

An Alternative Pedagogy For Understanding Scripture

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Those of us who have grown up in the church have learned to understand scripture as the repository of inspired truth wherein can be found the answer to life's challenging questions. We have been taught to think of the Bible as a sort of life's "owner's manual." For many, Genesis 1 is the beginning, and Revelation 22 is the end of all inspiration. Minimally, we are taught that the canonized scripture holds a place high above any other inspired writing or teaching. It is true, of course, that scripture is inspired by God, and that body of writing which we have received as sacred canon has stood the test of time and of many challenges throughout history as to its authenticity. We are grateful for the precious inspired truth that can be found in the pages of scripture.

Because of the church system and its teachings, many have set scripture on a pedestal high above all other forms of inspiration; the tendency is to elevate scripture to a place of idolatry,¹ and make it into an object to be revered and studied as an end in itself. This "objectification" of scripture has, over the centuries, resulted in an approach to studying and understanding scripture—a *pedagogy*—that has greatly diminished the power of scripture itself to transform lives, and indeed, to transform the world.

¹ We have written about this in other writings, including [The Spirit of God and Bibliolatry](#), among others, which can be found on the Books and Articles page of www.wordforthebride.net. See also William Law's (1761) [The Power of the Spirit: An Humble, Earnest and Affectionate Address to the Clergy](#).

An Anemic Pedagogy

A pedagogy is nothing more than a method or an approach to studying something. For example, in the years just prior to my entering elementary school, the pedagogy for learning how to spell was rote learning. Children were expected to rote memorize the spelling of the words in a vocabulary list. The result of this approach was a generation of children who would grow into adults that had a difficult time spelling. It is an onerous task to memorize the spelling of thousands of words that will eventually become part of one's vocabulary. By the time that I entered grade school, the pedagogy for learning to spell had changed. Rather than simply memorize the spelling of words, we were taught to sound out the words. There were guidelines taught as to how to translate the sounds of words into correct spelling, as well as rules for spelling such as "*i before e, except after c, or when sounded like a as in neighbor and weigh*" etc. It was much easier to learn a few rules of spelling that could be applied to nearly any word that we encountered, than to have to memorize the spelling of every single word. It was a superior and much more powerful pedagogy that resulted in a generation of much better spellers!

The making of scripture into an object to be studied has resulted in an approach to the written text that, like the old rote method of learning spelling has been cumbersome and has resulted in many "misspellings." Moreover, it is an exercise that fails to produce life—the very thing that the Word of God is and is intended to do! Generally, the pedagogical approach to scripture that most have learned consists generally of the following aspects.

The Goal of Understanding Scripture

Every pedagogy has a goal, and in the case of the pedagogy that most of us have inherited throughout our years in the church, the primary goal of studying scripture is to come to a more complete and accurate understanding of what the writers of scripture intended to convey. This pedagogy requires countless hours engaging in what biblical scholars call *exegesis* and *hermeneutics*. These are related terms that refer to a critical analysis and interpretation of the text. Rules for proper interpretation of scripture have been handed down through the

centuries. There is the “*rule of first use*,” for example, which says that, to understand a particular word or doctrine, we must find the first place in Scripture that word or doctrine is revealed and study that passage. This will give us a more accurate understanding of how to interpret subsequent passages which use that word. There is also the rule of “*context determines meaning*,” which states that to fully and accurately understand the meaning of a statement or truth presented, we must understand the context within which that statement was made, including the background of the writer, as well as the social and cultural circumstances of those to whom a particular letter or address was written or spoken. These are, to be sure, good and valuable rules for accurately understanding what a given scripture means, as it was intended by the inspired writer. The simple point that I am making is that under the present dominant pedagogy for approaching scripture, *understanding the intended meaning (that meaning which was intended by the writer) is the primary purpose of studying scripture*. The assumption is that if we can but accurately discern the original intent of the author, we can then make appropriate application of that scripture to present circumstances.

I would challenge the supposition that understanding the writer’s intended meaning should be the primary goal of studying scripture. Indeed, I might be so bold as to suggest that the intent of the human author—be it Moses, Jeremiah, Matthew, Luke, Paul or any of the other scribes that penned the words of scripture—should be of relatively little consequence if we truly believe the words that they penned were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Rather, we should want to understand God’s purposes for His inspired words *through* these human instruments, and these purposes are as varied as His creation and every generation of people who will have the opportunity to read them. Achieving this goal will require a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Human Reason the Ultimate Basis for Understanding

I would contend that because scripture has been elevated to a place of idolatry, and a replacement for the voice of God, it has come to be regarded by most church people as “the word of God.” Most in the church system have conceded

that this word is the Word that speaks quite apart from the Holy Spirit. That being the case, the scriptures have been objectified as something we must discern and approach with the best available knowledge and tools at our disposal. This, of course, leaves people dependent on the seminary trained pastors and bible-schooled leaders to spoon feed their interpretations of the scriptures based on their best logic and reasoning. While we say that we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in many cases we actually receive that guidance, seeking Holy Spirit enlightenment is not part of the conventional pedagogy, at least as taught in most seminaries. Rather, any moments of Holy Spirit illumination take place *despite* the conventional pedagogy that we have been trained to use. This pedagogy requires, instead, that one must employ proper principles of hermeneutics and exegesis to the written text. These “proper principles” have been developed over time by biblical scholars through much discipline of the mind. They are the best guide to understanding the scripture that human reasoning can offer.

The result of a pedagogy, which ultimately relies on human reasoning, is thousands of competing and contradictory doctrines and denominations which are built upon those doctrines. The “church” has been terribly fractured. Some of the most inane and inconceivable doctrines have emerged from the mind of man using this pedagogy. Elaborate predictive dating schemes have been concocted, for example, as to the timing of the Second Coming of Christ—typically based on the texts in the ninth chapter of Daniel. So far, every one of them has been wrong. All of these schemes, of course, are predicated upon a “premillennial” return of Christ, a debatable doctrine which itself has competing eschatological timing frames of “pretribulation,” “mid-tribulation,” and “post-tribulation” for the return of Christ. All of these competing understandings are the fruit of a pedagogy that relies primarily on strategies of human reasoning. The inevitable result of such competing and contradictory scriptural interpretations is a preoccupation with doctrinal correctness. But which of the many minds of men can be trusted when even the scripture says that the carnal mind is the enemy of God?

Preoccupation with Correctness of Interpretation and Doctrine

I suggested above that the primary goal of the conventional pedagogy for understanding scripture is to come to an accurate understanding of what the original writers were attempting to convey. Hence, the overriding preoccupation with theologians and biblical experts is with “correct” doctrine. The path to correct doctrine is in refining the techniques of hermeneutics and exegesis, as well as honing linguistic skills in ancient Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic languages. All of these strategies involve discipline of the natural mind in order to come to a more accurate interpretation of scripture. Generally speaking, the expert with the most and highest degrees behind his or her name is more likely to be recognized as an authority in their area of biblical studies; greater weight is usually placed on their interpretation as correct than, say, an uneducated man or woman, regardless of the fact that this man or woman has a much more intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. Because such scholarship is the product of natural human reasoning, it is not surprising that many contending, conflicting and contradictory interpretations are provided for any given passage of scripture. The layman, who simply wants to know what this scripture means, and especially what it means for his or her life, is often left in a state of confusion, having to then decide which of these “experts” he or she is to believe. Sadly this is because the layman has too often acquiesced to the delusion that it is not their relationship with the Holy Spirit that can be trusted, but rather the minds of greatly learned men who have become the replaced interpreter of Truth for them.

This approach to scripture also tends to place a great deal of importance on *orthodoxy*. That is, there is great hesitancy to deviate from the longstanding interpretations that the early church fathers and great theologians of the past have pronounced in their letters and essays. Often it is the case that these ideas are regarded as authoritative as the original writings of scripture themselves. To deviate from orthodoxy is tantamount to heresy. Indeed, much time and attention is devoted to identifying heresy, an exercise that is not only fruitless in advancing the Kingdom of God, but is actually counterproductive in that it serves only to further divide the body of Christ. There are certainly doctrines that have been put forth which are troubling, even dangerous in where they may lead

followers in their thinking or actions. We need only remember tragedy of some 900 people who committed suicide at the command of Jim Jones, cult leader of *The People's Temple*. It behooves us all to soberly examine any doctrine, whether that doctrine be a radically novel interpretation or highly orthodox. We must examine these doctrines, not through the use of highly sophisticated pedagogical methods of hermeneutics and exegesis, however, but rather by listening closely to the Holy Spirit and the Anointing which teaches us all things, as He bears witness to our spirit as Truth within us...or not.

Practitioners of conventional pedagogy rely heavily on the practice of *apologetics* to then promote what they consider to be the correct interpretation of scripture. *Apologetics* is simply the discipline of defending religious doctrines through systematic argumentation and discourse. Most preachers engage in this practice through their Sunday sermonizing, though some have honed this practice to a science. These apologists have developed their skills of persuasion to a degree that would put many a trial lawyer to shame. Indeed some, such as Lee Strobel² were trained as lawyers—in Strobel's case graduating from the highly prestigious Yale Law School. While the practice of apologetics has achieved a good bit of success in challenging and changing the *belief systems* of people, changing belief systems falls far short of coming into relationship with the Savior of the World. Another approach is required to complete the mission which Jesus of Nazareth commissioned His disciples to do.

Concluding Thoughts on the Conventional Pedagogy

The pedagogy that most of us growing up in the church have inherited is one that almost exclusively emphasizes intellectual knowledge *about* Christ, the Kingdom of God, the return of Christ, water and Spirit baptism or any of a host of other matters that church authorities have deemed to be of theological significance. While there is certainly nothing wrong, in and of itself, to increase our knowledge about God and His purposes, if the pursuit of this knowledge becomes the central focus we will have missed the whole purpose that the witness of scripture is

² Lee Strobel authored the bestselling book, *The Case for Christ* which was highly effective in convincing many otherwise athiests or agnostics of the plausibility of the truth claims of scripture.

intended to accomplish. That purpose is to *know God* (not merely know *about* God), and to *know who we are in Christ*. The problem with this approach to scripture is not so much that it leads to wrong information about God; good hermeneutics should certainly lead to much valuable information. The problem is that it fails to provide a means to *know* God—the very purpose for which the scriptural witness was given. Stated differently, *the life of Christ is not facilitated* by the conventional or orthodox pedagogy for the study of scripture. The experience of all too many of us has been to dutifully read whatever portion of scripture that we have predetermined to read, gather our concordances and commentaries around us to help in correctly interpreting these scriptures, and then to walk away from our study time with perhaps a greater intellectual insight into the meaning of a given passage, but with nothing of His life being stirred within us. Yes, there may be occasional Holy Spirit intrusions which spark life, but these experiences are in spite of our Bible study efforts; this approach to understanding scripture does not facilitate these Holy Spirit encounters.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day had honed the “science” of studying scripture to a degree unparalleled by most biblical scholars today. Anyone debating them on any point in scripture was sure to come out the loser. Anyone, that is, except Jesus. Recall that when Jesus was rebuked and persecuted for healing the man with the infirmity on the Sabbath, he said to His accusers:

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life (John 5:39-40, NKJV).

Jesus knew and proclaimed that simply searching and knowing the scriptures—which the Pharisees had honed to a science—would never result in giving them Life. I would humbly suggest another approach to apprehending scripture which, while it may cause heartburn among theologians and biblical scholars, is more effective for opening the door of our hearts to receive His Life—Life to which these written passages give witness.

A Pneumatological Pedagogy

While a familiarity with the principles of hermeneutics and exegesis, as well as a versatility with biblical research tools such as concordances, commentaries and Bible dictionaries can be valuable for understanding written truths that these recorded words have for us today, those who are called to rule and reign with Christ as His mature sons will find that these conventional tools and methods are not only insufficient but an impediment to unveiling the deep mysteries that our Father wishes to share with those whom He is raising up in this way. We must be willing to leave behind the traditions and the doctrines of men—and the old wineskins which have contained them—in order to embrace the new wineskin to receive the new wine that God is pouring into empty vessels who are ready to carry it.

We need a different pedagogy entirely for approaching scripture. I am calling this a “pneumatological pedagogy.” The word “pneumatological” is an adjective that is derived from two ancient Greek words: *pneuma* and *logos*. *Pneuma* can most directly be translated as “breath” or “spirit.” It is the root word from which we get the word “pneumatic,” referring to air-filled tires, air-powered tools, etc. *Logos* is a Greek word from which are derived English words such as “logic,” “logistics,” etc. *Logos* literally means “word,” and is also used to denote reason or discourse. When combined with other Greek words it denotes “the study of.” *Pneumatological*, therefore, refers to a Spirit-driven approach to study. Hence, my use of the term “pneumatological pedagogy” suggests ***an approach to the study and understanding of scripture that has its origins in and is driven by the Holy Spirit.*** While this pedagogy might make use of some of the conventional tools of biblical study, it is not dependent upon them and, indeed, comes from a different paradigm for understanding the nature of scripture itself.³ There are several important principles to this Spirit-driven pedagogy.

³ I will not be discussing that paradigm at length in this brief article. I would simply suggest that most of evangelical Christianity has raised scripture to a place of idolatry that was never intended by God or, for that matter, the writers of scripture themselves. For further discussion of this, I would refer the reader to the following articles, which can be found on the Books and Articles page of www.wordforthebride.net: [The Spirit of God and Bibliolatry](#); [Law of the Spirit—Higher than the Moral Law](#); and [The Bible, Honky Tonk Music and the Word of God](#),

The Purpose of Scripture

Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the faith, the following bit of wisdom:

All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2Timothy 3:16, KJV).

This was valuable advice given to a young disciple of Paul who was encountering all manner of false and dangerous teachings that were being introduced among those who had come out of paganism under Paul's ministry. The problem is that we have used this verse as a club to attack anyone or any teaching that does not conform to the teaching that we believe to be the "correct" teaching. The correct teaching, of course, is usually understood as that teaching which has been handed down through the years and centuries by the highly trained and educated clergy class. Moreover, this verse has also had the effect of raising scripture to a level of importance that is greater than the Holy Spirit Himself.

Please note the context in which Paul wrote these words to Timothy. He had been warning Timothy that in the days to come there would be men who were lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; who had a form of godliness but who denied the power thereof; and who were ever learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth. These whom Paul was describing were people who took great pleasure in their own high-mindedness and knowledge. They were more concerned about proselytizing their doctrines, beliefs and lifestyles than they were about seeking the Truth. Paul warned Timothy to beware of these, and indeed, from such men to turn away (2 Timothy 3:5).

May I suggest that Paul is advising young Timothy that in the face of all of the false teachings that Timothy would be facing, scripture is a witness to the Life that is to be found in Christ. The purpose of scripture is not to be a basis for developing sophisticated and elaborate doctrines about God or any other matter. Its purpose, rather, is for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that will lead to Life in Christ. Jesus himself makes this crystal clear when He told the Jews who were seeking to kill Him that in all of their study of

the scripture they had missed the entire purpose of such study because they refused to come to Him, who is the source of life (John 5:37-40).

Clearly, the purpose of scripture is to bring us to the Source of Life, which is Christ, who now comes and speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. We must understand this. Our study of scripture should never be for the purpose of becoming more knowledgeable *about* God; nor for learning a code for upright moral lifestyles; nor for learning about the “end times;” nor for learning about any of the multitude of theological questions that might be presented to us. These may be fine things to know, but they are not the purpose of scripture. Its ultimate purpose, rather, is to bring us to Jesus Christ, the Source of Life through its testimony and witness of HIM. As will be emphasized below, this is best realized through listening to and trusting the voice of the Holy Spirit as one’s primary pedagogical tool. After all, when Jesus was preparing His disciples for His earthly departure, He promised them the Holy Spirit. It was not more scripture for them to diligently study that Jesus promised that He would leave after He was gone. Nor was it a set of Bible commentaries. Nor, indeed, was it an increased reasoning capacity to study the scriptures that was His gift. No, what He promised them was the precious Holy Spirit who “*shall teach you all things*” (John 14:26). And so it is that we must develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit, listening closely to His voice within, and seeing with His eyes, as we approach scripture.

Place All Preconceptions of Scripture on the Altar

Several years ago, I was strongly led of the Lord to deliver a word to a brother with whom I was in fellowship at the time. This was an individual who was steeped in legalism and as a consequence continually found himself under great condemnation. The problem was that he was absolutely convinced in the correctness of his interpretation of scripture regarding these matters, and so he inflicted this condemnation on those around him as well. The word that the Lord gave me to speak to him was “Forget everything you ever knew about God.” Quite frankly, I was a bit startled when I heard this, and while I didn’t fully understand it at the time, I knew that he needed a radical paradigm shift in his

understanding of God—a shift from his concept of God as a cruel taskmaster to a God who loved him passionately. His harsh view of God was only reinforced by the lens through which he interpreted scripture. This was a lens that he inherited from his childhood experiences in a legalistically-oriented church. God was calling for him to offer up all of these preconceptions on the altar before the Lord. Indeed, God is calling us all to do the same!

We all have a tendency, when reading scripture (or any other written work), to “read into” that passage with our preconceived ideas of what it is saying or what it means. These are usually ideas that we have been taught by pastors, Sunday school teachers, and previous material that we have read. Those of us coming from a tradition in which hell is taught as a place of eternal damnation, for example, have likely approached the following text with great fear and trepidation:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matthew 5:22; KJV).

We are prone to interpret this passage to mean that if we hold anger toward a brother that God will judge us severely. More than this, however, if we let this anger grow into such a root of bitterness that we regard and call that brother a fool, we are in danger of being cast into an eternal lake of fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. If, however, we can suspend those doctrinal understandings of hell and let the God of love speak to us by His Holy Spirit, we might then come to understand that the hell that Jesus was referring to was a purifying flame—usually painful, to be sure—that God brings to purge out the insidious, wicked anger and offense in our heart that we have toward our brother.

Insofar as we can hold in suspense the traditional understandings of scripture that we have inherited, approaching scripture with more or less a “blank slate” willing to be written upon, we become open for the life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit to apprehend and transform us. Most of us, I am sure, have had that “aha!”

experience when reading a portion of scripture that is confronting us in a way that we had never seen before. These experiences come only as the voices coming from our preconceived ideas are sufficiently muted so as to give room to the fresh voice of the Holy Spirit. These experiences can be maximized as we consciously hold our preconceptions in a suspended state of skepticism. Stated differently, we attempt to take an “agnostic” approach as to the meaning of any given passage of scripture.⁴ We are in this way “becoming as little children,” with an openness to hearing whatever the Holy Spirit may want to share with us through a given passage of scripture.

A Lesson from Science. The importance of disencumbering ourselves from the crusty lens of tradition and past interpretation is brought home by a brief look at the history of the understanding of scientific knowledge. The long-held belief was that scientific knowledge was “cumulative;” that is, that past discoveries and theories are the basis from which to conduct further scientific inquiry, and new discoveries are made which add to the existing body of knowledge. Budding scientists are taught to learn the scientific theories in their area of study and to master the methods of scientific inquiry that have been handed down to them. Using this knowledge and these methods they engage in further scientific inquiry which will then result in further bits of knowledge that are then added to the body of scientific knowledge in any given area of study, and in turn reinforce the preexisting paradigms for understanding the world around us. This “conventional” approach to the study of science is basically what has been adopted by biblical scholars as they rely on past knowledge and methods for the study of scripture. The result is that they add bits of knowledge and insights as to the meaning of any given portion of scripture, but they do not appreciably challenge the dominant theological paradigms in which they operate. Indeed, these efforts serve only to further reinforce these paradigms.

In 1962, a philosopher of science by the name of Thomas Kuhn wrote a paradigm shattering book entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In this explosive work, Kuhn demonstrated that the history of scientific inquiry is *anything but a*

⁴ I am using the term “agnostic” here to simply refer to an approach that is non-committal one way or the other as to the meaning of a particular passage of scripture as one enters into study or meditation.

simple accumulation of knowledge whereby new discoveries build upon existing knowledge that has been passed down through the generations. Rather, Kuhn suggests, new discoveries are made which somehow cannot be explained by the knowledge and theories that have been developed over time. Kuhn refers to these novel discoveries as “anomalies.” These anomalies are often regarded as bad science at first by the purveyors of conventional scientific wisdom. However, over time, other “anomalies” are discovered which do not fit into the conventional scientific paradigm. When enough of these anomalies emerge, a scientific crisis ensues because the old paradigm is no longer tenable under the weight of the accumulation of discoveries that cannot be explained through that lens. A new paradigm is required in order to explain all of the anomalies. Eventually, an entirely new paradigm emerges which explains not only the “unexplainable” discoveries (through the lens of the old paradigm), but accounts for the previous body of knowledge as well. A “paradigm revolution” has taken place.

Kuhn provides the example of the Copernican revolution that took place in the field of astronomy to make his point. The old Ptolemaic paradigm for understanding the universe was that the earth was the center of the universe, and all of the stars—including the sun and the planets—revolved around the earth. Further observations over the centuries, however, exposed problems with this theory as the movement of the planets and stars that were now being more closely observed, was not compatible with the idea that they were revolving around a stationary earth. Attempts were made to explain this and other “anomalies” away, but over time the theory of a stationary earth was simply not tenable. Along came the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus in the mid-16th century with what came to be known as a “heliocentric” theory of the solar system, identifying the sun as the center of our solar system, and the planets—including the earth—revolve around the sun. Copernicus’ theory answered the dilemmas posed by the unexplainable anomalies under the old Ptolemaic paradigm. A paradigm revolution was underway. For this to take place, it was necessary for Copernicus to put aside the established knowledge regarding the

nature of the universe, and see what was taking place through completely new eyes.

This, friends, is what God is now calling us to do as we approach scripture. **We must be willing to relinquish dearly held traditional understandings if we are to receive fully the Life that He has in store for us!** Most, if not all of you reading this article have had the experience of “anomalies” as you have walked this journey of faith. You have been quickened within your spirit by truths which did not seem compatible with past teachings you have been taught. Indeed, these Holy Spirit inspired insights seemed to contradict your understanding of scripture—understanding that was based upon years of indoctrination by the religious system of which you were a part. Your first inclination is to suppress these quickenings, and explain them away as your own imagination, or possibly as having eaten too much pizza the night before! It is very possible, however—even likely—that these are Holy Spirit intrusions designed to shatter the long-held paradigm that you have inherited from the religious traditions of which you were a part. Listen carefully to these quickenings, and carefully discern the Word of God to you with a willingness to abandon even that which you have believed to be absolute truth as you explore what you are hearing within your being. A Copernican-level paradigm shift is about to take place within you!

Listen to the Voice Within as You Read

The primary “study tool” that we must learn to rely upon as we approach any given passage of scripture is the voice of the Holy Spirit. We would do well to throw away all of the commentaries, dictionaries and other tools that we have come to depend upon. These resources may be helpful to provide some historical, cultural and/or linguistic context as we later process what has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. But to rely on these materials “up front” as a primary guide to interpreting scripture can only get in the way of hearing God’s word specifically to us through the Bible.

Listening to the Holy Spirit in our meditations upon scripture will almost certainly require that we also intentionally and consciously “suspend” any previous knowledge or understanding of scriptural passages, as I have suggested above. It

will require coming to a place of quietness before the Lord in our own minds— simply listening and then speaking forth what we hear—and then meditating some more.

Listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit for many of us will involve remembering past experiences and words that we have received in our inner man as we read scriptural passages. My experience has often been that God will show me something in an encounter that I have with someone or some thing, but I cannot fully process it at the time. Somehow, it just doesn't make sense; or possibly it seems to contradict my understanding of scripture. It might even seem like heresy. At these times, I find that I must let these revelations lie dormant until the Lord further reveals His truth regarding the matter. Often, this further revelation will take place as I am directed to a passage of scripture. As I read that passage without the old lens of traditional doctrines that I have been taught, but with an openness to a fresh word from the Holy Spirit, I will remember these experiences and encounters, and His Truth will explode upon me as scripture now takes on new meaning and new Life.

There will, of course, be some rabbit trails that we pursue in this process. This is why so many of us are reluctant to approach scripture without our reinforcements of many study aids. Indeed, many preachers and Bible teachers strongly advocate against such an approach because they do not trust the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. We must, however, trust the ultimate guidance and teaching of the Anointing...Christ within. We must learn to trust that the Holy Spirit will correct any misunderstandings that we might have had, and will even use the rabbit trails to reveal Himself to us and to ultimately accomplish His purposes within us.

Actively Respond to the Truths that are Being Revealed

The pneumatological pedagogy for approaching scripture requires more than merely acquiring intellectual knowledge and insight. It demands a response. Indeed, it is in our response to that which is being revealed to us that scripture comes to life and becomes incarnate within us. Our responses will be varied, and will depend upon many factors. I would suggest three general types of response

to revelation that we receive from the Holy Spirit that might be highly valuable. To be sure, these are valuable responses to revelation that we might receive from any source, not to be limited to that coming out of our reading and meditating upon scripture.

Recording what God has revealed. I have found that keeping a journal of what God is doing and speaking is invaluable. Over the years I have kept journals of significant dreams that I have had. I have also kept a “travel journal” while we were on the road throughout the country on a motorcycle. I was quite diligent in making daily entries, focusing especially on spiritually significant encounters, events and insights. I also keep a general journal in which I make entries only when significant events or encounters take place. The value of journaling goes far beyond recording something for purposes of later recall—though it certainly has that benefit. Many people who journal will later go back and “harvest” their journals, which is to say some months or years later they will reread their journal entries for purposes of listening to what the Holy Spirit might have to say to them with regard to their current circumstances. I have found that an even greater advantage of journaling is that simply the process of writing down those things which are being revealed to us helps to reinforce those revelations and the new understandings that come forth. Educators tell us that there are two modes of learning: *passive* and *active*. *Passive* learning refers simply to the recording (in our mind) and processing of those stimuli which we take in through our senses. Reading is a form of passive learning. *Active* learning, on the other hand, requires some sort of active response to that which we take in. Writing down one’s discoveries or new-found insights is a form of active learning. I would always advise students in my classes to rewrite their lecture notes at their earliest convenience because I knew that the rewriting would reinforce the facts and ideas presented. So it is with journaling the fresh insights that are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit as we read scripture and listen to His voice within. Write in an attitude of prayer, giving the Lord permission to do whatever He will with that revelation.

Sharing with Others. Another form of active learning is to give testimony to what God is doing and saying. In the first place, this forces us to articulate that which

God is speaking. Even more significantly, sharing in this way opens up an opportunity for dialog, which allows the Lord to speak to us through other members of His body. His word to us begins to take on greater substance as we share with others. Often there is a “synergistic” effect when we share that which God has revealed to us; as others in the body of Christ then respond, there is almost a gushing forth of life-giving words among those present. This is one way in which we are growing up into Him, and being fitted together as His corporate body (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Acting Obediently Upon Any Directives. It is often the case when we read and meditate upon scripture in this way, that the Lord will direct us to speak a word to another person, or to engage in some specific act. These acts may be major, significant activities that have the potential to change the direction of our lives; or they may seem insignificant, even foolish in our eyes. They are not foolish. We must develop a keen sense of hearing the Lord on even the seemingly most insignificant of matters, and to act on that Word. We are often reticent to act or speak because we are unsure that this is really the Lord speaking. I would suggest to you that if this is not the Lord speaking, you will find that out soon enough. What is far more important to God, however, is an obedient spirit. This is what pleases God. Acting in obedience to God may surely result in a little egg on your face if you are not hearing Him correctly in a particular instance; but it will be a valuable lesson in learning to discern the voice of God. All of the “mistakes” as well as the “bull’s eyes” are part of the valuable curriculum for true spiritual growth that comes from the Head, as well as learning to wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God—**His** very life which is contained within.

Concluding Thoughts

I have previously shared my concern over how the church in our day has raised scripture to a place of idolatry (see footnotes 1 and 3). I would suggest that this is both a result of, and a cause of an inappropriate pedagogy for understanding scripture. We have approached scripture, and more specifically, correct understanding of scripture, as an end in itself. We approach the study of scripture as we would approach any other subject, whether that be microbiology,

astronomy, music and art appreciation, or, frankly any other piece of literature. Because we have set scripture apart, however, above all other literature, scripture has become elevated to a place of worship beyond what it was ever intended to be. William Law (1761) has called this “bibliolatry.”

We desperately need a different approach to scripture. We need a new pedagogy. What I am proposing here as a “pneumatological pedagogy” is but a humble attempt to broadly outline what a more appropriate approach to scripture might look like. Rather than a correct understanding of scripture as an end in itself, the biblical text is here understood to be but a means to a far greater end—namely an intimate union with the Author of scripture Himself. This greater end can only be achieved as we allow Him to shatter all prior “knowledge” that we have accumulated about Him, and indeed about scripture itself. We let Him be our teacher—not commentaries or Bible dictionaries or a preacher’s sermon notes. As we yield to His teaching through His Spirit within us, scripture is no longer simply an object to be understood, but as with all living epistles including you and I, the author and the Author behind the author becomes a conduit of Life!

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