do not know a man” (Luke 1:34). The angel explains, and Mary believes. “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to Your word” (vs. 38). Mary then visits her relative Elizabeth who is expecting a baby boy in her old age. When Mary arrives and greets Elizabeth, the baby leaps in her womb. Elizabeth speaks these precious words: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1:39-45).

The great apostle Paul compliments motherhood (and grand-motherhood) as he praises Timothy’s heritage of “genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5).

Mother, grandmother, step-mother, mother-in-law! They’re all in the text, and they’re all of incalculable value in bringing up children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4b). In fact, the same word translated fathers in Ephesians 6:4a is used in reference to Moses being hidden by his **parents** in Hebrews 11:23. Don’t ever leave out mothers!

Preaching the Word

Illustration: Solomon Rosenberg, his parents, his wife, and his two sons were arrested and placed in a Nazi concentration camp during the Holocaust of World War II. It was a labor camp and the rules were simple: As long as you can do your work, you are permitted to live. When you become too weak to work, then you will be exterminated.

Rosenberg watched his mother and father being marched off to their deaths when they became too weak to work. He knew that his younger son David would be next because David had always been a frail child. Every evening when Rosenberg came back into the barracks after his hours of labor, he would search for the faces of his family. When he found them, they would huddle together, embrace one another, and thank God for another day of life.

One day Rosenberg came back but didn't see those familiar faces. He finally discovered his older son Joshua in a corner huddled, weeping and praying. "Josh, tell me it's not true."

Joshua turned and said, "It is true, Poppa. Today David was not strong enough to do his work, so they came for him."

"But where is your mother?" asked the father.

"Oh, Poppa," he exclaimed, "when they came for David, he was afraid and crying. Momma said, 'There is nothing to be afraid of, David; and she took his hand and went with him.'"

Quote: "My mother said to me, 'If you become a soldier, you'll be a general; if you become a monk, you'll end up as the pope.' Instead, I be-

came a painter and wound up as Picasso."²

Application: Thank God for your mother! Do it right now! If your mother is still living and able to communicate, before you go to bed tonight, visit or call her and just let her know you love her and appreciate her. If your mother is no longer living, reflect on her teaching and influence in your life. Determine to be more alert and aware of God's blessings in your family and in His family!

Song Suggestions: "God Give Us Christian Homes," "Precious Memories," "For the Beauty of the Earth," "Magnificat."

Song of Encouragement: "In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified."

¹ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan) 67.

² Pablo Picasso. *Celebrating Mother: A Book of Appreciation*, Edited by Glorya Hale and Carol Kelly-Gangi (London; Metro-Books, 2002) 63.



MARRIAGE

HOWARD NORTON



Understanding the Word

Marriage and family are universal traits of human culture. One of the most interesting areas of cultural anthropology is the study of marriage customs in the different societies of the world. We might not think about it often, but marriage customs are different in various other countries.

It is interesting, for example, to know that typical middle- and upper-class Brazilian families go through two marriage ceremonies to satisfy both civil law and religious sensibilities. The civil marriage performed by an authorized government official binds two people together legally. In the eyes of the government, they are husband and wife.

In the eyes of religious Brazilians, however, especially Roman Catholics who make up the majority of the Brazilian population, a couple is not truly married before God until they are married in a religious ceremony performed by a clergyman duly chosen by the church for this responsibility. Because of the historical influence of the Roman Catholic Church which was the official religion of Brazil until 1889, this point of view penetrates much of Brazilian society today—even evangelical believers and members of churches of Christ.

Because each culture has its own set of tra-

ditions, we will focus in this article on God's view of marriage itself and not the customs surrounding it.

According to the sacred Scriptures, Jehovah God Himself created marriage. The first married couple is Adam and Eve who, along with their offspring, became the world's first nuclear family. We know very little about the details of that first union, but what we do know is significant. First, God creates both man and woman in His own image. They are, therefore, of equal value before God. Second, they are given the responsibility to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28). Sexual activity between a man and his wife is not just permitted in marriage, it is mandated because the couple is to "be fruitful and multiply." Notice that there is not a hint of same-sex marriage in the Bible. Marriage is always a union between man and woman, and it is to last for as long as they both live according to Jesus (Matthew 19:3-9).

Among other things, marriage was created to relieve loneliness and provide companionship, bear and nurture children, provide proper leadership for the creation (Genesis 1-2), create a loving and respectful atmosphere within the home (Ephesians 5:22-6:4), reduce the ten-

gency toward sexual immorality and create the conditions for God-given sexual pleasure (1 Corinthians 7:1-5), and produce godly offspring to the glory of God (Malachi 2:15).

Reading the Word

1. Genesis 2:18-25
2. Exodus 20:14, 17
3. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

Although marriage is created by God and its purposes are defined by His Word, there has never been a perfect marriage—not from the marriage of Adam and Eve to our own day. As is true of the human condition in general, all marriages are flawed. They are flawed because we as individuals are flawed by sin and the weaknesses it produces in us. A good marriage, therefore, requires great determination and effort on our part if it is to be the blessing God intended marriage to be. At the very heart of a good marriage is faithfulness to the wedding vows. No wonder the seventh of the Ten Commandments says, “You shall not commit adultery.” And the tenth of the Ten says, “You shall not covet...your neighbor’s wife” (Exodus 20:14, 17).

Sinful men and women have always suffered from wandering eyes and the illusion that “the grass is greener on the other side of the fence.” Even very devout people have fallen for this lie and wrecked their lives, their own families, other families, and their personal reputations. King David is a classic example of this scenario. The man who seems to have it all virtually loses it all because of failing to obey the two commandments just mentioned above. I stand in awe of David’s many military, political, and spiritual accomplishments, but

there are things in his behavior that make me sick to my stomach. It is then that I realize that I am also a flawed man and capable of wretched thoughts and behavior that can negatively affect my marriage. Television’s reality crime programs to this day are usually based on sins involving sexual infidelity, money, and power. We haven’t changed much at all since David lived some 3,000 years ago.

1 Thessalonians provides ethical instruction for a brand new congregation. Interestingly, Paul’s first ethical admonition to that church in chapter 4 is, “...Abstain from sexual immorality.” He writes later, “Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.” No marriage has ever been perfect, but God has not given up on the idea that fidelity in marriage is absolutely necessary for one who claims to be a Christian. To be unfaithful to marriage vows is to have disregard for God.

Preaching the Word

Principle: The role of a preacher is different than the role of a counselor. Although preachers are frequently called upon to counsel those who are having trouble in their marriages, their main job is to preach Biblical messages that will prevent marital problems from developing in the first place. Preachers proclaim. Counselors listen, suggest, and nudge. Many times counselors find that the couple in front

of them has a problem that might have been avoided if they had heard Biblical messages through the years that told them convincingly how to live harmoniously. Preachers are vital, and counselors are vital, but their roles are quite different. Most preachers would do well to refer marriages in trouble to experienced counselors. Preachers need to speak the Word of God about marriage as clearly and boldly as they can.

Principle: We can learn a great deal about marriage from passages that don't specifically mention it. I suggest that preachers learn to see the application to marriage and the family in passages of Scripture that say nothing specifically about marriage or family. It's easy, for example, to wear out Ephesians 5:22-33 when talking about building a good marriage and completely overlook applications to marriage and the home when dealing with Ephesians 4:25-5:2.

The same can be said about Colossians 3:5-15. This passage dealing with the new life that follows our baptism are dripping with information that will bless every marriage that pays attention to these teachings. What about the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12? Why don't we see teaching about successful marriage in this verse? What about Matthew 22:39 where we find the second greatest commandment? Doesn't "love you neighbor as yourself" speak to marriage? Does Christ's letter to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:1-6 give any tips for restoring a love that has gone away? The principles for restoring a church whose love has disappeared are the same principles that can restore a marriage that has grown cold and boring.

Principle: Marriage is an important concept. We are all painfully aware that Satan has launched a major attack against marriage in our day. This is not the first time it has happened in history, but it is the first time for many of us to experience such an assault on the most basic of human institutions. I grew up in a time when divorce hardly existed in the church or even in my urban neighborhood. The timeline nearly everyone seemed to follow was study, graduate, get a job, marry, have babies, and be a family till death do us part. That plan has long since ceased to be the norm for great numbers of people.

Marriage has become little more than an option or a joke for millions of our citizens. Babies might come at any time along the timeline. Neither father nor mother feels great responsibility for what happens to the kids. This attitude is diametrically opposed to the Biblical vision of marriage. Unless preachers teach the Biblical meaning and importance of marriage, along with God's plan for a happy one, the future of our children and grandchildren, as well as the future of our nation, is bleak and dreary.

Song Suggestions: "Bind Us Together," "How Beautiful," "The Greatest Command."

Song of Encouragement: "Boundless Love."



CHRISTIANS

WES MCADAMS



Understanding the Word

The word *Christian* comes from the Greek word *Christianos*. The word is actually a combination of the Greek word *Christos* (meaning “Anointed One”) and the Latin suffix *-ianos*, which indicated the person was a follower of a leader or slave who belonged to a master. So the word quite literally means, “A person who follows, or belongs to, Christ.” And it’s probably important to point out, this seems to be a term coined by outsiders rather than a name Christians came up with for themselves.

Consider how English speakers often label groups of people by taking a word associated with that group and adding a suffix to the end of the word. Sometimes we do this with proper names, like those of political or religious leader the group follows. Sometimes we do this with the primary philosophy to which the group holds. Although this is sometimes done in a negative or condescending way, that certainly isn’t always the case.

Just to point out a few examples: Religiously, we call those who follow the teachings of Martin Luther “Lutherans.” We call those who agree with John Calvin’s theology “Calvinists.” In politics, we add a suffix to words like “republic” to label a group of people “Republicans.” In English, the suffixes *-ist*, *-ite*, and *-ian* are commonly used this way.

So we can easily understand how, and why, the disciples of Jesus in Antioch are labeled “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Although it could have been, it isn’t necessarily meant to be a negative moniker. It could have just been a way for outsiders to differentiate the disciples of Jesus from others.

We know the early disciples were always talking about the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the “Christ.” In other words, they are declaring to anyone who would listen, “Jesus is the ‘Anointed One,’ the Son of David, the King of kings, the Messiah.” And when a group of people uniquely talk so much about one issue – or one person – then outsiders are more than likely going to create a label for that group.

I think it is interesting that when we talk about being a Christian today, we are usually thinking in terms of individual salvation and forgiveness, and that is certainly part of what it means to be a Christian, but the word Christian has much more to do with being in submission to the kingship of Christ. The early Christians talk about the kingship of Jesus. They are calling the entire world to bow in obedience, reverence, and awe before the Son of God, the King, Jesus the Christ. Thus, they are labeled “Christians.”

It seems many people today want a Savior, but they don’t want a King. A Christian is someone

who allows Jesus to be both his Savior and his King.

Reading the Word

1. Acts 11:21-26
2. Acts 26:22-28
3. 1 Peter 4:16

It is interesting to note that although we use the word Christian constantly today, the word is only found three times in the entire Bible. The first time we find the word “Christian” is in Acts 11:26. Luke writes about how the persecution of the disciples in Jerusalem causes the disciples to be scattered to several different cities (Acts 8:1; 11:19). One of the cities where the Gospel makes a huge impact is the city of Antioch.

Evangelists from Cyprus and Cyrene teach “a great number” of people about the Lord. In fact, so many people are obeying the Gospel in Antioch, the church in Jerusalem hears about it and sends Barnabas there to do what he does best, encourage the new Christians to “remain faithful to the Lord” (Acts 11:23). After awhile, Barnabas travels to Saul’s hometown of Tarsus and brings him in to teach and preach in Antioch.

While talking about Antioch, Luke emphasizes three times that a “great number” (vs. 21) or a “great many people” (vs. 24-26) are becoming followers of Christ. It would have been a very exciting time and place. In verse 26, we read,

“For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” The second occurrence is in Acts 26:28. In this context, the apostle Paul has been imprisoned and is making his defense before King Agrippa in Caesarea. Agrippa is “familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews” (Acts 26:3), so Paul tells him why he has become a follower Jesus the Christ. Paul boldly declares, “I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23).

Paul pleads with Agrippa to accept the truth about Jesus, saying, “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe” (Acts 26:27). But it would not be so easy to make a disciple out of the king. “Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?’” (Acts 26:28). Though some translations use a question mark, it’s hard to tell if Agrippa is saying, “You’ve almost persuaded me, Paul.” Or if he is scoffing, saying, “Do you really think that you could so easily persuade me, Paul?”

And the final time we read the word *Christian*, it is in 1 Peter 4:16. Peter is writing this epistle to encourage disciples who are suffering because of their faith in Christ. He writes saying, “If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed....” Once again, it seems others are labeling disciples of Jesus with the moniker *Christian*, but Peter tells them not to be ashamed of that at all, but rather “Glorify God in that name.”



Preaching the Word

Introduction for a sermon: People have probably labeled you your whole life. Perhaps they label you according to your looks, your style of clothing, things you did in your past, your political persuasion, or the pastimes you enjoy. Some labels may be ones of which you're embarrassed, but others are ones of which you are proud.

Those who wear a label like *veteran* usually wear that label proudly. But those who wear a label like *divorcee* feel shame at having to wear that label. Some strive to have others see them as the labels *smart*, *macho*, or *trendy*, while others wish they could shed the labels *geeky*, *boring*, or *grouchy*.

Think about the labels that you hope people will associate with you. How do you want people to know you? How do you want people to categorize you? What better word could there be than Christian? What better thing could be said about a person than that he or she is one of those Christian people?

Illustration: It is reported that Alexander the Great singled out one of his soldiers who is accused of cowardice.

“What’s your name?” Alexander snapped.
“My name is Alexander, sir,” came the reply.
“Well, change your life or change your name.”¹

The point being, of course, if we are going to wear the name of Christ by being called Christians, then our lives better reflect Christ. If our lives don't, then we need to change our lives or change our name.

Quote: The beginning of a letter from Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan. In this letter, Pliny wants to know how he should try, interrogate, and punish Christians and if just being named Christian is sufficient offense enough to punish them or if they need to have actually committed some offense.

It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished.

Song Suggestions: “We Are One in the Spirit,” “Shout to the North.”

Song of Encouragement: “Who Will Follow Jesus?” “Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me.”

¹Jack Exum, *The Art of Illustrating*, (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, 1989) 75.



ELDERS

JAY LOCKHART



Understanding the Word

God's plan for church organization is summarized in Philippians 1:1 when Paul addresses the letter, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." The bishops are the "overseers" of the work of the local congregation, the deacons are the "special servants" of the church, and the saints include the rest of the congregation. Both the bishops and deacons meet certain qualifications set forth in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). In the midst of these qualifications, Paul speaks of "wives" (vs. 11). The correct translation of the word he uses (*gunaikas*) is women or wives, instead of *diakonas*--servants-- showing that the apostle is addressing the wives of leaders in the church instead of women serving in an official capacity of leadership. This organization is simple, but it is God's plan and it works.

In Acts 20:17 and 28, Paul uses three words to describe the work of the bishops. First, he calls together "the elders (*presbuteros*) of the church." This word means "one who is older in the faith." Elders are not to be new converts (1 Timothy 3:11). Then, in Acts 20:28, Paul refers to elders as "overseers" (a translation of *episkopous*), which means that elders were to oversee all of the work of their congregation (See 1 Peter 5:2). Further, Paul states that elders are to "shepherd the church." A shepherd

(*poimēn*) has a three-fold responsibility to his flock: first, he is to lead the flock (elders provide leadership in all aspects of church work as they demonstrate faith, direction, and example to the flock). Second, shepherds are to feed the flock (elders are responsible for all the teaching that occurs in classes as well as the pulpit). Third, shepherds are to protect the sheep (elders are to know the truth and "by sound doctrine...exhort and convict those who contradict" [Titus 1:9]). Elders must protect their sheep from every error, whether from within or from without the church.



Reading the Word

When one reads the word *elder* in the Bible, he must determine by the context how it is being used. In the Old Testament the term is a translation of the Hebrew verb *zāqēn* and means "to be old." It may have been derived from the noun *zāgān*, meaning "beard."¹ It may refer simply to older men or to a ruling body of older men who "sat at the city gate...and settled many questions."² In the New Testament the Greek word *presbuteros* means older men or women (1 Timothy 5:1-2) members of the Jewish Sanhedrin (Acts 24:1), and those who oversee (*episkopos*) or shepherd (*poimēn*) individual congregations of the church (See Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).³ There is no evidence either Biblically or historically that women served as elders. Obviously they could not meet the

qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, particularly in respect to being the “husband of one wife.”

Preaching the Word

Sermon Idea: In preaching the word *elder*, the logical place to begin, after reading and understanding it, is to look at the work of elders. Notice the following facts:

1. The work of elders is seen in **the terms used** in reference to elders. *Elder* should mean experience and wisdom that equips these men for **counseling** members of the congregation in various areas. *Bishop* (*overseer*) equips for **mentoring**. *Shepherd* (*pastor*) equips men to know, teach, and defend the faith, to protect the sheep from harm from within and without the church, and to lead the church with vision and faith.

2. The work of elders is seen in **the qualifications given**. Some sign of all of the qualifications must be seen in the life of each elder. These qualifications speak of his **domestic, social, and spiritual** responsibilities.

3. The work of elders is seen in **their leading by consent**. People choose to belong to a certain congregation and to place themselves under its elders. Leading by consent means that elders understand that they are not lords over the flock (1 Peter 5:3) but are to provide leadership by example and persuasion.

4. The work of elders is seen in their **decision-making**. Elders are more than decision makers, but they must make many decisions. To do this successfully, let elders: (a) study the Scriptures; (b) pray; (c) seek advice; (d) weigh

the alternatives; and (e) take as much time as needed. After this process, decisions are made and not second-guessed.

5. The work of elders is seen in **equipping the saints** for service (Ephesians 4:12). All members are **important** and **necessary** (1 Corinthians 12:12-22), and each one must be equipped to do his or her part (Ephesians 4:16).

6. The work of elders is seen in **conflict resolution**. The divine plan is found in Matthew 18:15-18 and 5:23-24. Conflicts should be serious or forgotten because if unresolved they must be taken to the whole church. How conflicts are handled affects one's relationship with God. In matters of faith, the Scriptures are always the last word. In matters of opinion, judgment, or expediency, the elders will ultimately decide.

Principle: Let us remember that elders have responsibilities to the church and the church has responsibilities to the elders (See Hebrews 13:17, among other passages). Additionally, the work of elders has great reward (1 Peter 5:4).

Song Suggestions: “The Church’s One Foundation,” “Rise Up, O Men of God,” “I Am a Sheep.”

Song of Encouragement: “He Leadeth Me.”

¹ Warren Patrick Baker, *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*. Dr. Spiro Zodhiates ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1994) 2313.

² Baker.

³ See also *Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1992) 635.



DEACON

DAVID SHANNON



Understanding the Word

In the New Testament, the word translated *deacon* is from the Greek term *diakonos*, “one who serves as an intermediary in a transaction, agent, intermediary, or even courier.”¹ For example, in 1 Thessalonians 3:2, Paul sent Timothy as a “minister (*diakonos*) of God...to establish you.” It also refers to a submissive servant, “one who gets something done at the behest of a superior, assistant.”² It is used this way in Matthew 22:13 and Mark 9:35. In the most generic sense, it is an attendant, a servant, or a waiter. The service rendered of the servant (*diakonos*) is from *diakonia*, which is translated “ministry (*diakonia*) of this service” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

An exact Hebrew word for *deacon* isn’t found. But a term with similar usage, *shawrat*, is found in the Old Testament. It means “to attend as a menial or worshipper; figuratively, to contribute to, minister (unto), (do) serve (-ant, -ice, -itor).”³ *Shawrat* is the word which describes the Levites service for the whole congregation under Aaron’s leadership in Numbers 3:5-7. Notice how the two descriptions in the first paragraph of this article are seen in this one passage. The Levites are servants or agents from God to serve Israel under the submission of Aaron and God.

Everett Ferguson dispels the simple definition often heard for deacon as a “waiter of tables.” Ferguson explains that the word group rooted in *diakon* could cover “a quite varied field of service.”⁴ He also explained that *deacon* referring to the office in the church is more often paired with *bishop* or *overseer* as a counterpart. Ferguson reminds us of a helpful list of those who were described using words from the family of the term *diakonos*. That list includes Christ (Romans 15:8), the Apostles (Mark 9:45), Paul’s co-workers (1 Thessalonians 3:2), missionaries (1 Corinthians 3:5), evangelists (1 Timothy 4:6), all believers (John 12:26), civil magistrates (Romans 13:4), messengers of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:15), waiters (John 2:5, 9), as well as the technical usage of leadership in Christ’s church (Philippians 1:1).⁵

Therefore, context must determine what kind of servant is being discussed when the term is used. The technical usage is found far less frequently, but that does not take away from the existence of these appointed leaders or the importance of their work. Ferguson brings his discussion to a close by writing, “We conclude that deacons are agents of the bishops and intermediaries between them and the members of the congregation, and in this work they represent and mediate the servanthood of Jesus.”⁶

Reading the Word

1. Philippians 1:1
2. Acts 6
3. 1 Timothy 1–5
4. 1 Timothy 3:8-13

This entry deals primarily with the technical use of diakonos as it describes a position of leadership. For example, in Philippians 1:1, Paul greets all the church, but he specifically mentions the leadership made up of bishops and deacons. We know that all Christians should be servants, but here the word diakonos is used in a technical sense.

Some are quick to say that Acts 6 contains the first example of deacons in Scripture. Maybe so, but note that Scripture doesn't say that. By the time "deacons" are referred to in a technical sense, the church was well aware of these leaders. However, as the church matured, elders were appointed to oversee and shepherd while deacons seem to serve in a similar way as the servants of Acts 6.

In 1 Timothy, Paul expounds on one of the most important desires of God: He desires "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). We might begin by discussing a new ministry or starting a new class, but God looks to the infrastructure of the leadership of His church. The word deacon is

used in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 in the technical sense to refer to leaders of the Lord's church. Those who will be qualified must fulfill these qualifications. This is an important passage for a congregation to understand before appointing men into this position of leadership. To make appointments without a clear understanding of this passage is to ignore God's design of leadership.

Preaching the Word

Sermon Idea: A Lesson from Acts 6. Growth creates its own set of challenges. The Jerusalem church has been growing rapidly (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1). When the number of followers surpasses the leadership's ability to tend to and lead, the result will be heard in complaints. Fortunately, the Apostles have the type of relationship with the members that the church brings their complaints to them (Acts 6:1). The Apostles find a solution. They do not feed the widows themselves, but they make sure there are leaders in place to see that they were fed. If Apostles could work miracles yet could not do everything the church needed, elders need to humbly admit they cannot do everything. Instead of doing the work of deacons, elders need to lead deacons into service by giving them ministries "to be over." The Apostles make sure leaders are appointed to be "over this business" (Acts 6:3). Acts 6 is a great example of how when leaders do their part, the truth is not only lived out but exalted and spread.

Sermon Idea: Preach 1 Timothy 3:8-13 looking at the qualifications, understanding that all of them "must be" found in a man's life for him to be qualified in God's will. Perhaps you might want to divide them into four groups: 1.

Character of the Man, 2. Spiritual Maturity of the Man, 3. Domestic Responsibilities of the Man, and 4. Evaluation of a Deacon.

Sermon Idea: Preach 1 Timothy 3:13 as an evaluation of a deacon. How can a deacon know if he is doing God’s will? First, is he serving? Second, is he serving “well”? Finally, has the deacon gained great confidence or boldness in the faith? It is true that going forward we walk by faith, but looking back we can often see God’s powerful work and generous blessings. An experienced leader who has tested God in his life will enjoy the ability to look back and see God’s faithfulness. A past life of service with strong faith today will create a bold man for God.

Illustration: My son at 15 years old could do as much as many deacons are asked to do. Could it be that deacons are one of the most under-utilized resources in the Lord’s church today? How many congregations use deacons as “errand boys” for the elders instead of highly qualified leaders as described in Scripture? Appoint them over a ministry and urge them to involve all the willing members to serve with them.

Application: Finally, you are greatly encouraged to appreciate the work of deacons and those that serve well in it. Let them know that the Lord and the congregation greatly appreciate

them. What can you do as a church to let them know they are appreciated? What if you passed out note cards asking everyone to write a deacon a note letting him know why you appreciate him?

Song Suggestions: “We’ll Work ‘til Jesus Comes,” “I Want to Be a Worker,” “Make Me a Servant.”

Song of Encouragement: “Pierce My Ear.”

¹ Frederick W. Danker, et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 230.

² Danker 230.

³ James Strong, ed. *New Strong’s Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996) 149.

⁴ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) 335.

⁵ Ferguson 334.

⁶ Ferguson 337.



FATHERS

LEON BARNES



Understanding the Word

The word *fathers* is an extremely easy word to understand. It is first used in the sense of fathering a child. In this sense it is strictly the physical act of having sex with a female and getting her pregnant. Used this way it doesn't even matter whether or not the female gives birth to the child. If she chooses to abort the child, the man has still performed the act of fathering. There is absolutely no honor at all in fathering in this sense. In the much higher sense, the word fathers refers to those who serve as dads in the lives of children. This person may or may not have been the man who had sex with the mother of the child to bring him or her into the world. It refers to the real man, who, if he did give the child his DNA, will have the courage, faith, and discipline to be there for that child to teach them how to live in a healthy, wholesome, and serving way throughout his lifetime. This father can rightly share the name that God desires us to use for Him. When Jesus teaches us to pray, He says, "Pray then like this, Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name." An earthly father takes his cue from God the Father and loves the child for the rest of his life. He will sacrifice many of his own interests and desires to be the mentor, leader, guide, protector, and teacher for life.

The commitment of being a real father doesn't have any term limits with it. One doesn't de-

termine he will be there and do the job until the children are 18 and then they are on their own. Our job is to prepare our boys to become men who can serve as great fathers for their own children later. We are to "bring them up!" not make them eternal boys. Our job for our daughters is to show them how real men who dearly love them will treat them by demonstrating that kind of love for their mothers. Nothing a dad ever says to his daughter will carry the weight of his actions toward her mother. Most daughters grow up to either look for a man whom they think acts like their dad or who is the very opposite of their dad because they learned not to want anyone to treat them like you treated their mother. It is an amazing joy when that daughter who is now a young woman comes home to introduce you to the young man she loves and whispers to you, "He reminds me of you, Dad."

Fathers choose the job. Choose to be God's representative with your children. Be a father they are proud to say to their friends, "There goes my dad."

Reading the Word

1. Genesis 18:19
2. Deuteronomy 6:4-9
3. Luke 15:11-42
4. Ephesians 6:4
5. Colossians 3:21

In Genesis 18:19, God's message about Abraham is that He has chosen him to direct his children and family after him to keep the way of the Lord. In reality God chooses every father to do the same thing. You can be the kind of dad God chooses or the kind Satan chooses. Which will it be?

There is no other text that so clearly lays out the work God calls every dad to fulfill as Deuteronomy 6:4-9. He tells a father to start with complete devotion and love for God and to keep His teachings deep in his heart. It is only when we have done that part that we are ready to teach these things diligently to our children. God's plan for teaching our children His Word is the best you can find. Talk about the Scriptures when you are sitting at home, when you are walking along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on the gates. Everywhere our children look in our homes and in our lives they should be reminded of God and His will. A friend who drove each Sunday and Wednesday night to preach for a small church 75 miles from his home said it was the greatest time for sharing his faith with his daughters that he ever had.

Luke 15:11-42, the story of the prodigal son, is really the story of the loving father who is God. What a powerful text for talking to fathers. Even the best fathers sometimes lose their children. Proverbs 22:6 isn't a promise that if we teach right our children will always go right. If that were true our children wouldn't have a choice of their own. It is the best way to assure the future of a child, but not a guarantee. Great dads allow their children to go far from God and live with the consequences if that is their choice. They don't rescue them from the hog pen. But if their child repents and comes home, they meet them with open arms and welcome them home without any probation. They also go out to plead with older brothers who think they have it all right.

Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 are two texts that simply tell us what being a dad is all about. Instead of disheartening our children, we are to be their encouragers for life.

Preaching the Word

Idea: One good sermon idea is to look at God's faith in Abraham as a dad. He trusted that God would bring up his children and family for him. A sermon from the negative is to look at David, a good man, a man after God's own heart, but he still does a miserable job as a dad. He doesn't have time for his children, and even when Amnon raped his sister Tamar, the text says David was angry about it, but the Bible never says a word about him going to Amnon to correct him or to Tamar to comfort her. Great servants of God aren't always good dads. They may spend so much time with the church helping others that they neglect their children in the process.

Idea: Look at the story of the prodigal son from the standpoint of fathers. Even the greatest fathers sometimes lose their children. But great fathers welcome home a penitent child and take him back as though he had never done wrong. They also go out to try to change the selfish child that is only concerned about his goat. A good intro to this sermon would be to tell the story of the prodigal son, but in a modern setting with the father as a preacher or elder and the son as someone who gets involved with drugs and fathers a child outside of marriage. Is it true that if you make your bed you must lie in it?

Principle: Probably every father feels more vulnerable concerning how he serves God as a dad than in any other aspect of godly living. Why is that the case? We see our flaws and pray our children have forgotten them. How many of us have declared that we would never do or say things that our fathers did or said to us only to find ourselves doing the same things with our own children? We must never allow our own feelings of inadequacy as fathers to keep us from preaching on the subject because the need for sermons and lessons of the subject is overwhelming. God's charge to the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 6 is still one of the greatest plans in bringing up children ever conceived.

Song Suggestions: "God Give Us Christian Homes," "Precious Memories," "Rise Up, O Men of God."

Song of Encouragement: "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus."



GOD'S CHURCH



CHURCH

ANDREW PHILLIPS



Understanding the Word

The word translated church in the New Testament is *ekklesia*, which refers to: 1. an assembly, 2. a casual gathering of people, or 3. people with a shared belief.¹ When Christians have assembled to worship, we can then say that the church has assembled. *Ekklesia* is derived from a verb that means “to call out,” and the *ekklesia* has been described by some as “the called-out ones.” We need to remember this term is not always used in a spiritual nature. The secular use of the word in the Greco-Roman world referred to the legislative body of leaders who were gathered (“called out”) to decide on specific issues.² As with any term, we must be attentive to the context of *ekklesia* when we see it in Scripture. For instance, it is used in Acts 19:39 to refer to the legislative assembly in Ephesus. The majority of times it appears in the New Testament, though, it refers to the gathered body of God’s people.

Of course, as members of the church, we have been “called out” of the world. We understand from Scripture that we are called to live holy lives (1 Peter 2:4-10). In that sense, we can refer to ourselves as the “called-out ones” who have been called to serve Christ. This description is not derived from the etymology of one word but rather from an understanding of the New Testament as a whole.

The concept of God’s people as an *ekklesia* extends back to the Old Testament. In Acts 7:38, it is used to describe the “congregation” of Israel in the wilderness during the time of Moses. When the Israelites gather to listen to Moses, the term often used is “congregation.” For instance, Numbers 14:5-10 uses Hebrew terms like *qahal* and *edah* as “assembly” and “congregation” in describing one of those scenes. In later history, Jews would continue these assemblies by gathering in synagogues to recount the promises of God.³ Yet the term takes on a whole new meaning when it is used in the New Testament to describe the body of Christians. There are three primary ways the term church is used in the New Testament: 1. The totality of God’s people under the New Covenant (Matthew 16:18), 2. A congregation in a geographical area like the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2–3), 3. The local congregation gathered for worship (1 Corinthians 11:18; 14:19, 35).⁴

In the Gospels, Jesus speaks often of the “kingdom of God” or the “kingdom of Heaven.” In fact, many parables are designed to help explain what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. While 21st century Americans are not used to the concept of a kingdom, the title “kingdom of God” refers to the kingly rule of God.⁵ The concept of the kingdom of God is present in the Old Testament as well, though there is the anticipation of another kingdom to come (2

Samuel 7:12). When Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah in Matthew 16, Jesus states, "...On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (vs.18-19, NASB). Jesus links the church He would build to the kingdom of heaven. When the book of Acts begins, and the church is established in Acts 2, those who wished to submit to the reign of God were baptized, becoming members of His church.

Everett Ferguson describes the relationship between the church and the kingdom this way: "If the kingdom is designed primarily according to the word study above as the "rule of God" (pp. 73ff), then a basis is laid for explaining the difference yet the interrelationship of the church and the kingdom. The church may be defined as the people who come under the reign of God and accept His rule in their lives (Colossians 1:12-14)."⁶

Reading the Word

1. Deuteronomy 31:9-13
2. Matthew 16:13-20
3. Matthew 18:15-20
4. Ephesians 3:1-10
5. Hebrews 12:18-24

One reminder of the church's nature is found in Matthew 16:13-20. The setting where Peter makes this great confession drives home the power and authority of Jesus in His church. Caesarea Philippi is located at the base of Mt. Hermon. Several Old Testament references indicate that Baal worship took place in the area (Joshua 11:17; Judges 3:3; 1 Chronicles 5:23). The original name of Caesarea Philippi was Pannias, after the god Pan. One of the caves there

was said to be Pan's birthplace, and there are still niches hewn out of rock next to the cave which likely held statues at one time.⁷ According to Josephus, Herod the Great built a great temple there, which was constructed of white marble and dedicated to the godhead of Caesar.⁸ Herod also had a summer palace at Caesarea Philippi.

In the midst of an area that had honored Baal, Pan, and Caesar, Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" In an area that contained temples and even a king's palace, Jesus said, "I will build my church." You can travel there today and see where the temples would have been, and you can examine the remains of Herod's palace. But the church Christ built still exists, and nothing will prevail against it.

Preaching the Word

Illustration: In the church, we need each other. One of Aesop's fables describes a hungry lion watching three bulls grazing in the meadow. As he gazed at the bulls, he longed to go after them and devour them. He realized that as long as they were standing together, there was no way he could overpower all three. He settled on a strategy. He would sneak up behind one and start whispering about the others. He continued to do this to each one until they refused to be near each other or even eat next to each other. When they separated, the lion picked them off one by one. The moral is clear. When they were by themselves, they were vulnerable. There is strength in unity.⁹

Illustration: In the book *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck spends some time living with a family named the Grangerfords. They had a feud with a nearby family, the Shepherdsons, though no

one could remember exactly why. Though they were feuding, they all worshipped together:

“Next Sunday we all went to church, about three mile, everybody a-horseback. The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching—all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness, but everybody said it was a good sermon....”¹⁰ The image of listening to a sermon on brotherly love while keeping your weapon handy is a powerful one. It is vital for members of a church family to love each other.

Quote: “It is true that the church is an organization, but it is not primarily an organization. Rather, it is a new way of life. Those who have the view that being a part of the church is like being a member of a lodge, a luncheon club, a political party, or even a business are seriously mistaken. Such people feel that they should give to the church the same kind of support and loyalty which they give to these other organizations. It becomes ‘my church,’ as it is ‘my club, or lodge, or party, or team.’ The Christian’s loyalty to the church, however, should be unique, for in reality it is a loyalty to Christ and His way of life. The church is like no other institution on earth and a person’s membership in the church is like no other membership which he may sustain.”¹¹

Song Suggestions: “God’s Family,” “How Sweet, How Heavenly.”

Song of Encouragement: “In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified.”

¹ Frederick W. Danker, et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 303.

² William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006) 110.

³ Mounce.

⁴ Jack Lewis, *Basic Beliefs* (Nashville, TN: 21st Century Christian, 2013) 199.

⁵ Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996) 19.

⁶ Ferguson 29. For further study, I would recommend the larger discussion of the kingdom of God in this chapter.

⁷ John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991) 171-172.

⁸ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities 15.10.3 in The New Complete Works of Josephus*, Translated William Whiston, Commentary by Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999)520.

⁹ This fable has been told in various forms over the years. For an overview of a few variations, see fablesdfaesop.com/the-lion-and-three-bulls.html.

¹⁰ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Pleasantville, NY: The Reader’s Digest Association, 1986) 120.

¹¹ Batsell Barrett Baxter, *Family of God: A Study of the New Testament Church* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1980) 9.

FELLOWSHIP

KIRK BROTHERS



Understanding the Word

The New Testament words for fellowship are not used to translate Old Testament words related to fellowship with God. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states, “The absence of the group for fellowship with God marks off the Old Testament from the Greek world. The righteous in the Old Testament depend on God and trust Him, but do not regard themselves as His fellows.”¹ For this reason, this study focuses on New Testament passages.

The primary New Testament term for fellowship, *koinōnía*, is rarely used in the Greek version of the Old Testament (Septuagint, LXX). Nor are the related terms, *koinōnós* (companion, participant), *koinós* (common) and *koinōnéō* (to share in) common in the Septuagint.² *Koinōnía* is used in Leviticus 6:2 for the word deposit in the context of defrauding a companion. In Isaiah 44:11 it is used to state that one who makes an idol is a “companion” of the idol. *Koinós* is common in Proverbs. One example would be Proverbs 21:9 where it speaks of being in a house “shared” with a contentious woman. The verb *koinōnéō* is used in Job 38:4 in the context of being in the company of those who do evil. It is used in 2 Chronicles 20:35 for Jehoshaphat’s alliance with King Ahaziah of Israel.³ Frequently, words in this group translate forms of the Hebrew

term *chadar*, meaning “to unite, to be joined.”⁴ The key New Testament term for fellowship is *koinōnía*. It is found 19 times in the New Testament and generally means “fellowship, communion, participation, sharing.”⁵ Louw and Nida define it as “an association involving close mutual relations and involvement—‘close association, fellowship.’”⁶

Danker’s Lexicon gives a more detailed list of definitions:

1. Close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, close relationship.
2. Attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism.
3. Abstract for concrete sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, even gift contribution.
4. Participation, sharing.⁷



Reading the Word

1. 1 John 1:1-3
2. 1 John 1:5-7
3. Acts 2:42
4. Philipians 1:3-5

In 1 John 1:1, John is writing against the backdrop of false teachers who are denying (among other things) that Jesus came in human flesh. In verse 3, John gives the goal or purpose of their proclamation concerning what they have personally experienced with Jesus: "...so that you too may have fellowship..." The false teachers have fractured the relationship between brothers and sisters in Christ. John reminds us that proper teaching and especially proper understanding of the nature of Christ impacts our relationships each other and our heavenly relationships as well. The most important fellowship we can have is with the Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus declares that knowing the Father and Jesus Christ is "eternal life" (See John 17:3). We are not just religious people. We are people in a relationship with the divine.

1 John 1:5 reminds us that our relationship with God is not just something we know; it is something we live. In verse 6 above, we have the first of six "if" clauses found between 1 John 1:6 and 1 John 2:2. John seems to be using these clauses to present common arguments of the false teachers (vs. 6, 8, 10) and his responses to their claims (vs. 7, 9, 2:2). Apparently, the false teachers are claiming that their enlightened understanding of what they say is the "true" nature of things, allowing them to have a special and unique relationship with God. John says that the first test of their claims is that those who have fellowship with the Father will not "walk in darkness." He states his point in the positive in verse 7 but declares it in the negative here in verse 6. Our lives should be consistent with the blessings we have as Christians and the God who gave them to us. Walking in darkness is not consistent with fellowship with the God of light.

Acts 2:42 shows us that the Gospel message brings people into fellowship with one another. We become part of a family. Acts 2:47 states, "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" (2:47). When we respond to the Gospel message through faith expressed in repentance, confession, and baptism (See Acts 2:38), God adds us to His people and we begin a shared life together.

In Philippians 1:5, Paul mentions "participation in the gospel." Participation in verse 5 is translated from the term *koinōnía*. Baptism into Christ not only means entering into a relationship with God and God's people, but it also means we are to join in God's work. Paul understands that it takes a team to be successful in overcoming the work of evil in the world. Paul is able to take the Gospel across the globe because congregations like Philippi share in the work. Sharing in Christ's family means we all have a responsibility to participate in the work of our Savior.

Preaching the Word

Illustration: Eleven-year-old Natalia March-Welton of Cincinnati, Ohio, died of cancer in November 2014. Like other children dying with cancer, she was offered a wish by the Make-a-Wish Foundation. What wish did she choose? "I would like to give people soup and blankets. I don't want there to be hunger," she said. Natalia helped countless people in Cincinnati and down the road in Louisville, Kentucky. She stated, "It makes me feel warm inside to help."⁸ Like Natalia, the early Christians understood that people need each other's help. They shared everything (the root idea behind the word fellowship is "sharing"). Isn't it time

we started putting aside our own wants and started caring more about others?

Sermon Idea: I periodically use Philippians 1:3-5 in my missions reports. I am reminding those who help me in my work in Latin America that it takes all of us working together to accomplish God’s mission in the world. I point out the ways Philippi had assisted in Paul’s work.

- Lydia was a host to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:15).
- Jailer was a host to Paul and Silas (Acts 16:33-34).
- Philippi sent gifts to Paul at Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16).
- Philippi sent gifts to Paul at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:9).
- Philippi had recently sent gifts that led to the writing of this letter (Philippians 2, 4).

I then look at ways the congregation I am speaking to has participated in God’s work with me.

Sermon Idea: I use Acts 2:42-47 to emphasize what new Christians should do after conversion: continue to study God’s Word, fellowship with God’s people, observe the Lord’s Supper, and pray (“apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer”). I highlight how the early Christians shared everything:

- They shared possessions (2:44-45).
- They shared their presence (4:46).
- They shared their plates (2:46).
- They shared their praise (2:47).

I observe that the Christians helped each other. Many of the new Christians were from out of town. There were no Christians back in their hometowns. They also did not know what they were supposed to do now that they had found Christ. These new Christians stayed in Jerusalem to learn how to live in Christ. As a result, there were many new people in Jerusalem who did not have homes, jobs, or incomes. It seems the local Christians sold some of their possessions to help out the new Christians from out of town.

Song Suggestions: “Bind Us Together,” “God’s Family,” “A Common Love.”

Song of Encouragement: “We Will Stand.”

¹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abridged by Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985) 448-49.

² Bromiley 447.

³ Alfred Rahlfs, *LXX Rahlfs Tagged*, Accordance Software, n. p.

⁴ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Dictionary*, Abridged, Accordance Software, n. p.

⁵ William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006) 247.

⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Accordance Bible Software, Ver. 11.3.1, 2016, n.p.

⁷ Frederick W. Danker, et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 552-553.

⁸ Kimberly Yam, “Girl’s Dying Wish to Help Warm ‘Homeless Inside and Out’ Moves People to Help,” Huffington Post 2 January 2015. Web. 5 August 2016.



WORSHIP

STAFFORD NORTH



Understanding the Word

From the beginning in the Garden, God has wanted a meaningful relationship with His people. Genesis 3:9 suggests that God customarily “walked” in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Their children, Cain and Able brought worship to God and from them we learn that God expects the worshipper to have faith and to worship as He directs (Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4-5).

The two Hebrew words most commonly used for worship are *barak* and *halal*. *Barak* means “to kneel or bow and thus to come in reverence as an act of adoration” (Psalm 34:1; 100:4; 95:6). *Halal* means “to praise, rave about, and give adoration” (Psalm 22:23; 44:8; 63:5). Think of *halal* in *hallelujah*, a word in many songs. Isaiah 1:11-17, in addition, tells that God is not pleased when one offers the outward expressions of worship, but the person’s life is not obedient to Him. Thus, from the Old Testament we see that God wants each of His people to come before Him in a spirit of reverence to offer praise out of a life lived in submission to His will.

In the New Testament, the two most commonly used words for worship are *proskuneo* and *latreuo*. *Proskuneo*, like the Hebrew word *barak*, means “to bow before” or more literally “to kiss the ground before,” thus expressing

adoration in a spirit of awe (Matthew 4:10; Mark 5:6; Luke 24:50-53; John 4:23; Revelation 5:14). *Latreuo* suggests serving either gods or people or offering sacred services through rites of worship. These two words show that the concept of worship in the New Testament can have two different connotations. First, worship can mean coming to God in the ways He has commanded us to offer our praise. Second, worship may mean living in a way that serves and honors Him. This answers the often asked question about whether “all of life is worship.” Everything we do should serve God whether helping the poor, teaching a Bible class, sleeping, or watching athletics—all is done as service to Him either by helping others or by gaining rest and relaxation to prepare us to serve. In the narrower sense, however, there are moments when we come apart from life’s activities to “kiss the ground” in a moment of adoration to communicate to God our respect and awe. If all of life were worship in this narrow sense, then we could do anything to worship God that was not immoral. God, however, has always dictated just what He wants people to do as in this narrower sense they especially express their praise for Him. These are careful, well-regulated moments when we specifically are thinking about honoring Him.¹



Reading the Word

Many passages in both the Old and New Testa-

ments describe people attempting to worship God. Unfortunately, there are about as many times when the effort is displeasing to God as when it pleases Him: the golden calf (Exodus 32), Saul (1 Samuel 13), Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:16-23), the Pharisees (Matthew 15:7-9), and the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

1. Psalm 50:14 – “Offer to God your thanksgiving.” The book of Psalms, of course, is filled with expressions about worship. Also, “Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints” (Psalm 149:1, NKJV).

2. John 4:21-24 – One of the most important passages about worship is Jesus’ statement in John 4:21-24 in His conversation with the Samaritan women. She asks whether it is right to worship on Mt. Gerizim or in Jerusalem because in Old Testament times the place was especially important. Jesus replies, however, that in the new age, the place will not be a concern. What will matter, rather, is worshipping “in spirit and in truth.” Jesus had just said, “God is spirit” and then says we must worship Him “in spirit.” He is, then, calling us to worship with that part of our beings made in the image of God, our spirits. Thus, worship is to be our spirits reaching to the Spirit [God]. Through our spirits we make contact with God, the Great Spirit. Paul emphasizes the same point when he says he will worship with his spirit (See 1 Corinthians 14:15). In Ephesians 5:19, Paul adds “singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (NKJV).

Jesus also says we are to worship “in truth.” The best way to think of “truth” here is from Jesus’ statement in John 17:17: “Thy Word is truth” (KJV). Worshipping with our spirits,

then, tells the nature of the worship—it is to be spirit to Spirit. Worshipping “in truth” tells is that worship to God must be as He has revealed for us to worship. God has always told His people what to do in worship whether they are the patriarchs, or the Israelites, or the church. He has never left it to people to decide for themselves how to worship Him. When people are left to their own ideas, they often devise worship styles that are disrespectful to God and harmful to themselves.

So “in spirit” and “in truth” give us Jesus’ instructions for worship in the Christian age. Worship with your inner being and worship as God has revealed in His Word!

3. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 – Through His apostles, Christ made it clear how we are to worship. Following what the Holy Spirit-led apostles said and did, the early church took the Lord’s Supper in memory of Him (1 Corinthians 10:14-23; Acts 20:7).

4. Ephesians 5:19 – They sang and prayed (1 Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 3:16).

5. 1 Corinthians 14:26, 29-33 – Those men who had a message from God spoke to those assembled.

6. 1 Corinthians 16:2 – Paul asks that when the church is assembled on the first day of the week, they should contribute through laying by in store.



Preaching the Word

Sermons on worship can deal with many different aspects of the topic.

Principle: We need to preach more about coming with awe before God, the Great God over the universe. That He will even allow us to come before His throne so we may offer our praise to Him is such an unbelievable honor. Check Exodus 19:16-25; 20:18-21.

Principle: We also need to preach what we are told to do in Christian worship and what God has taught us to do to make these acts pleasing to Him. Many members have never learned how truly to direct their thoughts heavenward when they assemble. They sing, take the Lord’s Supper, and hear the sermon, but they are never truly in a worshipful state of mind.

We should teach the congregation and the youth to listen to sermons with respect as if God is speaking through His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). As we take communion, we should recognize that the bread represents the body of Christ and that His body reminds us of His incarnation. He came in a human body to die on the cross and to be raised from the dead. The bread, representing His body, brings us, then, to the great truth of the incarnation (Philippians 2:5-11). The fruit of the vine, representing His blood, brings us to the great truth of sanctification through His blood (Matthew 26:27-29; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17).

As we sing, we are “speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” while “singing and making melody in [our] heart[s] to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19, NKJV). So our singing sends good messages to others in the

audience and sends a heart-felt message to God. Many songs are spoken directly to God. “Glorify Thy Name,” for example, has a verse to the Father, another to the Son, and another to the Holy Spirit. Other songs are not spoken to God but to each other. “Take Time to Be Holy” does not admonish God to be holy, but we encourage each other to be holy. “O Worship the King” is interesting because in the first verse we urge one another to worship the King and in the second and third verses we address God, singing “in Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail.” Preachers should help listeners to think about the meaning of the words in songs so they can worship truly.

Likewise as we address the Father in our prayers, we need to help members know how to listen and then make the expression of praise, thanksgiving, and petition in the prayers to be their own thoughts to God (1 Corinthians 14:15; Acts 4:23-30). Finally, as we give our offering to God, we should be expressing our thanks for the opportunity to share in His work (2 Corinthians 9:10-15). Sermons on worship that help the congregation worship with the prescribed acts and with the prescribed attitude can do great good.

An interesting sermon on worship can be developed by using four words to express the intent of our worship. We **proclaim** to those

PROCLAIM

DALE JENKINS



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, there are three major words that are translated *proclaim*. The word is used to refer to crying out (as the prophets did), to call upon one (often God) for help, to read aloud, to appoint, or to be summoned.

In the New Testament, *proclaim* is used almost solely to refer to the act of proclaiming, heralding, or publishing something that has been done. The Greek term is *kerusso*, defined in this way: “to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel); “preach(-er), proclaim, publish.” Various uses are “to be a herald, to officiate as a herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald, always with the suggestion of formality, gravity, and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed; to publish, proclaim openly something which has been done; used of the public proclamation of the Gospel and matters pertaining to it, made by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles and other Christian teachers.”¹

While many debate the role and responsibility of a preacher, i.e. “what the preacher’s job is,” and while various passages might enhance (2 Timothy 4:5) or even expand (1 Corinthians 4:1-6) that role, the primary responsibility that sets “the preacher” apart is that he is to proclaim, herald, forth tell in a public manner the message of Christ. Furthermore, every other

specific task of the preacher is to be seen in light of this primary responsibility.

The word *proclaim* is used 72 times in your New Testament. Seventy-one of the times refer to Christ proclaiming, or His message (i.e. Gospel) being proclaimed (especially 2 Corinthians 4:5). Even in the rare event that the word refers to another proclaimer, it is in the context of that proclaimer proclaiming Christ (Ephesians 6:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:9). The one time it does not refer to Christ or His Gospel is 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where it refers to the man of lawlessness who proclaims himself to be God.

Reading the Word

1. Philippians 1:15-18
2. Mark 7:36
3. Luke 24:45-47
4. Matthew 12:18
5. Romans 1:8
6. 1 Corinthians 11:26

In Philippians 1:15-18, when Paul describes those who preach Christ from envy and rivalry and others who preach Christ from good will, he states that he rejoices when Christ is proclaimed. Christ must be the center of our message. He is The Proclaimed. This is so clear that Paul says even when preached with the wrong motive, if the message is true, he will rejoice

(Note: this is **not** a false gospel or false teaching; that would obviously not bring rejoicing). The measure of a sermon or proclamation is this: How long is it in your lesson before Christ shows up?

In Mark 7:36, even though Jesus tells the people not to tell anyone what He has done, they could not help zealously proclaiming what has happened. Proclamation of Christ is a natural result of a positive encounter with Him. When we see/hear/learn of Christ and His mercy, grace, forgiveness and ability to make all things new, we cannot keep quiet about it (i.e. Acts 4:20).

Luke 24:45-47 gives Luke's account of the Great Commission. Both Luke and Mark's account of this command include this word *proclaim*. In Matthew 12:18, Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1, revealing that one of the roles of Jesus is to proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

Paul tells the church at Rome that he thanks God for them because their faith is proclaimed (Romans 1:8). He writes to the church at Corinth that as often as they eat the bread and drink the cup, they proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). Often times it is the result of our faith or the actions we live out that proclaim Christ. The old saying is in fact sometimes true: "Actions speak louder than words."

Preaching the Word

Song: Prolific song writer, Fanny J. Crosby wrote these stirring words first published in 1882 but still powerful:

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am.*²

There can be no doubt that for us to effectively proclaim the news of Jesus Christ we must not only know in our minds we have obeyed His will but we must also feel the truth we imbibe. This song well illustrates that.

Introduction: Keith Parker often says in his sermons, "If I had 100 lives to live, I'd want to live every single one of them as a preacher. If I had 100 sons I'd want all of them to be preachers. If I had 100 daughters I would want them all to marry preachers. God only had one Son and His Son was a preacher."³ While those who preach are often mistreated today, and many parents encourage their sons to do anything but preach, it is God who determined that mankind would hear of His Son through these clay vessels we call preachers. They are the proclaimers who deliver the words of life to us.

Illustration: "In his first interview since the birth of his son, Prince William told CNN that fatherhood has already changed him. 'I think the last few weeks for me have been just a very different emotional experience, something I never thought I would feel myself. And I find, again it's only been a short period...but a lot of things affect me differently now.' He also spoke about what it was like to introduce George to the world in front of the hospital. 'I think I was on such a high anyway, and so was Catherine about George that really we were happy to show him off to whoever wanted to see him,' he said. 'As any new parent knows, you're only too happy to show off your new child and, you know, proclaim that he is the

best looking or the best everything.”⁴ Whether you are a pauper or a future king, you love to talk about without embarrassment what makes you proud. May we proclaim the news of the Gospel with the same fervor as a “new parent” would talk about the birth of a new child.

¹ These definitions can be found at www.blueletterbible.com.

² Fanny J. Crosby, “Redeemed,” in *Praise for the Lord* ed. John P. Wiegand (Nashville, TN: Praise Press, 2006).

³ Keith Parker, “Come as We Stand and Sing.” From an audio recording of *Better-Alabama* (a preaching conference) 2012.

⁴ “Prince William to CNN: Fatherhood Has Already Changed Me.” *Huffington Post*. 19 August 2013. Web. 7 August 2016.



OUR FAITH



FAITH

DAVE PHILLIPS



Understanding the Word

The Hebrew Bible doesn't really have a word for *faith*. The Old Testament has several words that can be used to describe the state of faithfulness, as well as words that describe the act of believing. Faith is described more than it is defined in the Old Testament¹ and is best exemplified when describing Abraham and David. The word that is translated faith in Genesis 15:6 is *aman*, a word that is related to amen, and carries the idea of having loyalty to God. Abraham's faith would remain loyal to God in the midst of faith-testing obstacles. The word *emunah*, appearing 49 times in the Old Testament, describes faithfulness. In Habakkuk 2:4, the word indicates the faithfulness of the righteous man. Scripture shows us that the faithful identify themselves by more than just believing – they are fiercely loyal.

In the New Testament, the noun form *pistis* and the verb form *pisteuo* are both used to describe the process of believing in and trusting God. In English, the word *faithful* suggests the idea of “full of faith.” We would use it to mean maintaining faithfulness, or being trustworthy, or continuing to be a believer through a long period of time.

It is important to remember at least three different ways the word *faith* can be understood. First, it can be understood as “the body of ma-

terial” that has been handed down to us, as in “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). It can also be understood as “our belief” or the “assumptions that we hold” as a body of believers. We must prayerfully and carefully remain vigilant that our faith is not formed by traditions of men rather than the revealed Word of God. This occurrence would call for the best in us to tactfully and successfully influence others back to the will of God. The third perspective of faith is “my personal faith” in God, supported by His revealed will, my submissive obedience, and my personal trust in the security of His promises.



Reading the Word

1. Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:5-6
2. Hebrews 11
3. Genesis 17:5; Romans 14:17-20

Perhaps the best usage of the word *faith*, *aman*, in the Old Testament is in Genesis 15:6, where Abraham is described as one who “believed in the Lord,” an act which resulted in God crediting it to him as an act of righteousness. Paul uses the verb form of *faith*, *pisteuo*, in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6 to recall this event. Interestingly, in Galatians 3:5, Paul uses the noun form of *faith*, *pistis*, as descriptive of the act of believing on Abraham's part. We



REPENT

WALT LEAVER



Understanding the Word

When Jesus begins to preach, His message is concise, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near” (Matthew 4:17). But what does it mean to *repent*?

In the Old Testament, *nacham*, a Hebrew word that comes from a primitive root meaning “to sigh” or “to breathe deeply,” appears at least 100 times. More than half of those references are translated *comfort* (e.g. Genesis 37:35). About 40 of the references are translated *repent*, *regret*, *change of mind* (e.g. Genesis 6:6: “The Lord regretted that He had made human beings on the earth” [NIV]; Exodus 32:14: “Then the Lord relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened” [NIV]; Numbers 23:19: “God is...not a human being, that He should change His mind” [NIV]). Note: The examples in Genesis 6 and Exodus 32 do not imply anything contrary to God’s immutability. However, God’s decisions can be influenced, negatively or positively, by the actions of people (rampant sin in Noah’s day or the intercessory prayer of Moses).

In the New Testament, the words translated *repent* and *repentance* are almost always connected to an individual’s response to sin. *Metanoeo* is a Greek verb that literally means “to perceive (*noeo*) afterwards (*meta*).” It means to think differently: to change your

mind, direction, or purpose: to repent. In the New Testament, it always involves a change for the better (e.g. Mark 1:15: “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” [NIV]; Acts 2:38: “Repent and be baptized...”). *Metanoia* is the noun version of the same word and means a change of mind, repentance, and usually describes repentance from sin or evil (e.g. Luke 3:8: “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance”; 2 Peter 3:9: “...Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” [NIV]).



Reading the Word

Reading these passages will help us reflect on and understand various aspects of repentance.

1. Jeremiah 3:22-23, Hosea 6:1-3 and 2 Chronicles 20:3-4
2. Luke 15:1-32
3. Acts 2:37-39
4. Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20; Matthew 5:29-30; Luke 19:1-10; Acts 19:19
5. 2 Corinthians 7:8-13

In Jeremiah 3:22-23, Hosea 6:1-3, and 2 Chronicles 20:3-4, the word *repent* or *repentance* in the Old Testament is typically used differently than in the New Testament. However, the concept of challenging people to repent and change their minds, direction, and ways is



CONFESS

WES MCADAMS



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for *confess* or *make confession* is *yadah*. It is used over 100 times in the Old Testament and used in a variety of ways, but most of the uses could be summed up with the word *acknowledge*. It is used in the sense of acknowledging who God is (praise), acknowledging what God has done (thanksgiving), and acknowledging sin (confession).

The word used in the New Testament for *confess* is the Greek word *homologeō*, which is a compound word using the words *homo* (same) and *logeō* (speak). It literally means “to speak the same thing.” So it is the idea of verbalizing the fact that you are in agreement with someone or that you are in agreement with an idea. It is used in the sense of agreeing to do a certain thing (promise), agreeing that Jesus is the Son of God (confess), agreeing with God’s greatness (praise), and agreeing about our sinfulness (confess).

While a confession implies verbal acknowledgement (*yadah*) or verbalizing agreement (*homologeō*), it also implies action. If a confession is not backed up with action, it is not a true confession. Imagine Bill saying, “We need to do something about this problem.” Fred speaks up, saying, “I agree!” Then Bill has every reason to expect Fred to actually help do

something about the problem. If Fred refuses to do something, he is not actually “in agreement,” though he confessed agreement.

The implications of this are huge. If we confess God’s omnipotence in praise, but we live in a constant state of fear and timidity, we are denying our confession and proving we are not really in agreement with the truth that God can take care of us. If we confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but we live in rebellion to Him, we prove we are not in agreement with the truth that all authority belongs to Christ. And if we confess our own sinfulness, but we continue in sin, we prove we are not in agreement with the truth that our behavior is wrong and needs to be changed.

Just as faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26), confession without action is dead.



Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand confess.

1. Leviticus 16:21
2. Ezra 10:1; 9:6
3. James 5:16
4. Romans 10:8-11
5. Matthew 10:32-33, 34-49.



BAPTISM

KEITH PARKER



Understanding the Word

In the New Testament, the word *baptism* is from the Greek word *baptismos* and *baptize* is from the Greek *baptizo*. It refers to an immersion, a dipping, a covering, or a burial. The word usually refers to an immersion in water, as demonstrated by John (John 1:26, 31), or by Philip (Acts 8:35-36), or by Peter (Acts 10:46-48). There are times, however, that the element in which one is covered is not water. For example, John the baptizer speaks of Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11). The Apostles are baptized with the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 and Cornelius is baptized with the Holy Spirit in Acts 10. Both of these cases are a fulfillment of the promise of Jesus (Acts 1:5; 11:16). Also, others would be baptized with fire. This likely is a reference to the wicked being immersed in the eternal fires of Hell (Matthew 3:12; 5:22; 25:41).

In the Old Testament, the word *baptism* is never found, but the idea is seen. For example, Naaman the leper dips himself seven times in the Jordan River to be cleansed of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:14). Likewise, the Israelites experience a form of baptism when they left the land of Egypt. They “went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left” (Exodus 14:29, NIV). Paul writing about this event said, “They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor-

inthians 10:2, NIV). In other words, the Israelites completely submitted to the leadership of Moses.

Although some understand *baptize* to mean to “sprinkle with water,” this is clearly a mistake. John the baptizer baptizes at Aenon near Salim. Do you remember why? Scripture says, “Because there was plenty of water” (John 3:23, NIV). To sprinkle someone with water or to pour water on someone’s head does not take a lot of water. But to dip, plunge, or immerse someone takes plenty of water. Also, there is the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. When he learned about Jesus, he wants to obey Jesus in baptism. He asks Philip the evangelist, “Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” (Acts 8:36, NIV). “Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...” (Acts 8:38-39, NIV). That’s what baptism is...a going down into the water and a coming up out of the water. Paul puts it in these words: “Buried with Him in baptism...” (Colossians 2:12). Paul said “buried,” not “sprinkled.” “Buried,” not “poured.” When the apostle Paul writes about the “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5, he is clearly speaking about immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins (See Acts 2:38).



Preaching the Word

Invitation Song Idea: We often sing the invitation song, “Nothing But the Blood.” The song starts with the question, “What can wash away our sins?” The answer: “Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” We don’t sing, “Nothing but the water in the baptistry.” Nor do we sing, “Nothing but the water at the river.” Nor do we sing, “Nothing but the water at the ocean.” We sing the truth—nothing but the blood of Jesus. While Scripture places a heavy emphasis on the importance and the necessity of baptism, we must never leave the impression that the power is in the water. Where’s the power? We sing it: “There’s Power in the Blood.” What washes away our sins? The blood (Revelation 1:5). When are our sins washed away? When we are baptized (Acts 22:16). What forgives sins? The blood (Matthew 26:28). When are our sins forgiven? When we are baptized (Acts 2:38).

Illustration: Trusting obedience always brings a reward. When a child trusts and obeys his parent, there is a blessing. When a student does what the teacher asks, he is rewarded with a positive grade. When an employee does what the employer wants, the reward is often a raise in salary. So it is with God. When a sinner by faith does what God desires, God gives the blessing. Jesus put it in these words: “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven” (Matthew 7:21, KJV).

We see this obedient faith when Paul preaches at Corinth. Acts 18:8 says, “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Cor-

inthians hearing, believed and were baptized.” The last part of Acts 18:8 explains the first part of Acts 18:8. Luke says that Crispus believed on the Lord. What does that mean? Read the last part of the verse: “And many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized.” They hear the message of the Lord, trust the message of the Lord, and in baptism obey the message of the Lord. And because of their obedient faith, they are rewarded by God (1 Corinthians 1:1-2).

Illustration: Consider three words: comes, fed, and filled. If I say to you, “He that comes and is fed shall be filled,” what would you have to do to be filled? Consider three more words: calls, grabbed, and rescued. If I say to you, “He that calls and is grabbed shall be rescued,” what would you have to do to be rescued? Consider these three words: believes, baptized, and saved. If I say to you, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” what would you have to do to be saved? Pretty simple, isn’t it? Jesus says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16, KJV).

Object lesson: Take off your coat. Then put it back on. As one puts on a coat, so a sinner puts on Jesus. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27, KJV).

Suggested Songs: “Nothing But the Blood,” “Have You Been to Jesus?” “What the Lord Has Done in Me.”

Song of Encouragement: “There is Power in the Blood.”



HIS WORD

INSPIRATION

ED GALLAGHER



Understanding the Word

The word *inspiration* possibly never appears in your Bible, depending on which translation you use. Our English word derives from a Latin root (*spir*) related to breathing (*spiro*), the wind, or the spirit/Spirit (*spiritus*). In this way it corresponds very closely to the Greek word *pneuma* and its cognates, or the Hebrew word *ruah*. The diverse meanings of the Greek word explain Jesus' wordplay at John 3:8. The Hebrew word mostly refers to wind (e.g. Isaiah 7:2) or perhaps character (e.g. Isaiah 19:3), and only about 75 times to the divine Spirit. Note the difficult passage at Genesis 1:2: "Spirit of God" in some translations, "mighty wind" in others.

In the KJV, the word *inspiration* appears twice, once in the Old Testament and once in the New. The Old Testament occurrence comes at Job 32:8, where it translates the Hebrew word *nesnema*, a word that appears 24 times and simply means *breath* in every instance.

The New Testament appearance of *inspiration* in the KJV is, of course, in 2 Timothy 3:16, where we read, "All scripture is given by *inspiration* of God." The phrase "given by inspiration of God" is translated from the Greek word *theopneustos*, a very rare word that appears only here in the Bible. In fact, Paul's use of it probably represents its first appear-

ance in all of extant Greek literature.¹ The word becomes somewhat common only with third- and fourth-century Christian authors. The complete absence of this word in literature contemporary with Paul means that our usual method for determining the meaning of a word—by looking at how it is used in a variety of passages—does not apply in this case. However, the etymology (word origin) of the word appears rather straightforward: the first few letters (*theo-*) derive from the word for God (*theos*), and the second part of the word derives from the word for blowing or breathing (*pneō*, related to *pneuma*). This suggests the meaning "God-breathed" or "inspired." While etymology is usually not an appropriate way to define a word (after all, you don't park on a *parkway*), in this case we have little choice, and the meaning obtained through etymology makes sense in context.

This single appearance of *theopneustos* does not eliminate all uncertainty on the process by which God chose to inspire the Scriptures. The Bible itself presents different models. The prophets, with their repeated refrains "the word of the Lord came" or "thus sayeth the Lord," imply a dictation model: The prophet expresses precisely what he hears God speak (e.g. Jeremiah 7:1; Ezekiel 6:1; Hosea 1:2). But this model does not work for other Biblical passages, such as Habakkuk's questions (1:2), or the psalmists' complaints (e.g. Psalm 6), or

the bureaucratic documents preserved in Ezra (7:11-26). Luke says that he researched the life of Christ before writing (1:1-4). Each of these passages requires some more dynamic model of inspiration, though the end result is the same: All Scripture is God-breathed and useful.²

Reading the Word

These passages provide some insight into the Biblical doctrine of inspiration:

1. Ezekiel 2:8–3:11
2. John 16:12-15
3. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13
4. 2 Timothy 3:16
5. 2 Peter 1:20-21

Scripture frequently emphasizes that the words of the prophets and the Apostles are God's words, and their message is God's message (Jeremiah 20:9; Amos 3:8; 2 Corinthians 13:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Ezekiel eats the book (2:8–3:11) in order to fill himself with the word of God so that he can speak it to the exiles. Peter links prophecies to the Holy Spirit in 2 Peter 1:20-21, a passage on which I. Howard Marshall has written: "Prophecy was not a matter of the prophet deciding what he wanted to say; the prophets were men consecrated to the service of God, and they were impelled by the Holy Spirit so that what they said came from God."³ While the Spirit of God does many different things, especially in the Old Testament (See Exodus 30:30-35; Judges 14:6), one of His purposes is to cause people to speak (or write) God's words (Ezekiel 11:5; 1 Corinthians 7:40). These words from God are necessarily true (John 16:12-15), because God is true and He speaks for our benefit. Because God stands

behind Scripture, it carries supreme authority, which is precisely how the authors of the New Testament used it.

Paul emphasizes the idea of usefulness in 2 Timothy 3:16. Because all Scripture is inspired, God-breathed, it is therefore useful for the purposes for which God has given it. Scripture is not useful for every purpose: you won't find much help there for filling out your tax forms, though you will learn not to lie or cheat. Scripture won't give you much help in making a recipe (beware Ezekiel 4:9-15!), though it will tell you that food alone does not sustain our lives (Deuteronomy 8:3). The purposes for which God has given Scripture is not for help with taxes or recipes, but for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that we may be equipped for every good work. God has given us Scripture for our formation—all Scripture, including the parts we don't like to read or preach (Leviticus, Ezekiel, Chronicles, etc.). A reading of Romans and the Corinthian correspondence shows that Paul not only talked the talk but walked the walk: he thought Scripture was useful for churches and he used it to help mold Christians.

Preaching the Word

Quote: "The church's great problem is *Biblical illiteracy and theological amnesia.*"

Illustration: Jacob wrestled with the divine being all night long and refused to relinquish his grip until he received a blessing (Genesis 32:26). So also we wrestle with Scripture. There are many passages that continue to baffle us in terms of their basic meaning (Luke 16:1-9; Romans 11:25-26), many other passages in which the value may prove elusive (1

Chronicles 1–9; Song of Songs). But we trust God’s promise that He gave us Scripture for our benefit, and so we refuse to relinquish our grip until we receive our blessing. We continue to wrestle with passages, fill our heads with their sounds, confident that God is using His Word to shape us into what He wants us to be. Sometimes people wonder why Scripture can be so hard to understand, and why interpretation sometimes takes so much work. God has not given us Scripture merely to instruct us in the basics of the faith (hear, believe, repent...), but to bring us on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1), to offer us a solid diet (Hebrews 5:14), to train us in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Wrestling with inspired Scripture is a major part of our training.

Quote: “The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy word.” These words were spoken by John Robinson just before his many members of his congregation set sail on the *Mayflower* in 1620. We are often tempted to assume that we have exhausted the meaning of Scripture. Robinson’s words remind us to continue to dig, knowing that the Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12).

Illustration: When we moved into our house, we decided to paint our kitchen dark red. The beige color we put on the other walls in the house had made me accustomed to needing two coats of paint. But after three coats, the kitchen still looked awful—the paint was very streaky. My brother-in-law advised me: “Just keep going.” Another coat brought some improvement, and a fifth coat assured me that the end was in sight. With six coats of paint, the walls looked pretty good. There are times I read a Biblical passage and have no idea what

to do with it. So I read it again, and I’m still lost. My brother-in-law’s advice enters my head: just keep going. Usually five times through a passage brings some clarity. Even a difficult book like Revelation becomes much more digestible the more we read it. (I didn’t understand football the first time I saw it, either, but watching it over many years has trained me to appreciate a football game.) God assures us that all Scripture is inspired and valuable, but He didn’t say it was easy. (It wasn’t easy for the Apostles either [Matthew 13:10-17].) It will never become easy, but how can it become easier? Just keep reading.

Song Suggestions: “Thy Word,” “How Precious Is the Book Divine,” “How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?” “Ancient Words.”

Song of Encouragement: “Softly and Tenderly.”

¹ Other possibly first-century uses of the word appear in *Testament of Abraham* A 20:11; *Pseudo-Phocylides* 129; and the *Sibylline Oracles* 5:308, 406. But each of these works—or, in the case of *Ps.-Phocylides*, the relevant verse—probably post-dates Paul.

² On ancient Christian (second through fourth centuries) notions of inspiration, see Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What the Early Church Can Teach Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014) §11.

³ I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982) 25.

⁴ Joel B. Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011) 75.

⁵ This quote, along with other references from this sermon, can be accessed at www.pilgrimmallmuseum.org/pdf/John_Robinson_Farewell_Sermon.pdf.



COVENANT

C. MICHAEL MOSS



Understanding the Word

Our English word *covenant* comes from two Latin words *con venire*, meaning “to come together.” The word assumes that two parties come together to make an agreement involving promises, stipulations, privileges, and responsibilities. The Hebrew word in the Old Testament is *berit* and occurs 280 times. The phrase that is translated to “make a covenant” is literally to “cut a covenant.” Genesis 15:5-23 reflects the covenant-making practice referred to by that phrase. God makes a covenant with Abraham and instructs him to cut in half a heifer, a ram, a turtle dove, and a pigeon. During the night a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the pieces. The act may have been a symbolic way of saying, “May this happen to me if I do not keep my part of the covenant.” In the Ancient Near East, a covenant is handed down by a sovereign to his subjects. The sovereign promises to protect his subjects if they keep their part of the covenant. The laws in the Old Testament are very much Israel’s part of the covenant.

The Greek word used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) to translate *berit* and used in the New Testament is *diathēkē*. Interestingly this word can mean either *covenant* or *testament*. The word appears 33 times in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews uses the word *diathēkē* first

as *covenant* and then transitions to use it as a *testament* or *will* in Hebrews 9:15-22, as can be seen in many English translations. It is likely that the use of the word in Hebrews has led us to call the major divisions in our Bible the Old Testament and the New Testament rather than the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

It is significant that God made a covenant with Noah after the flood, a covenant with Abraham, a covenant with Israel after the exodus from Egypt, a covenant with David, and a new covenant inaugurated with the blood of Jesus.



Reading the Word

1. Genesis 9:8-17; 15:9-20
2. Deuteronomy 29:1
3. 2 Samuel 7:5-16
4. Jeremiah 31:31-34
5. Luke 22:14-22; Hebrews 9:15-22

Genesis 9:8-17 contains God’s covenant with Noah. Genesis 15:9-20 contains His covenant with Abraham. Deuteronomy 29:1 mentions the covenant with Israel at Mt. Horeb (Sinai) and again confirmed in Moab. 2 Samuel 7:5-16 records God’s covenant with David and the promise that his throne would be forever. Jeremiah predicts the coming of a new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In Luke 22:14-22, as He institutes the Lord’s Supper, Jesus tells the disciples that the cup is the new covenant of His blood.

The longest discourse regarding covenant in the New Testament appears in the book of Hebrews. The author uses the word 21 times, more times than all of the rest of the New Testament. Hebrews 9:15-28 is though most important because the author begins by using our word *covenant*. He clearly uses it in this way in chapter 8 where he proclaims, after a discussion of Melchizedek's high priesthood, that Jesus is the high priest of a better covenant. He cites Jeremiah 31:31-34 in which Jeremiah predicts the new covenant. In 9:15 the author tells his readers that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. He discusses the fact that where there is a will (*covenant, diathēkē*), there must be a death. He then comes back to use to the use of *diathēkē* as covenant when he informs his readers "not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood." Jesus' blood is offered to bear the sins of many once and for all.



Preaching the Word

Idea: The covenant that God made with Israel is at the heart of the Bible. He promised His care and protection and required of them obedience. Understanding the similarities and differences between the old covenant and the new covenant under Jesus is vital for a proper understanding of the Bible.

Quote: "It is not too much to say that the covenant conception came to dominate Israel's thought about her relationship to God."¹

Quote: "The idea of a covenant is fundamental to the Bible's story. At its most basic, covenant presents God's desire to enter into a relationship with men and women created in His image. This is reflected in the repeated covenant

refrain, "I will be your God and you will be My people" (Exodus 6:6-8; Leviticus 26:12, et al.). Covenant is all about relationship between Creator and His creation. The idea may seem simple, however, the implications of covenant and covenant relationship between God and humanity are vast."²

Quote: "In a covenant, negotiation has no place. The greater in grace offers his help; the initiative is his. 'Gift' is descriptive of covenant as 'negotiation' is descriptive of contract. Both covenant and contract have obligations, but with this difference. The condition set out in a contract require fulfillment of terms; the obligation of a covenant is one of loyalty. A covenant, commonly, is forever, a contract for a specified period. A ticking off of terms in a checklist fashion can reveal a broken contract, and the point of brokenness can be clearly identified. A covenant, too, can be broken, but the point at which this transpires is less clear because here the focus is not on stipulations, one, two, three, but on a quality of intimacy. Of all the differences between covenant and contract, the place in the covenant of personal loyalty is the most striking."³

Song Suggestions: "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less," "Standing on the Promises," "Covenant of Love."

Song of Encouragement: "I Am Mine No More."

¹ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955) 81.

² Alistair I. Wilson and Jamie A. Grant, "Introduction," in *The God of Covenant: Biblical, Theological, and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Jamie A. Grant and Alistair I. Wilson (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2005) 12.

³ Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981) 72-73.



TRUTH

CHUCK MONAN



Understanding the Word

Look up the word truth in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* and there is the following ominous warning concerning its definition: “No term is more familiar and none more difficult of definition.”¹

In the Old Testament the word translated *truth* is *‘emeth*, whose primary idea is something that is true, right, certain, trustworthy, and faithful. It appears some 117 times, and is usually used of God, whose nature is truth (Psalm 31:5, Isaiah 65:16). Because God is truth, in Him is found confidence, constancy, and security. In the New Testament the word translated *truth* is *aletheia*, which means “true, truly, truth, verity.” As in the Old Testament, *truth* in the New Testament points to the nature of God, and His consistency and response to a universe of which He is the designer, creator, and sustainer.

Because of the broad and general use of *truth* in English, it is easy to go beyond the use of the Hebrew and Greek terms. Our world recognizes various aspects of truth from ontological to logical, from moral to religious. But ultimately all truth is religious because it emanates from the person of God. Anything that is true is the domain of God.

The place of truth in salvation is indispens-

able. The Old Testament cites the necessity of walking before God in truth (1 Kings 2: 4), and notes that God’s Word, which is truth, sanctifies (Psalm 119:160). The New Testament asserts that God’s salvation culminates in the Messiah, Jesus the Christ—the personification of truth (John 1:14; 14:6). “The truth” is further defined as the body of God-given teaching that the disciple of Christ will learn and follow (John 14:15; 16:13; Acts 2:42; 2 Timothy 2:15).



Reading the Word

The following passages offer vivid insights into the vital nature of truth.

1. John 16:12-15
2. John 18:33-40
3. Acts 2:22-41
4. Romans 1:18-25
5. 1 John 3:16-24

When the truth of God is exchanged for a lie (Romans 1:25), man is lost. Only by acknowledging and obeying God’s truth can we be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Mankind’s adversary the devil traffics in lies (John 8:44), as he knows keeping us from the truth keeps us from experiencing God’s salvation. Therefore, truth is not merely optional or preferential; it is essential. Paul notes the stark difference embracing God’s truth brings to our lives in Ephesians 4:15-23:

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds (NIV).

Preaching the Word

Illustration: A church in Little Rock advertises its message on a sign reading: “Truth Principles That Work For You.” But isn’t it obvious that for some lying, stealing, murdering, and a host of other sinful behaviors are an indication that these “truth principles” don’t work for them? Truth is not relative, nor is it open to interpretation; it is determined by God.

Idea: John 18 records Jesus before Pilate, an interview which reveals two very different views of truth. Jesus asserts that God’s truth is absolute, and that “everyone on the side of truth listens to Me” (vs. 37, NIV). Pilate cynically dismisses such a fixed view of truth with the

question “What is truth?” These remain the two possible responses to truth today.

Quote: A.W. Tozer observes, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”² Consider the implications of this. Some claim there is no God and live only for themselves. Some see God as an unreasonable tyrant out to get them, and turn toward legalism. Some see God as a senile, old benevolence and turn toward libertinism. Some see God as a vengeful destroyer and turn toward jihad and destruction, like ISIS. Believing lies about God leads to despair and death; believing what is true about God leads to life.

Illustration: In the 2003 film *Luther*, the religious reformer is called before the Diet of Worms, where Catholic officials order him to renounce his writings and recant his beliefs. He refuses to deny what he believes to be true, saying: “Here I stand; I can do no other.” This clip that runs 4 minutes and 44 seconds is a powerful reminder of the courage and cost it takes to stand for truth.

Song Suggestions: "How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?" "Ancient Words"

Song of Encouragement: "Trust and Obey"

¹ Carver, William Owen, “Truth” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* Vol. 5, Ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 2025.

² A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1961), 1.

PROPHECY

DENNY PETRILLO



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament, the term translated *prophecy* is *nābā'*, meaning “to bubble up,” “boil forth,” hence, “to pour forth words, like those who speak with fervor of mind or under divine inspiration, as prophets and poets.” The Biblical use of the word has the idea of “to receive God’s speech and then to proclaim it, emphasizing the reception of divine communication by the *nābī'*.”¹ The word occurs 123 times in the Hebrew Old Testament.

In the New Testament the word for *prophecy* is *propheteuo*, and the word for *prophet* is *prophetes*. “By and large the New Testament understands by “the prophet” the Biblical proclaimer of the divine, inspired message.”² The Cretan poet Epimenides (Titus 1:12) would be one of the exceptions to this in the New Testament. The word *prophet* or the verb *prophecy* is found 216 times in the Greek New Testament.

In God’s divine wisdom, He chose to communicate His will through men. Some might take issue with this approach, preferring to hear messages directly from God. Yet these direct communications were rare in Biblical times. Rather, if one wanted to know the will of God, he was to find one of God’s prophets. This led to a number of potential obstacles: 1. The prophet might decide to withhold the message he received, 2. The people might fail

to listen to the message proclaimed, 3. The people might not trust the message as being from God, and 4. Some might wrongfully claim to be a prophet of God, thereby misleading the people.

Despite these obstacles, it was still God’s design to communicate through prophets. Why might God have chosen this medium? Here are four advantages of prophecy: 1. It required the people to become proactive in discerning truth from error; 2. It enabled God to utilize faithful spokesmen; 3. It became a test of genuine faith, for one had to trust the messenger and the message; and 4. It provided a vehicle to communicate His divine truths to future generations.

Today we are reading prophetic messages when we read the Bible. These messages are from God through His inspired prophets (Ephesians 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).



Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand prophecy:

1. Jeremiah 14:14-16
2. 2 Peter 1:20-2:1
3. Acts 3:18-25
4. Ephesians 2:20
5. Revelation 22:6-19.

es of fake healing.”³ “Most of these guys are fooled by their own theology,” said Ole Anthony of the Trinity Foundation, which has investigated Popoff and other televangelists since 1987. “He’s fundamentally evil, because he knows he’s a con man.”⁴

Idea: The key concept of prophecy involves how God reveals His will to man. Thus, songs that focus on the Bible as God’s message to man would be appropriate. Sing songs like “Give Me the Bible,” “Break Thou the Bread of Life,” “Holy Bible, Book Divine” and “Wonderful Words of Life.” Also, involved in the idea of prophecy are divine promises. The New Testament is filled with God’s predictive promises. Therefore, sing songs like “Standing on the Promises,” “Sweet Is the Promise,” “Walking in Sunlight” and “Where He Leads I Will Follow.”

Illustration: Jesus describes a false prophet as a wolf in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). This presents a powerful image that can be used in discussing prophecy.

Quote: “The word ψευδοπροφήτης is not used by Paul. It occurs in all 11 times in the New Testament, of which 3 are in Matthew and 3 in Revelation. The question whether the pseudo-prophet is a man who falsely pretends to be a prophet of God or a man who is thus styled because he proclaims what is false must be answered according to context in the New Testament. In most cases pseudo-prophets are those who claim to be prophets without any truth. According to Matthew 7:15, they act like prophets but are liars by nature. In Mark 13:22; Matthew 24:24; 1 John 4:1 cf. 2:18, they are mentioned alongside ψευδόχριστοι. As the ψευδόχριστος is not a Christ who disseminates lies but one who falsely claims the title,

so the pseudo-prophet is primarily one who says he is a prophet when he is not. But 1 John 4:1-3 shows that the pseudo-prophet is also a man who proclaims what is false. For he is shown up as a false prophet by the fact that he champions false doctrine. In 2 Peter 2:1 the pseudo-prophets of the Old Testament are compared with the false teachers who introduce destructive heresies. They are thus men who proclaim ψευδή. By and large, however, the pseudo-prophet is called this, not because his teaching and predictions are false, but because he raises without justification the claim to be a prophet. Because he is a false prophet it follows that in most cases he also says what is false, disseminating lies.”⁵

Song Suggestions: “Break Thou the Bread of Life,” “Give Me the Bible,” “Holy Bible, Book Divine,” “Standing on the Promises,” “Sweet Is the Promise,” “Thy Word,” “Walking in Sunlight,” and “Wonderful Words of Life.”

Song of Encouragement: “Where He Leads Me I Will Follow.”

¹ Robert D. Culver, “1277 נבִּיִּם,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999) 544.

² Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) 828.

³ Fred M. Frohock, *Lives of the Psychics: The Shared Worlds of Science and Mysticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 76-77.

⁴ Christopher Maag, “Scam Everlasting: After 25 Years, Debunked Faith Healer Still Preaching Debt Relief Scam,” *Business Insider* 22 September 2011. Web 27 July 2016.

⁵Kittel 830.

GOSPEL

DOUG BURLESON



Understanding the Word

In the Hebrew Old Testament, the noun *besorah* only occurs four times and is always translated “good news” (2 Samuel 4:10; 18:22, 27; 2 Kings 7:9). This Hebrew noun form is translated as *euangelion* in the Greek Old Testament – the same word translated *gospel* in the New Testament. In the Greek Old Testament the verb form, often translated as “to bring good news” (*euangelidzō*), occurs 24 times. While “good news” in the Old Testament is often shared with *zeal* and *joy*, one should carefully note that these Old Testament references generally do not allude to good news coming from the mouth of God or His representatives (for example, Israel’s enemies spread the “good news” about Saul’s death in 1 Samuel 31:9; 2 Samuel 1:20).

In the New Testament, the noun *euangelion* occurs over 70 times and has a more specialized meaning, especially in light of the possessive nouns that are often used to describe the nature of the Gospel. There are rare designations like Matthew’s referring to “the gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; 24:14) or Paul’s references to the “gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15), the “gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24), “my gospel” (Romans 2:16; 16:25), or “our gospel” (2 Corinthians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). Though Paul warns about “a different

gospel” twice (2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:16), some of his most common designations for this word are the Gospel “of God” on nine occasions (See Mark 1:14; 1 Peter 4:17) and “of Christ” on eleven occasions (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Ephesians 1:13; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:8).¹

While the word *euangelion* is most often translated “gospel,” there are a few places where many English translations still render the verb form “to bring good news” (See Luke 2:10). Interestingly in the Gospels and Acts, the word is frequently referred to without any descriptive terms as simply “the gospel” (Matthew 26:13; Mark 1:1; 14:9; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 16:15; Luke 9:6; Acts 15:7). While one might notice the frequent allusions to the term *gospel* in Paul’s letters, on 32 occasions he uses the word without any descriptive or possessive terms. The specialized usage this word had among God’s people is evident as references to “the gospel” serve to encapsulate both what the disciples proclaim and what serves as the basis of their hope.



Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand grace:

1. Romans 1:16
2. Matthew 11:4-5 (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1)
3. Mark 1:14-15
4. Galatians 1:6-9
5. Philippians 1:27

Mark's Gospel account begins with what some might describe as a title. In Mark 1:1 readers learn what the Gospel really is--the story of Jesus. Mark suggests that he is beginning to tell the Gospel story, which can best be described as "of Jesus Christ." This is the message of John (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 3:18; 16:16), Jesus (Luke 4:18; 7:22; 20:1), and the disciples of Jesus (Luke 9:6; Acts 8:25, 40; 14:7). Furthermore, it was anticipated that this message would eventually be shared with the entire world (Mark 14:9; 16:15; Acts 15:7). While respecting the power of this "good news" (Romans 1:16), disciples needed to understand that the Gospel might cost one his or her life (Mark 8:35). Not surprisingly Paul is the New Testament writer to most frequently mention the Gospel as evidenced by his use of the word in all of his letters except Titus, including ten references to the Gospel in Romans, twelve in 1 Corinthians, nine in 2 Corinthians, eleven in Galatians, and nine in Philippians. While emphasizing the eternal nature of the Gospel, Paul also warns against turning aside to a different gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:4), which he then acknowledges is not really a gospel at all. In his prison epistle to the Philippians, Paul claims that the Gospel requires that adherents conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel (1:27). For Paul, this is personal as

indicated by his references to "my" Gospel or "our" Gospel described above. He is to give his life in service to God's commission (explained by Ananias) that he would take the message of Christ to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16).

Wayne Jackson correctly observes that the Gospel reflects God's gracious eternal plan, focuses on Christ's mission (particularly His death on the cross), requires that humankind obey the commands contained therein, and results in both peace with God and the ability to enter into the kingdom of God. He adds that the Gospel must be preached, believed, obeyed, and defended.² Interestingly Jesus' first recorded sermon includes the words of Isaiah 61:1 where the prophet has spoken of the realization of Jubilee in Israel when good news would be carried to the afflicted, the brokenhearted would be healed, with the captives and prisoners being freed as well. When Matthew and Luke record Jesus' words, the Greek verb used in Isaiah (*euangelidzō*) is used in Matthew 11:5, Luke 4:18, and 7:22. Jesus is proclaiming good news while going about doing good and healing (Acts 10:38). This Gospel is not just what He proclaimed, but also what He fulfilled! In Revelation 5 it is Jesus who could open the sealed scroll, explain the scroll, and ultimately be the central figure in the Gospel story (5:5).



LIFE'S CHALLENGES



WORRY

DALE JENKINS



Understanding the Word

It seems odd to write about understanding the word *worry*, for humans do not seem to have to be taught to worry. In fact, in all of God's creation, it seems humans are the only ones that worry (See Matthew 6:26, 28). Perhaps more interesting is that if you look up the English word *worry* in your old King James Version or your newer English Standard Version, you will not find it.

There are several New Testament words and phrases to denote the concept we call worry: *Merimna*--"to be anxious, to care for"; *ochleo*--"to disturb, trouble"; *merimna*--"care, anxiety"; *melo*--"to be an object of care"; *promerimnao*--"to be anxious beforehand." The Hebrew word *atsab* includes the idea of "to hurt or to grieve."

A Definition of Worry:

1. To give way to anxiety or unease; allow one's mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles.
2. To harass by pursuit and barking; to attack repeatedly; also, to tear or mangle with the teeth.
3. To harass or beset with importunity, or with care an anxiety; to vex; to annoy; to torment; to tease; to fret; to trouble; to plague.

4. To harass with labor; to fatigue.
5. To feel or express undue care and anxiety; to manifest disquietude or pain; to be fretful; to chafe; as, *the child worries; the horse worries.*
6. A state of undue solicitude; a state of disturbance from care and anxiety; vexation; anxiety; fret; as, *to be in a worry.*¹

From these definitions, we see that "bad" worry is much more than just a mentally challenging emotion, but it can also cause hurt. Worry can feel like being pursued by a vicious dog and attacked repeatedly; it brings fatigue and pain.

While in our culture the word always seems to be used in a negative sense, we do not need to overlook that there is a positive "worry" in the Scriptures. It is a deep concern and care for another's state or over one's own soul.



Reading the Word

1. Matthew 6:25-34
2. Luke 10:41
3. Philippians 2:19-28
4. 1 Samuel 9:1-20
5. Philippians 4:4-7

Matthew 6:25-34 is perhaps the most famous of text on worry. No verse has more shaped

Preaching Thought: Title the sermon “We Need to Worry **More.**” Our common use of the word *worry* seems to always focus on the negative. Have you ever heard someone say he was worried and thought it was a positive sign? To “not worry” does not indicate a lack of concern, interest, even trepidation (i.e. “I’m worried about this test, my child, the condition of our country”). This is beautifully illustrated in Philippians 2:19-28: Here we see the positive and encouraging use of the word *worry*. The ESV translates the Greek *merimnaō* as *concern*. In this beautiful scrolling text, you have Paul sending the uniquely caring Timothy to the Philippians to make sure they are doing well, the ensuing report cheering Paul. Paul is worried (concerned) about them because they have heard that Epaphroditus, their minister, is ill. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus to Paul to help him out but he had gotten sick. But Epaphroditus is more concerned about the fact that the Philippians are concerned for him than about his own illness (though it is very severe). The Philippians need to see that he is better, which in turn will cause Paul to be “less anxious.” It is a beautiful circle of four—Timothy, Epaphroditus, the church at Philippi, and Paul—each outdoing the other in concern about not their own affairs but the joy of others.

Quote: “Sorrow looks back, worry looks around, faith looks up.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Illustration: As told in Alan Smith’s Friday’s “Thought for the Day.”²

The story is told of a young man who was fresh out of business school. He was looking for a job and saw an ad in the newspaper for a

small business needing an accountant. So he answered the ad and ended up going in for an interview with this very nervous man who was running this small business that he had started himself.

The man said, “I need someone with an accounting degree. But mostly I’m looking for someone to do my worrying for me.”

The young man said, “Excuse me? I’m afraid I don’t understand.”

The owner said, “I worry about a lot of things, but I don’t want to have to worry about money. Your job will be to take all the money worries off my back.”

The young fellow said, “OK, I understand. And how much does the job pay?”

The owner said, “I’ll start you at eighty thousand a year.”

The young man was blown away. He said, “Eighty thousand dollars! How can such a small business afford a salary like that?” The owner said, “That is your first worry.”

Song Suggestions: “It Is Well With My Soul,” “God Will Take Care of You,” “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow.”

Song of Encouragement: “Burdens Are Lifted at Calvary.”

¹ “Worry,” <http://biblehub.com/>.

² Alan Smith’s *Thought for the Day* archives as well as sign-up info can be found at www.tftd-online.com.

SUFFERING

DAN WINKLER



Understanding the Word

Old Testament Scripture frequently couples the idea of suffering with other stimuli of grief: e.g. grief that comes from miscarriages (Exodus 23:26), thirst (Job 21:11), hunger (Psalm 34:10; Proverbs 19:15), and punishment (Joel 1:18). However, some words are actually translated *suffering*. For example:

- *assebet*: “sorrow” (Job 9:28) as in the sorrow that comes from the “wounds” of a broken heart (Psalm 147:3) or a broken spirit (Proverbs 15:13).
- *alal*: “to abuse” (Lamentations 3:51) as in the abuse of a foot being crushed (Numbers 22:29), a concubine being gang-raped (Judges 19:25) or soldiers being “cut down” (Judges 20:45).
- *hava*: “calamity” (Job 6:2; 30:13), “trouble” (Isaiah 47:11) or “disaster” (Ezekiel 7:26).

The New Testament also employs a variety of words that imply some kind of trauma: e.g. the suffering of violence (Matthew 11:12), shame (Acts 5:41), wrong (Acts 7:24), loss (1 Corinthians 1:15), persecution (Galatians 5:11), need (Philippians 4:12), tribulation (1 Thessalonians 3:4), reproach (1 Timothy 4:10), trouble (2 Timothy 2:9) or affliction (Hebrews 11:25). But, like the Old Testament, there are a few words that

are predominately translated *suffering*. They include:

- *Pascho*: “to experience something” good or bad, although it originally referred to experiencing something bad (1 Corinthians 12:26).
- *pathos* [alternative to *pascho*]: “an experience that results in painful thoughts or feelings” [only three times in the New Testament, always negatively] (Romans 1:26; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:5).
- *pathema* [derivative of *pascho*]: “a suffering that comes from some kind of external stimulus” (Romans 8:18).
- *Thlibo*: “to be pressed by something” (Hebrews 11:37). Its cognate noun, *thlibos*, is mostly translated “tribulation” (Romans 5:3), “affliction” (2 Corinthians 4:17) or “trouble” (Acts 7:10-11).

Reading the Word

Suffering appears ninety times in the NKJV Bible, seventy-eight in the New Testament alone. It is definitely a subject the Holy Spirit wants us to consider. So, to help us know what we might feel and how we might deal with the trials of life, let’s spend some time this week with the following passages:

1. Psalm 13
2. Lamentations 3:46-66
3. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
4. James 1:2-8
5. 1 Peter 4:15-16

Many of the Psalms can be summarized in three words. “Problems”—Are you having problems? “Pray”—pray about them. “Praise”—when you pray about your problems, get ready to be amazed and praise God for His help. Look at Psalm 13. Read it at least five times and see if you don’t find:

“Problems”—David’s suffering alerts us to what we might experience when we suffer. We might wonder if our problems will ever go away (vs. 1a). We might think that God doesn’t care and is keeping His distance (vs. 1b). We might repeatedly throw a pity party for ourselves (vs. 2a). We might even feel abused by life (vs. 2b).

“Pray”—David’s reaction to suffering teaches us what to do when we suffer. We should “ask God to look at us, listen to us and help us” (vs. 3-4). We should focus on God’s feelings for us, His “mercy,” more than our own feelings, our “misery” (vs. 5).

“Praise”—David’s worship amidst his suffering should inspire us to also sing when we suffer. Like David, we should “look ahead” with the anticipation of God making things better for us (vs. 5b). We should “look up” with appreciation for all that God has already done to us (vs. 6a). We should “look back” with conviction, believing that God’s care will continue with us (vs. 6b).

The book of Lamentations is a funeral dirge for Jerusalem and Judah. The fact that it is called Lamentations makes it appropriate for this study. So, let’s look more carefully into Lamentations 3:46-66. After reading it at least five times, do three things in your study.

First, notice the mistreatment Jeremiah experiences. His enemies “harassed” him (vs. 46), “haunted” him (vs. 47-51), “hunted” him down (vs. 52) and “hurled” stones at him (vs. 53).

Second, consider how all of this makes Jeremiah feel. Look for his “fears” (v. 47, 57) and his “tears” (vs. 48-51, 54).

Finally, pay attention to the way Jeremiah handles his feelings. He prays about them and makes three requests: (a) “Do not hide your ear from my sighing” (vs. 55-57), (b) “I am wronged; judge my case” (vs. 58-60) and (c) “You have heard their reproach...pursue and destroy them” (vs. 61-66). Sound familiar? When we’ve been hurt; well...it hurts and we want God to do something about it. We want God’s help.

Preaching the Word

Introduction: “Suffering”? Okay, I hear you. You’re probably saying, “Been there, done that.” We all have. We’ve all found ourselves in what the Bible calls a “time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). Some of us have even been forced into a fetal position, trying to talk to God through our tears. But we’re not the first. Remember the words of David, “I am weary with my groaning; all night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears” (Psalm 6:6), How did Jesus feel in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38-39 and Hebrews 5:7)? So, when it comes to pain, I hear

what you're saying. I even hear what you're not saying: "I've been there, done that and I'm **not about to go through that again.**" But you are! We all are because "man is born to trouble" (Job 5:7; 14:1; see 2 Corinthians 5:4).

Quotes:

"Life by the yard is hard but anything is a cinch inch by inch." Live one day at a time and make the best of it to make it better (Matthew 3:34).

"Rough paths often lead to desirable destinations." Be grateful for the bad in life and the good that it can bring (Romans 5:3; 2 Corinthians 4:17; James 1:2-3).

"Tears are safety valves that protect the heart when too much pressure is laid on it." But remember, God is alert to each one of the tears we shed (Psalm 56:8).

You probably won't want to use this one but an elder friend of mine used to encourage a steadfast spirit by saying, "Hang in there like a hair in a biscuit." :-)

Idea: Of interest, the words translated suffer are found more in 1 Peter than anywhere in the New Testament. So, place your finger on the pulse of this great book.

First, underline the word suffer throughout the epistle (1:11; 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:1 twice, 13, 15, 16, 19; 5:1, 9, 10).

Second, think about the recipients of this epistle (1:1). They suffered persecution that scattered them to Turkey, more than two thousand miles from Jerusalem (See Acts 8:4; 11:19).

Third, in the margin of 4:16 write the word theme. That is the verse that challenges us to glorify God even when we suffer.

Finally, outline the book as follows, and be encouraged by each set of thoughts.

I. Salvation (ch. 1). The salvation for which we hope [i.e. Heaven] is better than anything we suffer here.

II. Sample (ch. 2-3). Jesus suffered even though He was special to God. We will suffer even though we are special to God. Jesus' example of how to suffer can help us.

III. Second Coming (ch. 4-5). Jesus is coming again to judge all and bring an end to all our suffering. Hang on.

*Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make
my refuge,
Until these calamities have passed by
(Psalm 57:1).*

Song Suggestions: "Praise Him! Praise Him!"
"Jesus, Draw Me," "Farther Along."

Song of Encouragement: "Do You Know My Jesus?"



SHAME

PHILIP JENKINS



Understanding the Word

The Hebrew word *bosh* can mean humiliation or shameful thing.¹ The Hebrew word *kalam* means to insult, humiliate, or be ashamed.² These are not the only terms used for *shame*, but they occur often. The Greek word for *shame* in the New Testament is *entrapay*, which indicates shame, respect, or reverence.³

Shame is a consequence of sin. The first response of Adam and Eve to their sinful condition is to hide from God (Genesis 3:7-8). David captures the pervasive Old Testament perspective when he says, “Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I have cried out to you; let the wicked be put to shame, and lie silent in the grave” (Psalm 31:17). Some nations ignore faith and obedience and God shames them by causing their defeat and dispersion (Isaiah 22:18; Jeremiah 2:26; 7:19; Ezekiel 7:18; Daniel 9:7-8). Proverbs emphasizes the shame of public humiliation for undisciplined behavior (13:18; 18:13; 25:8), with particular attention to family relationships (12:4; 17:2; 19:26; 29:15).

The New Testament deepens and expands the concept of shame. A disciple of Christ stands with Him unashamedly in a world that finds the cross (Hebrews 12:2), God's ways (1 Corinthians 1:27), and God's persecuted messengers (2 Timothy 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:12) shameful. Those ashamed of Him now will find Christ

ashamed of them on the Day of Judgment (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Conversely, God is not ashamed to call the faithful “brothers” of Christ (Hebrews 2:11).

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the only antidote for humanity's shame (Romans 1:16). Ultimately, the Christian who trusts in Christ need not be ashamed of anything (Philippians 1:20; see Isaiah 28:16; Romans 9:33; 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6). When one confesses Christ and openly rebels against Him, however, the work of Christ is publicly shamed (Hebrews 6:6).

Shame is a godly motivator. A virtuous life shames the ungodly, providing a context for evangelism (Titus 2:8; 1 Peter 3:16). A believer's shame for past sin is a spur to forsake sinning (Romans 6:21), to renounce disobedience (2 Thessalonians 3:14), and to minister the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:2). Paul uses the concept of shame most frequently with the immature Corinthian believers, urging them not to shame themselves (1 Corinthians 4:14; 6:5; 15:34; 2 Corinthians 9:4) or him (2 Corinthians 7:14; 10:8).

Shameless people flaunt their unholiness, caloused to God (Zephaniah 3:5) and glorying in their shame (Philippians 3:19). Yet no one is shameless ultimately. At the final judgment, the nakedness of those not clothed with Christ's

Quote from C. S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*:

"I felt ashamed."

"But of what? Psyche, they hadn't stripped you naked or anything?"

"No, no, Maia. Ashamed of looking like a mortal--of being a mortal."

"But how could you help that?"

"Don't you think the things people are most ashamed of are things they can't help?"

Intro idea: Begin with a little game of "Shame or No Shame." You could put some guilty pleasures up on a screen for the congregation to see. And then you could ask them to respond with shame or no shame by raising their hands to vote for each. Of course, if you really wanted to illustrate shame/no shame, you could have them stand up if they vote "no shame!"

- Example: "I like Taylor Swift's music." Shame or no shame?
- Example: "I think Hot Pockets are delicious." Shame or no shame?
- Example: "I go to eat at McDonalds...and like it." Shame or no shame?
- Example: "I talk to myself." Shame or no shame?

Illustration: Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic *The Scarlet Letter* tells the story of Hester Prynne, a young woman publicly shamed for her adultery, and the mysterious father (whom Hester refuses to publicly name) of her yet un-

born child. Hester is mocked by her own people, becoming the subject of all kinds of gossip and persecution, and is forced to wear a scarlet letter *A* visible for all to see. The other guilty party, the father, seems to have a much easier road: He is safe from the public eye, no one knows of his identity, and his sin doesn't seem to cost him anything. As the story unfolds, however, we learn that the guilt and shame of the father becomes so heavy that he has punished himself by engraving a scarlet letter *A* into his chest with a knife. As it turns out, his shame, though hidden, would be the thing that would end up killing him.

Song Suggestions: "There's Not a Friend," "He Lifted Me," "You Are My All in All."

Song of Encouragement: "Out of My Bondage"

¹<http://biblehub.com/hebrew/1322.htm>.

² <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/kalam.html>.

³ <http://www.greekbible.com>.

⁴ <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/shame/>.



GUILT

TIM MARTIN



Understanding the Word

What is guilt? Most would say an emotional feeling or a particular sin. What does it mean to be guilty? Our modern definition would define *guilty* as a judicial status within a particular legal framework. In the Bible, being guilty is to find oneself in violation of divine commandment. The offense can be directed toward God Himself (worshipping false gods, blasphemy) or toward our fellow man (murder, false witness, stealing). A group of people can also possess guilt, such as Israel and Judah's national apostasy. There are several terms that are associated with this concept: guilt, iniquity, sin, and transgressions.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word often translated as *guilt* or *iniquity* is *āwōn*. This Hebrew word is defined as “sin, wickedness, iniquity,” often with a focus on the guilt or liability incurred, and the punishment to follow.¹ This term, however, is not the only Hebrew term translated *sin*. The term translated *guilty*, denoting a status, is *rāšā'* and it “denotes behavior that is destructive and disruptive of harmony in the community and serves as a more generalized term for evil understood as the opposite of what is morally good.”² Many times, the Hebrew term *'āšām* is translated as *guilt* and it “is to be understood as moral or legal culpability, so it has an objective dimension. Guilt designates the condition or state of

a person who has acted wrongfully; it stands between the act of sin and the punishment.”³

The New Testament also contains the concept of *guilt* as a judicial condition. In the ESV translation, the English word *guilt* appears seven times, five of those occurrences are within statements made by Pontius Pilate concerning Jesus' legal status with regards to any violation of Roman law. In these instances, Luke and John use the Greek terms *aitia* or *aition* (meaning “reason, cause, accusation, charge, guilt, a wrong”⁴). Jesus, when speaking to the Pharisees in John 9:41, uses the term *hamartia*, which carries the footnote “you would not have sin” in the ESV. *Hamartia* is one of the “more than thirty words in the New Testament that convey some notion of sin.”⁵

In examining the Scriptures, we can see that the concept of guilt is not one that deals with how people **feel**, but what people **have**. Guilt is the possession of sin. If you don't do what God commands, you have guilt. The *Merriam-Webster English* definition of guilt applicable to the Biblical concept is “responsibility for a crime or for doing something bad or wrong; the state of one who has committed an offense especially consciously.”⁶ Biblically speaking, how a person feels is irrelevant; they either have guilt or they don't. Fortunately, although Christians still sin and “possess guilt,” Christ's blood overrides that guilt in the sight of God

(Romans 3:21-26). We may have guilt, but we also have grace.

Reading the Word

How would it be possible for us to examine the breadth of the Bible's discussions about sin and guilt in this brief outline? Obviously, we cannot. Since the Bible's overall story is one of redemption from guilt, it is best to start from the introduction of sin/guilt and progress to the final redemption from that guilt in Jesus Christ. The release of guilt evolves throughout the Bible until it culminates at the cross. Let's examine a few passages that can help us see that evolution.

1. Genesis 3:1-24
2. Leviticus 4:1-6:7; 16:1-34
3. Ezra 10:18-19
4. John 9:35-41
5. Acts 2:22-24, 36-40
6. Romans 7:15-23; Ephesians 2:1-3
7. Romans 5:1-6:23; 7:24-8:11
8. Hebrews 4:14-16

In Genesis 3:1-24 (See Romans 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:21), Adam and Eve disobey the commandment of God from Genesis 2:16-17. The result is physical death and the introduction of a distance between God and man. This gulf would exist until the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve bear guilt and receive just (and merciful) punishment from God. The evidence shows they lived for many years and had several offspring (Genesis 5:4). Perhaps the worst consequence of introducing sin is their first-born son killing his brother.

It is interesting to read in Leviticus 4:1-6:7 and 16:1-34 (See Hebrews 9:1-10:18) about the sin/

guilt offerings the Levitical priesthood present both for their sins and those of the people of Israel. In particular, these offerings atone for unintentional sin. Does man possess guilt when ignorant of the laws of God? Consider this question while comparing Romans 3 and 7:7-25. Did Jesus' sacrifice on the cross abrogate unintentional and intentional sin? Is this what makes His sacrifice better? Is there not removal of guilt by any of the atoning sacrifices under the Torah? If not, does Israel always bear some guilt? Do we still bear guilt when in the Body of Christ?

In Ezra 10:18-19 nearly 1,000 years after the Law is given at Sinai, we see that the physically and spiritually restored people of Judah can still discern sin in their lives. Is the sin of intermarriage (See Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-6) done in ignorance? Does the guilt offering take this guilt away in the sight of God? We assume they carry out their pledge, although the text is silent.

In John 9:35-41 a group of Pharisees overhear Jesus' conversation with the blind man healed in 9:1-11. This man is just berated by the Pharisees with regards to who healed him. Just before Jesus proceeds to refer to the Jewish religious leaders using metaphors like "thief" and "robber," He answers their tongue-in-cheek question: "Are we also blind?" Colin G. Kruse explains Jesus' response well: "If they, like the man born blind, had been prepared to acknowledge ignorance, they, like him, would not be guilty of sin. Because they claimed to know and were unwilling to learn, their guilt remained. Their presumption of knowledge kept them from seeing the truth."

Acts 2:22-24, 36-40 is a plain narrative from

an oft-referred-to passage in the church. The people who authorize and support the crucifixion of Christ bear guilt; they are the ones who sinned. Upon realizing they have sinned, the cry goes out: “What must we do?” Realization must precede repentance and baptism must follow repentance for the stain of guilt to be removed.

Romans 7:15-23 and Ephesians 2:1-3 address the question, “Should we feel guilty because we desire to sin?” Is it our fault we have fleshly passions and lusts? Taking into consideration Jesus’ statements in Matthew 5:27-30, do we become guilty of sin for having these desires? In Romans 7, Paul plainly states that when we act on evil desire, that is when sin dwells in us (i.e. we bear guilt).

Romans 5:1–6:23 and 7:24–8:11 (See Ephesians 2:4-10) give us the Gospel itself: Jesus Christ died to deliver us from guilt. The eternal Son of God offers cleansing from the stain of sin introduced by the created son of God.

Our Lord is not a far-away, capricious deity who sees humans as pawns and playthings Hebrews 4:14-16 teaches. Jesus Christ became lowly, a peasant from a backwater town. He became human and faced temptation. Why? So He could do what He always does—provide compassion and sympathy.



Preaching the Word

Illustration: In 2016, the FX network aired a TV mini-series entitled “The People v. O.J. Simpson.” In arguably the most public and hotly debated court case in the 20th century, the state of California attempted to prove the former football star was guilty of murdering his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend, Ron Goldman. This series looks back 21 years to this case and shows the overwhelming physical evidence the State had against Simpson. However, a “dream team” of high-profile attorneys was able to convince a jury to find Simpson “not guilty.” The producers of this show detail the money and legal wrangling it took to acquit the Hall of Fame running back. We will not have a “dream team” of lawyers on Judgment Day, nor will we be able to plea bargain away the sentence of Hell we deserve. The only advocate we have cannot be bought with wealth. The “free gift of God” is the blood of Jesus Christ. Only by that blood can our guilt be taken away.

Using the text: Can we overemphasize the great news in Romans 5–8 about what Jesus did for us? There is “life,” freedom from “death,” Just feel the attitude of gratitude and rejoicing from Paul. We should all appreciate our deliverance from eternal punishment. Most people are afraid of prison but not afraid of Hell. If we can grasp the magnitude of our salvation, we will treasure and appreciate God’s grace. Think of the worst sentence the judicial system can give: life in prison, which ends when you die. “Life” in Hell is eternal, never-ending.

Idea: “Jesus never faced what I am faced with.” For those who don’t feel like Jesus can

sympathize with what they face would do well to read this passage. Not just the temptations of Matthew 4, but in **every** way. Do we ever think about Jesus facing sexual temptation? Anger? Greed? Many people feel very alone and ashamed in their guilt. We are imitators of Christ; therefore we must be sympathetic, not prejudiced and judgmental.

Song Suggestions: “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” “Rock of Ages.”

Song of Encouragement: “My Eyes Are Dry.”

¹ William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006) 315.

² E.A. Martens, “Sin, Guilt” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) 767.

³ Martens 768.

⁴ Barclay M. Newman, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Society, 2010) Olive Tree Edition, np.

⁵ Leon Morris, “Sin, Guilt” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993) 877.

⁶ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guilt.

⁷ Colin G. Kruse, “John”, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008) 228-229.



GRIEF

LEON BARNES



Understanding the Word

“Grief is a multifaceted response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or something that has died, to which a bond or affection was formed. Although conventionally focused on the emotional response to loss, it also has physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and philosophical dimensions.”¹

“Coping with losing a loved one is one of life’s greatest difficulties. If you have experienced the pain of mourning, you know that any way to ease the loss is welcomed. While our knowledge and study of grief continues to evolve, it’s important to note that not everyone grieves the same way. We have individual patterns and outlets for grief.”²

“The stages of grief reflect a variety of reactions that may surface as an individual tries to make sense of how a loss affects him or her. An important part of the healing process is allowing oneself to experience and accept all feelings that are experienced. The following are the stages of grief: denial, numbness, shock, bargaining, depression, anger, and acceptance.”³ The study and books by Helen Kubler-Ross first popularized these stages of grief. While no one likely goes from one of these stages to the next in the order given, it does describe the emotions we tend to go through after suffering a major loss in life. It is said that instead of see-

ing them as steps, it is better to see these as a figure eight that we weave back and forth into one and then another and back again through the different stages.

It should be noted that major loss is one of the primary causes of major depression in life. It is always tied to the sense of loss felt by the person and may not at all relate to what others would think of as a major loss in life. Grief isn’t an illness. It is natural in the life of any person, no matter how healthy they may be mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. Some years ago when I was working with the church in Germantown, Tennessee, we sent out the little booklet I wrote on “When a Loved One Dies” to those who lost a loved one in the area. One man who received the booklet and the letter of condolence that went with it wrote back to say that he resented receiving the booklet. He was a Christian and as such he didn’t have any grief since his wife was now in Heaven. Obviously he misunderstood 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 that we are not to sorrow as others who have no hope. It doesn’t mean at all that we have no sorrow or grief in times of loss.



Reading the Word

1. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
2. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
3. Psalm 23
4. John 11:17-44
5. Isaiah 53

Sermon Idea: In Hebrews 4:14-16 Jesus is the great high priest who has suffered the same temptations we have so we are challenged to come boldly before His throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. During our times of grief we struggle as much as we ever will. What a time to come boldly to the throne looking for the grace to help in our needs! God helps us and He longs for us to open up to Him about our hurts.

Sermon Idea: In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Paul explains how he keeps from losing heart in his life. He has gone through horrendous pains. Yet he doesn't lose heart because he focuses on the things that are unseen rather than the things that are seen. What is unseen is eternal. What is seen is temporary. So one way to grow through grief is to focus on the eternal rather than the present.

Sermon Idea: In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul describes going into the third heaven whether in the body or out he isn't sure, but God knows. He goes to that realm and hears unspeakable words unlawful for a man to utter. But having received such a revelation, God gives him a thorn in the flesh to keep him from becoming proud. He prays diligently to have it removed. But God's strength is made perfect in weakness. So now he glories in his weakness. In grief we are weak. But it is a wonderful time for God to use us in His work.

Song Suggestions: "Be With Me Lord," "Surround Us Lord," "There's Not a Friend."

Song of Encouragement: "I Bring My Sins to Thee."

¹ "Grief," available at wikipedia.org.

² "Coping with Grief," available at psychologytoday.com/basics/grief.

³ "Grief and Depression," available at www.webmd.com/depression/guide/depression-grief.



OUR SALVATION

JUSTIFICATION

JESSE ROBERTSON



Understanding the Word

In many English Bibles, the word *justification* appears only three times (Romans 4:25; 5:16, 18), but the concept is also conveyed in other terms such as *atonement*, *vindication*, *acquittal*. It may be helpful to begin with the Greek terms found in the New Testament, and then identify the parallel terms in the Old Testament.

To grasp the concept in the New Testament, it is helpful to see the entire family of terms that are associated with *justification*:

dikaios (adj.)—right (in relation to a standard), just, fair

dikaiōs (adv.)—justly, correctly, uprightly

dikaioṣunē (noun)—justice, righteousness, uprightness

dikaioō (verb)—to vindicate by granting a favorable verdict

dikaioōsis (noun)—justification, vindication, acquittal

The noun form *righteousness* refers to the status of being regarded as right in relation to God's standard. The verb form means to be vindicated or regarded as righteous. In English

we do not have a verb form of righteousness (such as, “righteoused”), so translators often used the verb *justified* to translate the idea of being made/reckoned/counted righteous. The noun form *justification* can refer to either the act of acquitting someone or the means by which the acquittal is obtained.

The classic passage from the Old Testament that conveys this same idea is Genesis 15:6, where Abraham “believed the Lord, and He counted it to him as righteousness.” The noun for *righteousness* in this passage is *tsidqah* which has a cognate verb *tsdq*, which can mean “to be in the right,” “to make someone appear upright,” and “to declare as in the right.” Thus the Old Testament terminology again confirms the idea that justification is an act by which a person is declared to be righteous.



Reading the Word

1. Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6
2. Isaiah 53:11
3. Luke 15:11-32
4. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
5. Hebrews 10:11-14

Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:3, and Galatians 3:6 help us understand this term. In his argument against Judaizers, Paul finds a powerful ally in Genesis 15:6. These Christians with a Jewish background argue that in addition to faith in

Christ, one still needs to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. Paul argues that it is possible to be counted righteous in God's eyes without the Law because Abraham was justified by faith before the Law was ever given. It is one thing to attempt to obtain the status of "righteous" by lawkeeping, and another altogether to have it conveyed to you by God all at once.

In Isaiah 53:11 the prophet declares that the Suffering Servant will "make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities." This language resonates with the atonement theology of the Mosaic sacrificial system. In the Day of Atonement ceremony (Leviticus 16), the sins of the people are confessed over the sacrificial goat, and a second goat (the "scapegoat") is released into the wilderness to carry the iniquities of the people away. The result of this sacrificial service is that the sins of the people are no longer held against them. Not until the New Testament do we come to understand that the true atonement takes place at the cross, but what we learn from all of these symbols is that through vicarious atonement the guilt of one party can be removed and he/she can be declared righteous. Thus, justification comes through atonement.

During Jesus' ministry on earth, He sometimes simply declares people forgiven (e.g., Mark 2:5; Luke 7:48) which grants them justification. In the heart of the parable of the father with two sons (Luke 15:11-32), we see that same principle illustrated when the prodigal returns and is immediately given a robe, a ring, and shoes by the father. The status change from lost to found, from dead to alive, is symbolic of the change from unrighteous status to righteous

status, made possible through the justification provided through Christ's blood.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul gives a shocking list of sins that the Corinthian Christians formerly committed, and he urges them to leave off these practices because "you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." This passage helps to illustrate that justification is concurrent with forgiveness. This text is also especially relevant today because of the list of sexual sins, including homosexuality. It reminds us that these are not new sins, that the blood of Christ can deal with them, and that they are not practices that should continue for Christians.

The theme of justification through the sacrifice of Christ permeates the New Testament, but an especially poignant statement of it is found in Hebrews 10:14, which says, "For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." This statement emphasizes that our status as perfect in the eyes of God is not a status achieved by self-made righteousness, but is accomplished by the work of Christ who sanctifies us. He was perfectly just, suffered injustice, so that the unjust might be justified in the eyes of God.

Preaching the Word

Principle: The transition from unjustified to justified needs to be emphasized dramatically, in accord with the perfect power of the blood of Christ as the Scriptures above emphasize. I sometimes use a series of PowerPoint slides like the ones on the next page to illustrate this truth. The scale on the left is "righteousness." In the first slide, we illustrate the lie of

PROPITIATION

DAN WINKLER



Understanding the Word

Our English dictionaries tell us that *propitiation* has something to do with appeasing the feelings of another. The word itself is found only four times in the Bible. All four are in the New Testament (NKJV); however, the words translated *propitiation* (three different Greek words which are all closely related), are found in six verses of the Greek New Testament.

- In Luke 18:13, a sinner prays for God to “be merciful” (*hilastheti*).
- In Romans 3:25, Jesus is the “propitiation” (*hilasterion*) provided by God’s grace.
- In Hebrews 2:17, Jesus “makes propitiation” (*hilaskesthai*) as a merciful high priest.
- In Hebrews 9:5, the “mercy seat” (*hilasterion*) is above the Ark of the Covenant.
- In 1 John 2:2, Jesus is the “propitiation” (*hilasmos*) for the sins of all mankind.
- In 1 John 4:10, Jesus is, again, the “propitiation” (*hilasmon*) for our sins.

Clearly, these terms refer to the idea of gaining the favor of a merciful God despite our past sins.

In the Septuagint, some form of these terms is repeatedly used to reference God’s “mercy seat” (Exodus 26:17-21; 25:18-19; 31:7; 35:11; 37:5-9; Leviticus 16:2, 13-14; Numbers 7:89; 1 Chronicles 28:11). But, with a few other exceptions—“ledge” (Ezekiel 43:14, 17, 20) and “doorposts” (Amos 9:1)—they are used to convey the same emphasis as that found in the New Testament.

- In Leviticus 25:9, *hilasmou* refers to the “Day of Atonement” set aside by God.
- In Numbers 5:8, *hilasmou* and *exhilasetai* refer to “making atonement” with God.
- In Psalms 130:4, *hilasmos* is used for the “forgiveness” that is with the Lord.
- In Ezekiel 44:27, *hilasmon* is the “sin offering” offered to God.
- In Daniel 9:9, *hilasmoi* is translated “forgiveness” along with the mercy of God.
- In Amos 8:14, *hilasmou* is in the “propitiation” for sin that was supposedly granted to Samaria by their gods.



Reading the Word

As the above words indicate, it is hard to think of *propitiation* without the “mercy” of God.

Careful research will also reveal that it is hard to think of *propitiation* apart from the blood of Jesus (See Romans 3:25; Colossians 1:25). Accordingly, we recommend a careful reading of the following passages this week:

1. Luke 6:27-38
2. Romans 3:23-26
3. Ephesians 2:1-8
4. Hebrews 9
5. 1 John 4:7-11

Let's take another look at mercy and the teachings of Luke 6:27-38. How many times have you preached or heard someone preach about our giving to God only for God to give back to us “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over”? Fleshing out that word picture can provide a pretty awesome illustration; but, wait! Look at the context. This passage is encapsulated by a series of verses teaching us to love and be merciful to those that hurt us. It is talking about our forgiving, not our giving. Wow! That means, according to the contextual flow of this passage, if we are merciful to others, God will be abundantly merciful to us. (I need that. How about you?) Now, compare that with James 2:12 and 3:17, and get ready to preach about the feelings we should have for each other based on the feelings God has for us we want God to have for us.

Look at propitiation and the teachings of Romans 3:25. The first time our English translations provide us with the word *propitiation*, it is in Romans 3:25. Looking at this verse in its context, we see that is directly connected to: (a) our “transgression”—the sin that calls for the mercy of God (vs. 23; see 1 John 3:4); (b) our “justification”—the peace of being just-if-I'd never sinned before God (vs. 24; see 1 Cor-

inthians 6:11); and (c) our “redemption”—the ransom that was paid when the mercy and love of God sent Jesus to satisfy the offended holiness and avenging justice of a God angry with us because of sin (vs. 24; see Titus 2:14). Along with the verses above, we could add Psalm 51:1-2, Isaiah 1:18, and Revelation 1:5, 9; 7:14; 12:1. Figuratively speaking, Jesus' red blood makes me white as snow.



Preaching the Word

Introduction: *Propitiation*. How's that for a word? When was the last time you used it—or even heard it—outside of a Bible class, a sermon, or some deep religious discussion? Where is that word found in the Bible? What does it mean? What does it mean to you? To me?

Quote: Atonement might be spelled at-one-ment to get an idea of its meaning. It carries the emphasis of our being one with God again. It is one of those great Bible words for the heavenly fellowship we can enjoy with our Father in Heaven.

Illustration: A faithful Christian dreamed of Satan unrolling a large scroll; on the scroll was a list of every sin the man had committed. There was a sparkle in the devil's eye, thinking he had just escorted another into the den of doubt. Instead, the man replied, “There is one thing you have not written on this scroll.” “And what would that be?” asked the devil. Then, the man quoted the words of 1 John 1:7—“the blood of Jesus...cleanses us from all sin”—and, when he finished, every word on the scroll vanished. It was as spotless as his soul.

Idea: Hebrews 9 is one of those great chapters

REDEMPTION

BILL WATKINS



Understanding the Word

In the Old Testament there are three Hebrew words that are sometimes translated *redeem* in their verb forms. The word *ga'al* means “to redeem, deliver, avenge, or act as a kinsman.” This word, or variations of it, is used 90 times in the Old Testament. When Jacob blesses Joseph’s children, he uses this word when he says, “The Angel who has *redeemed* me from all evil.” The idea is that God has delivered him from all harm. If an Israelite became poor and had to sell himself or his property, a near relative could redeem him (See Leviticus 25:25, 48-49; Ruth 2:20).

Sometimes this word means “to avenge.” Twelve times in the Old Testament it is used in the sense of the “avenger of blood” (See Numbers 35:12, 19, 21; Exodus 29:24, 27). This person would be a near relative who would execute justice by executing the murderer of the victim. The word is most often used to describe what God does (Exodus 6:6; 15:13; Psalm 77:15; 78:35). Isaiah makes frequent use of the word, as in Isaiah 43:1. Sometimes the word is used of physical redemption as well as spiritual deliverance. You’ll find such thoughts in Psalm 69:18 and Psalm 103:2, 4.

A second word for redeem is *padah*. It means “to redeem or ransom.” It means that someone intervenes on behalf of another. When

Saul would have killed his son Jonathan, “the people rescued (redeemed) Jonathan, so that he did not die” (1 Samuel 14:45).

According to Exodus 21:8 and Leviticus 19:20, slaves could be redeemed. This would involve money. It also involves “redemption money” (Numbers 3:44-51) to redeem the firstborn sons of the Israelites, whom God claimed for Himself.

When this word is used to describe God, it means that He liberates human beings. Sometimes He redeems individuals (See Isaiah 29:22; 1 Kings 1:29; Psalm 21:5; 71:23), but most often He is described as redeeming Israel.

This word is used only once to describe being freed from sin (Psalm 130:8).

A third word that is used for redeem is *kapar*. It means “to ransom, atone, expiate, propitiate.” *Kapar* basically means a material transaction or ransom. It is often translated as “atone, forgive, or pardon” (Deuteronomy 32:43; 2 Chronicles 30:18; Jeremiah 18:23). Most often, it describes the sacrificial rites of the priests.

The word *ge'ullah* is the noun form of *ga'al*. It is used to describe deliverance of things or people who had been sold for debt (Leviticus 25:24, 48).

The word *pedut* is the noun form of *padah*. It means “ransom or redemption” (Psalm 111:9). In the New Testament the word redemption comes from the Greek words *lutrosis* and *apolutrosis*. The second word is simply a strengthened form of the first and simply means “a deliverance or a releasing.” It always carries with it the idea of a price paid, as by a *lutron* (See Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45).

One verb that is translated redeem is *exagorazo*, which means “to buy.”

Reading the Word

1. Leviticus 25:23-32
2. 2 Samuel 7:23-24
3. Deuteronomy 32:43
4. Titus 2:14
5. Ephesians 1:7-8
6. Galatians 3:13-14

Leviticus 25:23-32 contains a description of redemption when God gives the commandments surrounding the sale of land and the year of Jubilee. The key Hebrew root for the concept of redemption in this passage is *ga'al*. 2 Samuel 7:23-24 describes the redeeming work of God in making a nation for Himself and delivering that nation from Israel, using the language deriving from the Hebrew root *padah*. Deuteronomy 32:43 depicts the vengeance of God and atonement for His people. Look for the Hebrew term *kapar*.

As far as the New Testament goes, Titus 2:14 uses a Greek cognate of *lutroo* as He describes God redeeming Christians from every lawless deed. When Paul describes our redemption through the blood of Christ in Ephesians 1:7-8, he uses the term *apolutrosin*. Look for the

word *exagorazo* in Paul’s discussion of Christ’s redemption in Galatians 3:13-14.

Preaching the Word

Illustration: You may never have heard of Nicholas Winton. He died in 2015 at the age of 106. In 1938, he decided to skip a vacation to Switzerland to help a friend who had called him from Czechoslovakia. When he arrived, he found that hundreds of Jewish children were destined to be transported to Nazi death camps. Working quickly, he organized the rescue of 669 children. He found homes for the children and arranged for their safe passage to Britain. The world would not find out about his work until 40 years later in 1988. It was then that the surviving children made their way to London to honor Winton at a surprise gathering. As they stood and applauded, Winton cried. A statue of Winton carrying one child and walking with another stands today at the main railway station in Prague. His rescue of the children is all about redemption.¹

Illustration: Sergeant Dennis Weichel was a U.S. soldier who in March 2012 gave his own life to save an Afghan girl. Weichel, a Rhode Island National Guardsman, was riding along in a convoy in Laghman Province in eastern Afghanistan when some children were spotted on the road ahead. The children were picking up shell casings lying on the road. The casings are recycled for money in Afghanistan. Weichel and other soldiers in the convoy got out of their vehicles to get them out of the way of the heavy trucks in the convoy.

The children were moved out of the way, but an Afghan girl darted back onto the road to pick up some more casings that lay underneath a

passing MRAP, or Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle. The huge armored trucks weigh 16 tons and are designed to protect the troops they carry from roadside bombs. Weichel spotted the girl and quickly moved toward her to get her out of the way. He succeeded, but not before he was run over by the heavily armored truck. The girl was safe, but Weichel later died of his injuries.² He gave his life to save hers. That's redemption.

Illustration: NBC News reported the following story on January 22, 2014:

An 8-year-old boy is credited with saving six people from the fire that ultimately claimed his life. Lynette Adams of NBC station WHEC of Rochester, N.Y., reports:

“A New York town Wednesday was grieving the death of an 8-year-old boy who’s credited with saving the lives of six people in a roaring trailer fire, only to lose his own when he went back in to try to rescue his disabled uncle.

‘I’ve cried so much. I’ve cried so much it just doesn’t seem real,’ said Crystal Vrooman, the mom of Tyler Doohan, who died Monday morning after the trailer where he was staying overnight went up in flames. ‘It’s just so hard. I’m never going to see him again.’

Tyler, a fourth-grader at East Rochester Elementary School, didn’t have class on Monday—a holiday—so he was sleeping over with several other people at his grandfather’s trailer. The trailer caught fire about 4:45 a.m. ET, probably because of an electrical problem, the Penfield Fire Company said.

Tyler went through the trailer and was able

to wake six people—including two other kids, ages 4 and 6—who all made it out alive. But then Tyler went back in to try to help his uncle Steven Smith, who used a wheelchair because he’d lost part of a leg. They didn’t make it out.”

Redemption is all about rescue. Sometimes it’s costly.

Song Suggestions: “Redeemed,” “Sweet Is the Song.”

Song of Encouragement: “There Is a Redeemer.”

¹ You can find more information about Nicholas Winton in this *New York Times* article by Robert D. McFadden, “Nicholas Winton, Rescuer of 669 Children From Holocaust, Dies at 106.” 1 July 2015. Web 25 July 2016.

² Larry Shaugnessy, “Rhode Island Guardsman Died Saving Afghan Girl,” CNN 28 March 2012. Web. 25 July 2016.

³ Lynette Adams, “NY Town Mourns Brave 8-year-old Who Died Saving Six People from Trailer Fire,” NBC News 22 Jan 2014. Web. 28 April 2016.



ATONEMENT

DANIEL OVERTON



Understanding the Word

For many Christians, *atonement* is a confusing word and concept, conjuring up a host of related terms like *propitiation*, *expiation*, and *justification*. In essence, *atonement* refers to the process by which sinners are reconciled to relationship with God. William Tyndale is often credited with coining the word by combining *at* + *one* + *ment*;¹ so simplistically, *atonement* makes us “at one” with God. On an interpersonal level, people frequently seek out atonement by struggling to right wrongs or earning back lost trust. Similarly, Hosea 1–3 depicts God as a husband yearning for reconciliation, for atonement with His beloved people. However, as a theological term, *atonement* must deal with the enormity of human fallenness and sin. As a fundamental force, sin obscures relational unity with God, and any hope of reconciliation rests on an adequate means of atonement, a plan of redemption.

The word is important in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old, atonement is worked out through the sacrificial system, and the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, remains the holiest day of the Jewish calendar even today. Frequently in the Old Testament, the term translated *atonement* is *kiper*, which denotes a covering over or pacification. *Kiper* can even reference a ransom, the price paid for a life (See Psalm 49:7).

In the New Testament, two primary terms and their cognates convey the notion of atonement. The first, *ilasterion*, is often translated “propitiation,” an appeasing sacrifice. This same term is used in the Septuagint to describe the so-called mercy seat, the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. The second word, *katalagha*, is typically translated “reconciliation,” the restoration of relationship or the removal of hostility.

The New Testament is clear that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” on the cross and that “Christ died for our sins” (2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:3), but the New Testament authors are less clear on exactly **how** the death of Jesus accomplishes the reconciliation of God and humankind. As such, atonement theories have proliferated throughout Christian history. These theories might be grouped into three categories: dynamic, subjective, and objective theories.² Dynamic theories of atonement discuss Jesus’ death as overcoming and declaring victory over the powers of sin and Satan enslaving humanity; these theories focus on God’s work to vanquish sin and death (See Hebrews 2:14–15; Titus 2:14). Subjective theories of atonement consider God’s great display of love in Jesus, a display that might move sinners to sorrow and repentance. These theories focus on God’s selfless love and work within each individual (See Ephesians 5:2). Finally, the objective the-

ories of atonement relay God’s substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus and the satisfaction of His justice through the obedience of Christ. These theories focus on God’s work to exercise His mercy and His justice in concert (See Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24).

Here are a few theories that help illustrate the fullness of atonement imagery in the New Testament. Mark Baker notes five dominant images for the cross consistently used throughout the New Testament: (1) justification in the court of law, (2) redemption in commercial dealings, (3) reconciliation in personal relationships, (4) worship through sacrifice, and (5) a battleground to triumph over evil.³ The atonement of Christ is not one-dimensional, but instead God’s work on the cross is a beautiful tapestry of redemption conveyed through several images and metaphors. The result is renewed relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

According to Stanley Grenz, “We cannot understand the full meaning of the cross of Christ. We can only stand in silence before it, acknowledging its wonder, and submit to its power.”⁴ The reality of Paul’s dictum “He made Him to be sin who knew no sin” is beyond our full comprehension (2 Corinthians 5:21). As preachers, we faithfully proclaim this Gospel of reconciliation, never ceasing to marvel at the limitless awesome wonder of that good news.

Reading the Word

Reading these passages this week will help us understand atonement.

1. Leviticus 16
2. Isaiah 53
3. Romans 3:21-6
4. Romans 5:6-11
5. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
6. Colossians 1:19-20
7. Hebrews 2:9-18
8. Hebrews 9:11-28
9. 1 John 4:7-11
10. Revelation 5:6-14

Leviticus 16 describes the Day of Atonement ceremony. In short, the high priest, wearing simple and clean clothes and having purified himself through ceremonial washing and sacrifices, enters the Holy of Holies to sprinkle sacrificial blood on the mercy seat in the presence of the Lord. Then, a scapegoat is released into the wilderness, bearing the iniquity of the people, as another goat is offered to Yahweh. A Sabbath accompanies these rituals for the people, as the recipients of atonement. “The one who receives expiation is not Yahweh, but Israel: Yahweh is rather the one who acts, in averting the calamitous curse which burdens the community.”⁵ These rituals both cleanse the sanctuary and sanctify the people of God for service in the year ahead.

As referenced above, Paul refers to Jesus as a propitiation in Romans 3, a word used in the Old Testament to refer to the mercy seat, the place of atonement and God’s presence. As the mercy seat of the new covenant, Jesus becomes both the place where and the means by which atonement occurs.⁶ The death of Jesus

God I am saying that while Jesus was dying on Calvary, God was suffering—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When Jesus cried, ‘My God, My God, why...?’ He was letting us know that His death was affecting God in Heaven. The entire Godhead went through something that broke into the community of fellowship they had shared from all eternity. Here, once in the middle of history, the Godhead suffered what it meant for Jesus the Son of God to actually die. God the Father had to see His Son die. God the Son died. God the Holy Spirit experiences that suffering as He identifies with us in grace. This has mystery beyond my comprehension but before which I bow in humble devotion.”⁷

Quote: Charles Spurgeon wrote, “Whilst thou art lying there in the dust turn thine eye to Christ and say, ‘Black as I am, and hell-deserving as I confess myself to be, I believe that Jesus Christ died for the penitent; and inasmuch as He died, He died that the penitent might not die. I believe Thy merits to be great; I believe Thy blood to be efficacious; and more than that, I risk my eternal salvation—and yet it is no risk—I venture my eternal salvation upon the merit of Thy blood. Jesus, I cannot save myself. Cast the skirts of Thy blood-red atonement over me. Come, take me in Thine arms; come, wrap me in Thy crimson vest, and tell me I am Thine. I will trust in nothing else but Thee. Nothing I can do or ever did shall be my dependence. I rely simply and entirely upon Thy mighty cross, upon which Thou didst die for sinners.’”⁸

Illustration: In C. S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Aslan, a lion serving as a God-figure in the novels, is killed on an ancient stone table by an evil witch. When he comes back to life, the novel’s protagonists ask him

what his resurrection means. “It means,” said Aslan, “that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards.”⁹ The slain lamb is really the Lion of Judah. On the cross, where death appeared victorious, a deeper “magic” was at work.

Song Suggestions: “Hallelujah, What a Savior!” “To God Be the Glory.”

Song of Encouragement: “Nothing But the Blood.”

¹ Alister McGrath, *Jesus Christ: A Guide for Study and Devotion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014) 80.

² Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) 340-345.

³ Mark D. Baker, *Proclaiming the Scandal of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) 15.

⁴ Grenz 340.

⁵ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2005) 270.

⁶ N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part One* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004) 57.

⁷ Myron S. Augsburger, “Justice in Forgiveness,” *Living Pulpit* 16, no. 2 (2007): 7.

⁸ Charles Spurgeon, “Justice Satisfied,” in *The New Park Street Pulpit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1964) 247.

⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1994) 178.



CRUCIFY

DAN WILLIAMS



Understanding the Word

The word translated in our English language as *crucify* is *stauroó* and means “to fix to the cross.”

In the Old Testament, the word *crucifixion* does not appear, though the details of Psalm 22:1-18 illuminate elements of Christ’s crucifixion in the Gospels. The Law of Moses never prescribes hanging people from a stake or a cross as a means of execution, but instead commands that condemned criminals be executed by stoning (Leviticus 20:2). The Law does permit, however, the public display of a lawbreaker’s body “on a tree,” provided the corpse is removed at the end of the day (Deuteronomy 21:22-23; see John 19:31). This Old Testament background explains why Jesus is said to have been killed “by hanging on a tree” (Acts 5:30, 10:39) and why He is described as having thereby become a “curse” (Galatians 3:13).

In the New Testament, of course, the word appears in all four Gospels as they recount the death of Christ. The word *crucify* would have had horrible connotations for the original hearers of the Gospel, because it refers to an agonizing, humiliating, torturous death. It is designed to create the most painful, prolonged, public execution possible, both as a punishment for the one being executed and as

a warning by the state to the spectators.

Many ancient sources attest to the widespread use of crucifixions by the Roman Empire as a means of suppressing dissent. The Jewish historian Josephus describes a large number of crucifixions that took place in Judea in the first century. The Jews’ familiarity with crucifixions would have made the call of Jesus for His disciples to “take up your cross” (Luke 9:23) all the more striking. It also highlights the callousness of the crowd in crying out “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” (Matthew 27:22-23). The fact that they would insistently clamor for one of their fellow Jews to be so brutally executed by the hated Roman occupiers emphasizes the awful sinfulness of sin.



Reading the Word

Read these passages this week to understand the significance of the word *crucify*.

1. Psalm 22:1-18
2. Matthew 27:19-54
3. John 19:1-30
4. 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5
5. Hebrews 9:11-10:18

The sacrificial death of God’s Son on a cross is so central to our faith that Paul could sum up his message by saying, “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus

Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul does a masterful job in 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5 of demonstrating that “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (vs. 18, NKJV).

In this he follows the example of Jesus, who made it clear in John 3 that the dividing line between the lost and the saved is in their response to His death on the cross. Most people are familiar with John 3:16: “For God so loved the world...,” but fewer pay close attention to the two verses that precede it, where Jesus says, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (NIV). The fact that Jesus references that episode (found in Numbers 21:8-9) demonstrates that from the very beginning of His ministry the Lord is not only aware of how He would die, but also aware of the part His sacrifice on the cross would play in saving souls.

Preaching the Word

Illustration: In 1968, building contractors in East Jerusalem accidentally uncovered an ancient Jewish tomb that contained the remains of Jehohanan, a first-century Jew who had been crucified. An iron nail, with traces of wood on both ends, was still embedded in the right heel of the skeleton. Pictures of the nail-pierced bone (Google “Jehohanan crucifixion”) vividly drive home the horror of a death by crucifixion.

Illustration: One of the privileges enjoyed by Roman citizens is that they were exempt from crucifixion, except in extreme cases of trea-

son. The great Roman orator Cicero said, “To bind a Roman citizen is a crime, to flog him is an abomination, to kill him almost an act of murder: to crucify him is--What? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed.”¹ Later Cicero also commented, “The very word *cross* should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen, but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears.”² Cicero’s revulsion makes us understand why the earliest evangelists, who came preaching a crucified Savior, had such a challenging mission! It also makes us appreciate all the more Paul’s bold declaration, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16; see Luke 9:26, 2 Timothy 1:8).

Illustration: It is revealing that the first surviving visual representation of the crucifixion comes from graffiti found on the wall of a second-century building on the Palatine Hill in Rome that is believed to have been a school for imperial pages. (Google “Alexamenos graffiti”). Scratched on the wall is a crude drawing of a man with the head of a donkey, nailed to a cross. To the left of the cross stands another man, with one arm raised in worship. Scribbled underneath are the words “Alexamenos worships his God.” We sympathize with our young brother Alexamenos, who had to withstand such ridicule for worshipping a crucified man.

Quote: “The fact that a cross became the Christian symbol, and that Christians stubbornly refused, in spite of the ridicule, to discard it in favor of something less offensive, can have only one explanation. It means that the centrality of the cross originated in the mind of Jesus Himself. It was out of loyalty to Him that His followers clung so doggedly to this sign.”³



GOD'S NATURE



SOVEREIGNTY

JAY LOCKHART



Understanding the Word

The English word *sovereignty* is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew term *mamlakhuth* and the New Testament word *basileia*, both words denoting “a kingly reign.” (When used in reference to God, *sovereignty* means the rule, the power, the providence, the choices, the will, and the works of God.) We see God’s sovereignty at work in the lives of His Old Testament people. It is by God’s sovereignty that He makes man in the beginning and when man sins, He judges him (Genesis 1:26–3:24). God’s sovereignty can be seen in His sending the flood in Noah’s day (Genesis 6:1–9:19) and in scattering the people after the tower of Babel incident (Genesis 11:1–9). After Babel, God exercises His sovereignty in choosing Abram, a man living in Ur of the Chaldees in the Mesopotamia valley, and giving him a three-fold promise: a great nation (Israel); a land (Canaan); and a blessing to the world in the person of his descendent (Christ). This would become the greatest promise of the Old Testament because the rest of the Bible after Genesis 12 is the fulfillment of that promise to Abram.

Consider some questions. Of all of those who lived in Mesopotamia in the days of Abram, why did God choose him? No doubt we could give some answers to this question—things like his faith (Genesis 15:6), his worship of the one true God when others around him worshipped

idols (See Joshua 24:2), and his willingness to obey God (Genesis 12:1–4). However, the fact is that God chooses Abraham because He wanted to. And, in His sovereignty, He has the right to do so. Further, why did God choose Isaac over Ishmael? Why Jacob over Esau? Why Israel over other nations? Because He is sovereign and, in His sovereignty, He wanted to. God is sovereign and He can do anything He pleases that is within His nature and will.



Reading the Word

There are many passages of Scripture that emphasize God’s sovereignty. A good place to begin is Psalm 103:19: “The Lord has established His throne in heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.” Continue with Psalm 115:3: “But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases” (NKJV). Other passages emphasize God’s sovereignty. A list of some of them is given below.

1. Joseph says to his brothers who had sold him as a slave into Egypt, “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to...save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20, NKJV).

2. Solomon says, “A man’s heart plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9, NKJV).

Quote: “Instead of causation, the key word for sovereignty is control. God is sovereign in the sense that He is in control of every event that takes place among creatures, whether He actually causes it (which is often the case), or simply permits it to happen (instead of preventing it, which He could do if He so chose). Either way, God is “in charge”; He is in full control over His creation; He is sovereign.”

Song Suggestions: “Majesty,” “We Shall Assemble,” “How Great Is Our God”

Song of Encouragement: “God Will Make a Way”

¹ Zodiates, Spiros, ed. *The Complete Word Study Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002) 2333, and *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament* (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1992) 936.

² C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (Quebec, Canada: Samizdat University Press, 2016) 12.

³ *Today in the Word* (April, 1989) 43.

⁴ Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002) 81.



FATHER

KEITH PARKER



Understanding the Word

The word *father* is used in various ways throughout the Bible. First, it refers to our earthly fathers, our fathers in the flesh, or our dads. For example, the first time that the word appears in Scripture is in Genesis 2:24: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Just like I’m the father of three children, Noah was the father of three (Genesis 6:18-19). We are to honor our fathers so that it may be well with us and so that we can enjoy long life upon the earth (Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-3).

Second, sometimes the word *father* is used in reference to God the Father. The psalmist identifies God as “a father to the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5, NIV). Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed is Your name” (Matthew 6:9). In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus refers to God as our heavenly Father at least 17 different times. Paul writes about the “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). And what kind of Father is He? Gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him (Psalm 103:13, NIV).

Third, the word *father* is used in reference to

the devil. When the Jews say, “The only Father we have is God Himself” (John 8:42), Jesus declares, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on My own; but He sent Me. Why is My language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire” (John 8:42-44, NIV). When a person lives like the devil, he becomes a child of Satan.

Fourth, *father* is used in reference to our ancestors or our family that went before us. On one occasion God says to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you” (Genesis 31:3, NASB). Stephen preaches to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham” (Acts 7:2, NIV).

Fifth, the word is used in reference to religious or spiritual leaders, people of influence. Paul uses it in a positive way when he says, “I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me” (1 Corinthians 4:14-16, NIV). Jesus uses it in a negative way when He says, “And do not call anyone on earth ‘father;’

for you have one Father, and He is in heaven” (Matthew 23:9, NIV).

Reading the Word

Here are some passages that will help us understand this word:

1. Genesis 42–45
(the story of Joseph and his father)
2. Matthew 5–7 (the Sermon on the Mount)
3. John 14–16
4. Ephesians 1–6
5. Hebrews 12:5–11

Since the term *father* appears hundreds of times in Scripture, it is difficult to limit our study to a few passages. But let’s look at the book of Ephesians. The word appears in every chapter of the book.

Here are some things that we learn from Ephesians about the heavenly Father: First, He is called “our Father” because we are His children (1:2). We become His children by faith when we are baptized (Galatians 3:26–27). Second, He is the source of all blessings. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (1:3, NIV). As James says, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17, NIV). Third, we have access to the Father (2:18). Through our Lord Jesus Christ, God is approachable. I can bow my knees and approach Him in prayer (3:14). Fourth, He is the Father of all humanity (4:6). “Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.” Fifth, He deserves our praise and thanksgiving. “Always giving

thanks to God the Father for everything” (5:20, NIV). Because of our Father’s goodness, He deserves our very best.

Here are some things that we learn from Ephesians about our earthly fathers: First, they are to guide and teach us. “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (6:4). This has always been God’s plan for the home (Deuteronomy 6:4–9). Second, our fathers are to be respected, honored, and obeyed. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother” (6:1–2). Again, this has always been the will of God (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Preaching the Word

Illustration: A few years ago, within a period of four months, I lost both of my fathers. In January 2013 my father unexpectedly died, and in May of the same year my father-in-law passed. They both served as elders of the church. They were far from perfect, but they both wanted to be like Jesus on earth and they both wanted to live with Jesus in Heaven. Do I miss them? Every day. Is your father still living? Do yourself a favor. In some way, let him know how much you love him. Don’t let another day pass without telling him of your love and appreciation. I wish that my dads were here so that I could do that. Take it from someone who’s been there— one day it will be too late to say, “Daddy, I love you.”

Idea: Ask for a show of hands from the fathers in the audience. Then ask them this question: Do you want your children to go to Heaven? The answer is obvious. Without a doubt, every dad present deeply desires eternal salvation for his children. If we want that for our

children, don't you know the heavenly Father wants the same for His children? If we want our children to be eternally blessed, don't you know that the heavenly Father desires the same? (See Matthew 7:9-11).

Illustration: A teacher was teaching a Bible class and asked this question: If you were to die, what would happen to you eternally? Forty of the eighty-five students in this Bible class, about fifty percent, gave the answer, "I don't know." We often live with doubts, fears, and uncertainty. But if we could get a glimpse of God our Father and the love that He has for us, we could live with confidence, praise, and assurance. John writes in 1 John 3:1, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God!" (NIV). No wonder John could say in 1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (NIV). If we know 1 John 3:1, we can declare 1 John 5:13.

Quote: "God is our Father, Jesus is our brother, and the blessed Holy Spirit is our guide. The devil is no relation, for we are new creations. We're members of the family of God."¹ Jesus puts it in these words in Matthew 12:50: "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (NIV).

Song Suggestions: "Father," "Father God," "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind."

Song of Encouragement: "May I Call You Father?"

¹ These are lyrics from the children's song "God Is My Father."



CHRIST

DAN WILLIAMS



Understanding the Word

The word *Christ* comes from the Greek word *Christós*, which is itself a translation of the Hebrew *Māšīah*, a word that is transliterated in the KJV as “Messiah.” The literal English meaning of both the Greek and Hebrew words is “the Anointed One.” In various forms the Greek word *Christós* occurs 529 times in the New Testament. By contrast, the Hebrew word “Messiah” appears only twice in the New Testament, and both times (John 1:41; 4:25) it is immediately translated and interpreted by the word *Christ*.

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the term *Christós* is applied to the priests who are anointed with the holy oil, especially the High Priest (See Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16). The prophets are called *hoi christoi Theou*, “the anointed of God,” in Psalm 105:15. The kings of Israel are sometimes termed *christos tou Kuriou*, “the anointed of the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:10, 35; 2 Samuel 1:14; Psalm 2:2; 18:50). On one occasion the term is even used of the Persian king Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1) to indicate that he has been chosen by God to be His instrument of judgment.

While there were thus many “christs” or “anointed ones” in a general sense, Jews in the first century understand that there was only one “The Christ”—the long-promised Messiah

(Luke 7:19). For example, when the Magi (traditionally “Wise Men”) arrive from the east and ask Herod, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” the king calls all the chief priests and teachers of the law together and asks them where the *Christós* is to be born (Matthew 2:4). The chief priests are able to immediately provide Herod with the answer, because one of the Messianic prophecies (Micah 5:2) identifies Bethlehem as the home of the coming Messiah.

The sense of Messianic expectancy in the first century extends even to the Samaritans: the woman at the well says, “I know that Messiah’ (called *Christós*) ‘is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us” (John 4:25; see vs. 29). In the volatile political climate of first-century Palestine there were rebel leaders who took advantage of this expectancy to put themselves forward as the Promised One (See Acts 5:36-37). Jesus Himself warns against imposters claiming to be the *Christós* (Matthew 24:4-5, 23-26).

Jesus is the Messiah, the “Anointed One,” in every Old Testament sense of the word, because he is Prophet, Priest, and King!



Reading the Word

To understand the significance of the title *Christ*, read these passages.

1. Matthew 16:13-20
2. Luke 24:13-27
3. Acts 2:22-36
4. 1 Corinthians 1:18-30
5. Isaiah 53

The term *Christ* is often misunderstood by modern readers as Jesus' last name, but if He had possessed an American Express credit card, it would have read "Jesus of Nazareth" (Matthew 26:71; Mark 1:24; 10:47; Luke 18:37; 24:19; John 18:7; Acts 2:22), which is what Pilate had posted above Jesus' head on the cross (John 19:19).

In reality *Christ* was originally a title: Jesus the Christ/the Messiah. Outside of Judaism, however, the word *Messiah* was unintelligible as a title, and when the Gospel spread into the Roman world, *Christós* quickly became understood by Gentiles as a name for Jesus. It is significant that the word *Christianós* (*Christianós*) is initially applied to followers of Jesus at Antioch (Acts 11:26), the first predominantly Gentile church.

Preaching The Word

Sermon Idea: We often hear news reports of national surveys, but how many of us have actually received a phone call asking us to participate in a survey? [Ask for a show of hands.] It is important to remember that surveys report *opinions*, but they do not always establish *facts*. For example, take the question of Jesus in Matthew 16:13: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" This informal survey generated several opinions: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. All those answers share three characteristics: 1. All

are notable prophets, 2. All the individuals so named are dead, 3. All the answers are wrong! Jesus is not satisfied with receiving a report of the opinion of the crowds. Instead, He presses His disciples for their personal response (as He still does today). It is Simon Peter who recognizes the correct answer and makes a leap of faith, saying, "You are the *Christós*, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Jesus endorses Peter's confession of faith with three observations that remain true today: 1. Recognizing the identity of Jesus as the *Christós* brings a blessing, 2. It is the appropriate response to the revelation of God, 3. The confession of Jesus as the Christ forms the foundation for the church (See 1 Timothy 6:12).

Illustration: We live in a society that is increasingly unaware of basic Biblical doctrine. One sign of this Biblical illiteracy is confusion about the nature of Jesus Christ Himself. When the Barna group surveyed unchurched Americans, just half of them had a strong opinion about Jesus one way or the other. Three out of ten strongly agreed with the statement, "When He lived on earth, Jesus Christ was human and committed sins, like other people do."¹ The clear statement of Scripture is that Jesus was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15; see John 8:46).

Illustration: Just as there were mistaken concepts of the Christ in the first century, there is abundant confusion in the twenty-first century about His identity. Philip Yancey notes, "If you peruse the academic books available at a seminary bookstore, you may encounter Jesus as a political revolutionary, as a magician who married Mary Magdalene, as a Galilean charismatic, a rabbi, a peasant Jewish cynic, a Pharisee, an anti-Pharisee Essene, an eschatological prophet, a 'hippie in a world of Augustan

yuppies; and as the hallucinogenic leader of a sacred mushroom cult.”²

Sermon Idea: The central importance of this week’s word may be seen in the post-resurrection messages of Jesus in Luke 24. He meets two downcast disciples on the road to Emmaus, but they are somehow kept from recognizing Jesus (vs. 13-16). When the Lord asks them why they are so sad, they express their disappointment over the death of Jesus, explaining, “We had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (vs. 21). The two disciples relate the initial reports of Jesus’ resurrection, news they clearly do not believe (vs. 22-24). Jesus responds to their gloomy state with an emphatic rebuke: “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the *Christós* have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself” (vs. 25-26).

In a subsequent appearance to the disciples in the same chapter, Jesus has a similar message: “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then He opens their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He tells them, “This is what is written: The *Christós* will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:44-47).

These episodes suggest three essential facts about Jesus: 1. Their conceptions of the Christ are fundamentally wrong, and they are slow to recognize the nature of Messiahship. 2. They

could have, and should have, understood the nature of the Messiah, however, from the many prophecies throughout the Old Testament that speak of the coming Christ. 3. What they fail to understand is that the Promised One would be a *suffering* Messiah (See Isaiah 53). The cross of the Christ continues to be a stumbling block to many today (1 Corinthians 1:18-23) because it convicts people of the sinfulness of their sins and reminds them of their spiritual helplessness.

Quote: “If it had been widely spread around that Jesus was the Messiah, quite certainly the populace would have read their own meaning into that term; and quite certainly that would have been a nationalistic meaning.... There was no more explosive and inflammable country in the world than Palestine. If Jesus had publicly claimed to be Messiah, nothing could have stopped a useless flood tide of slaughter. Before Jesus could openly make any claim to Messiahship, it was absolutely necessary that He should lead men to see what Messiahship meant. He must teach them a Messiahship whose only power was sacrificial love; He must show them a picture of a Messiah whose reign was in the hearts of men, a Messiah who reigned from a cross.”³

Song Suggestions: “Fairest Lord Jesus,” “In Christ Alone,” “Before the Throne.”

Song of Encouragement: “Live for Jesus.”

¹ George Barna and David Kinnaman, *Churchless* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 68.

² Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 19.

³ William Barclay, *Jesus as They Saw Him* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 158-159.

HOLY SPIRIT

JEFF JENKINS



Understanding the Word

The question has never been, "Is the Spirit real?" or "Does the Spirit exist?" Every serious Bible student believes that the Spirit has been an active part of the Godhead in the creation and the transmission of the Word of God, as well as other areas. The point of contention in our day often revolves around questions such as "Does the Spirit indwell Christians?" "How does the Spirit indwell the people of God?" and "Does the Spirit do anything for us?"

While the words Holy Spirit occur only three times in the Old Testament (Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10, 11), the fact that the Spirit of God was working and active during those ancient times is evident. The word most often used for Spirit in the Old Testament is the word *ruach*. This word for *spirit* appears nearly 400 times in the pages of the Old Testament.

It is translated *spirit* 232 times. *Ruach* is also translated "wind" (92 times), and "breath" (27 times). The root word means "breath." It carries within it the idea of life. The context of Scripture shows us that when this term refers to the Spirit of God, the idea is the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, coequal, co-eternal with the Father and the Son.

The New Testament word for *spirit* that we are emphasizing in this study is the word *pneuma*.

It occurs 385 times in our Bible. In addition to being used to refer to the Holy Spirit, it also relates to the human spirit, evil spirits, and just the general idea of spirit.

Strong's Concordance offers the following breakdown of how *pneuma* is used in Scripture: Spirit (111x), Holy Ghost (89x), Spirit [of God] (13x), Spirit [of the Lord] (5x), [My] Spirit (3x), Spirit [of truth] (3x), Spirit [of Christ] (2x), human [spirit] (49x), [evil] spirit (47x), spirit [general] (26x), spirit (8x), [Jesus' own] spirit (6x), [Jesus' own] ghost (2x), misc. (21x).

In reference to the Holy Spirit, our word is sometimes used to emphasize the personality and character of the Spirit. At times, it is used to emphasize the power and work of the Holy Spirit.



Reading the Word

1. Genesis 1:1-2
2. Romans 8:9
3. 1 Samuel 16:13-14
4. Acts 8:14-22
5. Ephesians 4:30

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2). The

Preaching the Word

Introduction to sermon idea: G. C. Brewer, an excellent Bible student, and a great Gospel preacher, said there were four reasons why people wanted to study what is often referred to as “the sin against the Holy Spirit”: 1. some fear they have been guilty of it, 2. some because of curiosity, 3. some because they have a pet theory to advance concerning it, and 4. some so they can commit every other sin except this one!

Illustration: “This writer still recalls an incident of many years ago, in which a man struck himself in the breast and said, ‘I would not give what I feel right here for all the Bibles on earth.’ He interpreted that ‘feeling’ as the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit to him that he was a redeemed child of God, despite the fact that he was a known sinner in that community, who had never confessed the Lord, had never been baptized, and did not honor a church of any name with his membership!” (Illustration from Burton Coffman discussing “the witness of the Holy Spirit” in *Commentary on Romans* 8).¹

Quote: “A Personal Entity—There is considerable confusion in some segments of ‘Christendom’ over the nature of the Holy Spirit. Some have robbed him of his very personality. The Watchtower cult alleges that the Spirit is merely the ‘active force’ of God, not a person. Mary Baker Eddy, of ‘Christian Science’ fame, contended that ‘Spirit’ is a synonym for ‘Divine Science.’ Parley Pratt, one of Mormonism’s original ‘apostles,’ compared the Spirit to magnetism or electricity. An examination of the evidence reveals that the Holy Spirit is a personal entity, not a mere abstraction.”

Sermon Idea: In a sermon dealing with the “Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit,” after the introduction (see sermon intro idea above), spend some time discussing what the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not: 1. blasphemy in general (Matthew 12:31; 1 Timothy 1:13), 2. murder (the murderers of Christ were forgiven when they repented and were baptized—Acts 2:36-41), 3. adultery (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), 4. backsliding (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20), 5. the state of total apostasy (Hebrews 6:4-6), 6. “a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16), 7. failure to obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9), 8. rejection of God’s final offer to man in the Christian age.

Song Suggestions: “Sweet, Sweet Spirit,” “Love Divine,” “Take Time to Be Holy.”

Song of Encouragement: “Glorify Thy Name.”

¹ James Burton Coffman, “Commentary on Romans 8:4,” *Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*, www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/romans-8.html, (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press) 1983-1999.

² Wayne Jackson, “What Do You Know About the Holy Spirit?” *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: April 21, 2016. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1545-what-do-you-know-about-the-holy-spirit>.

