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DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY COURSE
AT ROCK SPRINGS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
IN MILNER, GEORGIA

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For the glory of God

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PREFACE

God has blessed me with the joy of serving as a high school Bible teacher at Rock Springs Christian Academy (RSCA). It is my love for teaching the Word of God and helping students at RSCA better understand and apply Scripture that motivated this project on biblical theology. My first course in biblical theology changed how I read Scripture and ignited in me an insatiable desire to know God and his Word. Engaging in the discipline of biblical theology continues to have a transformative influence in my walk with Christ, and I pray it will affect my students in the same way.

With deep gratitude I thank God for the opportunity to study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, an institution with a steadfast commitment to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. The professors and support staff in the Applied Theology and Professional Doctoral offices have invested immensely in my education for the past three years. The completion of this project would not have been possible without their support, and the support of close family members and friends who have invested their time, resources, and energy into helping me arrive at this place, especially my parents, Tim and Debbie Lenard. A personal thank you is due to my advisor, Brian Vickers, whose input was of inestimable value. Additionally, I could not thank my wife, Amelia, enough for her love and the sacrifices she continually makes to enable me to pursue my dreams.

For His Glory!

Caleb Lenard

Altoona, Iowa

May 2022

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Biblical illiteracy is rampant in twenty-first century America, even among the church. One of the key factors of this illiteracy is a lack of training in how to read and interpret Scripture, particularly in the way the Bible itself instructs. Jesus Christ, the living, breathing Word of God (John 1:14; 14:11; Heb 1:2-3), claimed and taught that all of Scripture is about him (Luke 24:44-47; John 5:39-40), and that “he was himself the interpretation of Scripture.”¹ Anyone could make such a claim, but in his resurrection, Jesus justified his hermeneutical claims definitively. Graeme Goldsworthy argues, “The one problem we have in the interpretation of the Bible is the failure to interpret the texts by the definitive event of the gospel.”² Rock Springs Christian Academy desires to combat the issue of biblical illiteracy by equipping students with a greater understanding of biblical theology for their own spiritual growth and witness to the world for the glory of God.

Context

Rock Springs Christian Academy (RSCA) is a non-denominational Christian school in Milner, Georgia. RSCA first opened for classes in the fall of 2006 as a ministry of Rock Springs Church. As of fall 2020, the school has a growing enrollment of close to five hundred students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Since its founding, RSCA has sought to provide a quality education with academic excellence from a Christ-

¹ Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past & Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 54.

² Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 50.

centered and biblically based perspective. The overarching goal of RSCA is to graduate outstanding Christian students who are highly motivated, service-oriented, and well-equipped to embrace the challenges of living for Jesus Christ in the increasingly post-Christian society of today's America. Over the past two years, however, RSCA has sought to bring in new leadership to recapture its original vision that was beginning to slip during the prior administration.

One of the primary initiatives of RSCA, set in 2018, in seeking to hire a new head of school, high school and middle school principal, and high school Bible teacher (myself in the summer of 2020), was to revamp the high school Bible curriculum. Since its founding, RSCA has lacked a solidified sequential high school Bible curriculum. Prior to the 2020-2021 school year, the Bible curriculum stopped after a student's sophomore year. Old and New Testament survey courses were taken in ninth and tenth grades, but outside of weekly chapel services, high school juniors and seniors did not have a required Bible course, or Bible elective classes from which to choose. The rationale was that a student's last two years of high school needed to focus on testing and college preparedness. However, the conviction of RSCA's new hires is that, in a post-modern and increasingly post-Christian culture, students need more of the Word of God, not less.

RSCA's high school needs a more robust Bible curriculum to equip its students more faithfully and adequately in their walk with Christ. A major weakness of the current high school Bible curriculum is its inability to combat the ever-increasing issue of biblical illiteracy. Most students at RSCA come from a variety of evangelical backgrounds and their familiarity with Scripture varies from minimal to quite strong. There is a decent population of non-Christian and unchurched students as well. Even among regenerate believers, many have a convoluted view of Scripture. A large number approach the Bible as a collection of random or independent stories, as a book full of generally wise council, or life's great answer book. Among students who understand themselves to be Christian, few can articulate and have difficulty making sense of the storyline of Scripture and how

it tells one unified story that leads to Christ. Training in a Christocentric hermeneutic is needed as many students struggle to recognize, as James Hamilton puts it, “the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors”³; or, as Michael Lawrence describes, “the reality of a single story emanating from a single Divine mind according to a single divine and sovereign will.”⁴ RSCA’s students lack instruction in and understanding of biblical theology (BT).

Another weakness in the current curriculum is its lack of course offerings. Although the existing curriculum does well in walking students through a survey of the entire Bible over the course of two years, there are not any courses in hermeneutics, theology, or apologetics. The new mission and vision of RSCA to *equip* students with the Word of God, see them *transformed* by the Holy Spirit, and *sent* into the world to live and minister to the glory of God, is hindered by the existing curriculum’s lack of course offerings. Given the rampant biblical illiteracy RSCA is experiencing, there is a significant need to expand the current anemic curriculum to include such courses, particularly in BT. RSCA can begin to address this critical issue of biblical illiteracy amongst its students by expanding its high school Bible curriculum and by using biblical theology as the starting point or foundation to do so.

Finally, there is a need for education in the discipline of BT to establish a Christocentric hermeneutic, given the fundamental disconnect in understanding the story of redemptive history revealed in the Bible, that is, the metanarrative of Scripture. Such a disconnect is concerning, because, as Albert Mohler explains, “The many fronts of Christian compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the

³ James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 15.

⁴ Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 89.

pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches.”⁵ Christian schools could be added to Mohler’s list. RSCA feels a burden to equip its students to recognize and embrace the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God, and to teach its students how to read, interpret, understand, and apply Scripture correctly. The thinness of the current curriculum, however, prevents this from taking place.

Rationale

Since its inception, RSCA has strived to be an effective instrument in the hand of God for the spiritual transformation of students and staff. RSCA, and like schools, are extensions of the local church; they ultimately serve the church. In concert with parents and the local church, RSCA’s aim is to educate young people so they may grow and mature into wise and compassionate Christians who have deep biblical convictions resulting in them maintaining a transforming influence in the world. Presently, the high school Bible curriculum is unable to adequately meet the convictions of RSCA’s leadership and the need for students to receive a more thorough and robust biblical education during their high school years.

RSCA recognizes the necessity for the school’s new high school Bible curriculum to not only be expanded, but to more specifically include instruction in the foundational discipline of BT to combat biblical illiteracy. This task requires teaching students to learn how to see the big picture design of the creator God in his Word, and how each individual passage relates to the entire canon of Scripture. Instruction in BT is foundational for everything else the school teaches as part of its curriculum revitalization because it teaches students to read and understand the Bible how it demands and intends itself to be read so that students can engage with the world more faithfully. Therefore,

⁵ Albert Mohler, “The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It’s Our Problem,” January 20, 2016, <https://albertmohler.com/2016/01/20/the-scandal-of-biblical-illiteracy-its-our-problem-4>.

this project brought BT into the minds, hearts, and hands of the students entrusted to RSCA by God, through the development of a six-lesson course that introduces students to the discipline of BT.

At its core, the course curriculum instructs students in the discipline of learning how to read the Bible as one story written by many human authors, but superintended by one divine author (2 Pet 1:20-21) that culminates in the person and work of Jesus so that every part of Scripture is understood in relation to him.⁶ In other words, the spectacles of BT give clarity of vision to readers of God's Word so that they begin to engage the entire biblical canon as Christian Scripture (2 Tim 3:15-17). Jesus himself attests to the reality that all of Scripture is about him (Luke 24:44-47; John 5:39-40). If disciples of Jesus fail to read Scripture in a way that points them ultimately to him then they have missed the point of the Bible entirely. Equipping students at RSCA with the Christocentric hermeneutic BT offers helps them to correctly understand and apply Scripture to their lives the way the Bible prescribes for accurate, faithful interpretation of itself.⁷

Curriculum development that includes BT aides RSCA in its campaign to see biblical illiteracy among the school populous begin to dissipate through sound and intentional theological training. From BT, as a foundational and mediating discipline, doctrines are formed and find their place, context, legitimacy, and development in redemptive history.⁸

Further, a proper understanding of BT is imperative for the gospel message to make sense. BT pushes students of the Bible into the unfolding drama of God's plan in

⁶ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 26.

⁷ Stephen J. Wellum, "Editorial: Preaching and Teaching the Whole Counsel of God," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 2-3.

⁸ D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 103, Logos Bible Software.

redemptive history to see how the entirety of Scripture points to and culminates in Jesus Christ. This perspective is vital given the fact that not all RSCA students are regenerate believers; souls are at stake. Scripture must be properly taught, faithfully applied, and inform all RSCA does, for only the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, has the power to transform hearts and minds (John 6:63; Rom 8:1-11; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 3:6; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 3:18). Intentional instruction in the discipline of BT helps RSCA in its endeavor to see students burn with a desire to know the God of the Bible for who he truly is and be completely committed to the authority of Scripture and its sufficiency, continually turning first to the Word of God in every circumstance and situation.

This ministry project first served to reinforce the mission and vision of RSCA, but it also sought to be replicable for use by other Christian schools and churches to further the kingdom of God and to bring glory and honor to him.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a high school biblical theology course as part of a curriculum revision at Rock Springs Christian Academy in Milner, Georgia.

Goals

There were several necessary goals for the purpose of this ministry project. These goals reflect a progression of the steps to be taken to grow the students of RSCA in their understanding of biblical theology.

1. The first goal was to assess the initial understanding of biblical theology among high school students at RSCA.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-lesson introductory curriculum in biblical theology.
3. The third goal was to equip students at RSCA with a knowledge base and skill set to apply biblical theology in their reading of Scripture.

A detailed research methodology was constructed to measure the successful completion of the three goals.⁹ This methodology and the instruments used in this project are described in the following section.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project and its effectiveness depended upon the completion of these three goals. The first goal was to assess the initial understanding of biblical theology among high school students at RSCA. This goal was measured by administering a pre-course Biblical Theology Competency Test (BTCT) to tenth grade high school students at RSCA.¹⁰ The pre-course assessment gauged each student's initial understanding and familiarity with the discipline of biblical theology.¹¹ This goal was considered successfully met when the survey had been administered, completed by the students, and the survey data had been analyzed yielding a clearer picture of the current biblical literacy rate among RSCA students.

The second goal was to develop a six-lesson introductory curriculum in biblical theology. This course took place in an academic setting. The course was implemented in a high school classroom as part of RSCA's larger Bible curriculum. The course curriculum was designed to increase the understanding of biblical theology and develop a Christocentric hermeneutic amongst students at RSCA. This goal was measured by an expert panel consisting of one of RSCA's principals and instructional lead teacher, two local church pastors, and one faculty professor of biblical theology who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the

⁹ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

¹¹ Some general background information, church and denominational affiliation, and practice of spiritual disciplines were attained by means of the survey as well.

curriculum.¹² This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, then the material was revised until it met the standard, at which point the curriculum would be adopted by RSCA.

The third goal was to equip students at RSCA with a knowledge base and skill set to apply biblical theology in their reading of Scripture. Two measurements were used to assess this goal. First, this goal was measured by administering the BTCT a second time, within one week of course completion, to measure the change in content knowledge of RSCA students who had taken the course.¹³ This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. A *t*-test for dependent samples, in this context, compared the means from the pre- and post-course survey scores and focused on the differences between the results of each survey.¹⁴ Further, the BTCT as a mixed-methods assessment tool allowed for qualitative analysis of certain open-ended, short answer questions to evaluate student growth in competency in biblical theology.

Additionally, this goal was measured by each student's application of the biblical theology skills learned, through submission of a four to five-page research paper. Each student individually produced a research paper, 4-5 double-spaced pages in length, on a particular passage of Scripture.¹⁵ I completed an evaluation of each student's project.

¹² See appendix 3. RSCA's principal and instructional lead teacher has a master's degree in education. One of the pastors who served on the panel has been in full-time ministry for over twenty years and is a Doctor of Ministry student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The other pastor who evaluated the curriculum is a youth minister and former Christian school Bible teacher pursuing a Master of Divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The faculty member is my doctoral supervisor who is professor of New Testament interpretation and biblical theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and holds a PhD.

¹³ See appendix 1.

¹⁴ Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 189-91.

¹⁵ See appendix 4.

This goal was successfully met when all students had submitted their paper and at least 80 percent of participants met or exceeded the *sufficient* or above level in all skill areas detailed in the evaluation rubric.¹⁶

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Biblical illiteracy. *Biblical illiteracy* refers to a deficiency in knowledge of what the Bible teaches particularly when it comes to the gospel, the storyline of redemptive history, and doctrine. Biblical illiteracy often leads to unbiblical or even heretical beliefs and is an ever-increasing issue in twenty-first century America.¹⁷

Biblical theology. *Biblical theology* is notoriously difficult to define, due to the broad and varying practices within the discipline.¹⁸ Biblical theology, however, may be generally understood as the discipline of reading, interpreting, and applying the biblical text the way Scripture itself teaches (Luke 24:24-27, 44-49; John 5:39-40, 45-46; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:16-21). Simply put, by Michael Lawrence, “biblical theology is the

¹⁶ See appendix 5.

¹⁷ See Lifeway Research, “Discipleship Pathway Assessment—Engaging the Bible National Survey of Protestant Churchgoers,” January 29, 2019, <http://lifewayresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Discipleship-Pathway-2019-Engaging-the-Bible-Release.pdf>; and Barna Research Group, “Six Megathemes Emerge from Barna Group Research in 2010,” December 13, 2010, <https://www.barna.com/research/six-megathemes-emerge-from-barna-group-research-in-2010/>. Further, Gallup and Castelli add, “Americans revere the Bible—but, by and large, they don’t read it. And because they don’t read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates.” George Gallup and Jim Castelli, “Americans and the Bible,” Biblical Archaeology Society Online Archive, June 3, 2018, <https://www.baslibrary.org/bible-review/6/3/18>.

¹⁸ Edward Klink and Darian Lockett offer the five most prominent ways in which biblical theology is defined and practiced today: type 1 (biblical theology as historical description), type 2 (biblical theology as history of redemption), type 3 (biblical theology as worldview-story), type 4 (biblical theology as canonical approach), and type 5 (biblical theology as theological construction). Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 21-25.

attempt to tell the whole story of the Bible as Christian Scripture.”¹⁹ With a little more specificity, Brian Rosner offers another helpful definition:

Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.²⁰

Christocentric hermeneutic. A *Christocentric hermeneutic*, as a method of biblical interpretation, does not hold that all Scripture is the gospel, but rather all Scripture is related to it, because the gospel is the focal point of biblical revelation.²¹ In other words, what preceded Christ in the Old Testament and what comes after him in the New Testament finds its meaning and fulfillment in and through him.²² Essentially, a Christocentric hermeneutic is the product and ultimate skill learned from practicing sound biblical theology. This way of interpreting the Bible examines all of Scripture “through Christian eyes.”²³

Several limitations applied to this project. First, RSCA’s administration has the final authority in determining the appropriate grade level, duration, and implementation of the course. Second, curriculum implementation took place within an eighteen-week, two-quarter semester and included curriculum implementation and post-assessment. The condensed nature of the curriculum into one six-week unit within a single semester was sufficient to introduce students to the discipline of biblical theology because, although this course is vital, it is only one part of RSCA’s larger high school Bible curriculum.

¹⁹ Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 89.

²⁰ Brian S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 10.

²¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 63.

²² Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 50.

²³ Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 55.

Further study of Scripture and implementation of biblical and theological training will continue to take place in other courses.

Several delimitations applied to this project. First, this project took place in a Christian high school as part of a Bible curriculum revitalization. Second, the scope of this project was to implement the developed course more acutely as a key component of the tenth grade Bible curriculum. Restricting the implementation of the course to a single grade level during this project allowed for RSCA to retrieve tangible and manageable data to evaluate the effectiveness of a new course it anticipates being a core part of the overall high school Bible curriculum. Pre-assessment, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and post assessment took place over a fifteen-week period.

Conclusion

The Bible tells its readers how it desires itself to be read, and the interpretive key is Jesus Christ. Biblical theology plays a vital role in combating biblical illiteracy by developing in students a Christocentric hermeneutic. The following chapters give the biblical warrant and defense for these claims and show why and how equipping students at RSCA with such a hermeneutic is imperative for a more faithful, mature, and fruitful reading, interpretation, and application of Scripture.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR TEACHING
A CHRIST-CENTERED BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY HERMENEUTIC

Introduction

This chapter will examine two passages in Luke 24 to establish the biblical and theological warrant for a Christ-centered reading of Scripture. Jesus saw himself and his mission as the focal point of redemptive history and biblical revelation.¹ Thus, he taught his disciples how to read the Scriptures with the reality of his centrality within them.² Luke does not give his readers particular guidelines for how to interpret individual texts of Scripture in recording the words of Jesus, but rather sets a trajectory for how all of Scripture is to be read and understood, that is then further developed by the apostles in their preaching and teaching in the book of Acts (see chap. 3).

¹ Richard Gaffin comments regarding progressive revelation and redemptive history:

The proper focus of interpretation is the subject matter of the text, that is, the *history* with Christ at its center that *lies in back of the text*. With a view to its content, then, a primary and essential qualification of the unity of the Bible is that that unity is redemptive-historical. *The context that ultimately controls the understanding of a given text* is not a literary framework or pattern of relationships but *the historical structure of the revelation* process itself. In the final analysis the analogy of Scripture is the analogy of parts in an historically unfolding and differentiating organism. (Richard Gaffin, "Systematic and Biblical Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 [1975]: 293-94, emphasis original)

² Todd Miles, "What Is Biblical Theology?" class lecture notes for BT502 (Western Seminary, Fall Semester, 2017). Dan Kimball comments, "Jesus had a deep relationship with the Bible, and he saw it as a pointer to him, a story to prepare the world for what he had come to do." Dan Kimball, *How (Not) to Read the Bible: Making Sense of the Anti-Women, Anti-Science, Pro-Violence, Pro-Slavery and Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 294.

The Interpretive Foundation (Luke 24:13-32 and 44-49)

Luke 24 is a foundational text for doing biblical theology. The selected passages below are crucial for justifying biblical theology not only as an exercise and theological discipline, but also as a way of reading the Scriptures that is obedient to Jesus.³

Setting the Larger Context

Luke 24 records Jesus's resurrection and ascension, but the emphasis is on a physical manifestation rather than a mere declaration of the fact.⁴ Jesus truly died and was buried (23:50-56), but rose from the grave as Lord and king (24:1-12). After his victory over sin and death, Jesus presents himself as the fulfillment and central focus of Scripture. In verses 13-27, Jesus appears, in incognito fashion, to two disciples on the road to Emmaus as they are discussing all the events that had transpired in Jerusalem over the weekend. In mid-conversation the veiled messiah initiates a conversation, revealing to his despairing and confused friends that he is the hope they had been seeking. The resurrected Christ then appears to the disciples in Jerusalem and in a similar way opens their minds to understand the Scriptures and his centrality within them (vv. 44-49). Verses 50-54 form the conclusion to the gospel, setting up Luke's second volume, the Book of Acts, by recording Jesus's ascension and the disciples poised and waiting for the promised Holy Spirit to come in Jerusalem.

The Prologue: Luke 24:13-16

Verses 13-15 set the stage for a divine encounter between two men and the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke notes that "two of them" were on the path to Emmaus. The pronoun "them" is meant to refer readers back to verse 9, locating the travelers among the disciples

³ Miles, "What Is Biblical Theology?"

⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The New International Version Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 614, Logos Bible Software.

of Jesus.⁵ Luke’s reference to “two of them” is also significant in light of the resurrection for their claims to hold any sort of legal credibility in Judaism (Num 35:30; Deut 19:15; 1 Kgs 21:10, 13).⁶ As the disciples are walking, they discuss “all these things that had happened” (v. 14). The phrase “all these things” refers to the events surrounding the death of Jesus, but also the puzzling claims of a now empty tomb (vv. 18, 21). Two infinitives in verse 15, “talking” and “discussing,” define what kind of interaction is taking place between the two disciples. This is not a casual conversation about the weather, otherwise the author likely would not have felt the need to use two different words for the same action. The infinitive συζητεῖν, translated “discussing,” gives the reader the sense that there is deep reflection and pondering, possibly even debate, taking place among these friends who are trying to figure out what had recently transpired.⁷

As they converse, Jesus appears and approaches them, but they do not recognize him. Significantly, in verse 16 Luke comments that the men’s eyes were “kept” from recognizing their master. In this instance, the verb “kept” ἐκρατοῦντο is in the passive voice, meaning their inability is something that is happening to these disciples. They are not simply ignorant. Divine intervention is hindering their sight, seemingly both physically and spiritually. James Edwards notes, “This is confirmed by v. 31, which reverses v. 16, ‘Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.’ ‘Prevented’ and ‘opened’ are ‘divine passives,’ i.e., both their lack of understanding and their subsequent recognition are due to divine agency. Only those who otherwise would have known Jesus could be prevented

⁵ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 714, Logos Bible Software.

⁶ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 714.

⁷ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 954, Logos Bible Software.

from seeing him.”⁸ Acknowledgement, belief, and confession of Jesus as Lord are not matters of the human will but are the gift of “divine enablement.”⁹

The Inquiry and Response (Luke 24:17-24)

Joining them on their journey, Jesus inserts himself into their dialogue by asking a question in verse 17: “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” The initial response by the Emmaus duo is described in the latter half of verse 18: “And they stood still, looking sad.” The adjective *σκυθρωποί*, translated “sad,” expresses the result of their deliberations so far. The men are downcast and perplexed. They also appear to be irritated or impatient with this stranger’s question, no doubt exhausted mentally and fatigued physically given the current events. This astonishment can be seen in the lone-named traveler Cleopas’ dumbfounded response to, really insult of, an apparently oblivious Jesus (v. 18). Cleopas is referring to “the things” that had taken place during the past few traumatic days: the death of Jesus of Nazareth to be sure, but also the stories circulating and boasting that he was no longer in Joseph’s tomb but had risen from the dead. Jesus pries further to illicit a response from his disciples asking them, “what things?” (v. 19). He is allowing space for them to open their hearts to him so that he may teach them and restore their hope.

The remainder of verse 19 summarizes the disciples’ understanding of who Jesus was: “a prophet mighty in word and deed.” First century Jewish historian, Josephus, describes Jesus similarly as “a wise man . . . and worker of remarkable feats.”¹⁰ In their minds, Jesus was no doubt an extraordinary man however, as Edwards points out, words

⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 716.

⁹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 716-17.

¹⁰ Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 480, Logos Bible Software.

like “Lord,” “Messiah,” and “Son of God” are absent, indicating their current appreciation of Jesus as no greater than Israel’s preeminent prophets before him.¹¹

Verses 20-24 further nuance their understanding. All the factual elements are present for a proper understanding of who Jesus is—the cross, the empty tomb, and hope that he was the promised messiah that would redeem Israel—yet, this knowledge has not led them to the understanding that comes only through beholding the Jesus for who he truly is in all his glory. They have yet to recognize the resurrected Christ who is walking and talking with them on the road. Their despair and loss of hope over their unmet expectations resonates with humanity to this day. The two cannot conceive of suffering and death as the necessary trailblazers for redemption and eternal hope.

In verse 21, the phrase “the one to redeem Israel” speaks of their hope of who Jesus might have been and connects the reader to a key repeated theme in Luke’s Gospel.¹² Luke 1–2 record the roles the priest Zechariah and the prophetess Anna played in the birth narrative of Jesus. Included in both accounts is the “redemption of Israel” theme (1:68, 77; 2:38), which seems to borrow language from the Servant of the Lord texts in Isaiah (41:14; 43:14; 44:24).¹³ Further, the “redemption of Israel” theme is crucially linked with suffering in the Servant Poems found in Isaiah 40-55.¹⁴ Edwards helpfully

¹¹ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 719.

¹² The book of Acts also reflects the theme of the restoration of Israel and the extension of salvation to the nations in and through the Christ-event. Roy Ciampa recognizes, “Jesus, the Lord of all, is already seated and reigning at God’s right hand and is responsible for the long-awaited outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:25-36). The Twelve have been reconstituted (1:12–26) and it seems that Israel’s ingathering from the diaspora (2:1-47) has begun.” Roy Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 296-97, Logos Bible Software.

¹³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 719.

¹⁴ One should notice the connections in Luke 3:22 and Isa 42:1; Luke 22:37 and Isa 53:12; Luke 22:42 and Isa 51:17. Thomas Schreiner observes, “Luke does not cite the clearest verses about the servant’s atoning death, and yet the several allusions to Jesus as the servant indicate that he saw Jesus as the servant of the Lord who suffers for the sake of others.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 480, Logos Bible Software. Stephen Dempster also adds that Jesus “clearly understands himself as the servant of Isaiah 53.

notices, “The same medium is present in Simeon’s words that Jesus would face opposition and sword (2:34–35). The important point here is that suffering *precedes* glory; Jesus must die before he can live (Rom 14:9; Rev 1:18; 2:8).”¹⁵ Again, the idea that suffering plays a role in redemption is a foreign concept to the disciples, as it was for many Jewish people. Understandably, suffering and death do not instill hope. How can ultimate redemption and eternal hope come through suffering and death, much less be the necessary means by which salvation is brought to humanity? Roy Ciampa points out,

At the close of Luke’s Gospel, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the disciples on the road to Emmaus admit that they had been hoping ‘that he was the one to redeem Israel’ (24:21), whereas Jesus clarifies that his passion and resurrection were the prerequisites for the proclamation of “repentance and forgiveness of sins . . . to all nations” (24:47).¹⁶

The latter half of verses 21-24 hints that the two disciples have not lost hope entirely, as they recount the empty tomb reports that other disciples, including the women, witnessed. Considering verse 24, it appears as though verses 1-11 are selective, not exhaustive. Verses 1-12 record the women and only Peter going to the empty tomb, but Luke uses the phrase, “some of those who were with *us*.” The report of the women and Peter had been confirmed, and thus on account of multiple witnesses, the evidence was considerable for a vacant tomb. One question, the most important matter of all, still hangs in the balance: where is the risen, living Jesus if the tomb is empty? Verse 24 ends this way: “But him they did not see.”

If the first twenty-five verses of Luke 24 teach one thing about what it takes to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is that belief does not only depend upon solid objective evidence of the fact. Schreiner states, however, that “the truth of the

Since this teaching about sacrificial service and the citation of Isaiah 53 are situated immediately before the impending death of Jesus (Lk 22:37), they provide the lens through which that death is to be viewed.” Stephen Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” in Hafemann and House, *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, 170.

¹⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 719.

¹⁶ Ciampa, “The History of Redemption,” 296-97.

resurrection in history is important to Luke . . . [and] many convincing proofs attested to the reality of the resurrection (Acts 1:3). The apostles witnessed firsthand that Jesus was risen (Acts 3:15; 10:40-41; 13:31), and the resurrection is also verified by the OT Scriptures (Acts 2:24-36; 13:32-37).¹⁷ Yet, the disciples are still bewildered. Edwards notes, “On the ironic journey to Emmaus living disciples talk about a dead Jesus, while a living Jesus speaks with lifeless disciples.”¹⁸ The two men are battling doubt and confusion over the empty tomb accounts because no one has seen the resurrected Christ, yet he is physically walking and talking with them along their journey and they fail to recognize him.

A Christ-Centered Interpretation (Luke 24:25-27)

Verses 25-26 record Jesus’s response to his disciples: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” Jesus does not chastise his disciples for their uncertainty about the eyewitness accounts, physical evidence, or not knowing with whom they had been speaking. What Jesus confronts is their understanding of the prophetic witness.

Mercifully, Jesus does not leave these men in a state of confusion; rather, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (v. 27).¹⁹ The evangelist has crafted his narrative of this encounter on the road to Emmaus to inform his readers how Jesus himself claimed to be the authoritative interpreter of Israel’s sacred texts. Those sacred texts must be

¹⁷ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 478-79.

¹⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 720.

¹⁹ Hermeneutics, the art of interpreting texts, is derived from the Greek verb Jesus uses translated “interpreted” διερμήνευσεν (*diermēneuein*) in v. 27. Although Jesus does not give a set of rules or guidelines in this text, he lays the foundation and sets the trajectory for the apostolic hermeneutic found in the book of Acts and in the New Testament letters.

understood in light of the Christ-event, because they anticipated his coming, mission, and work. To say it another way, the living Word has interpretive rights over the written word, and he taught his disciples the necessity of seeing his centrality in all of Scripture.²⁰ Jesus, as Brian Vickers notes,

Teaches them to read the Scriptures in a new way, showing them that Moses and the Prophets were pointing to him and his suffering and glory (Luke 24:26–27). This is not a “new” reading in the sense that Jesus invented a new interpretation or that the Scriptures were not pointing to him all along. Luke records that Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (24:45).²¹

This question, however, still lingers, besides being the lenses through which all prior revelation must be read, is there anything in particular that Jesus taught his disciples?

It is true that this passage in Luke’s Gospel does not specifically mention any Old Testament text that Jesus is expositing. The latter half of verse 27 simply states Jesus interpreted, “in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Thus, Leon Morris rightly suggests readers understand verse 27 not as a grab bag of proof-texts, but as showing a robust consistency as it pertains to the Old Testament’s witness of a divine purpose being progressively revealed, an objective that in the end required the death of Israel’s messiah on a Roman cross.²² Therefore, the major takeaway is that the entire Old Testament is an account of the creator God working his plan to redeem humanity—a plan that ultimately culminates in Jesus as he is the focal point of salvation history, the prophetic hope.²³

Geerhardus Vos explains, “From the beginning all redeeming acts of God aim at the

²⁰ Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenaeus against Heresies,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885), 526, Logos Bible Software.

²¹ Brian J. Vickers, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *ESV Expository Commentary*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 311, Logos Bible Software.

²² Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 358, Logos Bible Software.

²³ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2007), 347, Logos Bible Software.

creation and introduction of this new organic principle, which is none other than Christ. All Old Testament redemption is but the saving activity of God working toward the realization of this goal, the great supernatural prelude to the Incarnation and the Atonement.”²⁴ Jesus’s instruction requires his followers to read the Old Testament “through Christian eyes.”²⁵ All of Scripture finds its meaning and fulfillment in and through him.²⁶

Earlier in Luke’s Gospel Jesus instructed the disciples on the necessity of his suffering (9:22, 44; 17:25; 18:31–34); however, as previously noted, the disciples’ struggle and confusion is with the concept of a suffering a *Messiah*, which is what Jesus addresses. Darrel Bock asserts that the freshness Jesus brings with his interpretation of the messiah theme in the Hebrew Scriptures is that of a twofold division of “suffering followed by glory.”²⁷ The suffering of Jesus as Messiah becomes the indispensable content of early Christian gospel teaching and preaching (Acts 3:18), yet only in Luke 24:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 are the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah identified with the witness of Scripture.²⁸

There had always been an anticipation and expectation of how God would finally deliver his people and establish his eternal kingdom on earth that was rooted in the Abrahamic covenant. Pervasive throughout Israel’s prophetic literature, with ties to the Abrahamic covenant, is the concept of a royal, divine, suffering, messianic, servant, shepherd king that is to come (Dan 7; Hos 1, 3; Amos 9; Obad; Mic 5; Hag 2; Zech

²⁴ Geerhardus Vos, *The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1894), 12.

²⁵ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 55.

²⁶ Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 50.

²⁷ Bock, *Luke*, 615.

²⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 722.

3–4,12–13; Isa 11, 42, 53; Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23). Further, the notion of a salvation that would include previously unparalleled intimacy with God was also present in the new covenant texts of the Hebrew Scriptures (Ezek 36–37; Joel 2; Jer 31). Yet, how this all fit together remained elusive until Jesus entered the world as the incarnate Son. The Gospels and Acts attest to the fact that Jesus claimed to be the reality behind the developing mosaic that prior Spirit-inspired biblical authors were creating as they pondered how God would bring ultimate redemption and healing. It seems safe to assume this is the interpretive trajectory Jesus began to establish in the hearts and minds of his disciples.

The Veiled Messiah Revealed (Luke 24:28-32)

In verses 28 and 29, Luke indicates that as they come near Emmaus Jesus planned to travel on, but the disciples begged him to stay, so he obliged. They sat down together to share a meal, and when Jesus “took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight” (vv. 30-31). Surely this demonstration recalled for the men Jesus’s words at the Last Supper: “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19-20). The Last Supper is a Passover meal; Jesus’s death is portrayed as the Passover offering and the new Exodus that ushers in the New Covenant of God’s kingdom. Jesus rescues from the slavery of sin, and he is himself the Passover lamb. Schreiner observes,

In the Passover the blood of the lamb was spilled in place of the firstborn in each Israelite house. So too, Jesus gave his body, surrendered his life, to give life to his people. The new covenant resonates with OT themes, including the sacrificial covenant blood that inaugurated the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 24:8), and the new covenant that secures forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:31–34). Luke here indicates that the pouring out of Jesus’ blood provides atonement for the sins of the people.²⁹

²⁹ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 480.

The “bread” being broken was an image of his body. He had been providing the bread in the wilderness (Luke 9:10-17)—a means of life; now he is providing “bread” in a new way. He is the bread that will bring life through suffering and physical death.³⁰ Although the “cup” is not mentioned in Luke 24:30, it is plausible that Jesus’s breaking of the bread would have reminded the disciples of their entire Last Supper experience. If this is indeed the case, then in the Old Testament, the “cup,” as Schreiner observes, “most often refers to the wrath God pours out upon those who have sinned against him (e.g., Pss 11:6; 75:7–8; Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 25:15, 17, 28; 49:12; Hab 2:16–17). Hence, Jesus took upon himself the wrath that sinners deserved so that they would be freed of their sins.”³¹ This is what the narrative surrounding the character of Barabbas is all about just a chapter earlier as well: “The guilty one was counted as innocent because Jesus, the innocent one, took upon himself the death that Barabbas deserved (Lk 23:16-25).”³² Jesus used this simple act of breaking the bread to highlight his mission and purpose for entering human history in bodily form.

The once veiled messiah made himself known to the disciples. The phrase, “their eyes were opened” (v. 31), as noted earlier, is a divine passive, indicating that the disciples’ power to identify their new-found companion as the risen Jesus is made possible only by divine revelation. Edwards puts it this way: “Their blindness was not their fault, and their perception is not their accomplishment. Both are the result of spiritual dimensions beyond human abilities and capabilities (e.g., 2 Kgs 6:17, 20).”³³ It is surely not coincidental that Luke uses the verb “to open” διηνοίχθησαν three times in the latter part of Luke 24 (vv. 31, 32, 45) and three times in the book of Acts (7:56;

³⁰ This passage is smothered with Old Testament imagery. See for example Exod 24:7-8 (blood of the covenant), Zech 9:11 (freeing prisoners), and Jer 31:31-34 (the New Covenant).

³¹ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 480-81.

³² Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 481.

³³ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 724.

16:14; 17:3), all with reference to divine revelation, and with the exception of Luke 24:31 and Acts 7:56, the conduit of divine revelation is the written Scriptures or proclamation of the gospel found in them.³⁴ This revelation leads to heart transformation: “They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’” (v. 32). If one does not know Christ, one cannot understand Scripture (John 5:45-47), and one comes to know Jesus as Lord and Savior through the Scriptures, just like these disciples.

Luke’s Great Commission (Luke 24:44-49)

Verses 44-49 constitute Luke’s “Great Commission,” consisting of Jesus’s declaration that all Scripture is about him and fulfilled in him (v. 44), followed by another account of opening the minds of his disciples to understand the Scriptures (v. 45), particularly prophecies of his sufferings and resurrection as Messiah (v. 46).³⁵ Verses 44-46 repeat Jesus’s prior self-disclosure to the Emmaus disciples with the Jerusalem disciples. In verse 48, after opening the Scriptures, Jesus declares, “You are witnesses of these things.” Verse 49 then recounts Jesus’s reassurance of the gift of the Holy Spirit and his command for them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come.

Luke records in verse 45 that Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” These verses carry the Emmaus story a step further. Jesus gives Luke’s readers his succinct statement of the gospel: “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (vv. 46-48). The assertion in verse 46, that Jesus’s death fulfills Scripture, David Pao notes, is supported by references to many significant Old Testament passages in other parts of the

³⁴ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 724.

³⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 732.

Gospel of Luke.³⁶ Again, however, there is no explicit Old Testament reference, so one must conclude that Jesus believed his statement of the gospel was the implicit teaching of all the Scriptures.³⁷ Jesus opens the disciples' minds to how their Scriptures culminate in his person and work.

Jesus's gospel statement defines the messianic office once again in terms of "crucifixion and resurrection, suffering and glory (vv. 7, 26, 44, 46)."³⁸ The three post-resurrection interpretations of the Christ-event complement the three pre-resurrection prophecies (9:22; 17:25; 18:31-34). Jesus included in his teaching, as Morris notes, enough foreshadowing of his passion and its inevitable outcome for his followers not to have been surprised at what had happened.³⁹ Until Jesus's interpretation at this particular moment in Luke's gospel, though, there is no prior explicit reference to a resurrected messiah in any pre-Christian Jewish literature.⁴⁰ A resurrected messiah is a near foreign

³⁶ David Pao and Eckhard Schnabel note the references to Ps 118:22 (Luke 20:17), Isa 53:12 (Luke 22:37), Ps 31:5 (Luke 23:46), and Pss 22:7, 18; 69:21 (Luke 23:34-36) and the references in the book of Acts, where Jesus's death is interpreted with reference to Ps 118:22 (Acts 4:11), Ps 2:1-2 (Acts 4:25-26), and Isa 53:7-8 (Acts 8:32-33); note also the reference to Ps 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28; 13:35) and Isa 55:3 (Acts 13:34). David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Greg K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker: Apollos, 2007), 401, Logos Bible Software. Further, Greg Beale notices that "Luke 24 directly links Christ's resurrection (24:46) and his ascension (24:51) with the restoration promise of Isa. 32:15 about the Spirit (Luke 24:49). . . . In addition, Luke 24:48 links Christ's resurrection to the Isa. 43:10, 12 allusion ("you [Israel] are witnesses"), another restoration prophecy." Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 577, Logos Bible Software.

³⁷ It seems that in 1 Cor 15:3-4 Paul uses the phrase "κατὰ τὰς γραφάς" (*kata tas graphas*), "according to the Scriptures," twice to make a similar point as Luke does here in the chap. 24 of his Gospel, meaning something like "the entire trajectory of the Old Testament" rather than a particular passage or specific proof text.

³⁸ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 734.

³⁹ Morris, *Luke*, 361.

⁴⁰ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 734. The intertestamental literature is a complex corpus and it would be an injustice to make a sweeping generalization; however, it seems highly plausible that the statement made above is defensible, as Edwards notes,

Tg. Isa. 53:12 associates Messiah with the Servant of the Lord but reinterprets the sufferings of the Servant as *not* referring to Messiah. The precise dating of the Targumim is debated (see Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies*, 185-96), though scholarly opinion is generally agreed that they are post-Christian. The general Jewish interpretation of Isa 53, which prevails still today, is that

concept in the Jewish mind, much like the concept of a suffering messiah.⁴¹ Yet, no one should think of the death and resurrection of Christ as one of God's contingency plans.⁴² Jesus predicted that he would be raised after his death (Luke 9:22; 11:29-30, 18:33).⁴³ The disciples are experiencing the satisfaction of promises from Scripture being fulfilled; what every Old Testament saint desperately longed to see (10:23-24; 1 Pet 1:10-12).⁴⁴ Verse 46 focuses exclusively on Jesus's death and resurrection because together they sum up the purpose of the Christ-event: the messiah, Jesus, was to die for the sins of the world and be raised from the dead for its redemption (Rom. 4:25).⁴⁵

Jesus's aim in teaching the disciples how to interpret their Scriptures was to help them see that the Bible tells a unified story with him as its center. This story, broadly speaking, is about creation, fall, judgement, and redemption that culminates in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which the apostles later regarded as attested to by Scripture.⁴⁶ Admittedly, the Bible has numerous subplots and themes that arguably could be considered "centers" around which one could rightly do biblical theology.⁴⁷ Hamilton, draws attention to this

the Servant is a metaphor for Israel as a people. So, Origen, *Cels.* 1.55, "My Jewish opponent replied that these predictions [Isa 53] bore reference to the whole people regarded as one individual." (Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 722)

⁴¹ The reason there is nothing about a resurrected Messiah in pre-Christian Jewish writings is because there is virtually no discussion of a dying Messiah. If no one is expecting a dying Messiah, then it is hardly surprising that no one expected a resurrected Messiah.

⁴² Bock, *Luke*, 621.

⁴³ Schreiner notes, "Luke particularly emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus, and the resurrection is not just a bizarre event in history. It attests that Jesus reigns at God's right hand as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and that the new age has dawned." Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 478.

⁴⁴ Bock, *Luke*, 621.

⁴⁵ Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 735.

⁴⁶ Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 9, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁷ One can think of such themes as salvation, judgment, glory, worship, the kingdom of God, idolatry, restoration, messiah, etc.

fact, saying, “One of the key tasks of biblical theology is to trace the connections between themes and show the relationships between them.”⁴⁸ This diversity of sub-plots and themes, though, simply act as tributaries that lead ultimately to the gospel, as the apex of redemptive history. The beauty of the Bible’s basic plot and message (creation, fall, judgment, redemption, consummation) is that it can be organized and told from its various sub-plots and themes because, as Rosner notes, “virtually every theme in biblical theology . . . leads to Christ as the final and definitive instalment. . . . Thus biblical theology explores the Bible’s rich and many-sided presentation of its unified message. It is committed to declaring ‘the whole counsel of God . . . [in order] to feed the church of God’ (Acts 20:27-28).”⁴⁹

It seems in Luke 24, and in his other post-resurrection instructions (c.f. Acts 1:3), that Jesus is laying the key foundational interpretive perspective through which his disciples are to view all of Scripture. That is, they are to embrace his centrality in them and his fulfillment of them. The Christ-event requires Jesus’s disciples to read the Old Testament as a book that prepares for and prophesies his coming and the renewal he will bring to all creation. The historical narrative the Bible tells is to be viewed theologically.⁵⁰ The Old Testament records, as Goldsworthy explains, “The history of salvation as, it proceeds towards its full realization.”⁵¹ Therefore, a faithful biblical theology, particularly of the Old Testament, will, as Marshall observes, “recognize its dual role, as a book which would be understood on one level (or series of levels) by its original, pre-Christian readers, and on another level by those who had the ‘key’ to a new reading of it,” that key

⁴⁸ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 45, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁹ Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” 9-10.

⁵⁰ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 57.

⁵¹ Graeme G. Goldsworthy, “Relationship of Old Testament and New Testament,” in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 87-88, Logos Bible Software.

being the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁵² Touching on this dual role as a primary function of biblical theology, Rosner along with Marshall also affirms that “biblical theology maintains a conscious focus on Jesus Christ, not in some naive and implausible sense, where Christ is found in the most unlikely places, but in noting God’s faithfulness, wisdom and purpose in the progress of salvation history.”⁵³

Since Jesus is the focal point of biblical revelation, his life, death, resurrection, and ascension must control how one interprets Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, and how one does biblical theology. For Christians, reading the entire Bible through gospel lenses, as Goldsworthy writes, is crucial because it is Christ who “shows us what the unfolding message of the Old Testament is really concerned with.”⁵⁴

To claim that Luke 24 gives precise hermeneutical principles would push the text beyond the author’s original intent. Though, by establishing himself as the nucleus of Scripture, Jesus allows space for many different interlocking themes to contribute to a greater understanding of the Bible’s fundamental message.⁵⁵ To read the entirety of Scripture, however, and to miss the mission of God that is focused on the messiah, who has been revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ, is to fundamentally misunderstand the Bible.⁵⁶ In other words, Jesus’s death and resurrection are what give proper meaning to the Scriptures. Luke 24:44-47 instructs and warns that the Bible will be misunderstood without belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁷

⁵² I. Howard Marshall, “Jesus Christ,” in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 595.

⁵³ Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” 10.

⁵⁴ Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 76.

⁵⁵ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, xii.

⁵⁶ Miles, “What Is Biblical Theology?”

⁵⁷ Pao, *Luke*, 401. See also William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 352, Logos Bible Software.

The death and resurrection of Jesus changes how students of the Bible read the Scriptures, particularly Old Testament Scriptures. In Luke’s Gospel, Schreiner observes how “Jesus’s glory and lordship were veiled by his humanity and suffering. But at his resurrection, Jesus is exalted as Lord.”⁵⁸ Further, “The lordship of Jesus is inseparable from his resurrection, for the resurrection functions as the proof and emblem of his lordship, showing that Jesus now reigns over all. He now reigns as Lord and Christ (Acts2:36).”⁵⁹ Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture and he is its purpose and center—prior biblical revelation paved the way for his unrivaled moment in history. Therefore, when interpreting any passage of Scripture one must ask how the text relates to Christ. Since, as Goldsworthy notes, “Christ is *the truth*, God’s final and fullest word to mankind, all other words in the Bible are given their final meaning by him.”⁶⁰

Verse 47 presents the reader with a key transition point to Luke’s second volume, Acts. It summarizes the mission of Jesus, but it also declares what will be the mission of the church moving forward. The apostle Paul declares in his letter to the Romans, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:16). The resurrection narrative of Luke 24 verifies the power of the gospel to change hearts and minds. The gospel also demands a response, repentance, and faith, and demands preachers and teachers to proclaim its message of salvation (Luke 24:47). Yet, as Howard Marshall correctly notices, part of the fulfillment of Scripture requires those who are equipped to bear witness be sent out to broadcast the gospel message in the power of the Spirit.⁶¹ That is the task of the church: equip and send.

⁵⁸ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 476-77.

⁵⁹ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 479.

⁶⁰ Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 71-72.

⁶¹ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 906, Logos Bible Software.

Jesus involves the apostles and his church in God's salvation plan, not as bystanders, but as integral participants.⁶² This task will be significantly shackled, however, if God's people do not learn how to follow and be obedient to the interpretive foundation laid out for them in Luke 24. This very text has allowed believers across the ages to say along with the apostle Paul that the sacred writings (the Old Testament texts in particular) are able to "make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). The church builds its understanding of the Old Testament from Jesus's interpretive perspective laid out in Luke 24. Bock insightfully describes how

Jesus' death and resurrection lead to an evangelistic commission for the disciples. All three of these stages are reflected in the Old Testament. The Christ, the Messiah, was to suffer (e.g., Pss. 22; 69; Isa. 52:13–53:12) and to be raised (e.g., Pss. 16:8–10; 110:1), and the disciples must now engage in preaching to the nations "repentance and forgiveness of sins," starting from Jerusalem (Luke sees texts like Isa. 40:3–5 and Amos 9:15 as fitting into this promise). Both the desired response ("repentance") and its effect ("forgiveness") are noted here."

The Bible is primarily a story about the Triune God redeeming humanity from their slavery to sin, winning for them on their behalf through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins and transforming their lives through the power of his life-giving spirit for his glory and their good. All other subplots and themes, as important as they are, play butler to this one unified message of the Bible, according to Jesus. Hamilton argues, "If the Bible tells a coherent story, it is valid to explore what that story's main point is. That leads us to ask whether the Bible shows us what God's ultimate purpose is. Understanding God's ultimate purpose, even with our limited human capacities, gives us insight into the meaning of all things."⁶³

Final Reflections on Luke 24

Just as Jesus opened the minds of his disciples to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:31, 32, 45), he must also open the minds of his followers across the ages to the

⁶² Liefeld and Pao, *Luke*, 352.

⁶³ Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgement*, 39.

relationship between all of Scripture and his person and work.⁶⁴ This is the work of biblical theology. Luke 24 is essential for justifying this theological discipline that seeks to look at each passage of Scripture always considering the trajectory of redemptive history so that it might be understood how every piece of the larger story is related to Jesus Christ.⁶⁵ Christians who hold fast to the authority of Scripture,⁶⁶ after reading Luke 24, should clearly see Jesus's claims to be the Bible's interpretive key. Failure to read, interpret, and understand the Bible in a way that affirms its overarching narrative as one unified story that leads to the risen savior is to miss the point of the Bible entirely. As Edmund Clowney asserts, Christians must "take account of the full drama of redemption, and its realization in Christ. To see the text in relation to Christ is to see it in its larger context, the context of God's purpose in revelation."⁶⁷

Jesus is clear and to the point with his disciples. According to his own words, it is foolish to read the Old Testament and not understand that he is the point of it all. It needs to be said again, however, that Luke does not give his readers particular guidelines for how to interpret individual texts of Scripture in recording the words of Jesus, but rather sets a trajectory for how all of Scripture is to be read and understood, that is then further developed by the apostles in their preaching and teaching in the book of Acts. This being said, they were not free to interpret prior revelation however they wanted.

⁶⁴ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 48.

⁶⁵ Nick Roark and Robert Kline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 18.

⁶⁶ Wayne Grudem defines the authority of Scripture this way, "The authority of Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God." Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 73, Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁷ Edmund Clowney, *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 11, Logos Bible Software.

They were guided by their master’s words here in Luke 24.⁶⁸ Liefled and Pao rightly state, “The way the writers of the NT used the OT had its origin not in their own creativity but in the post-resurrection teachings of Jesus, of which this passage is a paradigm.”⁶⁹ Therefore, Christians are to follow the apostles as they followed Christ (cf. 1 Cor 11:1). Obedience to this command, then, certainly entails learning to interpret Scripture, redemptive history, and one’s own present reality the way the biblical authors did.⁷⁰

The Bible teaches Christians how it should be read, Christo-centrally, which is the heartbeat of the apostolic hermeneutic. Sidney Greidanus poses the question, “Where did the New Testament writers, in contrast to their non-Christian Jewish counterparts, get the idea of interpreting the Old Testament from the reality of Christ?” Answering his own question, he responds, “Jesus himself taught them to read the Old Testament in this way.”⁷¹ In the book of Acts, Luke showcases how the apostles and disciples of Christ took to heart his instruction given them in his post-resurrection appearances. Luke’s second volume begins to unfold the answer to what a post-resurrection apostolic hermeneutic built upon the interpretive foundation laid by Jesus in Luke 24 might look like.

⁶⁸ Luke 24 is not the only place Jesus, post-resurrection, instructs his disciples. Acts 1:3 says, “He (Jesus) presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” Jesus builds upon the foundation he lays in Luke 24 with the disciples until his ascension. Vickers notes, “These forty days correspond to Jesus’ teaching them to understand the Scriptures at the end of Luke’s Gospel.” Vickers, *Acts*, 311. He continues,

Jesus teaches these men to read the OT with himself as its fulfillment. Presumably, Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom during the forty days he spent with the disciples before the ascension included his showing them how he was the goal and fulfillment of Scripture (Luke 24:44–47). And this is precisely what the apostles do in Acts: they go from place to place showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised King. (319)

⁶⁹ Liefled and Pao, *Luke*, 347.

⁷⁰ James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology: A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19, Logos Bible Software.

⁷¹ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 202.

CHAPTER 3
A CHRIST-CENTERED HERMENEUTIC

Introduction

A Christ-centered hermeneutic must be based on the content of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. Luke 24 sets a trajectory for how all of Scripture is to be read and understood. That trajectory is further developed by the apostles in their preaching and teaching in the book of Acts. This chapter will begin with a brief survey of the apostles' Christocentric interpretation of Scripture then consider the interpretive challenges biblical theology (BT) presents given the diverse spectrum of how BT is practiced. To conclude, a suggestion will be put forward as to which theory and practice of BT is best suited for teaching high school students at RSCA to interpret Scripture like the apostles.

**Forty Days with the Risen Jesus
(Acts 1:3-8)**

Before the risen Christ ascends to heaven, he spends forty days with his disciples. Again, as noted in the previous chapter, there is no explicit reference to a particular text from which Jesus is teaching. However, readers should connect Jesus's teaching here in verse 3 with Luke's Gospel account of Jesus interpreting, "To them [the disciples] in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).¹ It can be safely inferred that what Jesus began to reveal to the disciples about his person and work from the Old Testament in Luke 24 is carried forward and further developed during his forty days with them before his ascension.

¹ Brian J. Vickers, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *ESV Expository Commentary*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 334, Logos Bible Software.

At least two categories are prioritized by Luke regarding Jesus's activities with the disciples during the forty days, as Vickers notes, "Jesus focuses on two things during this time: (1) providing the disciples with proof that he is indeed alive and (2) teaching them about the kingdom of God."² The resurrection has always been a point of controversy and difficult for many to believe. There is, however, no gospel message without the messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament, suffered, died, was raised from the dead, and now rules and reigns from heaven. Jesus's repeated post-resurrection, bodily appearances to the disciples are crucial for their ability to faithfully proclaim the gospel to the nations.³ Affirming the importance of Jesus's physical appearances, Vickers comments that the "apostolic ministry is grounded in the eyewitness testimony of the disciples."⁴ Further Alan Thompson adds,

As in Luke 24, the sermons in Acts (following a recounting of the events of Jesus' life and death by crucifixion) stress the historical reality of the resurrection with an emphasis on the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus. The body put to death was the body raised (cf. Acts 2:23–24, 27, 31; 3:15; 5:30; 10:39–40; 13:29–31) and (as in Luke 24) Jesus' disciples saw him.⁵

The magnitude of the resurrection cannot be overstated. In Acts, the resurrection is the climactic event in God's redemptive plan. It is because of a risen Jesus that the blessings of salvation are available to all who believe. Alan Thompson asserts, "The reason for this appears to be that in the resurrection of Jesus, the hoped-for resurrection age to come has arrived already, and it is because of the arrival of the age to come that the blessings of

² Vickers, *Acts*, 334.

³ Vickers comments, "In the resurrection, Jesus is the vanguard of a new, transformed, immortal humanity. It is on this foundation that the disciples undertake the ministry to which Jesus the risen King calls them." Vickers, *Acts*, 334.

⁴ Vickers, *Acts*, 334.

⁵ Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 77, Logos Bible Software.

that age may now be received.”⁶ The “new age” Thompson speaks of was anticipated in the Old Testament, which explains why Luke 24 and Acts 23–28 take special interest in the resurrection of Jesus as the fulfilment of Israel’s hope.⁷

Also vital for the mission Jesus gives the disciples is his instruction about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). The book of Acts marks the beginning of a new era of the kingdom of God with Christ reigning as the risen king; particularly through recounting the establishment of the church, the proclamation of the gospel, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The apostles carry on what their master had started. A major part of seeing the kingdom spread came through establishing churches and preaching the gospel to every tongue, tribe, and nation. Although Luke does not provide his readers with the content of Jesus’s teaching regarding the kingdom, and Acts 1 lacks specificity, Christians are not left clueless as to what Jesus teaches his disciples.⁸

Vickers sheds light on the kingdom of God theme in Acts 1, stating that it “is not localized with borders or made up of particular people connected politically, culturally, or ethnically, but is established in the lives of men and women through the power of the gospel.”⁹ The gospel is the message of this kingdom’s inauguration in the Christ-event. As noted in the previous chapter, Jesus declares the content of this message succinctly in Luke 24:46-48: “The Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that

⁶ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 79.

⁷ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 99.

⁸ Graeme Goldsworthy notes, “There are about one hundred references to the kingdom of God/heaven in the Synoptics. There are two references in John (3:3, 5), where Jesus also speaks of “my kingdom” (John 18:36). The kingdom of God is mentioned six times in Acts and eight times in Paul’s letters. Three passages indicate that the kingdom of Christ is the same as the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 11:15; 12:10).” Graeme Goldsworthy, “Kingdom of God,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 615, Logos Bible Software. Goldsworthy defines the kingdom of God this way: “God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule.” Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2000), 53, Logos Bible Software.

⁹ Vickers, *Acts*, 335.

repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” If this summary of the kingdom of God and its message is accurate, then the disciples ask a profoundly appropriate and biblically informed question in Acts 1:6: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”¹⁰

In his response to the disciples’ question (vv.7-8), Jesus does not chastise them; he redirects their question.¹¹ Jesus, as Vickers explains,

redirects their question to the more important issue that focuses the disciples on a different idea of time. The disciples are thinking in regard to the consummation, the final establishment of the kingdom. They are also likely thinking of a decisive event. But Jesus directs them away from a specific day and instead focuses on the situation that exists as a result of his resurrection. The kingdom is being restored and will continue to be restored through the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, who will empower the disciples. The restoration begins now.¹²

As heralds of the gospel, the disciples are to be the conduit through which the kingdom of God spreads, as the symbolically restored Israel who will go forth preaching the message of reconciliation and restoration available through faith in the messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.¹³ As Thompson notes, here Jesus simply wants to affirm and clarify “their role in this restoration.”¹⁴ The gospel message they are to proclaim is not simply the forgiveness of sins and escape from hell; the gospel is an all-encompassing transformative reality, “a restoration of relationships between God, man, and the world.”¹⁵ Kingdom restoration is a present reality. The salvation Jesus brings through his death and resurrection is a present reality, but there will be a final revealing of the kingdom of God in all its

¹⁰ Vickers points out that first century Jews would have likely been familiar with many of the promises of a restored kingdom of Israel, particularly in the writings of the prophets Isaiah (see 49:5-6) and Ezekiel (see 37:16-19). Vickers, *Acts*, 336-41.

¹¹ Vickers, *Acts*, 339. See also Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 108.

¹² Vickers, *Acts*, 337.

¹³ Vickers, *Acts*, 339.

¹⁴ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 108.

¹⁵ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 121.

glory as well.¹⁶ When will consummation take place? The timing is known by God alone and he will bring it about according to his timing and will (Act 1:7; c.f. Matt 24:36; 25:13; 1 Thess 5:2). Vickers adds, “Only by believing that the time is set by God can the disciples go out with both confidence (God is in control) and urgency (God will certainly bring everything to his appointed end).”¹⁷

Since, as Vickers notes, “the disciples preaching will be the only standard of teaching in the kingdom,” it seems Luke intends his readers to connect Christ’s teaching in Acts 1 with his first post-resurrection teachings in Luke 24.¹⁸ Jesus continues to reveal to the disciples that he is Israel’s restoration hope and once again that he, as Goldsworthy comments, “is the goal to which all revelation points, he himself, in his person and acts, is the key to the interpretation of all scripture.”¹⁹

Key Elements of Apostolic Teaching and Preaching in the Book of Acts

The common practice in apostolic preaching and teaching, showcased in nearly every major speech in the book of Acts, is to demonstrate from Scripture that Jesus is the long-awaited messiah (Acts 8:35, 17:2-3, 18:27-28). The apostles are committed to the theological reality of Jesus as the goals and fulfilment of the Old Testament. Therefore, though by no means entirely uniform, the content of their teaching contains many common elements throughout the narratives found in the book of Acts.

¹⁶ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 119. The kingdom came through Jesus, the Messiah’s death and resurrection (Matt 16:21-27); however, it is a kingdom that is “already-not-yet,” meaning that the kingdom is in the process of realizing itself, but there is more to come. Christians should not expect to see everything yet because there is more that needs to be done. The kingdom has been inaugurated, but followers of Christ also wait in anticipation for the consummation—that which is yet to be realized (Luke 21:5-37; Acts 3:18-22).

¹⁷ Vickers, *Acts*, 338.

¹⁸ Vickers, *Acts*, 339.

¹⁹ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 122.

Luke provides his readers with representative speeches and teaching from the apostles. Reflection upon the content of the gospel proclamations Luke includes demonstrates how the gospel was presented to a variety of audiences by the disciples, and how they interpreted and used Scripture in their presentations. Speaking of the apostle Paul in particular, Thompson points out,

In Paul's major speeches we have one each for Jews (13:16-41), Gentiles (17:22-31; cf. also 14:14-17) and Christian leaders (20:18-35). These speeches, in keeping with Luke's practice of selectivity, are *typical* of more general accounts and thus we are to read these as *typical* of the way Paul would present the gospel to a synagogue audience and *typical* of the way he would present the gospel to a Gentile audience with no background knowledge of God's special revelation.²⁰

The speeches in the book of Acts are representative of the typical content and form of the apostolic teaching and preaching. Concerning the content of their message, Thompson adds, "Consistent patterns emerge concerning their focus on God's saving purposes in Christ's death and resurrection so that forgiveness of sins may be offered to all who respond in repentance and faith."²¹ Fifty-seven years ago C. H. Dodd suggested six fundamental categories that shaped the content of apostolic teaching and preaching.²² Vickers summarizes Dodd's proposal:

According to Dodd, their basic message has six parts: (1) the time of fulfillment promised in the OT has come; (2) that time has come in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth; (3) Jesus is now enthroned as king because of his resurrection from the dead; (4) now that Jesus is enthroned, the Spirit is his power at work in the world; (5) Jesus will return and bring this age to its end; and (6) hearers must repent and be forgiven in response to gospel preaching. Examples of this apostolic preaching occur mostly in the first half of the book (2:14-39; 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-44; 13:16-41). Dodd's work identifies the basic themes and theology of the apostolic message and demonstrates how gospel preaching was based on established content.²³

²⁰ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 89.

²¹ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 90.

²² Charles. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 21-24.

²³ Vickers, *Acts*, 321.

Not all the categories listed appear in every speech, as though the apostles were simply using scripted material every time they taught.²⁴ The categories, however, are a helpful and valuable summary that highlight in a succinct fashion the Christocentric focus of apostolic preaching and teaching. This focus is discernable in all the speeches, and, as Thompson notes, this is true, “whether the speech is for those with or without a biblical background” (see Acts 17:18.31-32).²⁵ Further describing this Christ-centered focus of the speeches in Acts, Thompson draws attention to three key features that solidify this claim: (1) “The sermons are historically grounded accounts of the events of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection” (2) these accounts are “theologically oriented,” showcasing, “God’s saving action in history is climaxed in Christ’s death and resurrection,” and (3) “The focus of this Christologically oriented preaching in Acts is on the resurrection.”²⁶

Christocentric Interpretation of Scripture: Brief Examples

In their teaching and preaching, the apostles used the Old Testament to develop the key themes, as Dodd and Thompson have highlighted. The apostles’ use of Scripture is evident in the various contexts in which they taught, regardless of whether they spoke to large crowds (Acts e.g., 2:14-41) or engaged in one-on-one discipleship (e.g., Acts 8:26-40).

In Acts 2, in his sermon at Pentecost, Peter interprets Joel 2 and Psalms 16:8-11, 132:11, 110:1 Christocentrically to bolster his argument. Peter argues that the coming

²⁴ Vickers writes, “Consequently, readers of Acts today need not try to deduce a sermon template from these texts.” Vickers, *Acts*, 321.

²⁵ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 93-94.

²⁶ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 94. Thompson also highlights other important themes in the apostolic teaching and preaching: God-centered, audience-conscious, response oriented, and boldness. See pp. 90-99.

of the Spirit and the prophetic witness of Scripture prove Jesus to be Lord and Messiah; that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated; and the last days have dawned.

The heart of Steven's speech in Acts 7 is that the old covenant, including the law and the temple, have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ; he has eclipsed them.²⁷ Steven delivers a theological retelling of Israel's history in attempt to expose his accusers' misreading of Scripture and the centuries-long pattern of rebellion they were caught in.²⁸ Beginning with the story of God's promise made to Abraham and ending with his promise kept in Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension, Stephen chronicles the end of the old covenant era.

In Acts 8:26-40, Philip capitalized on a divinely orchestrated encounter with a foreigner in the desert to share the good news of Jesus Christ from the Hebrew Scriptures. The puzzled eunuch heard and accepted the gospel and was baptized because of the Holy Spirit working through Philip's Christocentric interpretation of Isaiah 53, and presumably, other Old Testament passages. What better Old Testament passage on redemption could the eunuch have been reading since Jesus saw himself as fulfilling the role of the Servant and clearly passed down this interpretation to his earliest disciples, including Philip (c.f. Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Rom 10:16; 1 Pet 2:21-25)? Longenecker identifies how Luke sets up a parallel between Jesus's use of Isaiah 53 and Philip's exposition based on that same passage in context, and suggests in making this connection that Philip was dependent

²⁷ Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law (see Gal 3:15-4:7; 2 Cor 3:7-18)

²⁸ N.T. Wright summarizes the gravity of Steven's speech well:

It isn't just that they rejected God's Messiah, the Righteous One, and handed him over to be killed by the pagans. In doing so, they were simply acting out, at long range, the pattern of rebellious behavior set by their ancestors. Instead of the recounting of Israel's history becoming a 'story of salvation', as so often, it turns out to be a 'story of rebellion'. Stephen is claiming the high moral ground. He stands with Abraham, with Moses, with David and Solomon, and with the prophets, while the present Jewish leadership are standing with Joseph's brothers, with the Israelites who rejected Moses, and with those who helped Aaron build and worship the golden calf. (N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008], 119, Logos Bible Software)

on Jesus's teaching (cf. also 1 Pet 2:22-25 on 53:4-6, 9, 12).²⁹ A diligent reader whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit will affirm, as Peterson explains, that "there is no one else in history, apart from Jesus of Nazareth, to whom these words can truly be applied."³⁰

Paul's preaching in Acts, of which Luke's account of his exposition in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2-4) is exemplary, contains essentially three elements: (1) Jesus is Israel's promised messiah; (2) he fulfilled, in his suffering and resurrection, Israel's Scriptures; and (3) through his life and living presence with believers through the Holy Spirit, Christians can "experience the reign of God in their lives."³¹ Thus, Paul appears to have aligned his teaching with the interpretive foundation Jesus laid in his post-resurrection teaching (Luke 24:24-27; 44-49; Acts 1:3). There is a direct linguistic connection with the verb "explaining" διανοίγων in Acts 17:3 and "opened"³² διήνοιγεν (the same verb) in Luke 24:32.³³ Luke's use of the same verb across his two-volume work leads readers to conclude that Paul is doing what Jesus did on the Road to Emmaus. Recall Luke 24:32: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" The subject explained from sacred Scripture was the necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Israel's Messiah and Lord (Acts 17:3). Paul understood that just as all roads in the ancient world led to Rome, so all the Bible leads to and through the gospel of Jesus Christ and is to be understood in relation to his person and work as Scripture's center.

²⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 847, Logos Bible Software.

³⁰ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 296, Logos Bible Software.

³¹ Longenecker, *Acts*, 974-75.

³² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. "dianoigo," Logos Bible Software.

³³ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*, s.v. "dianoigōn."

It is true that later in Acts 17:22-33, addressing the crowd on Mars Hill, Paul does not appeal to Scripture to make his argument to the gentile audience. Thompson observes, however, that “the goal of the speech is to present Christ to the audience [see vv. 18, 31-32] . . . even the sermon in Acts 17 is prompted by questions about the resurrection and climaxes with reference to Jesus’s resurrection, which indicates that this was the goal of the sermon from the start (17:18–31; i.e., after establishing the nature of the God of the Bible).”³⁴ Therefore, a quite elaborate biblical framework is in use here. Paul’s sermon in Athens, though it does not quote any Old Testament Scriptures, delivers a BT lesson about the nature and character of God and a polemic against idols from the book of Isaiah (see Isa 42:5, 45:18; 66:1-2, 40:18-20, 55:6), with the purpose of working his way to proclaiming Christ.³⁵ Paul’s audience’s familiarity with the Old Testament does not stop him from proclaiming Christ from Scripture. Whether explicitly by quotation or allusion, or more implicitly, even if the audience does not realize it, Paul’s teaching and preaching has a Christocentric focus that is always reliant upon Scripture for its content.

Summary

Luke 24 sets a trajectory for how all of Scripture is to be read and understood. That interpretive trajectory further developed by the apostles in the book of Acts persuades readers to adopt a Christ-centered hermeneutic based on the content of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. The question then becomes how to implement this perspective while reading and studying the Bible today.

³⁴ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 93-94.

³⁵ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 92. See also David Pao, “Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus,” *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2, no. 130 (2000): 193-97; Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission*, vols. 1-2 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004).

A Christ-Centered Reading of Scripture Today

It is vital for students of God’s Word to understand how the whole of Scripture points to Christ in such a way that, as Charles Scobie writes, “all the varied material in both Old and New Testaments can in some way be related to the plan and purpose of the one God of the whole Bible.”³⁶ There is a clear structure and purpose to biblical revelation. Believing this is the case and accepting it intellectually and logically is one thing, but how does one read the Bible the way the biblical authors do and what hermeneutical principles can be drawn from their teaching? Not all will agree with the interpretation of the passages of Scripture, or the argumentation put forward in this chapter and the previous. The goal, however, has been to convince the reader that learning to read the Bible Christocentrically, imitating these men, is not only worthwhile but is obedient to Jesus. In my estimation, this means Christians must come under the tutelage of BT.

To view the world the way God does—the way the biblical authors and Jesus do—is to embrace, as Goldsworthy expresses, the fact that “the interpretation of reality; of the world, of history, of human nature, is governed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.”³⁷ And, as Hamilton voices, “to catch a glimpse of the world as they saw it is to see the real world.”³⁸ Studying BT is the best way to learn “from the Bible how to read the Bible as a Christian should.”³⁹ Followers of Christ should engage the Scriptures the way Jesus did and the way he taught his disciples and apostles.⁴⁰ Hamilton powerfully

³⁶ Charles H. Scobie, “The Challenge of Biblical Theology,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 42, no. 1 (May 1991): 50-51.

³⁷ Graeme Goldsworthy, “Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 16.

³⁸ James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible’s Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 19, Logos Bible Software.

³⁹ Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 19-20.

⁴⁰ Jesus taught these men how to interpret earlier Scripture, redemptive history, the events, and circumstances they were narrating, addressing, and even experiencing at that time. Learning to read the Bible from Jesus and his authorized spokespersons is to learn, in a sense, a divine perspective. Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 20.

comments on this interpretive strategy that stretches across the canon from Moses to the New Testament authors:

Moses learned and developed the ability to see the world this way from the accounts of God's words and deeds that he received, from his contemplation of what God had done in his own life, and from the inspiration of the Spirit of God. The biblical authors who followed Moses in the Old Testament, whether historians, prophets, psalmists, or sages, learned the interpretive perspective that Moses modeled for them and had it confirmed by other Scripture available to them. Jesus then learned to read the Bible, history, and life from Moses and the Prophets, and he taught this perspective to his followers (Luke 24). What we find in the New Testament, then, is Christ-taught, Spirit-inspired biblical interpretation.⁴¹

The interpretive model the biblical authors display can be emulated by Christians today through learning how to practice BT. BT, by shedding light on the way the biblical authors use key themes, symbols, events, people, and places to summarize and interpret, theologically, the larger story, serves as Hamilton describes, a bridge into the biblical world and the Spirit-inspired authors' shared perspective.⁴²

However, the discipline of BT presents interpretive challenges given the diverse spectrum of how BT is practiced. A primary question for this project then, is, "Which theory and practice of BT is best suited for teaching high school students at RSCA how to read the Bible like Jesus taught his disciples." To respond to and offer an answer to this question, a comparison of current dominant theories and practice of BT will be explored next.⁴³

Modern Theories and Practices of BT

Every biblical-theological task must address certain key issues regarding theory and practice of BT. Klink and Lockett are helpful here and break down the issues into

⁴¹ Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 20-21.

⁴² Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 22.

⁴³ Although a discussion on the history of BT is outside the scope of this project, it significantly informs how BT is practiced today. For a helpful, brief, and general understanding of how BT has developed over time, see Charles H. Scobie, "History of Biblical Theology," in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 11-20.

five categories: (1) the Old Testament connection to the New Testament, (2) historical diversity versus theological unity, (3) scope and source of BT, (4) subject matter of BT, and (5) BT as a churchly or academic discipline.⁴⁴ In this section, given the limited scope of this this project and chapter, only the various ways in which evangelicals do BT (how they address these questions and so form a particular theory of BT) will be discussed.⁴⁵

Andrew Naselli states that evangelical practitioners of BT are committed to essentially three truths: “(1) The Bible is God-breathed, entirely true, and our final authority. (2) We must read any part of the Bible in light of the unified, noncontradictory whole. (3) Biblical theology is a fruitful way to read parts of the Bible in light of the whole.”⁴⁶ Growing out of these three presuppositions Naselli broadly defines how evangelicals do BT with another triplet:

Evangelicals do biblical theology in at least three overlapping ways: (1) analyze the message; (2) trace themes; and (3) tell the story. It’s ideal to study biblical theology in those three steps: (1) analyze the theological message of each book of the Bible and the message of sections of the Bible; (2) trace central themes through the Bible; and (3) see how it all fits together in the grand storyline. If you start by telling the story without having adequately studied the message and central themes, then you will likely fail to explain important aspects of the story. These three ways of doing biblical theology are *overlapping* because they are not completely distinct from each other. Some authors combine all three approaches.⁴⁷

Klink and Lockett propose five types of BT that demonstrate the three categories Naselli proposes through exemplar theologians of each theory and practice: (1) historical description (e.g., James Barr), (2) history of redemption (e.g., D. A. Carson),

⁴⁴ Edward W. Klink and Darian R Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 17-20, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁵ The term *evangelical* in this project, agrees with Al Mohler’s definition: “An evangelical is recognized by a passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ, by a deep commitment to biblical truth, by a sense of urgency to see lost persons hear the gospel, and by a commitment to personal holiness and the local church,” See Al Mohler, *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology, ed. Kevin T. Bauder, Andrew David Naselli, and Collin Hansen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 69.

⁴⁶ Andrew D. Naselli, “What Are Different Ways That Evangelicals Do Biblical Theology?,” in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 101, Logos Bible Software.

⁴⁷ Naselli, “What Are Different Ways?,” 102.

(3) worldview-story (e.g., N. T. Wright), (4) canonical approach (e.g., Brevard Childs), and (5) theological construction (e.g., Francis Watson).⁴⁸ Anytime a taxonomy is proposed, decisions must be made about what is included. As previously mentioned, only the various ways in which evangelicals do BT will be discussed due to the nature of this project. Klink and Lockett propose two types of BT that seem to fall outside of evangelical BT as defined above. Naselli offers two general critiques of Klink and Lockett by asserting that BT types 1 and 5 do not properly qualify as evangelical BT, and BT types 2-4 should be wed.⁴⁹ These critiques will be taken in turn.

First, Orin Martin asserts, on par with Naselli:

When doing biblical theology, what we must presuppose includes the commitment to the Triune God, who speaks truthfully and reliably through his Word; the divine and human authorship of Scripture; the possibility of a “whole-Bible biblical theology”; and the unity of God’s saving plan that progressively unfolds through the Bible’s literary diversity.⁵⁰

Types 1 and 5 identified by Klink and Lockett fail this presuppositional test for several reasons. Type 1 (historical description) fails because it reduces BT to a purely historical and descriptive discipline, denies any essential unity between the Old and New Testaments, and holds to an open canon.⁵¹ Klink and Lockett state that Type 1’s task is to “affirm the exegetical or descriptive nature of biblical theology and deny the theological or normative nature of biblical theology. . . . Biblical theology is past-tense theology, not present-tense or contemporary theology.”⁵² As a BT that is “grounded in historical criticism

⁴⁸ Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 27-182.

⁴⁹ Andrew D. Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” in Merkle, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 19.

⁵⁰ Oren R. Martin, “What Must We Presuppose to Do Biblical Theology?” in Merkle, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 112.

⁵¹ Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 22. For more about Type 1 BT, see Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1:418-32; and James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

⁵² Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 31.

in such a way that faith commitments are off the table,”⁵³ Type 1 BT falls outside the bounds of evangelical BT in its “methodological naturalism.”⁵⁴

Type 5 (theological construction) fails because, on the opposite end of the spectrum, it undervalues historical criticism and historical context placing theological assumptions over exegesis and contemporary application over original meaning and authorial intent.⁵⁵ BT done according to evangelical principles requires that a text be read on its own terms, because, as Don Carson notes evangelical BT, “...seeks to uncover and articulate the unity of all the biblical texts taken together, resorting primarily to the categories of those texts themselves.”⁵⁶ In light of Carson’s statement, practitioners of Type 5 run the risk of lacking concern for the diverse literary and historical contexts of the biblical story and so neglect to relate, as Michael Lawrence says, “...the meaning of the story in the terms of the story itself.”⁵⁷ Rather than moving from what the text “meant” to what it “means”, practitioners of Type 5 swap the order, potentially bridling the biblical text itself from defining its own meaning.

⁵³ Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 32.

⁵⁴ Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 56. Additionally, Steven Wellum highlights the importance of scriptural unity when he says that biblical theology “contends that to read the Bible as unified Scripture is not just one interpretive option among others, but that which best corresponds to the nature of the text itself, given its divine inspiration. As such, [biblical theology], as a discipline, not only provides the basis for understanding how texts in one part of Scripture relate to all other texts, but it also serves as the basis and underpinning for all theologizing.” Stephen J. Wellum, “Editorial: Preaching and Teaching the Whole Counsel of God,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10 (2006): 2-3.

⁵⁵ Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, 139. For more about Type 5 BT, see Daniel J. Treier, “Biblical Theology and/or Theological Interpretation of Scripture?” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 (2008): 16-31; Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); and Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997).

⁵⁶ D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 100.

⁵⁷ Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 88.

Second, weaving types 2-4 together allows for a more robust definition, theory, and practice of evangelical BT that gets closer to the interpretive perspective demonstrated by the biblical authors, and in the apostolic teaching and preaching par excellence. Blending types 2-4 as described by Klink and Lockett, Naselli, DeRouchie, and Martin offer this clear and succinct definition of BT: “Biblical theology is a way of analyzing and synthesizing the Bible that makes organic, salvation-historical connections with the whole canon on its own terms, especially regarding how the Old and New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ.”⁵⁸ For Naselli, DeRouchie, and Martin, “Redemptive history⁵⁹ is a worldview story, and we analyze that story by studying the literary features of the unified canon.”⁶⁰ Thus, views 2-4 described by Klink and Lockett’s, are successfully fused together.⁶¹ Naselli’s three overlapping categories for how evangelicals practice BT can now be further discussed in light of this hybrid “whole Bible” BT theory and practice.⁶²

⁵⁸ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 20.

⁵⁹ A project of this nature does not allow space to account for the diversity of redemptive histories proposed among orthodox biblical theologians. However, what I mean by *redemptive history* is the story of salvation progressively revealed by God in Scripture. That storyline moves from creation to the fall to redemption to consummation in the new creation (new heavens new earth). BT perceives the whole Bible as “describing the progressive unfolding of God’s purposes of salvation for humanity.” Philip E. Satterthwaite, “Biblical History,” in Alexander and Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 43. *Redemptive history* is, as John Frame states, “that series of events by which God redeems his people from sin, a narrative fulfilled in Christ. It is the principal subject-matter of Scripture. Redemptive history constitutes the mighty acts of God that he performs for the sake of his people, those acts by which people come to know that he is the Lord (Ex. 7:5; 14:18).” John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2010), 78, Logos Bible Software.

⁶⁰ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 19- 20.

⁶¹ Scholars who practice this hybrid view proposed by Naselli, DeRouchie, and Martin, in addition to themselves, are Geerhardus Vos, D. A. Carson, G. K. Beale, Stephen G. Dempster, T. D. Alexander, Thomas Schreiner, James Hamilton Jr., Peter Gentry, and Stephen Wellum. See Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 19.

⁶² The canon is the collection of the authoritative, sixty-six books that the church recognizes as belonging to/in the Bible.

In Naselli’s proposal, the practice of BT is about making organic connections in the biblical text bringing to light how the parts relate to the whole.⁶³ He suggests two more aspects that make up a thoroughly evangelical theory and practice of BT: BT makes salvation-historical connections and BT analyzes and synthesizes the whole canon on its own terms.⁶⁴ Naselli notes that, for BT, the text always sets the agenda and priority is given to the literary context.⁶⁵ It is worth quoting his explanation of this prior statement in full:

Biblical theology must analyze and synthesize the whole canon on its own terms because it prioritizes literary context—the role that a Bible passage plays in its immediate context, section, book, corpus, testament, and the whole Bible. It is the result of careful reading—interpreting text after text by analyzing what the human authors and what the divine author intended to communicate. Biblical theology is essentially whole-Bible, redemptive-historical exegesis—analyzing text after text to discern what the authors intended to communicate. Exegesis draws the meaning out of a text, and biblical theology does that for the entire unified and God-breathed Bible.⁶⁶

Naselli’s explanation and summary of what BT seeks to accomplish is helpful, especially for a big picture view that, without ignoring the immediate context of a given text, zooms out to consider the canonical context. In other words, BT, as Geerhardus Vos defines, “is that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible.”⁶⁷ This perspective is essential, but how can students of the Word tangibly set out to do the task of BT and engage in this discipline without feeling it is out of reach?

⁶³ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 20.

⁶⁴ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 25.

⁶⁵ Naselli offers a helpful chart that briefly and clearly explains the differences between biblical and systematic theology readers may find helpful. See Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 25.

⁶⁶ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 26.

⁶⁷ Geerhardus Vos, quoted in Vern Poythress, “Kinds of Biblical Theology,” *Westminster Journal of Theology* 70 (2008): 130. See also Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 13.

Teaching and Practicing BT

BT it is not an ethereal task. When practiced well, BT equips believers with many necessary tools they need to read the Scriptures Christocentrically—to read the Bible the way the Bible wants to be read. This is not to say that BT is all a Christian needs to interpret the Bible well or that exegesis, historical, systematic, and practical theology are of less importance, or do not influence BT practice. No theological discipline is done, nor should be done, in a vacuum. Each of these disciplines, as Martin states, “complements, informs, and shapes the others as we grow in knowing God.”⁶⁸ In the interpretive journey, BT simply pays special “canonical attention to what comes *before* and *after* a text to understand how it fits into God’s final redemptive purposes in Jesus.”⁶⁹ Therefore, BT is vital for combating biblical illiteracy and warrants the special attention it is given in this project, in light of the project’s ministry context and goals.⁷⁰ As a hermeneutical tool, BT takes Jesus’s instructions and the biblical authors’ models of interpretation and offers several categories through which students of the Word can humbly employ to interpret Scripture more faithfully. This is where Naselli’s first category mentioned previously (BT makes salvation-historical connections) comes into play.

For Naselli, BT makes organic connections within the salvation-historical framework in five primary ways:

1. Trace a theme’s salvation-historical progression. For example, trace the theme of *serpent* from Genesis to Revelation.
2. Consider continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. For example, compare and contrast how OT Israel related to the Mosaic law versus how Christians should today.

⁶⁸ Oren Martin, “How Does Biblical Theology Compare to Other Theological Disciplines?,” in Merkle, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 119, Logos Bible Software. See also D. A. Carson, “Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology,” in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 91-92.

⁶⁹ Martin, “How Does Biblical Theology Compare?,” 123.

⁷⁰ RSCA’s new four-year high school Bible curriculum will include hermeneutics, systematic theology, Christian ethics, worldview and apologetics, and evangelism courses. BT is a component, one that was previously missing entirely, from the overall curriculum.

3. Track promise and fulfillment. For example, work through the fulfillment language (πληρώω, *plēroō*, “fulfill”) in the Gospel of Matthew, and connect it to the OT.
4. Trace type and antitype. Typology analyzes how NT persons, events, and institutions (i.e., antitypes) fulfill OT persons, events, and institutions (i.e., types) by repeating the OT situations at a deeper, climactic level in salvation history. For example, in John 6:32–33 Jesus fulfills God’s giving manna in the OT by repeating that event at a deeper, climactic level in the history of salvation.
5. Think through how the New Testament uses the Old. Why do NT authors quote or allude to specific OT passages in the way they do?⁷¹

In like fashion, by condensing Richard Lints’ proposal in *The Fabric of Theology*,⁷² Roark and Cline name five lenses through which one can study any biblical passage with BT in mind, conveniently all beginning with the letter “c”: context, covenant, canon, character of God, and Christ.⁷³ The *context* lens includes two aspects: the historical-culture context and the literary context. That is, what are the facts surrounding the text in its particular moment in history, in what genre is the passage written, and how does it relate to the individual book that houses it and Scripture as a whole? Students of God’s Word must know these things in order to allow the text to set the agenda and shape how they read, interpret, and apply it.

Next is *covenant*. Covenants are the backbone of Scripture. As Roark and Cline note, “God’s plan of salvation is revealed progressively throughout Scripture, culminating with Jesus Christ. The way God reveals this plan develops like a seed growing into a tree. And recognizing where the passage you’re studying fits into this covenantal development is crucial to proper interpretation.”⁷⁴ Correctly identifying where

⁷¹ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’” 20-21.

⁷² Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 259-311. See also Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 118-29. Gentry and Wellum summarize nicely Lints’ “three horizons”: textual, epochal, and canonical in a handful of pages. Lawrence breaks these three horizons down in a helpful and approachable way for all Christians in *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, 37-69.

⁷³ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 88-98.

⁷⁴ Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 92.

a particular passage is on the plotline of redemptive history (creation, fall, judgement, redemption, new creation/consummation) is key.

Third, is *canon*; let Scripture interpret Scripture. In other words, one should look for textual connections between the passage being studied and other parts of Scripture and ask, “What connections does the author make to the rest of the Bible?”⁷⁵ The examination of Luke 24 and the samplings from the book of Acts in this project sought to show how important this concept was to Jesus and the disciples. This lens is a kaleidoscope containing five items to notice while reading canonically: themes, prophecy, typology, promise and fulfillment, and continuity and discontinuity.⁷⁶ The Bible has many *themes* stretching from Genesis to Revelation that warrant thoughtful consideration of how the particular passage one is studying may relate to one of these major themes. *Prophecy* nudges one to consider how the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament and ultimately in Christ, though there may be multiple fulfillments along the way. Hamilton further nuances Naselli’s definition of *typology*:

God-ordained, author-intended historical correspondence and escalation in significance between persons, events, or institutions across the Bible’s redemptive-historical story (i.e., in covenantal context) . . . the biblical authors draw attention by building into their writings repetitions of key terms, quotations of phrases or whole lines, and presenting similar sequences of events. By establishing historical correspondences with earlier biblical material, the biblical authors establish patterns they intend their audience to notice.⁷⁷

In the passages selected from Luke-Acts in this project, there are numerous typological connections focused mostly on the person and work of Christ.⁷⁸ Fourth, is *promise and fulfillment*, which helps one to see that God is always faithful and

⁷⁵ Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 95.

⁷⁶ Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 95-97.

⁷⁷ James M. Hamilton Jr., “How Does Joseph Foreshadow Jesus?,” *The Gospel Coalition*, February 10, 2020, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/joseph-type-foreshadow-jesus/>.

⁷⁸ For example, just in relation to Jesus considered in the text explored in this project: the Temple, the suffering servant, the righteous sufferer, the new greater than David and Moses, the “seed” from Gen 3:15, and the connection with Abraham’s “seed,” the Passover lamb, etc.

trustworthy. Much of the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament and in Christ, but some things are yet to be fulfilled or are only partially fulfilled right now, the *already-not-yet* aspect of Jesus's bringing of the kingdom of God. The final aspect to consider is *continuity and discontinuity*. Viewing a passage with this concept in mind allows readers to see what has changed and what has stayed the same as God progressively reveals himself throughout redemptive history.

The fourth lens is the *character of God*, which does not change. Things to consider when viewing a passage through this lens are questions like: what does it teach or reveal about the nature and character of God and what theological themes are surrounding what is revealed about him?⁷⁹ The final lens is *Christ*. Christians must be committed to a Christ-centered reading of Scripture. Thus, the key question that must continually be asked is: how does this passage relate to the person and work of Christ and the gospel? The "5 C's" offer a BT hermeneutic that is simple to remember, and approachable in its practice.

Back to the Purpose of This Project

The theory and practice of BT proposed by Naselli, DeRouchie, Martin, Roark, and Cline, by combining Klink and Lockett's categories of history of redemption, worldview-story, and canonical approach (BT types 2-4), offer the most robust and tangible way to accomplish the purpose and goals of this doctoral project: to combat the issue of biblical illiteracy at RSCA by equipping students with a greater understanding of BT for their own spiritual growth and witness to the world for the glory of God. The curriculum this project developed as part of RSCA's high school Bible curriculum revamp focuses on teaching students the interpretive perspective Jesus himself used and passed

⁷⁹ Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 97.

down to his disciples. There is not a more practical and important spiritual discipline than learning how to read the Bible well.⁸⁰

The hybrid theory and practice of BT proposed by Naselli, DeRouchie, Martin, Roark, and Cline was adopted to accomplish the task of building a BT curriculum at RSCA. Lessons were built upon this theory and practice because the interpretive perspective this theory and practice of BT produces, best connects students to how the biblical authors read and interpreted Scripture, particularly Jesus Christ himself. As a result of this curriculum, my prayer is that students will learn, echoing Hamilton's words, to "read the world from the Bible's perspective, rather than reading the Bible from the world's," and in turn come to savor the person and work of Jesus Christ revealed in and throughout all of Scripture (Luke 24:44-49).⁸¹

Conclusion

An effort was made in this chapter to justify, from key selections in the book of Acts, the warrant and benefit of learning to apply a Christocentric, apostolic interpretive perspective. In other words, this chapter sought to establish the validity of a Christ-centered biblical-theological interpretation of Scripture. The selections from the book of Acts sought to further reveal, with more specificity, the interpretive perspective Jesus passed along to his disciples. Additionally, a brief analysis of contemporary theories and practice of BT was explored. Lastly, though there is not a single right way to do BT, there

⁸⁰ A couple of advantages are offered RSCA in its current curriculum overhaul. First, in building its own Bible curriculum in house RSCA can create a larger scope and sequence of classes custom tailored to its students and that offers a more robust biblical education than standard boxed curriculums. Second, BT is virtually absent in Christian high school Bible curriculums, which is unfortunate as one's worldview, doctrinal commitments, evangelism, and apologetics (the typical areas of focus in most curriculums) are only as good as their biblical interpretation and reading skills. BT is essential for shaping a Christian worldview, giving literary and historical-cultural context from which one can properly draw timeless theological truths, and defending faith intelligently and in light of the progress of redemptive history. BT should be a priority in any Christian high school Bible curriculum.

⁸¹ Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 23.

are better ways in which to practice BT, so one primary theory and practice was argued for and chosen to develop the high school Bible curriculum for students at RSCA.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This chapter describes the development and implementation of a high school biblical theology (BT) course as part of a curriculum revamp at Rock Springs Christian Academy (RSCA). The goals of this project were to assess the initial understanding of BT among tenth-grade high school students at RSCA, to develop a six-lesson introductory curriculum in BT, and to equip students with a solid knowledge base and skill set to apply BT in their reading of Scripture. First, a general description of the project will be given followed by an overview of the teaching sessions. The results and evaluation of the project will be given in detail in chapter 5.

Project Overview

To address biblical illiteracy at RSCA, this project was brought before the school administration in the spring of 2020. After describing the project, discussing the need for it, and the desired results after implementation, approval was given for the project. The project started Thursday July 1, 2021, when the curriculum began to be developed in a preliminary fashion. Based on informal research through teaching and observing students in Bible classes for a full school year, discussions with students and school administrators, the curricular outline of this project began to take shape. The bulk of the curriculum was built upon the felt needs from the previous school year and the anticipated pre-test answers for the test group.

On Wednesday July 28, 2021, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee approved the research profile for this project, allowing for

official project implementation to commence. Permission slips were given to all eighteen students who would be in the test group on Monday August 16, 2021, to be returned the following week with a parent/guardian signature. All eighteen permission slips were received Monday August 25, 2021, and the Biblical Theology Competency Test (BTCT)¹ was administered to the test group via a Google form that day in class.

All six lesson outlines were adjusted via the data received from the pre-test before being emailed to the expert panel for critique and revision based on the curriculum feedback rubric developed for this course. The expert panel was given ten days to assess the curriculum, and their feedback was received Tuesday September 7, 2021. Adjustments were made to the curriculum based on the panel's feedback.

On Monday September 13, 2021, the first lesson was taught to tenth grade Bible students introducing a new unit of study into the teaching schedule for sophomores at RSCA. Each RSCA student has a Bible class every day for fifty minutes, and all six lessons were taught within a four-week span. The BTCT was readministered at the end of the four-week instructional period, on Thursday October 7, 2021. Finally, students were given the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained throughout the course with a summative BT paper² that was received after their fall break on Wednesday October 15, 2021.

Teaching the Lessons

The six-lesson curriculum in BT was taught within a traditional five-day school week. Each RSCA student has a Bible class every day for fifty-minutes and all six lessons were taught within a four-week span. Wishing not to taint the first administration of the BTCT, no instruction was given on the topic of BT prior to administering the test. Only the instructions for the test, the test itself, and the permission slips were sent home with students for their parent/guardian to review and sign. Therefore, the first teaching session

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 5.

hit the ground running. In the course, students (1) were introduced to the subject of BT; (2) examined the unity of the Bible; (3) discovered the overarching storyline of redemptive history found in Scripture, which is structured around the major biblical covenants and culminates and climaxes in Jesus Christ; (4) learned a gospel-centered and Christocentric hermeneutic; and (5) saw the value BT has for the everyday Christian in their study of the Bible.

Lesson 1: What Is Biblical Theology and Why Is It Important?

The learning outcome for lesson 1 was as follows: by the end of this lesson, students will be able to define BT and discuss its biblical foundation. This lesson began with several questions posed to the class to pique interest in the topic before diving into the content: (1) What if I told you that the Bible teaches us how it wants to be read and interpreted?; (2) What if I told you the apostles in the New Testament teach us an interpretive perspective handed down to them by Jesus Christ himself?; and (3) Would you want to know what that perspective is and to learn how to read and interpret the Bible like Jesus and the biblical authors do? Learning to understand the Bible the way Jesus taught his disciples is to engage in what is known as BT. From here, the lesson focused on the key foundational aspects for the course: (1) defining what BT is and why it is important; (2) how Christians know Jesus is the focal point of Scripture; and (3) the biblical and interpretive foundation for practicing the discipline of BT and the need to cultivate a Christ-centered hermeneutic.

After the introduction, two definitions of BT were presented to the class. The first was more technical, but clear by Andy Naselli, who states, “Biblical theology is a way of analyzing and synthesizing the Bible that makes organic, salvation-historical connections with the whole canon on its own terms, especially regarding how the Old and

New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ.”³ To follow, a second definition was offered from Nick Roark and Robert Cline, which is simpler in form yet is in the same light:

Biblical theology is a way of reading the Bible as one story by one divine author that culminates in who Jesus Christ is and what he has done, so that every part of Scripture is understood in relation to him. Biblical theology helps us understand the Bible as one big book with lots of little books that tell one big story. The Hero and centerpiece of that story, from cover to cover, is Jesus Christ.⁴

After walking through and explaining key terms within these definitions, brief two-to-three sentence examples were also given to increase students’ appetite for the key tools to later be learned in class, such as letting the biblical text set the agenda for study, tracing themes across the canon, noticing continuity and discontinuity between the covenant, tracking promise and fulfillment, typology, and New Testament use of the Old Testament.⁵ BT provides a framework for reading the whole Bible as a unified story that leads to the person and work of Jesus Christ. The previous statement, however, begs the question, “How does one know Jesus is the focal point of Scripture?” The answer is simple: he tells us so.

The lesson transitioned from defining BT and why is important, to the biblical and theological foundation for practicing the discipline of BT with a short exposition of Luke 24:13-32, 44-49. Jesus saw himself and his mission as the climax of the biblical storyline, the central focus of redemptive history and biblical revelation.⁶ Thus, he taught

³ Andrew D. Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’” in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 40 Questions Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2020), 20, Logos Bible Software.

⁴ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 26, Logos Bible Software.

⁵ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 24.

⁶ Richard Gaffin, “Systematic and Biblical Theology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975): 293-94.

his disciples how to read the Scriptures with the reality of his centrality within them.⁷ Luke crafted his narrative of these post-resurrection encounters to inform his readers how Jesus himself claimed to be the authoritative interpreter of Israel's sacred texts, the Old Testament. The Old Testament must be understood in light of the Christ-event because they anticipated his coming, mission, and work. Jesus taught his disciples the necessity of seeing his centrality in all of Scripture. The major takeaway was that the entire Old Testament is an account of the creator God working his plan to redeem humanity—a plan that ultimately culminates in Jesus as he is the star of salvation history, the prophetic hope.⁸

To conclude the lesson, a snapshot of the next lesson was given. Namely, that in the book of Acts, Luke showcases how the apostles and disciples of Christ took to heart his instruction given them in his post-resurrection appearances. Luke's second volume begins to unfold the answers to how and what Jesus taught the disciples regarding biblical interpretation. Essentially, what an apostolic hermeneutic built upon the interpretive foundation laid by Jesus in Luke 24 might look like.

Lesson:2 The Apostles' Christ-Centered Interpretive Perspective

The learning outcome for this lesson and its various parts was as follows: by the end of these paired lesson sessions, students will be able to articulate the common content and themes of apostolic preaching and teaching and how it relates to BT. Lesson 2 consisted of five parts spanning the course of one teaching week. Day 1 began a series of five lessons aimed at demonstrating how Jesus's teaching in Luke 24 transformed how the disciples read, understood, and taught the Bible, and thus gave insight into how to understand and interpret God's Word like they did. These lessons explore how Acts 1

⁷ Todd Miles, "What Is Biblical Theology?," class lecture notes for BT502 (Western Seminary, Fall Semester, 2017).

⁸ Walter L. Liefeld and David W. Pao, *Luke*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2007), 347, Logos Bible Software.

carries the narrative forward and transitions to how Peter, Steven, Philip, and Paul read their Bibles in light Christ's post-resurrection teachings. A brief examination of these key selections from the book of Acts sought to reveal the interpretive framework the apostles built upon on the foundation Jesus laid in his post-resurrection teachings (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 1:3). Further, these passages bear witness to four different men in four different contexts, employing the same Christocentric understanding of Scripture in their teaching to proclaim the gospel.

Part 1: Jesus (Acts 1:1-8). This lesson began with three review questions regarding the previous lesson that students answered in small groups.⁹ A short exposition of Acts 1:1-8 was taught with special attention was given to the reality that it is not just Luke 24 where Jesus reshapes the disciples' interpretive perspective, but for forty days before he ascends into heaven as well. The teaching throughout the rest of the book of Acts reflects the hermeneutical transformation the disciples have undergone and how they are trying to get their first-century audience and people today to read and understand the Scriptures. Attention was also given to Dodd's summary of the six fundamental categories that shaped the content of apostolic teaching and preaching.¹⁰ Introducing students to the common elements of apostolic teaching aimed to provide categories to think about and search for in the following four lessons while exploring the selected passage for the class. This lesson proposed the idea that the hallmark feature of apostolic preaching and teaching was its theological orientation and Christological or gospel-centered interpretation of Scripture.

Part 2: Peter (Acts 2:14-41). This lesson began with a brief review of the previous lesson, asking students to summarize the main idea, recall Dodd's six categories,

⁹ See appendix 3.

¹⁰ Charles. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 21-24.

and why it would be helpful in dissecting the selected passages in the book of Acts in subsequent lessons. Following this introduction, a brief exposition was given on Acts 2:14-41. Peter interprets four short passages of Scripture (Joel 2; Ps 16:8-11; 132:11; 110:1) and faithfully connects them to the person and work of Christ that his audience may see how the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ changes everything, especially how one is to interpret the Word of God this side of the cross. As Jesus said in John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” Peter argues that the coming of the Spirit and the prophetic witness of Scripture prove Jesus to be Lord and Messiah, that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, and the last days have dawned. An effort was made to highlight Peter’s use of the Old Testament and how he connects the Christ event with the prophecy and fulfillment paradigm.

Part 3: Stephen (Acts 7:2-53). This lesson began with three review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.¹¹ Transitioning from a time of review and reflection, students were given a brief overview of the context and development within the narrative from Acts 3 through the first part of Acts 8, and background information on Stephen. These chapters recount the gospel in Jerusalem, which is met with mixed results of acceptance and hostility and culminates in the martyrdom of Stephen. The heart of Stephen’s speech in Acts 7 is that the old covenant, including the law and the temple, have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ; he has eclipsed them.¹² Stephen delivers a theological retelling of Israel’s history to expose his accusers’ misreading of Scripture and the centuries-long pattern of rebellion in which they were

¹¹ See appendix 5.

¹² Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law (see Gal 3:15-4:7; 2 Cor 3:7-18).

caught.¹³ Beginning with the story of God’s promise made to Abraham and ending with his promise kept in Jesus’s death, resurrection, and ascension, Stephen chronicles the end of the old covenant era.

More time was spent on Stephen’s speech than the other passage because it is exemplary in that it contains all the key elements this course desired to instill in participants. Earlier, BT was defined this way: “Biblical theology is a way of analyzing and synthesizing the Bible that makes organic, salvation-historical connections with the whole canon on its own terms, especially regarding how the Old and New Testaments progress, integrate, and climax in Christ.”¹⁴ After reading this description again, this question was posed to the students: “Does this definition accurately describe how Stephen uses the Scriptures in Acts 7?” Recalling from chapter 3 of this work, Andy Naselli offers five primary ways BT makes organic connections within the salvation-historical framework:

1. Trace a theme’s salvation-historical progression. For example, trace the theme of *serpent* from Genesis to Revelation.
2. Consider continuity and discontinuity between the covenants. For example, compare and contrast how OT Israel related to the Mosaic law versus how Christians should today.
3. Track promise and fulfillment. For example, work through the fulfillment language (*πληρώω*, *plēroō*, “fulfill”) in the Gospel of Matthew, and connect it to the OT.
4. Trace type and antitype. Typology analyzes how NT persons, events, and institutions (i.e., antitypes) fulfill OT persons, events, and institutions (i.e., types) by repeating the OT situations at a deeper, climactic level in salvation history. For example, in John 6:32–33 Jesus fulfills God’s giving manna in the OT by repeating that event at a deeper, climactic level in the history of salvation.
5. Think through how the New Testament uses the Old. Why do NT authors quote or allude to specific OT passages in the way they do?¹⁵

¹³ N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 119, Logos Bible Software.

¹⁴ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 20.

¹⁵ Naselli, “What Do We Mean by ‘Biblical Theology?’,” 20-21.

Working from top to bottom through Naselli’s framework, students were shown how these elements are present in Stephen’s speech. First is *tracing themes*. There are several themes Stephen highlights in Acts 7: (1) God’s sovereign choice of his people; (2) promise and fulfillment; (3) God’s salvation of his people, which is always linked with judgment¹⁶; (4) Israel’s rejection of God and his actions on their behalf; and (5) the temple.¹⁷ Second is *continuity and discontinuity*. The heart of Stephen’s speech is that the old covenant, including the law and the temple, have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Third is *promise and fulfillment*. The prophets of Israel foretold the coming of the “Righteous One” (v.52; c.f. Acts 3:14) who is the “prophet like me” Moses prophesied would come (v. 41, c.f. Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22), Jesus, whom Stephen’s hearers “betrayed and murdered” (7:52).¹⁸ Fourth is *typology*. Joseph is portrayed by Stephen typologically as a rejected deliverer figure as is Moses and the prophets, culminating ultimately in the anti-type Jesus Christ as “the” rejected deliverer figure.¹⁹ Fifth is the *New Testament use of the Old Testament*. Although only two explicit citations from the Old Testament come in 7:42, 48, Marshall comments, “Stephen’s lengthy speech contains one of the most dense webs of OT material in the NT.”²⁰

This exploration of Stephen’s speech gave students a powerful example of how BT should and can be done with all major BT tools present and that were taught later in the course. Students were able to see that the skills this course eventually taught them came right out of the Bible itself.

¹⁶ See James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

¹⁷ Brian J. Vickers, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *ESV Expository Commentary*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 399, Logos Bible Software.

¹⁸ Vickers, *Acts*, 320.

¹⁹ Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1*, 110-13.

²⁰ I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 556, Logos Bible Software.

Part 4: Philip (Acts 8:26-40). This lesson began with five review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.²¹ Transitioning from a time of review and reflection, students were given a brief overview of the context and development within the narrative from the previous lesson to the latter half of Acts 8. Students were then asked to read silently Acts 8:26-40 and Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and directed to write down any similarities they could find. Following their self-exploration, a brief exposition of Acts 8:26-40 took place. In this passage, Philip capitalized on a divinely orchestrated encounter with a foreigner in the desert to share the good news of Jesus Christ from the Hebrew Scriptures. The puzzled Eunuch from Ethiopia heard and accepted the gospel and was baptized because of the Holy Spirit working through Philip’s Christocentric interpretation of Isaiah 53, and presumably other Old Testament passages. Special attention was given to the similarities between Philip and Jesus’s use of Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts. Also highlighted for students was how Stephen’s interpretive perspective, his use of BT, was used by God to bring salvation to this Gentile traveler who became one of the first converts to Christianity outside of Jerusalem.

Part 5: Paul (Acts 17:1-4). This lesson began with four review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.²² Transitioning from a time of review and reflection, students were given a brief overview of the context and development within the narrative from the previous lesson up to Acts 17. A brief exposition of Acts 17:1-4 was given after the context was set revealing how Paul understood that just as all roads in the ancient world lead to Rome, so all of the Bible leads to and through the gospel of Jesus Christ and is to be understood in relation to his person and work as Scripture’s center. Special attention was given to exposing how what

²¹ See appendix 5.

²² See appendix 5.

Paul did in Thessalonica in Acts 17 was what Jesus did on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Additionally, the three essential elements Longenecker proposes that are in Paul's speech were brought into focus for the students: (1) Jesus is Israel's promised messiah; (2) He fulfilled, in his suffering and resurrection, Israel's Scriptures; (3) through his life and living presence with believers through the Holy Spirit, Christians can "experience the reign of God in their lives."²³

After concluding teaching on Acts 17, a brief explanation was given for why an entire week of class was spent studying exemplary passages of the disciples and apostles of Christ engaging in the discipline now known as BT. The goal was to convince students that learning to read the Bible Christocentrically, imitating the apostles, is not only worthwhile but is obedient to Jesus. It also means Christians must come under the wing of BT.

Lesson 3: The Storyline of Scripture

The learning outcome for this lesson was as follows: by the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain the message of the gospel and trace out the overarching storyline of Scripture. This lesson began with three review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.²⁴ Transitioning from a time of review and reflection, the trajectory for the lesson was explained. The Bible tells a story of creation, fall, judgement, redemption, and consummation or new creation. This story might not be readily apparent from the beginning, but the unity of the story, the flow of the story, must be perceived from the standpoint of its climax which is the gospel, the Christ event. Not just the words of Jesus and the apostles, but the very way the narrative is told, points to Jesus. To demonstrate this reality, the class was led through a brief look

²³ Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 974-75, Logos Bible Software.

²⁴ See appendix 5.

at Matthew 1. Matthew 1 points to both the Jewishness of Jesus and his position as the heir of David. He comes as the answer to a problem; an answer to an anticipation developed from the earliest pages of Scripture.²⁵ As theologian John Goldingay summarizes, “As well as understanding Christ in light of Old Testament story, Matthew understands the Old Testament story in the light of the Christ event.”²⁶

The metanarrative of Scripture was then explained using the redemptive historical timeline and its categories from primarily two graphics created by Dan Kimball²⁷ and Robert Cheong,²⁸ as well as showing students the Bible Project video on the storyline of Scripture.²⁹ Following these activities, the class concluded with taking students through the gospel presentation paradigm of God, Man, Christ, and Response, and showing them how to understand and share the message of the gospel from the viewpoint of the redemptive historical timeline presented previously in the class session.³⁰

Lesson 4: The Major Biblical Covenants

The learning outcome for this lesson and its various parts was as follows: by the end of these paired lesson sessions, students will be able to define the concept of a biblical covenant and explain how the various covenants relate to and interact with one another and carry redemptive history forward. The first of four class sessions began with

²⁵ Miles, “What Is Biblical Theology?”

²⁶ John Goldingay, “The Old Testament and Christian Faith: Jesus and the Old Testament in Matthew 1-5, Part 1,” *Themelios* 8, no. 1 (1982): 5-6.

²⁷ Dan Kimball, *How (Not) to Read the Bible: Making Sense of the Anti-Women, Anti-Science, Pro-Violence, Pro-Slavery and Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 44.

²⁸ Robert Cheong, *Restore: Knowing and Experiencing God through His Story* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2020), 34.

²⁹ Bible Project, “The Story of Scripture,” accessed February 23, 2021, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/the-story-of-the-bible>.

³⁰ 9Marks, “What Is the Gospel?,” accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>.

six review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.³¹ Transitioning from a time of review and reflection, a quick recap of the previous lesson was given before focus shifted to the importance of having a basic understanding of the major biblical covenants.

Session 1: The concept of covenant. The first class session focused on the concept of covenants in the Bible, offering two definitions. The first comes from Peter Gentry and Steven Wellum: “A covenant is an enduring agreement which defines a relationship between two parties involving a solemn, binding obligation(s) specified on the part of at least one of the parties toward the other, made by oath under threat of divine curse, and ratified by a visual ritual.”³² The second is offered by Tom Schreiner who writes that “covenant” is the Bible’s term for “a chosen [as opposed to natural or biological] relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other.”³³ These definitions were unpacked with the students drawing similarities and differences they saw in various relationships present in culture and society today. Attention was then placed on how students would see by the end of these class sessions how the biblical covenants are the backbone of redemptive history. To conclude the teaching session, students were shown the Bible Project video on the biblical covenants as a foretaste of the next three lessons.³⁴

Sessions 2p–5: A survey of the major biblical covenants. Each of the four sessions began with a short review of key concepts and terms from the previous lesson

³¹ See appendix 3.

³² Peter Gentry and Steven Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 48-49, Logos Bible Software. Adapted from Daniel C. Lane, “The Meaning and Use of the Old Testament Term for ‘Covenant’ (*b^erît*): with Some Implications for Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology” (PhD diss., Trinity International University, 2000).

³³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 13, Logos Bible Software.

³⁴ Bible Project, “Covenants,” accessed February 23, 2021, <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/covenants/>.

before transitioning into the new teaching material. The goal of these paired teaching sessions was to demonstrate that throughout the Bible, beginning in the book of Genesis, God established relationships with specific people at specific times by means of covenants, and these covenants drive the overarching storyline forward. As Jason DeRouchie rightly notes, “It is through the covenants that God reverses the ruinous effects of sin and introduces his saving reign into the world.”³⁵ Thus, a survey of each major biblical covenant, its basic components and contribution to redemptive history, was presented. The major biblical covenants with the key passages and verses that were read and studied through included: (1) the Adamic-Noahic (Gen 1-3; 9:8-17); (2) the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-14); (3) the Mosaic (Exod 19–25); (4) the Davidic (2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17); and (5) the new covenant (Jer 31:27-34; Ezek 36:24-28; Matt 26:27-30). The final class session concluded by highlighting crucial takeaways for the week: how Jesus fulfills all five covenants and how someone can enter into the new covenant today. These are two crucial things BT helps students see with greater clarity.

Lesson 5: Biblical Theology Tools

The learning outcome for this lesson and its various parts was as follows: by the end of these paired lesson sessions, students will be equipped with the Bible study tools they need to interpret Scripture Christocentrically, like Jesus taught his disciples. The first of the five teaching sessions began with six review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.³⁶ Transitioning from a time of review and reflection, the trajectory for the lesson was explained, noting that all the foundational pieces had been laid and it was time for the more explicitly

³⁵ Jason DeRouchie, “What Is a Biblical Theology of the Covenants?,” in Merkle, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 215.

³⁶ See appendix 5.

practical application part of the course: how to do BT when reading Scripture and how to recognize its interactions with hermeneutics.

These five teaching sessions relied heavily upon the condensed work of Richard Lints' proposal in *The Fabric of Theology*,³⁷ that Roark and Cline produced in their book *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*. They name five lenses through which one can study any biblical passage with BT in mind: context (historical and literary), covenant (five major covenants), canon (themes, prophecy, typology, promise/fulfillment, and continuity/discontinuity), character of God, and Christ.³⁸ The five lenses are briefly explained in chapter 3 of this project.³⁹ Essentially, the spotlight was primarily on each individual lens for one class session each, except for the "canon" lens, which took two sessions. Students took a deep dive into the various aspects of these lenses through guided Scripture reading and interpretation.⁴⁰

In summary, during these five teaching sessions, students were shown that the the "5'C's" are used in biblical interpretation to explore two categories: study tools and storyline tools.⁴¹ One is a microscope, the other a drone. Study tools focus a reader's interpretation on understanding the context of any passage and the author's original intent, a microscope view. The storyline tools help the reader see where a text fits into redemptive history and how each individual text contributes to the entire canon of Scripture, which has its climax in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the drone footage.

³⁷ Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 259-311.

³⁸ Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 88-98.

³⁹ See chap. 3 of this project under the section titled "Teaching and Practicing BT" for further description.

⁴⁰ Commonly misinterpreted passages of Scripture were explored, main themes were traced, and basic skills for how to find historical and literary context were taught by asking simple investigative questions to ascertain the material. Also, examples of typology were developed, and patterns of promise and fulfillment were given significant time of study.

⁴¹ Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 88.

Lesson 6: BT Workshops

The learning outcome for this lesson and its various parts was as follows: by the end of these workshops, students will be able to apply the foundational principles of BT to interpret passages of Scripture in personal Bible study. The first of the five teaching sessions began with five review questions regarding the previous lesson that students were required to answer in small groups.⁴² Transitioning then from a time of review of the “5 C’s,” students were assigned passages of Scripture to, as individuals, investigate using the “5 C’s.” Students were given thirty minutes per passage. The remaining class time consisted of students sharing their findings, and large group discussion to ensure accurate interpretation, understanding, and to offer responses to any questions that arose. In the first two class sessions students dissected 1 Samuel 17 and Proverbs 2:1-6. In sessions 3 and 4, students analyzed Luke 4:1-13 and Colossians 1:12-14. Conclusion to the course came when the BTCT was readministered at the end of the four-week instructional period, on Thursday, October 7, 2021. Finally, students were given the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained throughout the course with a summative biblical theology paper that was received after their fall break on Wednesday, October 15, 2021.

Conclusion

This project was implemented through fifteen weeks of preparation and implementation. As both formal and informal feedback from participants began to come in, it was clear they by and large appreciated and found this course useful. The research data in chapter 5 demonstrates this project was successful in accomplishing its goals. The process was enjoyable and enriching. It is my prayer that the content of this course will bear fruit in the lives of students for years to come and will be utilized as a vital piece of the overall high school Bible curriculum at RSCA.

⁴² See appendix 5.

CHAPTER 5
EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT
AND REFLECTIONS

Introduction

This final chapter evaluates the purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses of the ministry project detailed in the previous chapters to assess its overall effectiveness. It also contains some ways in which this project might have been improved during its development and implementation phases, as well as several theological and personal reflections regarding the project. The following analysis and evaluation show that this project made a statistically significant difference in students' knowledge of and ability to use biblical theology (BT) while reading Scripture.

Evaluation of the Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a high school biblical theology course as part of a curriculum revamp at Rock Springs Christian Academy (RSCA). RSCA recognized the necessity for a high school's Bible curriculum overhaul that included instruction in the foundational discipline of BT to combat biblical illiteracy among its student population. This task required teaching students to learn how to see the big picture design of the creator God in his Word, and how each individual passage relates to the entire canon of Scripture. Instruction in BT is foundational for everything else the school desires to teach as part of its curriculum revitalization because it teaches students to read and understand the Bible how it demands and intends itself to be read so that students can engage with the world more faithfully and with greater confidence.

There is hardly anything more practical and important for the Christian life than learning how to read and interpret the Bible well. This is particularly true for the western

church's young people who exist in a world of ever-changing cultural trends and norms. Their world, emersed in social media, endless apps, and virtual reality resembles a "choose your own adventure book" concerning truth and morality. That is why a more robust hermeneutic is required to combat the competing narratives that rear their heads at ultimate reality and truth portrayed in Scripture. It is only through coming to realize that the Bible, in telling one unified story that culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ, tells a more beautiful, lifegiving, and satisfying story and portrayal of what is ultimate reality, that this world begins to lose its grip on human hearts. It is not by becoming an expert of the counterfeit that the real is recognized; rather, it is by constant immersion in the truth that the forgeries are revealed for what they are.

It was one of the goals of this course in BT to saturate students in the story of Scripture so that they would begin to discern how the gospel of Jesus Christ changes the way God's people read their Bibles, especially the Old Testament. To say it another way, this project, through the power of the Holy Spirit, opened the eyes of RSCA students to see how, as the subtitle to Sally Lloyd Jones' *Jesus Storybook Bible* puts it, "Every story whispers His name."¹ The emphasis on this interpretive commitment was an essential piece of this project. As the data revealed, a verifiably significant step was taken in the right direction through the development and implementation of this ministry project.

Evaluation of the Goals

There were three necessary goals for the purpose of this ministry project. These goals reflect a progression of the steps taken to grow RSCA students in their understanding of biblical theology. This section offers an evaluation of each goal that guided this project and sought to make it meaningful and effective.

¹ Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Page Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids: Zondervankidz, 2007).

Goal 1: Assess Initial Understanding of BT

The first goal was to assess the initial understanding of BT among high school students at RSCA. To accomplish this, the Biblical Theology Competency Test (BTCT) was developed.² The purpose of this instrument was to assess the BT aptitude of students before and after taking the six-lesson course in BT. This research instrument employed a mixed methods approach which, as Creswell and Creswell state, “involves combining or integration of qualitative and quantitative research data in a research study.”³ A mixed methods approach allowed for the use of both open-ended responses and closed-ended survey or questionnaire-style instruments within the research study. This research project used a convergent mixed methods approach.⁴ Data of both varieties (qualitative and quantitative) were collected at the same time and then integrated in the interpretation of the results in both the pre- and post-tests. A convergent mixed methods approach was chosen to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the research questions, or as Lesley Andres puts it, to “strengthen the explanatory power of the findings,” to more accurately gauge students’ competency in BT prior to and after curriculum design and implementation.⁵

The pre-course test gauged each student’s initial understanding and familiarity with the discipline of BT in several ways.⁶ In the test are general background questions, open-ended short answer questions, and a more pointed seventeen-statement survey that

² The BTCT in appendix 1 was adapted into a Google form.

³ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018), 14. See also Timothy C. Urdan, *Statistics in Plain English*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 4; and Lesley Andres, *Designing and Doing Survey Research* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 45-46.

⁴ Creswell and Creswell, *Research Design*, 14, 217-21.

⁵ Andres, *Designing and Doing Survey Research*, 46.

⁶ Some general background information, church and denominational affiliation, and practice of spiritual disciplines were attained by means of the survey as well.

utilizes a six-point Likert scale.⁷ The six-point Likert scale allowed for a numeric value to be assigned to students' responses on a symmetrical scale that captures their agreement or disagreement with a particular statement. Further, as opposed to a five-point Likert scale, a six-point scale does not allow participants to have an "easy out" option with "neutral" as an option on the scale. Rather, on a six-point Likert scale there are an equal number of positive and negative statements, allowing for better data collection.

This goal was measured by administering the BTCT to tenth grade high school students at RSCA via an online Google form. This goal was considered successfully met when all eighteen permission slips were received Monday, August 25, 2021, and the BTCT was administered to the test group and completed by students that day in class. The survey data was collected and analyzed to yield a clearer picture of the current biblical literacy rate among RSCA students from which to build the teaching curriculum. The results showed that a considerably small number of students were familiar with the term or discipline of BT, and even more alarming could not offer a biblical definition of the gospel. Data from the pre-test was considered alongside the data from the post-test under assessment of the third goal. It is, however, interesting to note here a simple observation from the background questions section of the BTCT relating to the correlation between church attendance, daily Bible reading, and familiarity with BT expressed in figures 1 and 2.

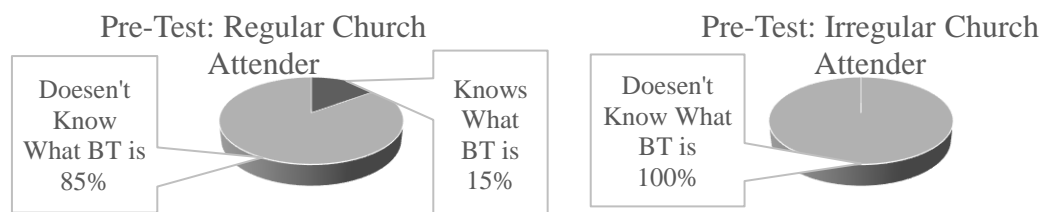


Figure 1. Church attendance and knowledge of BT

⁷ Five items were only for the post-test.

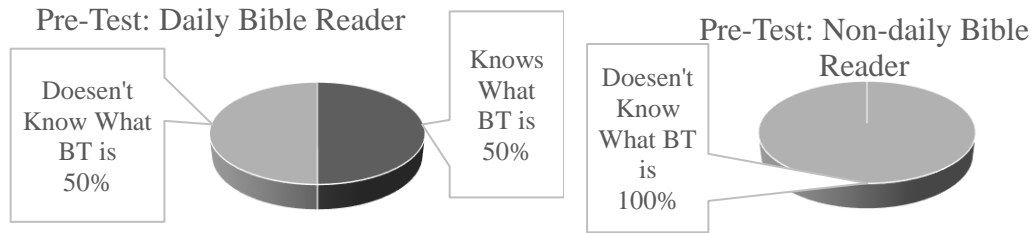


Figure 2. Daily Bible reading and knowledge of BT

Goal 2: Building the Teaching Curriculum

The second goal was to develop a six-lesson introductory curriculum in BT. Chapter 4 details the preparation, development, and implementation of the curriculum at RSCA from pre-planning to completion. This course took place in an academic setting and was implemented in a high school classroom as part of RSCA's larger Bible curriculum. The course curriculum was designed to increase the understanding of BT and develop a Christocentric hermeneutic amongst students at RSCA. This goal was measured by an expert panel of four individuals consisting of one of RSCA's principals and instructional lead teacher, two local church pastors, and one faculty professor of BT who utilized a rubric to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.⁸ The expert panel was given ten days to complete their evaluation prior to course implementation.

This goal was considered successfully met when the set minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion exceeded the sufficient level upon receiving panel member feedback. Although the curriculum passed the criterion without needing adjustment, the teaching material still underwent revision to strengthen the overall curriculum based on the panel's feedback. Some reviewers suggested working more student engagement into

⁸ See appendix 4. RSCA's principal and instructional lead teacher has a master's degree in education. One of the pastors who served on the panel has been in full-time ministry for over twenty years and is a Doctor of Ministry student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The other pastor who evaluated the curriculum is a youth minister and former Christian school Bible teacher pursuing a Master of Divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The faculty member is my doctoral supervisor who is professor of New Testament interpretation and biblical theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and holds a PhD.

some lessons and that certain lessons could be more condensed and should cover slightly less material. These suggestions were taken seriously, and the curriculum was amended to better the teaching material.

Goal 3: Equip Students with Knowledge of and Skill in BT

The third goal was to equip students at RSCA with a solid knowledge base and skill set to apply biblical theology in their reading of Scripture. The BT curriculum was adopted by RSCA on Monday September 13, 2021, when the first lesson was taught to Bible students, introducing a new unit of study into the teaching schedule for sophomores. The BTCT was readministered at the end of the four-week instructional period, Thursday, October 7, 2021. Students were also given the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained throughout the course with a summative BT paper,⁹ submitted after their fall break on Wednesday, October 15, 2021. Chapter 4 details the teaching of the curriculum—what follows is an evaluation of the curriculum’s effect upon student learning. Two measurements were used to assess this goal: re-administration of the BTCT and a BT paper assignment.

Readministering the BTCT and the results. Goal 3 was measured when the BTCT was administered a second time. This took place the day after course completion to measure the change in content knowledge of RSCA students who had taken the course. Although the six general introductory questions in the BTCT were more for personal reference they did yield a couple of noteworthy insights during the pre-test. Figures 1 and 2 show two connections between daily Bible reading and church attendance in relation to a knowledge of BT.

The quantitative part of the BTCT consisted of twelve Likert scale items. Goal 3 was successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples, and this portion of the test

⁹ See appendix 5.

demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores: $t_{(17)} = -2.854, p = .0055$. During the quantitative data analysis, however, one student scored drastically lower than all other participants. This same student also stood out as having a bias in the qualitative data analysis. The student revealed in their responses to the short answer questions in the BTCT that they identified as an atheist, did not believe the Bible to be authoritative, unified, or true in any sense and did not desire to learn or practice BT. Further, after taking the BTCT the first time this student approached me and proceeded to tell me in person what I later found their survey answers to reveal. Additionally, this individual's mean pre-test score was lower (39) than their post-test score (36) and was over two standard deviations away from the mean test score. Given that the individual did not give a quality effort during the teaching sessions or when taking the BTCT, my supervisor and I decided to run a new test excluding this student's scores from the t -test. Upon rerunning the numbers, the new t -test for dependent samples demonstrated a greater positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores than the first test: $t_{(16)} = -3.039, p = .0039$. Tables 1 and 2 show the full results from the two t -tests.

Table 1. First t -test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-Test Results	Post-Test Total
Mean	51.11111111	56.61111111
Variance	46.10457516	44.25163399
Observations	18	18
Pearson Correlation	0.260172619	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	17	
t Stat	-2.853899548	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.005491697	
t Critical one-tail	1.739606726	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.010983393	
t Critical two-tail	2.109815578	

Table 2. Second *t*-test: Paired two sample for means

	Pre-Test Results	Post-Test Total
Mean	51.82352941	57.82352941
Variance	39.27941176	18.90441176
Observations	17	17
Pearson Correlation	-0.148004068	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	16	
t Stat	-3.039364382	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.003905231	
t Critical one-tail	1.745883676	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.007810462	
t Critical two-tail	2.119905299	

Goal 3 was also measured by qualitative analysis of the BTCT’s open-ended questions. These questions were crucial to the study as participants cannot hide what they truly know or as easily answer according to what they think the favorable responses should have been. Key themes from participant answers were documented and used to inductively map the data. The raw data drove tagging, classification, and coding during the organizational process. For simplicity’s sake, the five short answer questions that appear in the BTCT were funneled into two categories. Student responses were judged according to their ability, in their own words, to define certain concepts and terms in alignment with the way the terms and concepts were defined in the teaching sessions. The figures that follow display the BTCT’s qualitative data analysis.¹⁰ Students were asked a “yes/no” question, and then asked to explain their answers in 150 words or less. The charts labeled “perceived” refer to each student’s “yes/no” answer, and each chart labeled “actual” refers to the students’ ability to correctly define or explain what they claimed to know in their written response to the prompts. The qualitative data gained from the BTCT showed a

¹⁰ For the short answers, I elected to keep the student whose answers were excluded in the second *t*-test in the data set for the qualitative analysis portion of the BTCT. As noted, the students’ answers are easily recognizable, as they refused to answer most of the qualitative survey questions or simply wrote “n/a” as their response.

significant increase in knowledge and understanding of the key areas of BT the curriculum sought to address. The qualitative data displayed in the figures verifies and compliments the quantitative data above, further bolstering confidence that goal 3 was successfully met. For readability and simplicity, percentages in the charts that follow were rounded up to the nearest 1 percent.

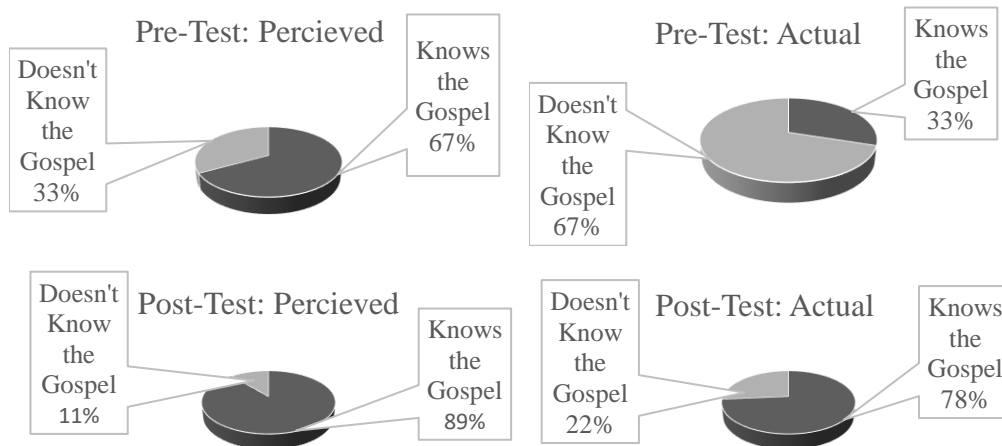


Figure 3. Question 1: What is the gospel?

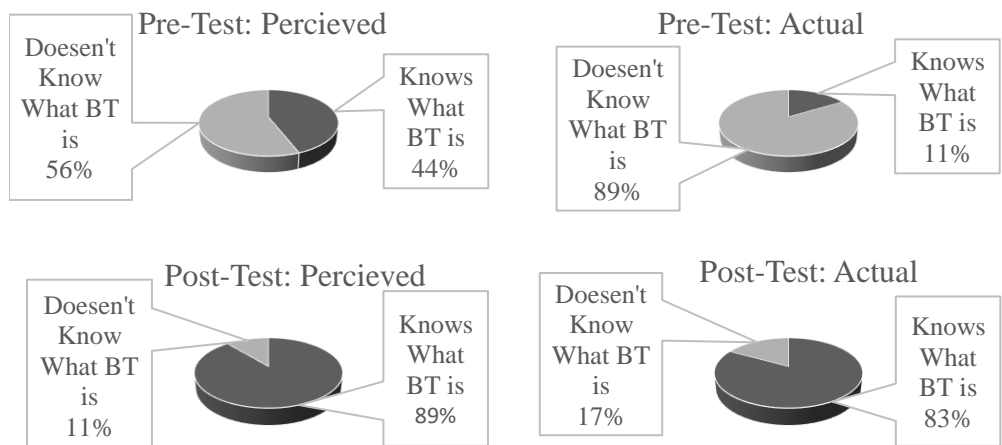


Figure 4. Question 2: What is biblical theology?

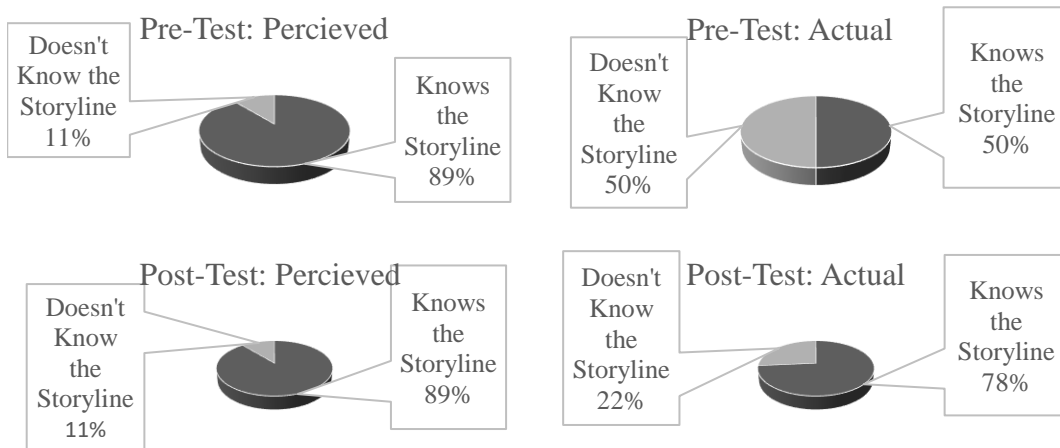


Figure 5. Question 3: What is the storyline of Scripture?

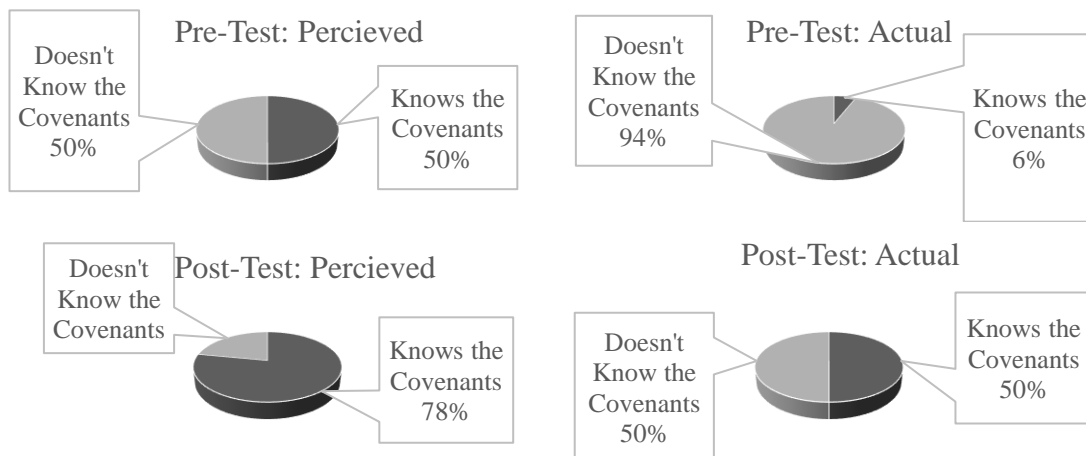


Figure 6. Question 4: What are the major biblical covenants?

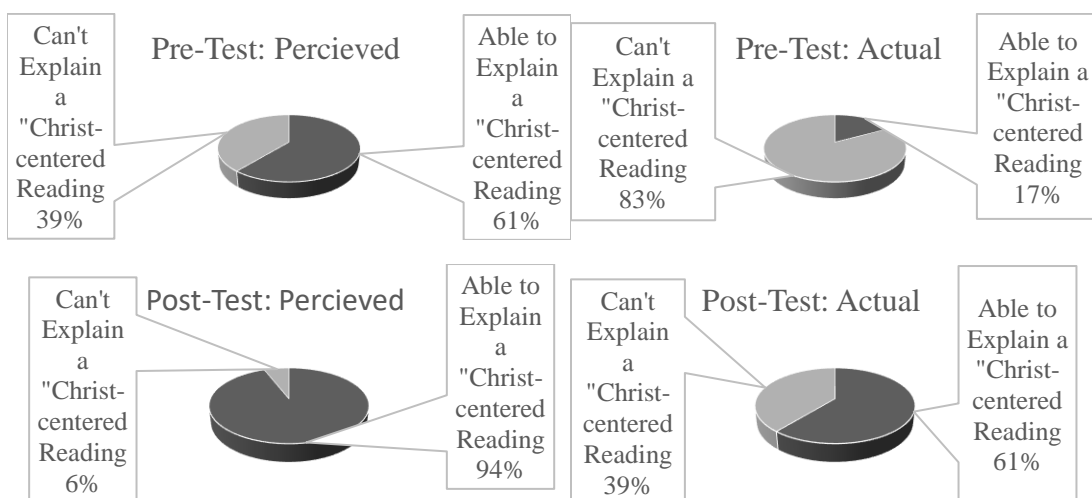


Figure 7. Question 5: What is meant by a Christ-centered Reading of Scripture?

The final piece of the BTCT consisted of a five-piece, post-test-only self-evaluation of how students perceived their own growth after completing the course. Their response displayed in the figures below were an encouragement to read. Percentages were rounded up to the nearest 1 percent for clarity and simplicity.

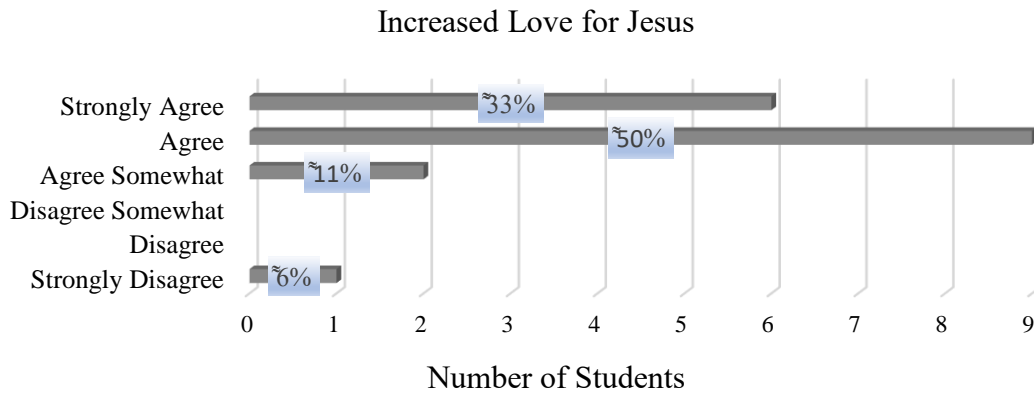


Figure 8. Love for Jesus

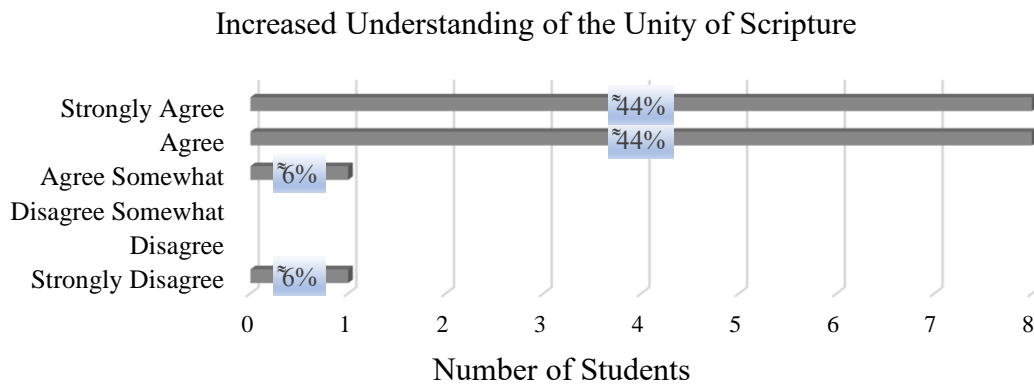


Figure 9. Unity of Scripture

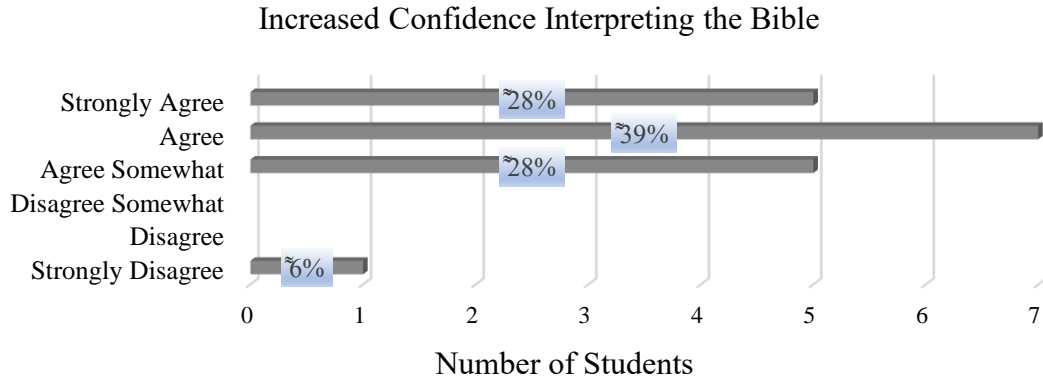


Figure 10. Bible interpretation

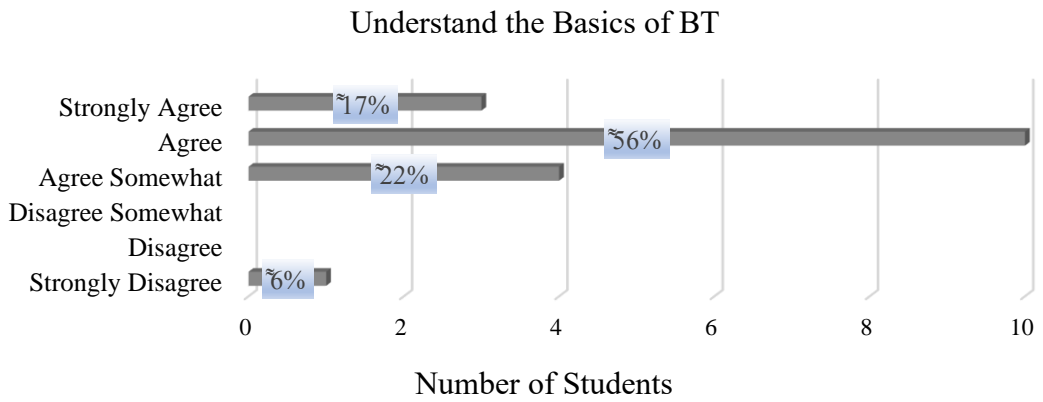


Figure 11. BT basics

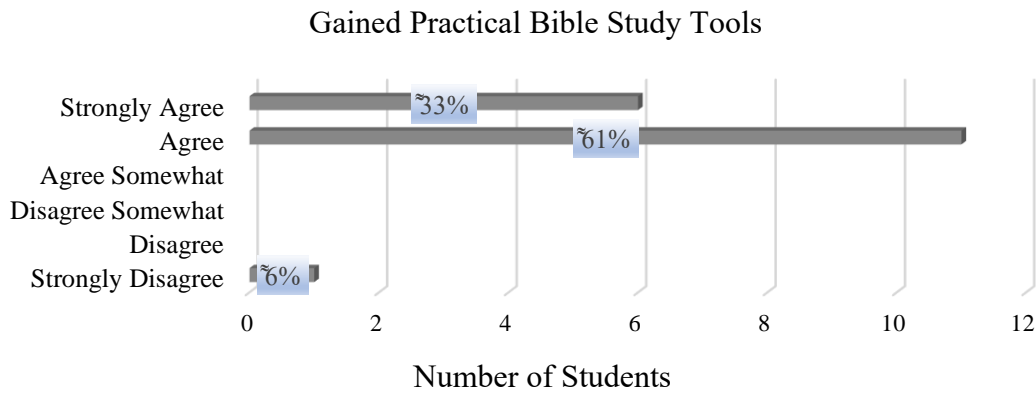


Figure 12. Bible study tools

BT research paper. Additionally, goal 3 was measured by each student’s application of the biblical theology skills learned, through submission of a four to five-

page biblical theology research paper.¹¹ An evaluation of each student's project was completed, and this goal was successfully met when all students submitted their papers and 83 percent of participants met or exceeded the *sufficient* or above level in all skill areas detailed in the evaluation rubric.¹²

Strengths of the Project

Several strengths were identified during the implementation and evaluation process of this project. First, the intervention of this project into the life of the curriculum at RSCA, by God's grace, achieved all three of the stated goals. After teaching the six lessons, the students demonstrated verifiable increases in knowledge and application of BT through the post-test and other post-curricular implementation assessments. Both the qualitative and quantitative data reveal this to be the case.

Second, there was also evidence of an increase of knowledge outside of formal assessment. In discussions that took place during the sessions and outside of the classroom, students, with some frequency, would comment how this BT course was helping them make connections while reading Scripture. They reported how BT had proved useful in other context such as during Sunday sermons at their churches, in their discipleship groups at youth group, in their own personal Bible study, or even devotionals with their families. This was encouraging as the course was designed to foster not only growth in knowledge, but a love for God's Word and practical skills and habits for a lifetime of fruitful Bible study.

Third, students saw how studying the Bible the way it intends for its readers to study it was helpful in their other studies at school. For example, in English and social studies, how stories are crafted and reported matters. Ascertaining the context, authorial

¹¹ See appendix 5.

¹² See appendix 6. As stated in chap. 1, 80 percent of participants must reach the sufficient or above level for the paper assessment to have been considered a success.

intent, patterns, themes, repeated words and ideas of any text matters. Though not a stated goal, but a welcomed outcome, was growth in critical thinking skills and ultimately worldview formation in terms of how to interpret texts well and ask penetrating questions. This is a vastly declining skill, not just in students but in society at large. It seems that for several students, the skills learned and applied from the curriculum began to yield some fruit and encouraged a deeper curiosity about the meaning and significance of things.

Fourth, this curriculum could be adopted by other Christian high schools, youth groups, homeschool parents, or even adult Sunday school classes or small groups. Though it was tailored specifically for the ministry context of RSCA, it travels well and could be adapted easily to various ministry contexts. The curriculum is not so specific that it cannot be taught elsewhere. To read the Scriptures through the interpretive perspective of Jesus and the apostles, to have a gospel-centered and saturated hermeneutical commitment, is vital for any Christian. This curriculum is by no means exhaustive or the ultimate authority on the subject, but it humbly offers an introduction to BT, standing on the shoulders of many theologians who have come before, that could prove useful in certain context for pastors, teachers, and parents alike.

Weaknesses of the Project and What I Would Do Differently

Although this project was successful in meeting the desired goals and many positives arose out of its implementation, it had its weaknesses as well. One weakness regards the variety in teaching methodology. Though the curriculum included class discussions, individual time for reflective journaling, some Bible Project videos, a mixed methods test, and a summative paper assessment, it was still heavily lecture based. If using the curriculum with adults, this would not be as much of a weakness but with teenagers who I had for fifty minutes five days a week, I would consider adding a group or partner project and presentation to break up the delivery of the material. This project would most likely increase the length of the course, but could be a positive addition. My suggestion

for inserting a group project into the curriculum would be within class sessions that dive into the five major biblical covenants. An overview lesson on the covenants could be followed by assigning each group one of the covenants to study and present to the class.

Second, though happy with the thoughtfulness of students' personal journal reflections and encouraged by student answers to daily review questions and discussions about the previous class sessions, another weakness is lack of opportunity to practice BT skills until the week-long workshop sessions and summative paper. Ample examples, illustrations, and teaching took place to equip students with the knowledge base and skills to begin to practice using BT in their daily Bible reading, however, this could perhaps be further enhanced with additional opportunities for students to practice individual skills as they were taught. For example, when approaching the lesson of the "5 C's,"¹³ my suggestion would be to add several short activities where students, after listening to and watching the instructor define terms and show examples, could have an opportunity to practice that one skill with a particular passage of Scripture. Rather than waiting until the workshop week, students could equip themselves with one tool at a time. This may be less overwhelming for some students by gradually resourcing them and providing more opportunities for application as they approach the workshops and paper assignments near the end of the course. This would also increase active student engagement.

Third, the curriculum could be enhanced by not having the restraints of it also functioning as a doctoral project, particularly by extending the course to occupy an entire quarter of the school year rather than a single unit lasting four weeks. This would allow, for example, more integration of reading in class on particular aspects of biblical theology. Lessons could be supplemented with quality reading and book discussions with some of the more accessible works referenced in this project such as Jim Hamilton's *What Is Biblical Theology*, Nick Roark and Robert Cline's *Biblical Theology*, Michael Lawerence's

¹³ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 88-98.

Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church, and select chapters from DeRouchie, Naselli, and Martin's *40 Questions About Biblical Theology*.¹⁴ For an adult group, Graeme Goldsworthy's *According to Plan* and Edward Klink and Darian Lockett's *Understanding Biblical Theology* would be excellent assigned outside reading or potential books for fruitful in-person discussion.¹⁵ Additionally, in an academic setting, this would allow for more projects, papers, or group work to be completed by students along the way that would provide more opportunities for assessment and application of knowledge and skills learned.

Finally, it was out of the purview of this particular project and the ministry needs at RSCA, but an additional chapter and/or further work comparing current high school Bible curriculums and their strong points and insufficiencies would prove fruitful. Brief research and inquiry into the presence of BT in current high school Bible curriculums at the beginning of the research phase for this project showed a near total absence of BT in school curriculums. This project has the potential to fill a gap in curriculums that are currently available to Christian educators, but more research is needed to quantitatively verify my personal findings.

Theological and Personal Reflections

My love for teaching the Word of God and helping others better understand and apply Scripture to their lives motivated this project on building a BT curriculum. My first course in BT with Todd Miles at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, forever changed how I read Scripture and ignited in me an insatiable desire to know God and his

¹⁴ See James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018); and Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

¹⁵ See Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991); and Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

Word. Engaging in the discipline of BT continues to have a transformative influence in my walk with Christ, and I pray it will affect my students now and long into the future in the same way. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, BT brings the unity and beauty of the Scriptures to life in seemingly endless ways. Deeper exploration brings more mystery and fascination, greater clarity, more questions, and “Aha” and “No way!” moments sometimes all wrapped into a single passage. A constant refrain in my own study and use of BT is running headlong into reality and experience of Romans 11:33: “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”

God’s providence has also been evident in several major ways throughout this project. When I began studies at Southern Seminary I was in full-time pastoral ministry, and just a few months before taking project methodology accepted a job teaching Bible and theology classes full-time at a Christian high school that required me to move from Colorado to Georgia. Shifting ministry context was exciting and nerve-racking at the same time. Yet, by God’s grace, the transition of this project from the church to an academic setting went smoothly, and having the schedule of a school teacher allowed for me to graduate a semester early. Further, as this final chapter is being written it seems the Lord is leading me and my family back into full-time pastoral ministry. Several opportunities have presented themselves for me to potentially fill the role of an adult education pastor. We are currently praying and seeking the Lord’s will for us and his church in this.

These past two and a half years have helped me grow as teacher, content creator, disciple maker, and learner. Being critiqued can often be unpleasant, humbling, and helpful at the same time. Often the context and whom one is being critiqued by can make a significant difference as well. Either way, critique is necessary to produce high-quality work. The reviewers for this project were honest and kind. In addition to being in full-time ministry, I grew up with a mom who was in the Air Force, and I played college football, so I am used to constructive (and not so constructive) criticism and critique, so I welcome

it more than I dread it, or feel uncomfortable. Receiving feedback, however, is always a humbling experience, especially to hear that a portion of something I have created does not make sense, needs more work, or needs an axe taken to it! Revision can be grueling especially when opinions conflict, or a strong desire to see what is under scrutiny remain the way it is. Critique is necessary and good, though, because I am not all-knowing and all-wise, I need other brothers and sisters to sharpen and assess my work. The goal of this project was not to prove my own self-sufficiency, but to produce the best project possible to benefit God's people and further his kingdom. Having multiple people critique this work was invaluable in that it brought greater clarity, brevity, and focus to my work. Overall, it helped produce a high-quality end product that I would have been incapable of producing alone. For this, I am grateful!

One of the most challenging aspects of this degree program was its equal emphasis on people-based research and text-based research. Being a teacher and student, I am most comfortable when I am researching a biblical passage or theological topic to present to people or write a paper about, but that was only 50 percent of the doctoral project. For the people-based research aspect of the project, not only did the questions I was asking have to change, but my mindset as well, from teacher to researcher. This mind shift was an adjustment, but learning to view chapters 4 and 5 of this project through this lens transformed how I put my research instrumentation together and designed the curriculum. Having a history and theology educational background as opposed to a social sciences background, much of the people-based research required for this work to be a success was foreign to me. Pastor-theologians, however, must be exegetes of people as well as texts. It is demanded of believers called to "stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb 10:24). Michael Lawson notes, "When theology is applied to education, it most often finds a home in what should be taught rather than how education ought to be

experienced.”¹⁶ Learning to teach students not just content, but doing so in such a way as to cause them to learn was an immensely valuable skill that the Doctor of Educational Ministry degree program at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has inspired me to lean into more.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to develop a high school BT course as part of a curriculum revamp at Rock Springs Christian Academy to combat biblical illiteracy among its students. This was accomplished by designing a curriculum that introduced students to the biblical warrant for and nature of BT as well as its major hermeneutical implications. More specifically, the curriculum sought to equip students with a Christ-centered interpretive perspective. The curriculum was implemented in RSCA’s tenth grade Bible class to eighteen students, and each of the three goals established for this project were successfully met by the intervention.

In chapter 1, this project demonstrated the need to equip students at RSCA with a Christocentric hermeneutic. Chapter 2 provided the biblical and theological basis for biblical theology as a discipline and a particular way the Bible is designed to be read, from Luke 24. Chapter 3 further developed the interpretive foundation laid by Jesus in Luke 24, which was carried forward in the book of Acts. A brief survey of select passages from the book of Acts was then followed by a brief outline and critique of modern theories and practices of BT. Chapter 4 described the details and execution of the project. Chapter 5 evaluated of the project’s purpose, goals, strengths, and weaknesses, concluding that it was successful in accomplishing its purpose and achieving its stated goals. To conclude, several theological and personal reflections upon the project as a whole were given.

¹⁶ Michael S. Lawson, *The Professor’s Puzzle: Teaching in Christian Academics* (Nashville: B & H, 2015), 8.

This project successfully equipped participants with a greater knowledge of BT and the tools necessary to apply that knowledge for years of fruitful and faithful Bible study. I pray this curriculum has a lasting impact in the hearts and minds not only of current, but also future students at RSCA, and to whomever else may find this material helpful in their church or school with high school students or adults. May God receive all the glory for this project and the fruit it produces.

APPENDIX 1

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY COMPETENCY TEST

The following instrument is the Biblical Theology Competency Test (BTCT). In the test are several general questions, open-ended short answer questions, and a more pointed seventeen-statement survey which utilizes a six-point Likert scale. The purpose of this instrument was to assess the biblical theology aptitude of students before and after taking the six-lesson course.

Pre and Post Test

Agreement to Participate

You are being asked to give permission for a minor or member of a vulnerable population under your legal supervision to participate in a study designed to assess knowledge and understanding of biblical theology. This research is being conducted by Caleb Lenard for purposes of a doctoral research project. In this research, a person will be asked a series of questions, both open and closed-ended, to better understand their current knowledge of and familiarity with biblical theology. Any information provided will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will a person's name be reported, or a person's name identified with his or her responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary, and the person you are giving approval to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

By signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the designated minor or member of a vulnerable population to participate in this research if he or she desires.

Participant Name _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Y/N & Short Answer:

General Information Questions

1. Do you understand yourself to be a Christian? Y/N
2. If you answered yes to question 1, how many years have you professed faith in Jesus Christ? _____
3. Have you ever had any formal training in how to interpret the Bible? Y/N
4. Do you read the Bible daily? Y/N
5. Do you pray daily? Y/N
6. Do you attend church at least twice a month? Y/N

Biblical Theology Competency Questions Section #1

1. I can explain the message of the “gospel.” Y/N
2. In 150 words or less describe the gospel message:

3. I am familiar with the term “biblical theology”? Y/N
4. In 150 words or less, explain “biblical theology”

5. The Bible tells one big unified story? Y/N
6. In 150 words or less, explain the main storyline of Scripture. If you don’t think there is a main storyline, why not?

7. I am familiar with the major biblical covenants. Y/N
8. In 150 words or less, explain the concept of a “covenant.” List the major biblical covenants after your definition.

9. I am familiar with the term “Christ-centered” within the context of Bible reading and study methods. Y/N
10. In 150 words or less, what do you think is meant by a “Christ-centered” reading of Scripture?

Biblical Theology Competency Questions Section #2

Directions: Please circle your opinion on the statement using the following scale.

SD = Strongly Disagree

D = Disagree

DS = Disagree Somewhat

AS = Agree Somewhat

A = Agree

SA = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I can confidently apply the teachings of Scripture to my life. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. The Bible instructs Christians how to interpret the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. All of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. The Bible is primarily about changing my behavior. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. Reading Scripture in context is vital for understanding the meaning of a biblical text. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. When reading Scripture, I often notice key repeated themes, ideas, words, patterns, etc. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I can easily identify different kinds of writing in Scripture. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. The Bible progressively reveals God's plan of salvation. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. Biblical theology is important for my spiritual growth. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. Biblical theology is important for my understanding of Scripture. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I can confidently explain biblical theology on a basic level. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I know how to practice biblical theology when studying the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

(Post-Test Only)

1. This course increased my love for Jesus Christ. SD D DS AS A SA
2. This course helped me see the unity of Scripture. SD D DS AS A SA
3. This course helped me become a more confident interpreter of God's Word. SD D DS AS A SA
4. After taking this course, I understand the basics of biblical theology. SD D DS AS A SA
5. This course has given me practical tools for a lifetime of faithful Bible study. SD D DS AS A SA

APPENDIX 2
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY CURRICULUM
TEACHING OUTLINE

This appendix includes the curriculum outline developed for the six-lesson unit on biblical theology at RSCA.

RSCA Biblical Theology Unit Curriculum Outline

Lesson #1: What is Biblical Theology & Why is it Important?

- A study of Luke 24:13-32 and 44-49 will reveal that the Bible teaches Christians how it should be read, Christo-centrally, which is the heartbeat of the apostolic hermeneutic. Sidney Greidanus poses the question, “Where did the New Testament writers, in contrast to their non-Christian Jewish counterparts, get the idea of interpreting the Old Testament from the reality of Christ?”
- Answering his own question, he responds, “Jesus himself taught them to read the Old Testament in this way.”¹ Jesus saw himself and his mission as the focal point of redemptive history and biblical revelation.² Thus, he taught his disciples how to read the Scriptures with the reality of his centrality within them.³
- Missing the point of the Bible’s story produces false gospels and false churches. What we need is a framework for understanding the whole Bible. Biblical theology provides that framework because it guides our reading of the Bible and therefore guards against bad interpretation.
- Biblical theology is an approach to reading the whole story of the Bible while keeping our focus on the main point of Scripture, Jesus Christ. In other words, biblical theology is the scriptural road map that leads us to Jesus.⁴
- Defining Terms
 - *Biblical theology* is notoriously difficult to define, due to the broad and varying practices within the discipline. Biblical theology, however, may be generally understood as the discipline of reading, interpreting, and applying the biblical text the way Scripture itself teaches (Luke 24:24-27, 44-49; John 5:39-40, 45-46; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:16-21). Simply put, by Michael Lawrence, “biblical theology is the attempt to tell the whole story of the Bible as Christian Scripture.”⁵ With a little more specificity, Brian Rosner offers another helpful definition:

¹ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 202.

² Richard Gaffin, “Systematic and Biblical Theology,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975): 293-94.

³ Todd Miles, “What Is Biblical Theology?” class lecture notes for BT502 (Western Seminary, Fall Semester, 2017).

⁴ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 23.

⁵ Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 89.

Biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.⁶

- A *Christocentric hermeneutic*, as a method of biblical interpretation, does not hold that all Scripture is the gospel, but rather all Scripture is related to it, because the gospel is the focal point of biblical revelation.⁷ In other words, what preceded Christ in the Old Testament and what comes after him in the New Testament finds its meaning and fulfillment in and through him.⁸ Essentially, a Christocentric hermeneutic is the product and ultimate skill learned from practicing sound biblical theology. This way of interpreting the Bible examines all of Scripture “through Christian eyes.”⁹

Study Questions:

1. What is biblical theology?
2. Why is it necessary and how does it help us read the Bible more faithfully?
3. Summarize Luke 24:13-32; 44-49 and John 5:39-40 in a paragraph (4-6 sentences). What do these verses teach us about Jesus' mission? How does it give us insight for how we are to read and understand the biblical story and its primary focus?

Learning Outcome: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to define biblical theology and discuss its biblical foundation.

Lesson #2: The Apostles' Christ-centered Interpretive Perspective

- **Part #1: Jesus Continues to Teach the Apostles (Acts 1)**
 - What Jesus began to reveal to the disciples about his person and work from the Old Testament in Luke 24 is carried forward and further developed during his forty days with them before his ascension.

⁶ Brian S. Rosner, “Biblical Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 10, Logos Bible Software.

⁷ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 63.

⁸ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 50.

⁹ Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 55.

- o ***Six fundamental categories that shaped the content of apostolic teaching and preaching:***¹⁰
 - (1) the time of fulfillment promised in the OT has come;
 - (2) that time has come in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth;
 - (3) Jesus is now enthroned as king because of his resurrection from the dead;
 - (4) now that Jesus is enthroned, the Spirit is his power at work in the world;
 - (5) Jesus will return and bring this age to its end; and
 - (6) hearers must repent and be forgiven in response to gospel preaching.

Examples of this apostolic preaching occur mostly in the first half of the book (2:14-39; 3:11-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-44; 13:16-41).

 - Dodd’s work identifies the basic themes and theology of the apostolic message and demonstrates how gospel preaching was based on established content.¹¹
 - The categories are a helpful and valuable summary that highlight in a succinct fashion the Christocentric focus of apostolic preaching and teaching.
 - This focus is discernable in all the speeches, regardless of the hearers’ familiarity with the Scriptures (see Acts 17:18.31-32).¹²
- o ***Three key features that solidify this claim:***
 - (1) “The sermons are historically grounded accounts of the events of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection”¹³
 - (2) these accounts are “theologically oriented,”¹⁴ showcasing, “God’s saving action in history is climaxed in Christ’s death and resurrection,”¹⁵ and
 - (3) “The focus of this Christologically oriented preaching in Acts is on the resurrection.”¹⁶

¹⁰ Charles. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 21-24.

¹¹ Brian J. Vickers, *Acts*, in vol. 9 of *ESV Expository Commentary*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 321, Logos Bible Software.

¹² Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke’s Account of God’s Unfolding Plan*, ed. D. A. Carson, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 27 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011), 93-94, Logos Bible Software.

¹³ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 94.

¹⁴ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 94.

¹⁵ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 94.

¹⁶ Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 94. Thompson also highlights other important themes in the apostolic teaching and preaching: God-centered, audience-conscious, response oriented, and boldness. See pp. 90-99.

Study Questions:

1. How is Acts 1 connected to Luke 24 and why is it important?
 2. The teaching and preaching in the book of Acts reflects the hermeneutical transformation the disciples/apostles underwent in Luke 24 and Acts 1. How was their interpretive perspective changed by Jesus?
 3. What are the six fundamental categories that shaped the content of apostolic teaching and preaching?
- **Part #2: Peter (Acts 2)**
 - o Peter interprets four short passages of Scripture and faithfully connects them to the person and work of Christ that his audience may see how the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ changes everything, especially how one is to interpret the Word of God this side of the cross. As Jesus said in John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

Study Questions:

1. Summarize in 2-4 sentences Peter’s sermon in Acts 2.
 2. Define what the message of the gospel is in your own words but using Peter’s sermon as a guide to write your definition.
 3. How does Peter interpret Joel 2 and Psalms 16:8-11; 132:11; 110:1 Christocentrically? In other words, how does he apply these texts or show them to be speaking about Jesus? How/why does he use them in his argument? (This should be a thoughtful paragraph (about 1/2 page).
- **Part #3: Stephen (Acts 7)**
 - o The heart of Stephen’s sermon is that the old covenant, including the law and the temple, have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ; he has eclipsed them.¹⁷ Stephen delivered a theological retelling of Israel’s history in attempt to expose his accusers’ misreading of Scripture and the centuries-long pattern of rebellion they were caught in.

Study Questions:

1. How is Stephen’s context different than Peter’s in Acts 2? Describe the differences. Are there similarities?
2. How is Stephen’s speech like or unlike Peter’s in Acts 2?
3. What are the key themes of Stephen’s speech?
4. How does Stephen use the Old Testament in his argument? What are some of the

¹⁷ Christians are no longer under the Mosaic Law (see Gal 3:15-4:7; 2 Cor 3:7-18).

- key stories and people he talks about to expose the religious leaders' sinful hearts?
5. Are there ways in which you currently are or have, rebelled against God like Israel's repeated pattern highlighted by Stephen in Acts 7? If so, how? Have you repented or do you need help knowing how to seek forgiveness from God?

- **Part #4: Philip (Acts 8)**

- o In Acts 8:26-40, Philip capitalized on a divinely orchestrated encounter with a foreigner in the desert to share the good news of Jesus Christ from the Hebrew Scriptures. The puzzled Eunuch from Ethiopia heard and accepted the gospel and was baptized because of the Holy Spirit working through Philip's Christocentric interpretation of Isaiah 53, and presumably, other Old Testament passages.

Study Questions:

1. Summarize Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian in Acts 8.
2. How is this story different from the account of Peter in Acts 2 and Stephen in Acts 7? What are some similarities?
3. How does Philip use Isaiah 52-53 to share the gospel with the Ethiopian? What are some of the key things Philip likely shared with this man about the person and work of Jesus? Do you think you could share the gospel with someone using this text?
4. Often people prioritize the New Testament over the Old Testament, yet the Bible the apostles had only consisted of the Old Testament Scriptures, as the New Testament was still being written. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:15, "the sacred writings" are "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." How does this effect how you view the Old Testament and its importance for your life and ministry to others?

- **Part #5: Paul (Acts 17)**

- o Paul understood that just as all roads in the ancient world lead to Rome, so all of the Bible leads to and through the gospel of Jesus Christ and is to be understood in relation to his person and work as Scripture's center.

Study Questions:

1. Compare and contrast Paul's preaching of the gospel with Peter's, Stephen's, and Philip's. How are they similar and how are they different? Are they teaching the same gospel even though they are in different contexts (i.e. geographical locations, hostile/friendly crowds, large/small crowds etc.)?
2. Paul's activity in the opening verses in Acts 17 can be distilled into two things. What are they?
3. Paul's preaching in Acts essentially consists of three elements, which can be seen in Acts 17:1-4. What are they?

Learning Outcome: By the end of these paired lessons, students will be able to articulate the common content and themes of apostolic preaching and teaching and how it relates to biblical theology.

Lessons #3-4: Understanding Redemptive History

- **Part #1: The Storyline of Scripture**
 - The Literary Strategy of the Gospels
 - Example: Matthew chapter one (the genealogy of Jesus) points to both the Jewishness of Jesus and his position as the heir of King David. He comes as the answer to a problem, an answer to an anticipation that has been developed from the earliest pages of Genesis to his coming.¹⁸
 - An overview of the metanarrative of the Bible will be taught and explained using the categories of:
 - Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation/Consummation
 - Show storyline graphic from Kimball¹⁹
 - Draw Cheong graphic²⁰
 - God, Man, Christ, Response²¹
 - God.
 - God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8).
 - Man.
 - All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph 2:1-3).
 - Christ.
 - Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God’s wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people

¹⁸ Miles, “What Is Biblical Theology?”

¹⁹ Dan Kimball, *How (Not) to Read the Bible: Making Sense of the Anti-Women, Anti-Science, Pro-Violence, Pro-Slavery and Other Crazy-Sounding Parts of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 44.

²⁰ Robert Cheong, *Restore: Knowing and Experiencing God through His Story* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2020), 34.

²¹ See 9Marks, “What Is the Gospel?,” accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>.

eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim 2:5, Heb 7:26, Rom 3:21-26, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 Cor 15:20-22).

- Response.
 - God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom 10:9-10).

Study Questions:

1. Why is it important to identify and understand the focal point of a story? How does Matthew's genealogy (Matt 1) identify the focal point? Who is the focal point?
2. Why do the gospel writers craft their narratives around specific themes that continue and fulfill the OT themes?
3. What are literary strategies, and how do the Gospel writers use them to tie the life of Jesus to OT themes? What are some of the themes?
4. Why is it important that every part of the OT be seen in the NT revelation of Jesus?
5. What events would you put in a summary of the Bible's story? List them, learn them, and be ready to tell the story.
6. How do you think reading the whole Bible in light of the Christ event influences our understanding of the entire story with respect to events, purpose, and outcomes?

Learning Outcome: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain the message of the gospel and trace out the overarching storyline of Scripture.

- **Part #2: The Major Covenants**
 - The biblical covenants are the backbone of redemptive history. A brief survey of the major covenants found in Scripture will be conducted.
 - the Adamic-Noahic (Gen 1-3; 9:8-17)
 - the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-14)
 - the Mosaic (Exod 19-25)
 - the Davidic (2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17)
 - the New covenant (Jer 31:27-34; Ezek 36:24-28; Matt 26:27-30)

Study Questions:

1. What is the basic role of covenants with respect to the relationship between God and His people?
2. What are some of the big implications of the covenants?
3. What are the main characteristics of the biblical covenants? List them for each one: Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New. It might be helpful to simply summarize each covenant in 2-4 sentences.
4. In what ways is Jesus related to all the covenants?

5. How much influence does it appear that covenants have on the relationships between God and people?
6. How does a basic understanding of the major biblical covenants help you read the Bible more faithfully?

Learning Outcome: By the end of these paired lessons, students will be able to define the concept of a biblical covenant, explain how the various covenants relate to and interact with one another, and carry redemptive history forward.

Lesson #5: Learning to Interpret the Bible like the Apostles: BT Tools

- **The 5 C's²²**
 - Context
 - Historical & Literary
 - Covenant
 - Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New
 - Canon
 - Themes, prophecy, typology, promise & fulfillment, continuity & discontinuity
 - Character of God
 - Ask, “What does this text teach me about the character of God?”
 - Christ
 - Every time we open the Bible, we should labor to understand where our text fits into the “big story” and ask how it relates to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Study Questions:

1. What are the two aspects that make up the first “C” (Context)? Why is understanding any given passage in context important?
2. Once you’ve read a passage in its context, you need to read it covenantally. Why is this important?
3. Scripture is the best interpreter of itself. You want to read your passage and look for textual connections to other parts of Scripture. What are the five components that make up this lens? Briefly describe each of them.
4. One thing that doesn’t change when we read the Bible is the character of God. What kind of questions are we to ask when viewing our passage through this lens?

²² Roark and Cline, *Biblical Theology*, 88-99.

5. We must read Christologically. No matter what passage you are reading you must always ask how it relates to the person and work of Christ. What kind of questions are we to ask when viewing our passage through this lens?

Learning Outcome: By the end of these paired lessons, students will be equipped with the Bible study tools they need to interpret Scripture Christo-centrally, like Jesus taught his disciples.

Lesson #6: BT Workshop²³

- In class students, guided by the instructor, will practice in groups and individually, using the “5 C’s” to interpret select passages of Scripture. 15-20 minutes per passage should be given and then discussion should ensue to check for accurate interpretation and understanding.
- **OT:**
 - David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17)
 - Proverbs 2:1-6
- **NT:**
 - Luke 4:1-13
 - Colossians 1:12-14

Learning Outcome: By the end of these paired lessons, students will be able to apply the foundational principles of biblical theology to interpret passages of Scripture in personal Bible study.

²³ Capitol Hill Baptist Church, “Core Seminars,” accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/resources/core-seminars/series/biblical-theology/>. This lesson relies heavily on lessons 10 and 11 from the Biblical Theology core seminar materials from Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC, written by Michael Lawrence and Jonathan Leeman. I changed some of the wording in certain areas and added to certain examples to make them more robust, or simpler where needed.

APPENDIX 3

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY CURRICULUM EVALUATION

The following evaluation tool was sent to an expert panel consisting of one of RSCA's high school principals and instructional lead teacher, two local church pastors, and one faculty professor of biblical theology, to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Biblical Theology Course Curriculum Evaluation Tool					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical pedagogical methodology.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea or main goal.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to develop a Christocentric hermeneutic.					
At the end of the course, participants will be able to better read, interpret, and apply the Bible.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 4

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

The following assignment guidelines for writing a brief biblical theology research paper were given to each student at the beginning of the course. I used these guidelines to inform students of the requirements for successful completion of the assignment.

Biblical Theology Research Paper Guidelines

Students will thoughtfully produce a short paper due at the end of the biblical theology unit. The paper will provide the opportunity for students to showcase their Bible reading, studying, interpretation, and application skills gained during the course. Each student will individually produce a paper, 4-5 double-spaced pages in length, either on Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 23:1-6, Matthew 4:1-11, or Colossians 1:9-14 (***pick only one of the four passages listed above***). The paper will consist of the following:

I. Introduction (1/2 page)

- (a) Introduce your passage. What is it about (broadly speaking)? Why is it important for us to study? Why did you choose it? Get your reader interested in the passage!
- (b) Set up your outline for the paper. How are you going to proceed throughout the paper to teach your reader about this passage?

II. Bible Work (3-4 pages)

- (a) Work through the “5 C’s”.¹ (***Refer to class notes and lectures for more details***)
 - (i) Context
 - 1. Historical & Literary
 - (ii) Covenant
 - 1. Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New
 - (iii) Canon
 - 1. Themes, prophecy, typology, promise & fulfillment, continuity & discontinuity.
 - (iv) Character of God
 - 1. Ask, “What does this text teach me about the character of God?”

¹ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 88-99, Logos Bible Software.

(v) Christ

1. Every time we open the Bible, we should labor to understand where our text fits into the “big story” and ask how it relates the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- (b) ***Do not*** fill space with “fluff.” Be prayerful, thoughtful, and intentional. Go deep. This will be challenging but rewarding!

II. Biblical-theological summary and application (1/2 page)

- (a) Summarize your results. State in two to four sentences what your passage is about and what the reader should understand from reading it.
- (b) List at least two general applications that can be drawn from the text and two specific applications to your own life from the text.

III. Formatting and Citations

- (a) Students must use and include 3-4 sources not including the Bible for this project.
- (b) Students must properly cite all reference material using MLA format and include a bibliography. The bibliography should be in alphabetical order and on its own page at the end of the paper.

APPENDIX 5
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY RESEARCH
PAPER RUBRIC

The following tool was used to grade each student's biblical theology research paper and assess their ability to apply the biblical theology skills learned during curriculum implementation.

Biblical Theology Paper Grading Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The paper followed all guidelines given by the instructor.					
The paper is well organized.					
The paper contains no major spelling or grammatical errors.					
The introduction clearly identified the passage and why the student chose their passage.					
The material presented is biblically and theologically sound.					
The student was able to interpret the passage using the "5 C's". ¹					
Summary statements are clear and concise.					
Reference works are cited correctly.					
The paper shows growth in knowledge of BT.					
The paper displays the proper use of BT tools.					
The student shows how their passage points to or is related to Jesus Christ.					

Other Comments:

¹ Nick Roark and Robert Cline, *Biblical Theology: How the Church Faithfully Teaches the Gospel*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 88-99, Logos Bible Software.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY COURSE AT ROCK SPRINGS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY IN MILNER, GEORGIA

Caleb Timothy Lenard, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Brian J. Vickers

High school students at Rock Springs Christian Academy were taught a Christocentric biblical theology, with the aims of increasing biblical literacy and best hermeneutical practices. Chapter 1 presents the purpose, goals, context, rationale, definitions, research methodology, and limitations of the project. Chapter 2 discusses the biblical warrant for interpreting Scripture Christo-centrally from Luke 24. Chapter 3 discusses the Christ centered interpretive perspective passed on to the disciples by Jesus through a brief survey of key selections in the book of Acts before turning to critique of contemporary practices of biblical theology. To close, the chapter offers a suggestion of how to merge several practices for a more robust Christ-centered hermeneutic. Chapter 4 outlines the developed curriculum used in the project. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation of the project. This project argues that best hermeneutical practice employs a Christ-centered biblical theology.

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EDUCATION

BA, University of Redlands, 2015

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