

W I N T E R 2 0 0 3 I S S U E N U M B E R 2

# SOLA SCRIPTURA

AFFIRMING THE AUTHENTICITY, ACCURACY, AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Bible Study Is  
Not Enough

Truth That  
Grabs the  
Heart

**Why  
I Believe  
the Bible**

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The pages of Sola Scriptura are designed to be evangelistic and pastoral in nature: evangelistic in that the magazine is dedicated to proclaiming and defending the historic gospel of Jesus Christ; pastoral in that the magazine is committed to equipping and encouraging believers through sound, biblical doctrine.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16)

"In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following." (1 Timothy 4:6)

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3)

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## Someone Else or Ourselves?

*Scott Pierre, Executive Director*

I was recently made aware of the passing of one of the Christian community's dearest members, Mr. Someone Else. Someone's passing has created a vacancy that will be very difficult to fill. Mr. Else had been with us for many years and for every one of those years, he did far more for the Kingdom than most. In fact, Someone usually ended up with a far greater share of the work than the rest of the Christian community. Whenever leadership was mentioned, we looked to this wonderful person for inspiration as well as results: "Someone Else will do it!" we said. Whenever there was a need for one to stand up and defend the Scriptures as an absolute among men, one name was on the tip of everyone's tongue—"Let Someone Else do it." Unfortunately, one person can only do so much. Were the truth known, everybody expected too much of Someone Else. Now Someone is gone and we find ourselves wondering what we are going to do. No longer can we say, "Let Someone Else do it." If it is going to get done, we will have to do it ourselves.

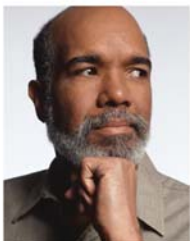
In 1 Timothy, chapter four, we read that we are to let no one look down on our youthfulness but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity show ourselves as an example of those who believe. The word, which is translated "example," is the Greek word *tupos*, meaning "type" or "an impression left." It carries with it the idea that if I walked up to you, and punched you in the eye, it would leave an imprint, a *tupos* (or in plain language, a "black eye"). It is the same word that is used in John 20 when Thomas told the other disciples, who had witnessed the risen Savior, that he would only believe when he saw the *imprint* of the nails in His hands. Think for a moment about those who have been an example to you or have left a positive imprint on your life. Maybe it's a parent, a teacher, a friend or a coach. I would venture to say that all of us could point to at least one person who has influenced our lives in a positive fashion.

At Sola Scriptura, we desire to be an imprint on people's lives. We will not wait for "Someone Else." We have often asked ourselves how we can best impact lives for the

kingdom. What is it going to take to provide a *tupos* for the Christian community? Our answer has come back, over and over again, to this very basic philosophy: affirm the Word of God as authentic, accurate and authoritative. In other words, we must proclaim the Bible as the standard for truth in our world. You see, at no other time in human history has the Word of God been under such attack. We must be willing to stand up and affirm this important truth. As God's Word, the Bible is our authority for living and our standard for truth.

Now how about you? Are you waiting for someone else to lead the way? Don't wait. Join us in this critical endeavor. May we, as a people who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, rise to the occasion within our communities to leave a positive, Christ-centered imprint that will not be forgotten.

In this issue of our magazine you will read about ways to go beyond Bible Study as you seek to know Christ more intimately. You will be encouraged as to just how to reach a new generation, and warned of the potential dangers of Bible translations in a special note on the gender-neutral Bible. Also you will be given some exciting facts about the Word of God that will help you deal with those skeptical friends who may think you are nuts at times. Finally, make sure and read our other regular commentaries and features, all designed to help you become more equipped to be the imprint on someone's life. May God richly bless you and yours this Christmas season as you seek to leave an imprint of Jesus upon those with whom you come in contact. ■



## Supremacy of the Word

■ The first issue of *Sola Scriptura* was a tremendous breath of fresh air to me... As a pastor, the supremacy of God's Word is something I stress as often as I have the chance, and yet I believe, sadly, that even many professing Christians are not comprehending its significance. Spiritual discernment comes in direct proportion to the amount of knowledge that we have of God's Word, and that's why I am thankful for the undertaking of this magazine.

—PASTOR DANIEL WOODRING  
*via Email*

### On target

■ *Sola Scriptura* is an outstanding magazine. The articles hit target on several topics we have discussed in our prayer breakfast.

—BILL SCHMOLL  
*Palm Harbor, Florida*

### Worldview perspective

■ Thank you for publishing this excellent magazine. The nature of postmodernism is a critical issue for the church today... Keep holding up the standard!

—PASTOR DAVID LINN  
*Rochester, New York*

■ I can't thank you enough for the timeliness of your premiere issue. Two of my teenagers have been exposed to the teachings of postmodernism in recent years and I have only now, thru your magazine, been able to grasp the effects this can have on the upcoming generation. My oldest is a freshman in college and in talking with him, I am concerned with some of the so called "knowledge" he is being taught in his humanities class... I'm looking forward to growing and understanding more about God's Word, along with having a resource that will enable me to address some of these issues my teenagers are being exposed to.

—LORI JUSTUS  
*Oxford, Georgia*

### Good, nay: excellent

■ The first issue of *Sola Scriptura* is a winner. I would say the piece on Martin Luther was my favorite because it clarified what was behind Luther's famous stand and declaration... The most hard-hitting was "Why Another Magazine?" I say that because it jolted me out of my comfortable stance regarding "interfaith prayer services." God Bless you—and keep up the good, nay: excellent, work.

—STEVE BLOCH  
*Carmel Valley, California*

### Not our calling

■ There is a spirit of error in the article "Opening Thoughts: Feast or Famine." Christians have no such calling, as you state, "to prevent our nation from a fatal collision." This statement reflects one of the most fundamental misunderstandings plaguing Christendom in our day. The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to improve the world or to change the world. He came to call people out of it! There is no hint in Scripture that Christians are to engage in political activism.

—BILL GAWIN  
*via Email*

### Inspiring and informative

■ I just wanted to take a moment and let you know what an incredible job you have done



with the magazine... It was inspiring, informative and so professionally and aesthetically laid out. I was truly impressed. I loved the articles about Luther and the Martyr's Bible.

—AMY BRADY  
*Orlando, Florida*

### Cover to cover

■ I was so intrigued upon receiving the new magazine that I spent my entire evening enthralled by every word from cover to cover. It's wonderful and I plan to share it with my friends and family. Thank you!

—MICHELLE RANKIN  
*Jackson, Michigan*

■ I received your new magazine two or three days ago and I could not put it down! I read the whole thing in about two hours. The magazine is a great concept.

—RIC HARWOOD  
*Orlando, Florida*


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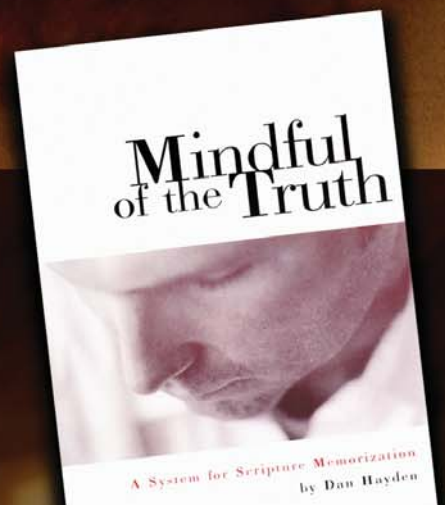
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to send my best friend  
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SOLA SCRIPTURA



# Why I Believe the Bible

By Dr. James MacDonald

**SO** what do you tell people when they ask, “You don’t really believe all that stuff in the Bible, do you?”

The more you rub shoulders with people who have no concept of real Christianity, the more your faith will be challenged, even your sanity questioned.

“You’ve got to be kidding? You’re basing your life on some dusty book written like a million years ago?”

“It’s just a bunch of stories.”

“You think God wrote it?”

“Any thinking person knows the Bible is full of mistakes and contradictions!”

I’m sure you’ve heard these lame excuses and more. Especially if you’ve ever tried to explain your confidence in God’s Word to somebody. Well, you’re not alone.

If you give me a couple minutes of your time, I’ll fill you with some facts about God’s Word that will not only increase your confidence in His book, but also give you some solid answers for your skeptical friends. God told the prophet Isaiah to “Cry out... The grass withers and the flower fades away, but the word of our God shall stand forever” (40:8). That means that long after skeptics are gone, God’s Word will still be standing. Here’s why.

### **The Bible is all that?**

The more I study the Bible, the more I am absolutely convinced that God did write a book. No one can refute that the Bible is the preeminent book in existence. It has traveled more highways, walked more paths, knocked on more doors and spoken to more people in their mother tongue than any book the world *has* ever known, *can* ever know, or *will* ever know.

Let me give you some numbers that blew my mind. One organization alone, Gideon’s International, distributes more than 56 million copies of the Scripture worldwide every year. Do the math—that’s 107 copies a minute. Since 1815 to 1975 2.5 *billion* copies of God’s Word were printed and distributed. No other book comes close in circulation.

Some would say, “Sure, the Bible is a great religious book, but what about the *Koran* or the *Book of Mormon*?” I love what this scholarly dude, Montero Williams (not to be confused with Montel Williams) said about Eastern religion after 42 years of studied comparison with the Bible. He said, “Pile them if you will on the left side of your study table, but place your Bible on the right side by itself alone. For there is a wide gulf between the Bible and the so-called sacred books of the East which cannot be bridged over by any science or religious thought.”

And why do so many people hate God’s Word? No other book has been so burned and banned and outlawed as much as the Bible. From Roman emperors to communist leaders to college professors, everyone seems to take it upon themselves to attack this book. If for no other reason, aren’t you at least curious why *this* book is so hated? I’ll tell you—the Bible

# Why I Believe the Bible

calls people to true accountability before the Creator of the universe and very few of us are willing to submit.

Man will never be able to destroy the Bible because Almighty God wrote it and He is taking care of it. We could go on citing fascinating historical twists and recent archeological finds that prove the Bible's credibility and indestructibility, but let's just say this: when you hold the Bible in your hands, you hold a personal message from the loving and living God. Yes, a loving God, provided we receive His message and choose to take Him seriously.

## Let the Bible speak for itself.

Does the Bible confirm itself to be true? Let's take a moment to consider the facts.

God used 40 different people to write down His Word. Not one or two people, or five or ten. Forty! Some of them were shepherds or farmers. Others were political and religious leaders, even kings. Together these authors lived over a period of 1,500 years. (That's the same amount of time as from the Middle Ages to the present.)

So we have 40 people, all authors of Scripture, from different walks of life, separated by one and a half millennia. Now tell me, how do you get all these people to agree on theology? You can't get four people to decide on where to go for dinner. And these guys wrote on the two things that nobody ever agrees on: religion and politics. Their consistency is nothing short of amazing. How did this happen? These human instruments recorded what the single Author of Scripture told them. I'll say it again—God wrote a book. And it changes people's lives.

Next time you hear a critic say, "the Bible is full of contradictions" just ask them to name one. Most people will be speechless. Even the few who will speak, 99% of their questions can be answered by the following:

**Supposed contradictions of message.** Critics say things like, "the Old Testament says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but in the New Testament it says to turn the other

cheek. Contradiction!" To that you can say, "Jesus totally cleared that up in Matthew 5:38. He changed the program from law to grace." And if they say something that you don't know how to address, offer to get back to them with an answer. Don't cower in silence because you don't have a response at your fingertips. Do your homework and ask your pastor or trusted Bible ministries to help you.

**Supposed contradictions of historical events.** Again, critics may say, "Two places in the Bible tell the same story differently. Contradiction!" Here's a common, big one. "Genesis 1 says that God created man and woman. Genesis 2 says He created man and later created woman out of man." Clearly we are getting a flyby in Genesis 1 and a focused look at one point of creation—man and woman, in chapter 2. More detail, not contradiction. Don't be intimidated into thinking that the Bible doesn't square with itself.

**Supposed contradictions of scientific details.** Did your college professors try to trash the Bible? This is one of their favorites: Joshua tells the story of the day that the sun stood still. Science could prove that if the sun ever stood still, the earth would blow apart. Like a God who could put one hand on the sun and hold it still couldn't put the other hand on the earth and hold it together?

Here's another: Did you know that 2,200 years before Christopher Columbus, God said our planet was circular and not flat? (Isaiah 40:22). Geologists and evolutionists have often challenged the Bible only to be proven wrong. It's almost laughable to think of them trying to figure out God's program. I'm going to stick with what God has said in the matters yet to be verified by science. I'm sure He's not holding His breath waiting to be validated. As if, "whew, they've finally proven I'm real; what a breakthrough!" I don't think so.

**Fulfilled prophecy.** For me, one of the greatest proofs for the Bible's trustworthiness is the fact that things God said would happen... did. The Old Testament is packed with fulfilled prophecies. Written a thousand years before Christ, Isaiah 7 foretold that the Promised One would be a child, born of a virgin (it happened) and that He would establish an eternal kingdom.

Psalms 72 says that the Promised One would be worshipped by shepherds and kings who would bring gifts to Him. ("In the same region there were shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night." Luke 2:8)

Micah 5:2 says that the Promised One would be born in Bethlehem. "That's just a lucky guess," some say. Hardly. Sixty-one prophecies concerning the life of Jesus Christ were

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totality, inerrant in doctrine,  
infallible in authority, immeasur-  
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power, diverse in its unity, and  
infinitely trustworthy.**

written between 500 and 4,000 years before His birth and they all happened. Coincidence? Unbelieving scientists applying the measurement of statistical probability tell us that the chances of just eight of those prophecies being fulfilled is one in  $10^{17}$  or one hundred thousand trillion. This wasn't luck. This was God.

True or false? People who have never read the Bible or have not read it with an open heart think that it's contradictory, outdated, and irrelevant. Like a car repair manual from the 1920's or a computer textbook from the 1950's.

But you and I know differently.

### Okay, let's make it personal.

Have you ever sat under the teaching of God's Word and felt totally convicted? Has the Spirit of God ever used His Word like a knife, pointing out your specific thoughts and motives? I could tell you about times God's Word has worked me over. The real question is are we allowing Scripture to penetrate our lives and change us? If you can say yes, then you know the power I'm talking about.

On the flip side, as you've pondered God's Word have you felt an inexpressible comfort? A peace that transcends understanding? When you were hurting or discouraged, did certain passages become clearer with new insight? Did it strengthen you? Could man have written such a wonderful comfort as this? I don't think so!

I wish you could see what I see from the front of my church every weekend as I teach God's Word. I look across the faces of people gripped by God's eternal truth. Tears stream down their cheeks. Some can hardly look up because they're under the power of the Holy Spirit. Hear this—God's Word is always effective in doing the job that He intended it to do. It never "returns void," Isaiah 55:11 promises. Every time you as a mother or father, pastor, small group leader or children's ministry worker teach Scripture, God says, "You think *you're* speaking, but what is really happening is that *I'm* sending forth My Word."

Why do I believe the Bible? Because I'm convinced beyond any doubt that it is divinely inspired in its totality, inerrant in doctrine, infallible in authority, immeasurable in influence, personal in application, regenerative in power, diverse in its unity, and infinitely trustworthy. Why? Because God wrote it.

Do you sense the immensity of that truth?

This reality not only compels me to celebrate *sola scriptura* but to live it! Are you with me? Starting right now, how about we choose to make a greater personal investment in God's Word? You've got the time—just set your priorities. Commit to read, study, and ponder more of God's timeless message... and then go live it! Make it the passion of your life to discover what it means to delight in the law of the Lord (Psalm 119:77).

And the next time someone asks you, "Why do you believe the Bible?" proclaim your confidence and faith in God and the book He has written by answering, "I am glad you asked..." ■



**Dr. James MacDonald** is the founding pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, IL and radio Bible teacher on *Walk in the Word* ([walkintheword.com](http://walkintheword.com)) which emphasizes the precise exposition of God's Word and its practical life application. James and his wife, Kathy have three children—Luke, Landon, and Abigail—and reside in the north-west suburbs of Chicago.

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# Bible Study Is Not Enough

Avoiding  
the **Ditch**  
of  
Bibliolatry\*

EXAMINING  
JOHN 5:39-40

By  
Dr. Dan Hayden

**W**hen driving, avoiding the ditch is the name of the game. The challenge, though, is that there is a ditch on both sides of the road. Overcompensating from either side will land you in the ditch on the other side—and that's not where you want to be.

The back end of the car was fishtailing. There was new snow on the winding country road, and I was navigating the curve a little too fast. Quickly I steered in the opposite direction to keep the nose of the car straight on the road. The back wheels swung around as I had hoped—but too far. Back and forth I went, like I couldn't make up my mind which way to go. And then it happened as I had hoped it wouldn't. I plowed through a bank of snow and began to tilt into the slope. The car teetered from a moment on the two outside wheels and then flopped on its side. I was in the ditch and off balance.

I looked at my kids, and their eyes were as big as saucers. "Dad," they exclaimed, "What are we gonna do?" We were in the left ditch and the kids were now lying on top of me (that was before seat belts were mandatory).

"Is everyone okay?" I asked.

"I think so," they responded with frightened voices.

**\* idolizing the Bible, Bible worship**

# Those who study the Bible without a living relationship with **Christ** are in the ditch.

We maneuvered ourselves to open the right front door, which was now on top of the car. Climbing out like soldiers exiting the hatch of a tank, we went in search of help. It took two Belgian draft horses with block and tackle anchored to the trees to pull the car out of the ditch. To this day, that curve in the road is known as “Dan’s Ditch.”

Over the years I have observed the Christian community reacting to issues like a driver fishtailing on the road. The usual tendency has been to overcompensate and land in the ditch of one extreme or another. Some land in the left ditch and others land in the right ditch. It doesn’t seem to matter—each is still in the ditch and off balance. Even a set of Belgian draft horses with block and tackle can’t dislodge them. Somehow they have gotten the idea that the ditch is where they ought to be. They simply stand on the road and try to get others to join them in their extreme.

In the days of my seminary experience, Dr. Charles Ryrie was my professor of Theology. To this day I can still hear him repeating the phrase that became the watchword of our studies—“Gentlemen, strive for balance.” Whatever the issue, and in every theological debate, he was concerned that we keep our sense of balance. An extreme reaction is generally not the answer. A balanced response is. Throughout the years of my ministry, I have greatly appreciated Dr. Ryrie’s words of wisdom.

## **THERE IS NO BENEFIT IN THE SCRIPTURES ALONE**

*“You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life...”*

The Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day had a great respect for the Scriptures, but they were in the ditch. In spite of their diligent and serious studies in the Word of God, they had become avid advocates of the letter of the Law and were totally oblivious to its spirit. They had a fixation on letters and words, which blinded them to the bigger picture of Divine intent and meaning. They knew the text, but they didn’t know God.

This was Jesus’ assessment of their situation, and John records the encounter in the fifth chapter of his Gospel. Jesus had just healed a crippled man on the Sabbath, and the Jews were angry at what He had done. From their perspective, healing on the Sabbath was a desecration of the Law of God, and was deserving of the penalty of death. John summarized their reaction by saying, “And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day” (John 5:16—KJV).

Jesus responded to the Jews by giving a defense of who He was, and by what authority He had healed the man. In essence He told them that they were mistaken in their evaluation of what had happened because they didn’t know God and they didn’t know the Scriptures. It was a surprising accusation. These were the teachers of Israel, and Jesus was saying that they were ignorant in the very area in which they prided themselves as having expertise. They were Bible scholars—but they didn’t know the Bible.

In the conclusion of His indictment against the Jews, Jesus challenged them to go back to the Scriptures and observe what they had missed. He said, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life” (John 5:39-40).

Jesus was saying that Bible study is not enough. In other words, there is no value in Bible study if the purpose for which God gave the Bible is neglected. In these verses John records Jesus as saying that the purpose of the Scriptures is to testify of Christ and to lead people to come to Him for life. Therefore, people who seek a relationship with Jesus through the study of God’s Word are on the road of God’s purpose. Those who study the Bible without a living relationship with Christ, on the other hand, are in the ditch. Furthermore, those individuals who try to have a relationship with Christ without a careful study of the Scriptures

have gotten off the road and are in the other ditch.

So, what were the Jews doing? They were studying the Word of God as though the adoration of Scripture was an end in itself. Jesus said to them, “You search the Scripture, because you think that in them you have eternal life...” The Jews’ idea was that if they gave themselves arduously and devotedly to the Scriptures, they would be the recipients of eternal life. That’s what they thought—the Scripture, in and of itself, was the key to life.

Leon Morris, in his commentary on John, quotes Hillel, the celebrated Jewish teacher of Jesus’ day, as saying, “the more study of the Law, the more life... if he has gained for himself words of the Law he has gained for himself life in the world to come.”<sup>1</sup> The Jews were, in fact, so committed to reverencing the very letters of Scripture that they took it to an extreme. Again Leon Morris quotes the great archaeologist, Frederic Kenyon as saying that the Scribes “numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book. They calculated the middle word and the middle letter of each. They enumerated verses which contained all the letters of the alphabet, or a certain number of them.”<sup>2</sup> It was adoration taken to the extreme of veneration. They had

# Bible Study Is Not Enough

turned Bible study into Bible worship, and they were guilty of bibliolatry.

Of course we can be guilty of the same extreme. Bible study can become a substitute for the true worship of God in Christ. A perfunctory approach to devotions, Scripture memory, discipleship, services of worship and Sunday sermons can desensitize us to the importance of a living daily relationship with Christ. We can feel sanctimonious about having put in our time with God, without ever grasping the joy of truly communing with Christ. As John Peter Lange put it, we can “[idolize] the *written book*” while at the same time resisting “the living word contained therein.”<sup>3</sup>

At *Sola Scriptura*, we are seeking to be sensitive to this balance. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was significant for more than just *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). It was equally concerned about the importance of *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), as well as *Sola Fide* (faith alone), *Sola Gratia* (grace alone) and *Soli Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone). To emphasize the importance of Scripture as the source of all truth without also stressing the essential aspect of Christ as the source of all life, is to fall into the ditch. It is to be off balance and to be guilty of bibliolatry.

## SCRIPTURE IS A TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

*“...and it is these that bear witness of Me...”*

The year my wife and I were engaged, we were living eight hundred miles apart. She was in her last year of nursing school in Chicago, and I was working in New York. It was a difficult year emotionally, but we survived the separation by writing a lot of letters. Those letters were very meaningful to me and I read them over and over with great interest. I even memorized the good parts. Nothing meant more to me than those letters because they were from the girl I loved.

Yet my adoration was not focused on the letters, but on my fiancée who had sent them. I was in love with her, not the letters. I pondered every word and I could see her

wonderful personality in the way she wrote. As I read the letters my thoughts were of her, however, and I revered the letters only because they spoke of her. The letters were truly precious to me, but only because they were letters from her.

That is essentially what Jesus was saying to the Jewish leaders concerning the nature of Scripture. “You search the Scriptures,” He said, “...and it is these that bear witness of Me” (v. 39). He was not saying that the Scriptures were unimportant or that the Jews were wrong in revering them. The point He was making is that they were missing the point. They had failed to see the Person behind the letter.

It was not that Jesus was unrecognizable as the One of whom the Scriptures spoke. Moses had written of the ultimate Prophet to come, who would be like him (Deuteronomy 18:15-19), and Philip had recognized that Jesus was that Prophet (John 1:45). Others also saw through His humble peasant garb and infamous Nazareth roots to worship Him as the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God. It’s just that the Jewish leaders had become blinded to who Jesus was, by their diversion into an obsession with the letter of the Law. They had substituted form for substance, and had lost any sense of spiritual meaning. Jesus stood before them as the clear fulfillment of Scripture, and they simply continued to count letters and words.

A Christ-centered study of Scripture is fundamental to a correct understanding of the Bible. Consider the comment of John Calvin on this text. He said,

...We ought to believe that Christ cannot be properly known in any other way than from *the Scriptures*; and if it be so, it follows that we ought to read *the Scriptures* with the express design of finding Christ in them. Whoever shall turn aside from this object, though he may weary himself throughout his whole life in learning, will never attain the knowledge of the truth;...<sup>4</sup>

Any biblical hermeneutic (principles of interpreting the Bible) that does not have at its core a Christocentric focus is merely a mechanical approach to Scripture. The Word of God is “living and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12) because it throbs with the life of Christ. He is the essence of Scripture, and the grand purpose of Scripture is to testify of Him.

When Jesus had a Bible study with two Emmaus disciples after His crucifixion and resurrection, Luke records the event by telling us, “And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things *concerning Himself* in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27, emphasis mine). Later that evening in Jerusalem, Jesus had another Bible study with most of the disciples and a few other believers who were gathered in a private room. Luke again tells us what He said:

Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. (Luke 24:44-45)

The point here is that even the disciples of Jesus did not understand their Old Testament Scriptures until they saw them in a Christocentric light. Neither can we understand our Bible until we see Jesus as the focus and fulfillment of Bible study. To study the Bible without communing with Jesus in the process, is to miss the point of Bible study.

## ONLY IN JESUS IS THERE LIFE

*“...and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.”*

The Jews were serious about their study of the Scriptures. They had a zeal for God which was nothing less than fanatical. Over the years they had gotten the idea that the blessings of the Lord were a reward for diligence in the observance of the externals of

# Avoiding the **Ditch** of Bibliolatry



their religion. The more devoted they were to the laws and rituals of Judaism, the more honor they thought they would receive from God. Consequently, every letter of the Sacred Text became an object of devotion. They had a near-sighted obsession with minutiae. For them, it was the way to God.

This was the background of Jesus' remark when He said to them, "...you think that in them you have eternal life" (v. 39). That is exactly what they thought. But they were mistaken. There is no life in the Scriptures by themselves. Jesus went on to say, "...and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life" (vv. 39-40). Jesus was standing before them as God, but they were willfully refusing to acknowledge Him. What they needed to understand was that they were not only rejecting Him, they were turning their backs on life.

Life comes from God, not from words in a book. Even God's words are only vehicles of communication. The words live because they come from God, who is life. That is the point. Life is in the God of the Word, not in the Word of God. This is not a subtle distinction—it is a basic observation of how things are.

When John wrote his first Epistle, he was careful to conclude with a strong statement of this very truth. As if using an exclamation point, he said,

And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1 John 5:11-12)

This, then, is what Jesus was saying to the Jewish leaders. Scriptures are clear about the fact that life is from God and that eternal life is in the hands of the Son of God. Yet, the Jews had failed to grasp this significant truth. They were ignorant of the Scriptures, and blinded to the fact that the giver of eternal life was in their very midst!

Therefore, they failed to come to Him that they might have life.

Is it possible that we could also be off balance in this regard? Our theology of eternal life may be correct—that salvation is only to be found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Yet, our daily relationship with Christ as the source of all life may be skewed. We can correctly see Him as our ultimate hope and still miss the fact that He is our present joy. We can get caught up in the religion of Christianity and at the same time not have fellowship with Jesus. We can pride ourselves in Bible study and be oblivious to the fact that Jesus is in our midst. We too, can find ourselves in the ditch and off balance.

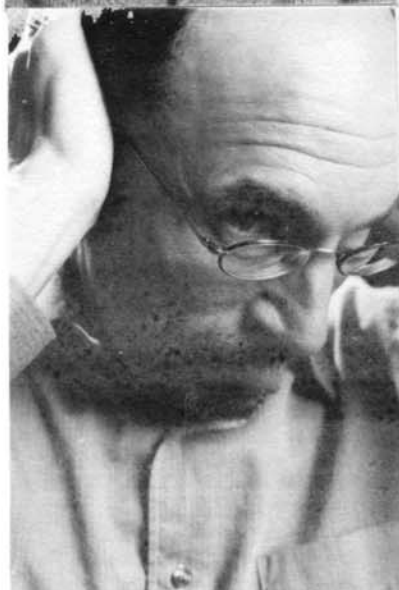
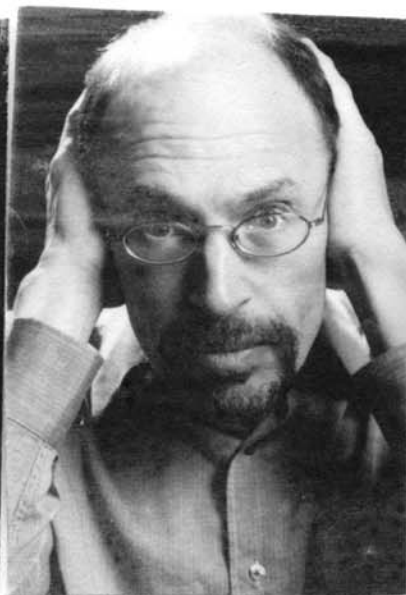
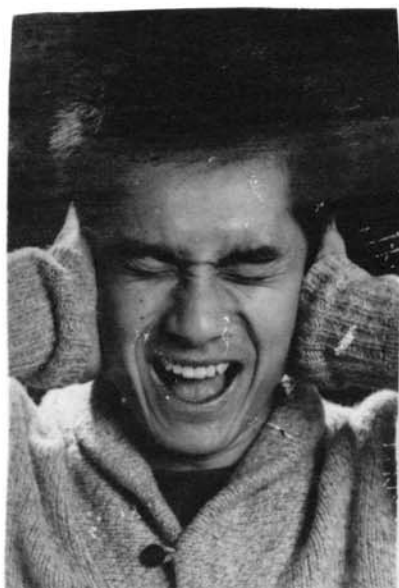
So, with a commitment to *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), how do we avoid the ditch of bibliolatry (worship of the Bible)? The answer is to recognize the equally important truth of *Solus Christus* (Christ alone). In our reading and study of the Bible, we need to worship Jesus and commune with Him. Scripture memory and discipleship studies must be rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Sunday morning sermons need to be listened to with an ear for the voice of Christ that overwhelms the voice of the preacher. We must be equally devoted to both *Sola Scriptura* and *Solus Christus*. We find truth in the Scriptures, but we find life in Christ. Balance is the key. ■

## END NOTES

1. Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament—The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 330.
2. Leon Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 331
3. John Peter Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company), p. 195.
4. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. XVII* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, reprint 1996), p. 218.

Life comes  
from **God**,  
not from  
words in  
a book...

Life is in  
the God of  
the Word,  
not in  
the Word  
of God.



# TRUTH THAT GRABS THE HEART

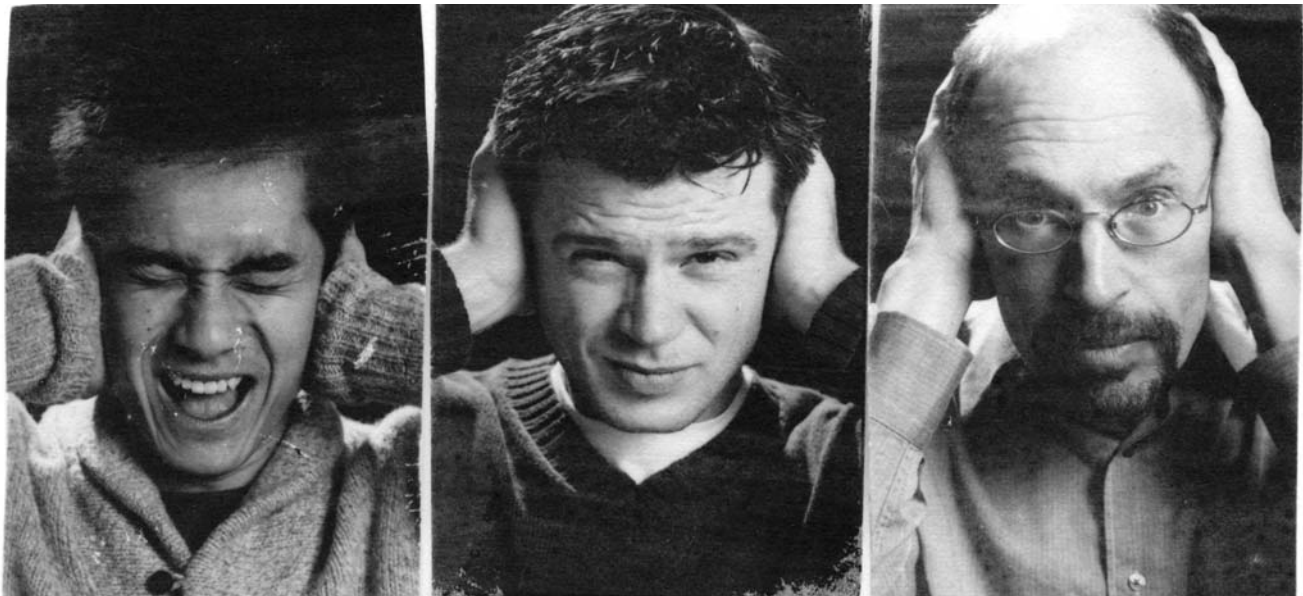
A NEW GENERATION IS DEMANDING  
THAT WE “SHOW” BEFORE WE “TELL”

BY REV. CHARLES COOPER

Jesús Christ never intended for people to experience the gospel message by word alone. It should be no surprise that the mere presentation of scriptural facts does not necessarily sway the current generation and that the days of “cold turkey” presentations of the gospel are, for the most part, gone. To win this generation, the gospel must become incarnate, that is, people must see it in our lives before they will believe it in their hearts. Our testimony must not only reflect truth, but must also reflect our love and compassion. This unbelieving generation is asking believers to present their lives before they present their doctrine.

Perhaps the reason some are so uncomfortable with this new generation is because they are demanding that we “show” before we “tell,” however it is not an uncommon request that they ask for duty (lifestyle) before doctrine (truth). The Christian lifestyle has been a magnet that attracted the world to Christ over the centuries. Many of us have become skilled at delivering the truth by saying all the right words in our gospel presentation, but we would be wise to remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:16: “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” In other words, offer up your life before you open up your mouth. Recognize that there is a compelling reason we must bring consistency between lip and life.

From the day my daughter was born, one of my main goals was to see her trust in Jesus Christ as her personal savior. This should be the desire of every believer who understands the consequences of the lost dying without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The process has not changed for more than 2000 years. Each person must hear the gospel and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the world is making it more and more difficult and, in fact, has changed the process through which the message is shared. According to our new generation, believing is not a matter of knowing something; it is a matter of feeling something. Feel is the four-letter word that characterizes this new generation.



Many attempts to evangelize the lost begin the same way. An evangelist uses the wisdom and logic of Francis Schaffer and C.S. Lewis (two of our best known modern thinkers who taught students how to think logically) in an attempt to persuade a non-believer that Jesus saves sinners. He logically and passionately engages and encourages the unbeliever, guiding him to a logical conclusion based on the information. After a brilliant attack strategy that leaves the unbeliever with no other options, the evangelist presents Jesus Christ as the only logical solution to the tangled emptiness of mankind. So logical, so reasonable, so simple! But his entire strategy is undercut when the unbeliever suddenly ends the conversation with these words, "That's okay for you, but I just don't feel the same way you do." Frustration! Anxiety! Depression! Who said anything about feelings? What do "feelings" have to do with anything?

## We've Come A Long Way

For the last 200 years the unbelieving industrialized West has had the luxury of a single worldview, or way to define reality, with reason and logic as the basis of learning. This period, commonly called the modern era, placed the highest premium on reason. The scientific method sought to discover and repeatedly demonstrate the way things work. Noted British philosopher Bertrand Russell summarized the modern age when he said, "What science cannot tell us, mankind cannot know." Even the gospel presentation was reduced to four spiritual laws (all have sinned, the wages of sin is death, Christ died for your sins, you must believe) with the full expectation that a person would trust Christ as savior once presented with these laws. Many Christians saw "belief" as the logical outcome of a clear presentation of the facts. But in the 1960s, the modern era

began to give way to the postmodern era, and its associated new worldview. Reason is out, experience is in. Logic is out, feelings are in.

To define a few terms, *postmodern* describes the era in which we live. A *postmodernist* is a person that subscribes to the outlook of this era. *Postmodernism* is the outlook that shapes the thinking of many in academic, architectural, and media circles. At its core, postmodernism is the rejection of modernism and its absolute truth, where reason is no longer seen as *the* sole route to gaining knowledge. Rather, knowledge is gained by experience and intuition. Why the change?

In the 1960s youth began to push the envelope. Drugs, sex, and rebellion against authority characterized the day. Forty years later, little has changed in terms of behavior, but there is a world of difference in the thinking that underlies that behavior. Youth do not trust adults. *Priests*, once the symbol of truth and trust, are continually portrayed in the media as liars, thieves, and pedophiles. *Parents*, who are supposed to protect their children, seemingly on a weekly basis are suspected of raping, murdering or abandoning their children. *Politicians*, who make great promises to get the vote, forget and ignore them once elected. *Policemen*, who are supposed to protect the people, are continually captured on videotape venting their frustrations. The *populists*, who cry "the children are our future," have put more than 40 million babies to death over the past 30 years. *Pedagogues* (teachers), who are supposed to teach the truth of our past, proclaim politically correct mantras that clearly contradict both history and common sense. In the eyes of this generation of youth, these, and others like them, are not to be trusted, and if these cannot be trusted, the entire concept of trust and absolutes is called into question.

What Shall We Do?

A recent article in *Christianity Today*, entitled “More Doctrine, Not Less” written by Charles Colson, offers a solution. He is responding to a popular theologian who was heard speaking to a crowd of Christian educators. Colson reports that the theologian said, “Don’t fight postmodernity. Take advantage of it. Express experience over reason, image over words.” In his article, Colson asks the question, “So how do we engage the postmodern mind?” Colson offers two suggestions. First, “post-modernism must be confronted, not accommodated.” This statement can be easily misunderstood. When Colson admonishes us to confront postmodernism he is talking about confronting a system of belief.

Teaching and speaking on college campuses, formal debates, and writing in scholarly journals are avenues to confront post-modernism. However, there is little to gain in attempting to confront individuals. This generation is not interested in debating philosophical or theological issues. Those who have tried will tell you that after a long reasoned presentation of the facts, most will say, “that’s really cool, for you!” In other words, if you want to believe it—great, but for me, “No way!” In the eyes of this generation, truth is in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, confrontation only widens the gap between the generations.

Secondly, Colson exhorts that we “must learn to translate for today’s postmodern.” A look into the world of this generation reveals people very much into spirituality as the effects of the New Age movement, begun in the 1960s, penetrates their thinking. Courses in spirituality and self-actualization have allowed the language of “religion” into everyday use. Terms like “sacrifice,” “spirit,” and “demons” are commonplace, yet with very different meanings than those intended in Scripture. We must therefore clarify what we mean when we use “religious” terms, however this is nothing new. The world has never understood the things of God and never will. Mere translation of jargon will not convince an unbeliever if transformation of the believer’s life is not evident. Using only words to translate other words may result in resistance and further confusion, but the translation of the Bible through holy, righteous living will attract the hungry, hurting, and empty. We must translate an authentic experience of God.

The experience this generation seeks is found in God. John 17:3 declares, “And this is eternal life, that they *know* you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (italics added). This is one of the few places in the New Testament where something is specifically defined. Eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ. The reader should understand that the word “know” in John 17:3 is the same term found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament used in Genesis 4:1, which says, “Now Adam *knew* Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord”” (italics added). The Greek suggests knowledge of an experiential nature is intended. Eternal life concerns an experi-

ential knowledge of God. No human explanation or description of God can compare to the experience of His reality.

We reject postmodernism because it is nothing more than a man-made fad that will soon give way to a new systematic treatment of reality by mankind to explain away God. However, we want to embrace postmodernists because they are watching the priests, parents, politicians, policemen, populists, and pedagogues, looking for that one person willing to offer an authentic relationship reflecting truth, love and compassion. After all, Jesus taught us that the most effective communication of the Gospel is when the Word becomes flesh. ■

An Age of Transitions

THEN	now
modern	postmodern
conceptual	perceptual
being	becoming
product	process
establishment	movement
hierarchy	network
structure-oriented thinking	process-oriented thinking
means	ends
theory	fiction
national	multinational
common sense	intuition
what we know	how we know
“how much we have”	“what we have”
win/lose	win/win
authoritarian/bureaucratic	corporate/charismatic
literalism	multidimensional
system	story
religious	spiritual
“Here I stand”	“This way we walk”

Excerpts from Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic* (Dayton, Ohio: Whaleprints, 1991), 29.

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## The Novum Instrumentum

Dr. Herbert Samworth

In the study of world events, one frequently encounters what is called a “hinge of history.” A hinge, of course, is a device on which things turn. A hinge of history, while an important event itself, often produces far-greater and unforeseen results.

The printing of the Greek New Testament in Basle, Switzerland was such a “hinge of history.” In 1514, after teaching for three years at Cambridge University in England, Erasmus, the greatest Greek scholar of his day, departed for Basle. He went there to supervise a new edition of his *Adages* and to edit the life and letters of Jerome to be printed by Johannes Froben. After completing negotiations with Froben, Erasmus, who rarely stayed in one location for long, departed for the Netherlands in March 1515.

When he had been there for only a month, he received a letter from Beatus Rhenanus, chief editor at the Froben Press, expressing a possible interest in publishing a new translation of the Latin New Testament on which Erasmus had been working. Not wishing to miss such an opportunity, Erasmus quickly gathered together his materials and prepared to return to Basle.

Meanwhile, in Basle and unknown to Erasmus, Froben learned that an edition of the Greek New Testament had been printed in Spain but remained unbound until work was completed on the Old Testament. Knowing that a printed Greek New Testament would have a popular appeal, Froben decided to publish his edition before the Spanish work was finished. However, he needed an editor to prepare the Greek manuscripts for publication.

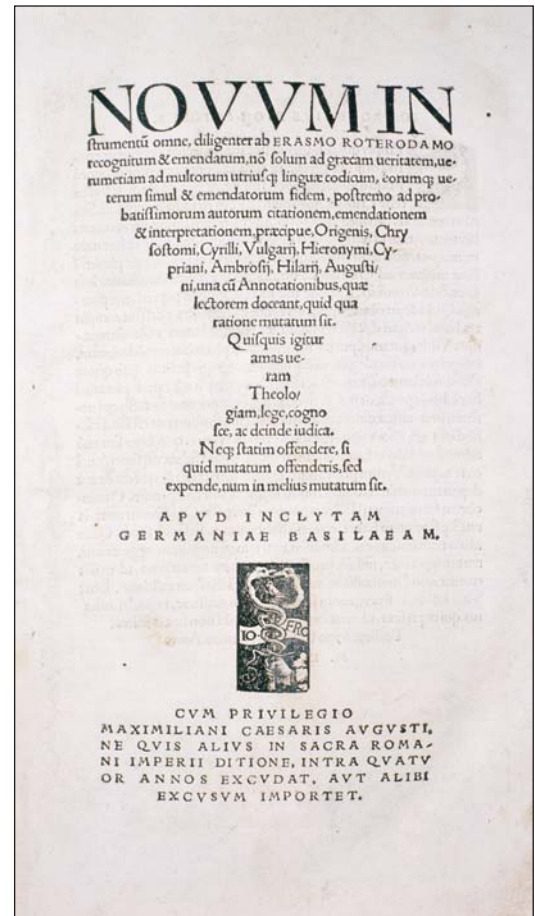
As a result, an agreement was struck between Froben and Erasmus. In return for Erasmus’ work on editing the Greek manuscripts, Froben agreed to print his translation

of the Latin Bible. Time constraints precluded obtaining Greek manuscripts from distant locations, so Erasmus secured ones from a local Dominican monastery. Most of these were dated to the twelfth century.

Working at a feverish pace, Erasmus edited the manuscripts while the printers rushed to put the work into print. Erasmus himself later confessed that the work was “precipitously edited.” It was published in March 1516 under the title *Novum Instrumentum* with the Greek text and Erasmus’ Latin translation printed side by side. In addition to his editorial work, Erasmus included material dealing with textual questions and an introduction exhorting Christians to read the Scriptures. In a shrewd public relations gesture, he dedicated the work to Pope Leo X declaring “the teaching which is our salvation is to be had in a purer form if drawn from the fountain head and actual sources.” This was the first of five editions Erasmus edited of the Greek New Testament. The Van Kampen Collection holds four of these editions: 1516, 1519, 1522, and 1535.

Why was the book given the title *Novum Instrumentum* and what was its importance? *Novum Instrumentum* can be translated into English by the words “the new instrument.” In God’s providence, this book aided the recovery of the knowledge of God and His salvation. The *instrument* was the Word of God itself. Although it was not *new* in the sense that it had just been written, the Scriptures became *new* in men’s hearts and experience.

Did Erasmus foresee the impact that this book would make on the lives of countless



persons? Did the printers in Froben’s establishment realize they were printing for eternity and not just for time? Did Froben understand that his desire for commercial benefit would result in the spiritual benefit of millions? It is probable that none of these men understood the significance of their work and that this book would become a hinge of history on which the entire course of Western Civilization turned. ■

The *Novum Instrumentum* is part of **The Van Kampen Collection**, one of the world’s largest private collections of Bibles, artifacts, and biblical manuscripts in the world. The Collection is the centerpiece of *Sola Scriptura*’s ministry, and is housed at **The Scriptorium**, an interactive museum at **The Holy Land Experience** in Orlando, Florida.

# TRUTH FOR TODAY

## A Contemporary Note

### TNIV Costs Women Their Inheritance

*Why A Gender-Neutral Bible is Too Expensive*

“So you are no longer slaves, but God’s children; and since you are his children, he has made you also heirs.” Galatians 4:7 (TNIV)

Men and women are the same and stand on equal footing in a secular humanistic society. Sadly, those who subscribe to this notion fail to understand the power and justice of God. Making the Bible gender-neutral does not help women; it hurts them. Read the passage again, but this time from the English Standard Version: “So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” Do you notice the difference?

Today’s New International Version (TNIV) New Testament published by the International Bible Society and Zondervan Publishing House attempts to make the Bible politically correct. Gender-neutral translations of the Bible eliminate masculine forms and male connotations in verses that express general truth. This is largely supposed to deal only with the generic “he,” however, as we can see in Galatians 4:7, the translators did not stop with generic “he.” They also replaced the word “son” with “children,” which not only takes a single word and makes it plural, but also attempts to include both men and women in the reference. In making the verse inclusive, the translators sacrificed theology. Under this translation, half



the members of the kingdom of God lose their inheritance.

A search of the Bible reveals that God is rarely spoken of as having sons and daughters. One might conclude that this is merely a cultural convention of an ancient time. However, there is a far more important theological reason behind this biblical custom. In biblical times, if given a choice, one would certainly want to be born male instead of female. Once an adult, sons could exercise all the rights and privileges of sonship. At the father’s death, the first-born son would receive a double portion of the father’s estate. These privileges were denied to a woman for no other reason than her gender.

By using the term “son” in this reference, women are given the same rights and privileges in the kingdom of God as men. If God had used a generic (gender-neutral) reference, women would have been subject to whatever cultural distinc-

tions and differences were popular for the day. In the case of Kingdom inheritance, women would have gotten far less than what the New Testament promises. The fact that women are included in the term “son” is theologically revolutionary. The amazing thing about this Scripture is that, in a time when the distinction between men and women was great, God offered the inheritance of the first-born son to both men and women equally.

Even though today’s culture recognizes that equality of the sexes in these issues is important, changing “son” to “children” in Galatians 4:7, removes the significance that God gives to women and forces Scripture to operate on a human level and not a divine level. The outcome is a return to second-class citizenship for women. To change one little word in the Bible can be an expensive proposition. In this case, it is too expensive. — Charles Cooper

# The Bible

## IN 50 WORDS

God made — Adam bit  
 Noah arked — Abraham split  
 Jacob fooled — Joseph ruled  
 Bush talked — Moses balked  
 Pharaoh plagued — People walked  
 Sea divided — Tablets guided  
 Promise landed  
 Saul freaked — David peeked  
 Prophets warned — Jesus born  
 God walked — Love talked  
 Anger crucified — Hope died  
 Love rose  
 Spirit flamed — Word spread  
 God remained...



### ▲ Noah's Ark—Why seven of some?

*Question:* Most people seem to think that Noah only took two of each kind of land animal on board the Ark—but that's not correct, is it?

*Answer:* No, it certainly isn't. Let's read God's Word... from Genesis, chapter seven, verse two: "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female." Thus God's Word informs us that Noah actually took two of each of the unclean animals, and *seven* of each of the clean. Now why was this necessary? I believe two reasons. First, after the Flood, in Genesis, chapter eight, we read that Noah took one of every clean beast and fowl and offered them as a sacrifice to the Lord. If there were only two each of these—they would've become extinct very quickly! Also, the clean animals are those mostly associated with man for food and clothing. It would make sense that God would have Noah take more of these on board to the new world. By the way, there was plenty of room on this massive Ark for all these animals. It is so important that we read God's Word so we can have *answers*!

Q&A from the ministry of **Answers in Genesis**, Ken Ham, President and Co-Founder. Ken is a speaker, author, and host of the radio program *Answers...*

*Ken Ham.* For additional information and resources, including a free newsletter, go to the Answers in Genesis Web site, [www.answersingenesis.org](http://www.answersingenesis.org).



### ◀ Oh Lord, Direct My Way

When in unfamiliar territory, it's helpful to have a compass to find our way. A fixed point that is consistently reliable is the essential element for getting our bearings. The alternative is to simply wander in circles. That's the experience of those without a compass. God's Word is our compass, and those who use it have a reliable, fixed point when navigating through life. When we trust the Lord, rather than our own sense of direction, by acknowledging the needle of truth on the compass of His Word, He promises to direct our path (Prov. 3:5-6). Divine truth is our true north. It is how we find our way.

## He Pitched His Tent

Dr. Dan Hayden

**H**ave you ever gone camping? You know—taken a tent and sleeping bags to a state park or to a clearing in the woods, or perhaps along the shore of a beautiful lake? Well, that's what God did when He came to earth. In a spiritual sense, He went camping.

The Greek word *skenoo*, used in John 1:14, literally means, “to pitch a tent.” In the Greek language, the word for tent is *skene*, which is the word from which we get our English word “scene.” Early Greek actors used tents as changing booths for their performances, and eventually, when scenic backdrops were used for their plays, the same word was applied to the staging props. Over time, the word *skene* began to be applied to any scenic background, and hence the word “scene” has come down to us with that meaning.

This word *skene* (tent), is the very word used in the New Testament to refer to the Tabernacle of God. If you remember, the Tabernacle was a wooden structure with a tent pitched over the top of it. In the Greek New Testament, therefore, the word translated “Tabernacle” is *skene*—“the tent” (Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:2, 5 and in chapter 9). Hence, when the glory of God descended to the earth and took up residence in the midst of Israel as described in Exodus 40:34-38, it could be said that God “pitched His tent” among men. The writer of the Book of Hebrews calls it, “the true tabernacle (*skene*), which the Lord pitched” (Hebrews 8:2). The glory of God went camping with Israel as Israel wandered in the wilderness.

Years later when the Temple of God was about to be destroyed by the Babylonians, Ezekiel described how the glory of God left the earth and went back to heaven (Ezekiel 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-25). Now, six hundred years

later, God has come back, this time in a new tent, in the body of Jesus Christ—“...and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father...” (John 1:14). There is a tabernacle motif throughout the Gospel of John, and therefore, it is no accident that John introduces Christ with the word *skenoo*. John is saying, “He’s back! God is pitching His tent among us once again. Jesus Christ, who is the Word, *dwelt* (*skenoo*) among us.”

Years ago a friend and I traveled throughout the State of New York on bicycles. We carried a little pup tent along the way. One evening we arrived late at a place called Camp-of-the-Woods, in Spectacular, New York. In the dark, we tried to find a suitable place for our tent, finally pitching it in a clearing on the backside of the camp. That night it rained... hard! Suddenly our tent began to move, slowly at first, then violently as we were carried off in a swelling torrent of water. Unknowingly, we had pitched our tent in a drainage ditch.

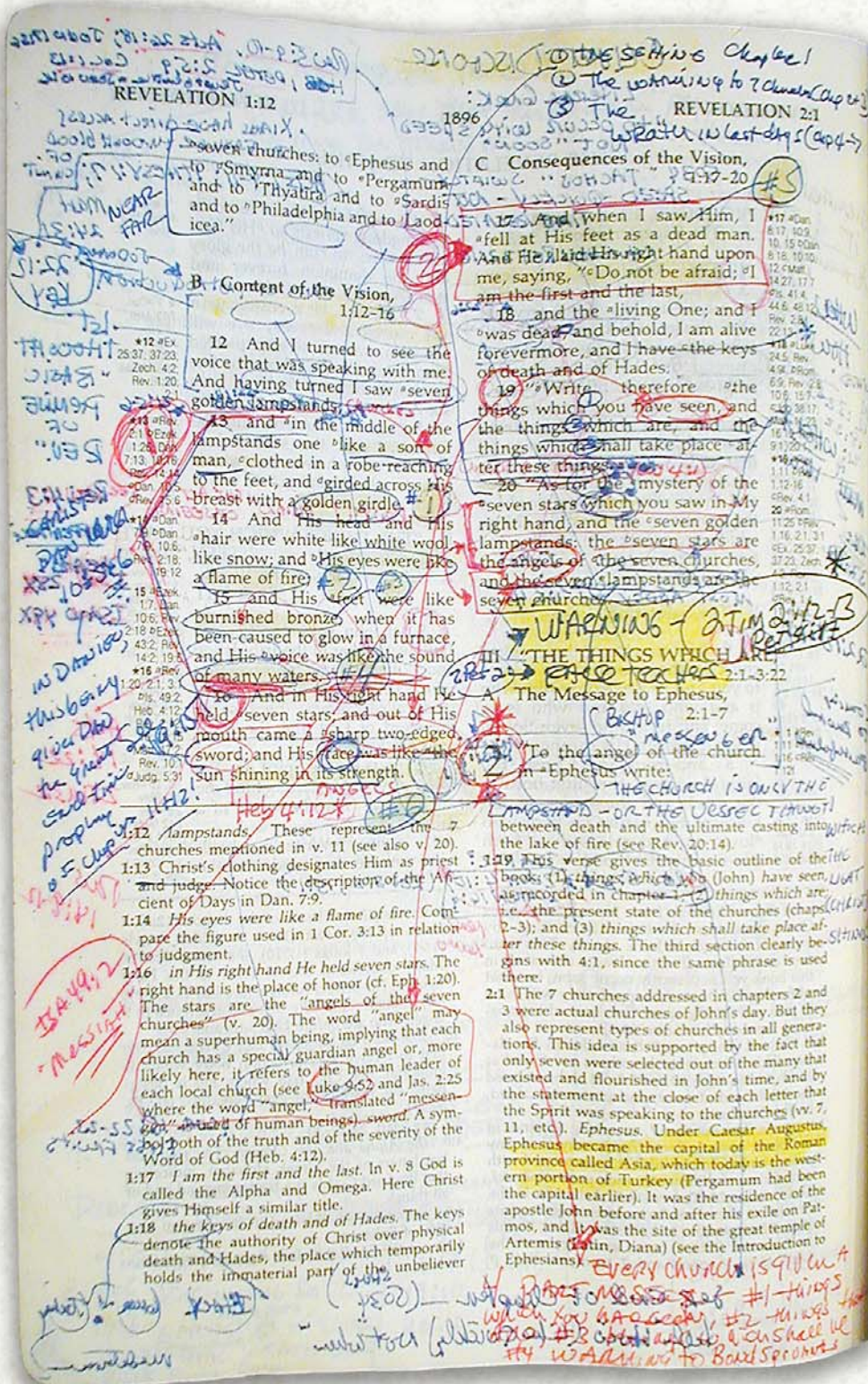
John begins his Gospel by telling us that God in Christ pitched His tent among us. The Gospel ends, however, with a swelling torrent of hostility carrying our Lord off to the cross. There was no surprise in this for Him, however. When He pitched His tent among us, He knew exactly where it would lead Him. He

pitched it purposefully in the very place that would lead to His sacrificial death for our sins.

So that’s the meaning of the word behind the word. “He *dwelt* among us” is *skenoo*—“He pitched his tent.” John describes the birth of Jesus Christ as the pitching of the tent. Then, as in the Tabernacle of old, he takes us to the Brazen Altar to behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). What a story! What a Savior! ■



# FINAL THOUGHTS



"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." - 2 Timothy 2:15

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