

# MINISTRY COACHING NETWORK



*Biblical Foundations*





MINISTRY COACHING NETWORK:  
*Biblical Foundations*



Written, Edited and Compiled by  
Doug and Rebecca Friesen, & Phillip Jeske

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[www.icmeurope.org](http://www.icmeurope.org)  
[icmeurope@cs.com](mailto:icmeurope@cs.com)

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# **Biblical Foundations**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Bible Teaching for Church Health**

What are you going to teach in this new church? Are you going to lavish your people with the great theology that you have obtained? Will you give them wisdom from the vast caverns of your mind? Will you bring a topic each week of news worthy current events with a spiritual spin? Will you heal the minds of your city with the great psychological insight of Jung, Freud, Maslow or Pavlov and his salivating dogs? Or will you teach the Bible the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible?

#### **Here are the reasons we need to teach the Bible:**

- It eliminates sermon block forever
- The Bible is a supernatural book. It is God's written revelation to his people given through prepared and selected spokespersons by the process of inspiration.
- The Bible is God's infallible Word and is authoritatively true and is effectual in accomplishing its purpose.
- The Bible manifests unparalleled spiritual worth and a capacity to transform lives.
- The Bible displays both diversity and unity. In terms of diversity, it represents a variety of human authors, different languages, different cultures, and is presented through a variety of literary genre and it comes to us over a vast span of time. The Bible is unified in that it possesses an inherent unity because ultimately it has one divine author.
- The Bible is understandable and it is accessible. It presents a clear message to anyone willing to read it.
- As spiritual descendants of the Great Reformation we accept the sixty-six books of the canon as the entirety of God's written revelation to his people.

**In terms of interpreting the Scripture we affirm the following:**

- Truth and meaning are to be found in the text. We deny that truth and meaning are dependent upon the reader or the interpreter. Meaning is not to be imposed on the text, rather, the reader or interpreter will gain understanding by submitting to the authority of the Bible, applying sound interpretive technique, and heeding the presence of the Holy Spirit who brings understanding through illumination.
- We affirm that a text contains only one meaning, however, in some cases there may be many appropriate applications of a text to life.
- We affirm that proper interpretation must take into account issues of continuity and discontinuity in the relationship between the Testaments. This means that we recognize a promise/fulfillment motif with Jesus Christ being the ultimate fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.

These affirmations regarding the Scripture and its interpretation form the basis on which to place the techniques of sound hermeneutics. It is of utmost importance that interpretive procedures be performed with these core values in mind. It is not enough, however, to merely learn responsible hermeneutical procedures without thinking of applying truth to the lives of God's people.

**When applying truth to God's church:**

- We affirm that the church is in constant need of reformation.
- We affirm that sound theology based on sound hermeneutics is one of the primary means God uses to bring reformation about.
- We affirm that the ideal for the Christian is a synthesis of intellectual excellence and a relational, passionate faith. Whenever reformation has occurred, the Church has been able to achieve something of this synthesis. This synthesis is accomplished through bringing all of life under the authority of God's Word, which is the goal of biblical hermeneutics.

- We affirm that the health of the church depends on its use of the Scriptures. The authority of the Scriptures must be believed and practiced in every aspect of the life of the church. The mission of the church as salt and light is gauged in part by its' use and treatment of the Scriptures.

**A Foundational Perspective**

The Bible was written over a period of approximately fifteen hundred years, it includes at least forty different authors, it reflects a variety of cultures and was originally written in three languages; Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. However, we have affirmed that the Scripture was inspired by one divine author. It is reasonable to assume then, that as we study the Scripture there would emerge a common theme that runs throughout the Bible that provides a foundational or governing principle that shapes our understanding and hermeneutical approach to all the Scripture.

What is the common thread that links the following texts?

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Genesis 49:10    | Revelation 22:3-5  |
| II Samuel 7:16   | Colossians 1:12-13 |
| Psalms 89:3-4    | Matthew 1:1-17     |
| Psalms 132:11-12 | Daniel 2:44        |
| Jeremiah 23:5-6  |                    |

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### **Jesus Preached the Bible**

All of these texts speak of or refer to the establishment of a king whose kingdom will last forever and that king is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When we study the life of Christ in the Gospels we will find that Jesus demonstrates for us how to rightly view the Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, in order for us to interpret it correctly.

In Luke 4:14-21 Jesus is in his home town of Nazareth and on the Sabbath he attends the Synagogue. On this occasion he was the one who stood to read the scroll and he read from the prophet Isaiah. After he finished reading and had rolled up the scroll, he stood before all those who were there and informed them that today this prophecy was fulfilled. Essentially what Jesus says is that the prophet was writing about me. In John 5 Jesus was answering Jews who opposed him and wanted to kill him and in verse 46 he says "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (John 5:46 NIV)

Again, Jesus informs his hearers that what was written in Scripture is about him. Luke records an occasion where Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection and "He said to them , 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." (Luke 24:44 NIV) In this text Jesus description of the writings indicates the whole of the Old Testament and he refers to himself as its fulfillment. These few examples reveal to us how Jesus viewed and interpreted the Scripture.

### **The Apostles Preached the Bible**

We see this pattern reproduced in the Apostles. On the Day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit had come upon those believers who were obediently waiting in Jerusalem, the Apostles stood together in front of the crowd and Peter explained to them the meaning of the events they were witnessing. Peter begins with the Prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32) who foresaw the events of the Day of Pentecost and proclaimed that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (also see Acts 2:21).

Peter, in what amounts to being the first post-ascension Christological confession, explains that the Lord is Jesus of Nazareth. Starting with the Old Testament Peter presents Jesus as the Lord who was crucified and resurrected (Acts 2:22-36). This begins a pattern seen throughout the New Testament of the preachers and writers understanding that the Old Testament ultimately points to the person and work of Jesus Christ. This pattern forms the hermeneutical presupposition of a biblical, therefore Christian, worldview and provides the foundational principle for reading, interpreting and teaching the Scriptures.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

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### **Planning/ Preparing: Historical-Cultural Context**

The person and work of Christ provides a broad, governing context for responsible interpretation. However attention must also be given to the context of the writings. These areas of context include the historical-cultural context of a book and the literary context which pays attention to an authors flow of thought and intended meaning.

The following is a list of questions intended to assist a student of the Word create a mental picture of the real circumstances pertaining to the particular text they are studying.

#### **1. Research the General Historical Context**

- a. Who is the author? What do you know about the author?
- b. Who are the recipients? What do you know about them?
- c. What is the relationship between the author and the recipients?
- d. What is the occasion or purpose of the writing?

#### **2. Research the Historical Background**

- a. Describe the setting of the passage.
- b. What events led up to this point in the passage?
- c. What major trends or events in Israel or other parts of the world have a bearing on this passage? What influence do these trends or events have on the passage?
- d. Are there other Scripture passages connected with the same historical setting? Do these shed light on your passage?

- e. Under what historical conditions did the author write the passage? What perspective might this provide?
- f. Does the passage bring to an end or help the progress of any events or concepts?

### 3. Research the Social Setting

- a. Where do the content or events of the passage fit into society?
- b. What social or civil institutions have a bearing on the passage?
- c. Is the passage directly relevant only to the ancient culture (culturally “bound”) or is it useful and meaningful today?

*A note regarding **Continuity** and **Discontinuity**:*

*Every truth discovered in Scripture is composed of a principle and a practice or application. The principle of a truth is timeless and has practical significance for every age and every culture. The practice or application of a scriptural truth in some cases may be culturally bound. If an application of truth is culturally bound in terms of how it may be presented in the biblical world, it does not mean that the greater principle of truth is culturally bound. Rather, we must be able to discern the true principle presented in Scripture and clearly understand how it can be practiced or applied in the contemporary world in which we live. The question is not whether a text is continuous or discontinuous but what is continuous about the text and what elements may be discontinuous?*

#### 4. Research the Historical Foreground

- a. What events immediately follow your passage?
- b. What ultimately happens to the people, places, things, and concepts of the passage?
- c. Does the passage contain information that is essential to understanding something that occurs or is said later?
- d. Where does the passage fit in the general scope of biblical history?

#### 5. Research the Geographical Setting

- a. In which nation, region, territory, or village do the events or concepts of the passage apply? Does it have national or regional perspective?
- b. Do issues such as climate, topography, and economy play a role?
- c. Is there anything else about the nature of the geography that illuminates the passage's content in some way?

#### 6. Date the Passage

- a. What time period do the events of the passage cover?
- b. When was the passage written? Or if prophetic, when was the prophecy delivered? Has the prophecy been fulfilled or is it yet to be fulfilled?

#### 7. Write a one to two page summary articulating how the information you have gathered helps to illuminate the passage you are studying.

What was the most interesting part of your research? Did anything surprise you?

What questions has your research generated in your mind?

What truths were being communicated to the original audience?

How did these truths practically apply to the original audience?

## Literary Context

Literary context pays particular attention to the meaning of language and the author's flow of thought. Paying attention to words, meaning and flow of thought requires reading with observation.

The following is a list of items and grammatical features to look for when reading attentively:

1. **Repetition of Words** – I John 2:15-17
2. **Contrasts** – Proverbs 14:31; 15:1
3. **Comparisons** – James 3:3-6
4. **Lists** – I John 2:16; Galatians 5:22-23; 5:19-21
5. **Cause and Effect** – Romans 6:23; 12:1; John 3:16
6. **Figures of Speech (FOS)** – Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 40:31
7. **Conjunctions** – and, for, but, therefore, since, because, etc.) Romans 6:23; Colossians 3:12
8. **Verbs** – Ephesians 4:2-3
  - a. Is the verb Active (*Bill **hit** the ball.*)
  - b. Is the verb Passive (*Bill was **hit** by the ball.*)

Example: Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been **raised (passive)** with Christ, **set (active)** your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

  - c. Pay attention to the tense of the verb.
9. **Pronouns** – Ephesians 1:3 (our, us); Philippians 1:27-30

Make sure to accurately identify pronoun references.

Carefully read through the following text paying attention to the different parts of speech and observe how they fit together and create flow of thought.

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*Romans 12:1-2*

*Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy*

*and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of*

*this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve*

*what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**10. General statements leading to Specific references**

Galatians 5:16 (general); 19-21 (sinful nature); 22-23 (live by the Spirit)

**11. Questions and Answers** – Romans 6:1-2

**12. Dialogue** – Mark 2:15 – 3:6; Acts 1

**13. Purpose Statements** – Ephesians 2:10 (to do good works)

**14. Means** (by which something is accomplished) – Romans 8:13; Psalm 119:9

**15. Conditional Clauses** – I John 1:6; 2 Corinthians 5:17

**16. Commands** (Imperatives) – Philippians 2:1-4

**17. Roles** of People/God – Ephesians 5:1-2

18. **Emotional Terms (Tone) –**  
Galatians 4:12-16

Contrast Colossians 3:1-4 with  
Galatians 3:1-4

Read Colossians 3:1-4 and make as many  
observations as you can.

**A Few More Contextual Questions to Consider**

1. What immediately precedes your passage? What immediately follows your passage? Can you trace the author's flow of thought leading up to your passage and immediately following your passage? How does your passage contribute to the author's overall intent?
2. What words or phrases will you need to investigate further? Identify these and perform a word study.

*Remember: The context of a word (phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc.) determines the use of a word. Words may have a range of meanings but they can only mean one thing at a time.*

**Determining the Structure of a Passage**

The structure of a passage is determined by creating a mechanical outline or a sentence diagram of the text. By paying attention to the parts of speech and the flow of thought an outline can be created which provides the basic organizational outline of a sermon or Bible study. The following is an example of how this can be done.

Here is a mechanical outline or a sentence diagram of Colossians 3:1-4 using the NIV text:

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Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,

Set your hearts

on things above,

where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your minds

on things above,

not on earthly things.

For you died, and

your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears,

Then you also will appear with him in glory.

The sentence diagram now becomes your sermon or teaching outline:

Introduction

I. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,

A. Set your hearts

1. on things above,

a. where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

B. Set your minds

1. on things above,

b. not on earthly things.

II. For you died, and

A. your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

III. When Christ, who is your life, appears,

B. Then you also will appear with him in glory.

### **Presenting: Making it relevant**

Once you have your outline, you can then utilize the historical-cultural and literary research to fill in the details and meaning of the text. The big advantage of this hermeneutical method is that the final product is a presentation that is faithful to the text.

The goal is to be a **discoverer** of truth not an **inventor**. Being diligent in employing sound interpretive techniques will help you achieve that for yourself and your hearers.

*“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”*

*(1 Timothy 4:15-16, NIV)*

## **CHAPTER 3**

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### **THINKING THEOLOGICALLY**

#### *An Introduction to Theological Method*

Everyone is a theologian. Some are deliberate about it and some do it by accident. Some do it well and some do it poorly. Most people's theology is shaped by the world, however, there are some whose view of the world is shaped by their theology.

Here is a critical question for the church. Is the church's view of culture shaped by her theological convictions or does the church's capitulation to culture shape her theological convictions? If the church is not being shaped by truth convictions regarding God, Mankind and the world, then what is shaping the church? We live in a time when theologians are not writing the number one selling Christian books and they are not well known and influential. We have gone through a time when television evangelists were the most well known and influential force in evangelicalism but this format has generally lost credibility and mostly arouses suspicion.

The recent shapers of Christian thinking seem to be the writers of fictional novels based on Christian themes. As entertaining and compelling as this might be, fiction is not the stuff on which theological convictions are based. God has given gifts to the church who have been strategically placed to influence and shape the church. These gifts are pastors and teachers who communicate and model truth and instruct people so they become not only hearers but practitioners of God's ways. Pastors, Bible teachers and children's workers are the front line theologians. They are the immediate voice in culture that presents God's plans and values in opposition to the world that either denies God's existence or at least his immediacy. God has placed leaders in key positions to bring His people to a transforming encounter with Truth.

## NOTES

A basic and simplistic definition of *Theology* is the study of God. The very thought of studying God raises many questions. How does one go about studying God? Can a person actually study the supreme being? In approaching the study of God aren't we subject to any presuppositions regarding God's existence and the nature of His being? Are any of our presuppositions reliable? Where do you find resources in order to pursue this study? Is an infinite God even knowable? Why do theologians come to contradictory conclusions? Isn't theology just determined by a person's philosophical view of life? Why are there different kinds of theology? Where does one begin when studying theology? What is the purpose of studying theology? These are just a few of the questions that may come to mind when thinking about the enterprise of doing theology. Judging by the number of theology books that have been published there must be answers to these questions.

It is intimidating to pick up a systematic theology book, usually hundreds of pages long (sometimes systematic theologies are multiple volumes and thousands of pages long), when you consider the time and effort that went into producing such a thing. You likely think to yourself "how did anyone do this?" and "who in the world is going to read it?" Of all the questions that can be asked regarding theology these last two are a good place to start. The first question deals with method: where do you start and what guidelines do you follow? The second addresses purpose: what will be accomplished and is it important or necessary?

For church leaders the question of purpose is critical. If you are a leader in a church you are a *front line theologian*. Another way to look at this is to think of church leaders as the ones who deliver truth at a popular level. The average person in church is not going to spend time reading volumes of theological references and then take the time to figure out how it all applies to their life. God has given the church those who preach and teach the Word of God and therefore are conveyors of His Truth.

It is these gifts to the church who are strategically positioned to heal the breach that has occurred over time between theological belief and Christian living.

### **Theological Method**

The reason that there are a plethora of theological schools of thought rather than an accepted consensus regarding truth is because conclusions are determined by where you start. It must be stated that in this method the *loci* of ultimate truth is God's Word, the Bible. It is the conviction of this writer that truth and meaning are located in the Scripture therefore it is the only suitable epistemological foundation for the task at hand. The following is a suggested model for thinking theologically about questions and issues that are important to God's people:

#### **Step One – Obtain a Working Knowledge.**

*(Prolegomena)*

This includes defining terms, understanding related issues and gaining a perspective on how a particular theological question has been addressed in the past.

#### **Step Two – Observe the Biblical Data (Biblical Theology)**

This step entails study texts from the different parts of Scripture (from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse) in order to become familiar with the biblical data that pertains to the question.

#### **Step Three – Systematically Organize the Biblical Data (Systematic Theology)**

This step includes the formulation of a number of propositional statements that articulate conclusive, biblical truth regarding the question based on careful examination (hermeneutics) of the biblical data.

#### **Step Four – Defend Your Conclusions (Apologetics)**

This includes anticipating objections to your conclusions. These may come from differential historical positions or schools of thought. You will then defend your conclusions against these objections.

#### **Step Five – Apply Your Findings (Practical Theology)**

This step is the one that makes all the work relevant. You will propose how your findings apply to both doctrine (what one should believe and think or not believe and think) and life (what one should do and say or not do and say).

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**Step Six – Personal Reflection**

It is important to take the opportunity to examine the thoughts and questions that may have come up during the course of your study as well as think about ways that this truth applies to your life and ministry.

If you are a pastor, teacher, church planter, youth pastor, Christian education worker, Bible study leader or serve in some other capacity of local church leadership then you carry the awesome responsibility of communicating God's truth at the level where it will have the most impact on the world. After all, it is the people of all ages and backgrounds who attend church weekly who engage with their worlds daily. It is at this level where we must get it right. It is hoped that this suggested method will help you discover God's truth as well as provide a way to think theologically through life's difficult questions.



