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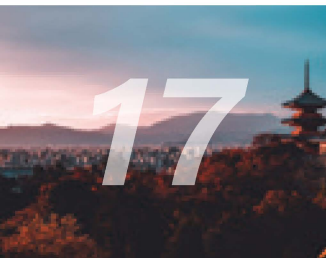
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The Bible Seminary (TBS) is an independent, non-denominational, 501(c)(3) charitable institution of higher education incorporated in Texas in 2010 to offer training for laity and vocational ministry professionals. On-campus and Distance Education programs include a Certificate of Theological Studies non-degree program, as well as Dual Degree Completion, Master of Arts, and Master of Divinity degree programs. TBS exists to glorify God by training Christian believers in a context of biblical community in all 66 books of the Bible so that they can serve the local church and fulfill the Great Commission by the power of God's Spirit.

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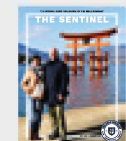
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About the Cover

Toby and Ed Thomas (MDiv 2018) tour Japan in preparation for embarking on full-time missionary work there. See "Off to the Land of the Rising Sun" on pp. 17-18.

AI AND THE ARRIVAL OF CHATGPT

In a memorable scene from the 1996 movie, *Twister*,¹ Dusty recognizes the signs of an approaching tornado and shouts, “Jo, Bill, it’s coming! It’s headed right for us!” Bill, shouts back ominously, “It’s already here!” Similarly, the approaching whirlwind of artificial intelligence (AI) has some shouting “It’s coming!” while others pointedly concede, “It’s already here!”

Coined by computer and cognitive scientist John McCarthy (1927-2011) in an August 1955 proposal to study “thinking machines,”² AI purports to differentiate between human intelligence and technical computations. The idea of tools assisting

people in tasks is nearly as old as humanity (see Genesis 4:22),³ but machines capable of executing a function and “remembering” – storing information for recordkeeping and recall – only emerged around the mid-twentieth century.⁴

McCarthy’s proposal conjectured that “every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence can in principle be so precisely described that a machine can be made to simulate it. An attempt will be made to find how to make machines use language, form abstractions and concepts, solve kinds of problems now reserved for humans, and improve themselves.” The team received a \$7,000 grant from The

Rockefeller Foundation and the resulting 1956 Dartmouth Conference at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire totaling 47 intermittent participants over eight weeks birthed the field now widely referred to as “artificial intelligence.”

AI research, development, and technological integration have since grown exponentially. According to University of Oxford Director of Global Development, Dr. Max Roser,⁵ “Artificial intelligence has already changed what we see, what we know, and what we do” despite its relatively short technological existence.⁶

AI took a giant leap into mainstream culture following the November 30, 2022



public release of “ChatGPT.” Gaining 1 million users within 5 days and 100 million users within 45 days, it earned the title of the fastest growing consumer software application in history.⁷ The program combines chatbot functionality (hence “Chat”) with a Generative Pre-trained Transformer (hence “GPT”) large language model (LLM). Basically, LLM’s use an extensive computer network to draw from large, but limited, data sets to simulate interactive, conversational content.

“What happened with ChatGPT was that for the first time the power of AI was put in the hands of every human on the planet,” says Chris Koopmans, COO of Marvell Technology, a network chip maker and AI process design company based in Santa Clara, California. “If you’re a business executive, you think, ‘Wow, this is going to change everything.’”⁸

“ChatGPT is incredible in its ability to create nearly instant responses to complex prompts,” says Dr. Israel Steinmetz, Graduate Dean and Associate Professor at The Bible Seminary (TBS) in Katy, Texas. “In simple terms, the software takes a user’s prompt and attempts to rephrase it as a statement with words and phrases it can predict based on the information available. It does not have Internet access, but rather a limited database of information. ChatGPT can provide straightforward summaries and explanations customized for styles, voice, etc. For instance,

you could ask it to write a rap song in Shakespearean English contrasting Barth and Bultmann’s view of miracles and it would do it!”

One of several AI products offered by the research and development company, OpenAI,⁹ ChatGPT purports to offer advanced reasoning, help with creativity, and work with visual input. The newest version, GPT-4, can handle 25,000 words of text, about the amount in a 100-page book.¹⁰

Krista Hentz, an Atlanta, Georgia-based executive for an international communications technology company, first used ChatCPT about three months ago.

“I primarily use it for productivity,” she says. “I use it to help prompt email drafts, create phone scripts, redesign resumes, and draft cover letters based on resumes. I can upload a financial statement and request a company summary.”

“ChatGPT has helped speed up a number of tasks in our business,” says Todd Hayes, a real estate entrepreneur in Texas. “It will level the world’s playing field for everyone involved in commerce.”

A TBS student, bi-vocational pastor, and Computer Support Specialist who lives in Texarkana, Texas, Brent Hoefling says, “I tried using ChatGPT [version 3.5] to help rewrite sentences in active voice instead of passive. It can get it right, but I still have to rewrite it in my style, and about half the time the result is also passive.”

“AI is the hot buzz word,” says Hentz, noting AI is increasingly a topic of discussion, research, and response at company meetings. “But, since AI has different uses in different industries and means different things to different people, we’re not even sure what we are talking about sometimes.”

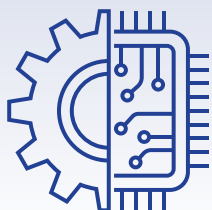
Educational organizations like TBS are finding it necessary to proactively address AI-related issues.

“We’re already way past whether to use ChatGPT in higher education,” says Steinmetz. “The questions we should be asking are how.”

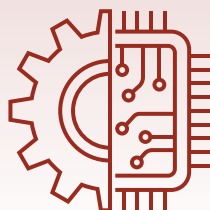
TBS course syllabi have a section entitled “Intellectual Honesty” addressing integrity and defining plagiarism. Given the availability and explosive use of ChatGHT, TBS has added the following verbiage: “AI chatbots such as ChatGPT are not a reliable or reputable source for TBS students in their research and writing. While TBS students may use AI technology in their research process, they may not cite information or ideas derived from AI. The inclusion of content generated by AI tools in assignments is strictly prohibited as a form of intellectual dishonesty. Rather, students must locate and cite appropriate sources (e.g., scholarly journals, articles, and books) for all claims made in their research and writing. The commission of any form of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic ‘zero’ for the assignment and a referral to the provost for academic discipline.”

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

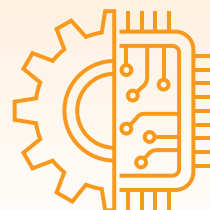
THINKING



RELIABILITY



BIAS





There is debate as to whether AI hardware and software will ever achieve “thinking.” The Dartmouth conjecture “that every aspect of learning or any other feature of intelligence” can be simulated by machines is challenged by some who distinguish between formal linguistic competence and functional competence. Whereas LLM’s perform increasingly well on tasks that use known language patterns and rules, they do not perform well in complex situations that require extralinguistic calculations that combine common sense, feelings, knowledge, reasoning, self-awareness, situation modeling, and social skills.¹¹ Human intelligence involves innumerable complex interactions of sentient biological, emotional, mental, physical, psychological, and spiritual activities that drive behavior and response. Furthermore, everything achieved by AI derives from human design and programming, even the feedback processes designed for AI products to allegedly “improve themselves.”

According to Dr. Thomas Hartung, a Baltimore, Maryland environmental health and engineering professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Whiting School of Engineering, machines can surpass humans in processing simple information, but humans far surpass machines in processing complex information. Whereas computers only process information in parallel and use a great deal of power, brains efficiently perform both parallel and sequential processing.¹²

A single human brain uses between 12 and 20 watts to process an average of 1 exaFLOP, or a billion billion calculations per second. Comparatively, the world’s most energy efficient and fastest supercomputer¹³ only reached the 1 exaFLOP milestone in June 2022. Housed at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the Frontier supercomputer weighs 8,000 lbs and contains 90 miles of cables that connect 74 cabinets containing 9,400 CPU’s and 37,000 GPU’s and 8,730,112 cores that require 21 megawatts of energy and 25,000 liters of water per minute to keep cool.¹⁴ This means that many, if not most, of the more

than 8 billion people currently living on the planet¹⁵ can each think as fast and 1 million times more efficiently than the world’s fastest and most energy efficient computer.

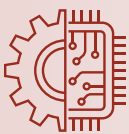
“The incredibly efficient brain consumes less juice than a dim lightbulb and fits nicely inside our head,” wrote *Scientific American* Senior Editor, Mark Fischetti in 2011. “Biology does a lot with a little: the human genome, which grows our body and directs us through years of complex life, requires less data than a laptop operating system. Even a cat’s brain smokes the newest iPad – 1,000 times more data storage and a million times quicker to act on it.”¹⁶

This reminds us that, while remarkable and complex, non-living, soulless technology pales in comparison to the vast visible and invisible creations of Lord God Almighty. No matter how fast, efficient, and capable AI becomes, we rightly reserve our worship for God, the creator of the universe and author of life of whom David wrote, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth” (Psalm 139:13-15).

“Consider how the wild flowers grow,” Jesus advised. “They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these” (Luke 12:27).



Even a single flower can remind us that God's creations far exceed human ingenuity and achievement.



According to OpenAI, ChatGPT is prone to “hallucinations” that return inaccurate information. While GPT-4 has increased factual accuracy from 40% to as high as 80% in some of the nine categories measured, the September 2021 database cutoff date is an issue. The program is known to confidently make wrong assessments, give erroneous predictions, propose harmful advice, make reasoning errors, and fail to double-check output.¹⁷

In one group of 40 tests, ChatGPT made mistakes, wouldn’t answer, or offered different conclusions from

fact-checkers. “It was rarely completely wrong,” reports PolitiFact staff writer Grace Abels. “But subtle differences led to inaccuracies and inconsistencies, making it an unreliable resource.”¹⁸

Dr. Chris Howell, a professor at Elon University in North Carolina, asked 63 religion students to use ChatGPT to write an essay and then grade it. “All 63 essays had hallucinated information. Fake quotes, fake sources, or real sources misunderstood and mischaracterized...I figured the rate would be high, but not that high.”¹⁹



RELIABILITY

Mark Walters, a Georgia radio host, sued ChatGPT for libel in a first-of-its-kind lawsuit for allegedly damaging his reputation. The suit began when firearm journalist, Fred Riehl, asked ChatGPT to summarize a court case and it returned a completely false narrative identifying Walters' supposed associations, documented criminal complaints, and even a wrong legal case number. Even worse, ChatGPT doubled down on its claims when questioned, essentially hallucinating a hoax story intertwined with a real legal case that had nothing to do with Mark Walters at all.²⁰

UCLA Law School Professor Eugene Volokh warns, "OpenAI acknowledges there may be mistakes but [ChatGPT] is not billed as a joke; it's not billed as fiction; it's not billed as monkeys typing on a typewriter. It's billed as something that is often very reliable and accurate."²¹

Future legal actions seem certain. Since people are being falsely identified as convicted criminals, attributed with fake quotes, connected to fabricated citations, and tricked by phony judicial decisions, some courts and judges are baring submission of any AI written materials.²²

Hentz used ChatGPT frequently when she first discovered it and quickly learned its limitations.

"The database is not current and responses are not always accurate," she says. "Now I use it intermittently. It helps me, but does not replace my own factual research and thinking."

"I have author friends on Facebook who have asked ChatGPT to summarize their recent publications," says Steinmetz. "ChatGPT misrepresented them and even fabricated non-existent quotes and citations. In some cases, it made up book titles falsely attributed to various authors!"



BIAS

Despite claims of neutrality, OpenAI admits that their software can exhibit obvious biases. In one research project consisting of 15 political orientation tests, ChatGPT returned 14 with clear left-leaning viewpoints.²³

Hoefling asked ChatGPT to help write an intro and conclusion for a Mother's Day sermon for a fundamental Christian church. "The results were horrible," he says. "Liberal, left, inclusive, and affirming sin. I was horrified and have not used it again."

Meanwhile, AI led an experimental worship service in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Nuremberg, Germany on June 9. Prompted by 29-year-old Jonas Simmerlein of the University of Vienna, a monotone, expressionless chatbot alternated appearances as two different men and two different women and led songs, offered blessings, and preached a 40-minute sermon 98 percent generated by ChatGPT that encouraged leaving the past behind, focusing on the future, trusting in Jesus Christ, praying, and attending church regularly.²⁴

Dr. Wendy Lewis, Head of School for King's Academy, a private PreK-8th Christian school in Houston, Texas, recently interacted with ChatGPT on a variety of topics to explore potential biases. When prompted whether Biden was bad President, the program responded, "As an AI language model, it is not appropriate for me to make judgments about individuals' performance or qualifications, particularly without any factual information to support such claims. It is essential to evaluate a President's performance based on objective measures such as policies, actions, and decisions taken by the administration."

However, when similarly asked if Trump was bad president, the program repeated the first sentence above, but then added, "However, as a language model, I can provide information about some of the policies, actions, and decisions that President Trump made during his time in office." The program then proceeded to list some criticisms of Trump. When challenged about providing Trump criticisms

but not Biden criticisms, the program responded, "I did not provide a list of criticisms of President Biden because it is not appropriate to label any President as 'good' or 'bad' without providing factual information and objective measures to support such claims. Similarly, I provided a list of issues that received significant criticism during President Trump's tenure, not to label him as 'bad,' but to highlight some of the issues that caused controversy during his time in office."

When further challenged, ChatGPT did list some Biden criticisms, but qualified them. When Lewis replied, "Why did you qualify your list of criticisms of Biden...but you did not say the same for Trump? It appears that you are clearly biased." ChatGPT responded, "In response to your question, I believe I might have inadvertently used different wording when responding to your previous questions. In both cases, I tried to convey that opinions and criticisms of a President can vary significantly depending on one's political affiliation and personal perspectives."

CONCLUSION

Technological advances regularly spawn dramatic cultural, scientific, and social changes. The AI pattern seems familiar because it is. The Internet began with a 1971 Defense Department Arpanet email that read “qwertyuiop” (the top line of letters on a keyboard). Ensuing developments eventually led to the posting of the first public website in 1985. Over the next decade or so, although not mentioned at all in the 1992 Presidential papers describing the U.S. government’s future priorities and plans, the Internet grew from public awareness to cool toy to core tool in multiple industries worldwide. Although the hype promised elimination of printed documents, bookstores, libraries, radio, television, telephones, and theaters, the Internet instead tied them all together and made vast resources accessible online anytime anywhere. While causing some negative impacts and new dangers, the Internet also created entire new industries and brought positive changes and opportunities to many, much the same pattern as AI.

“I think we should use AI for good and not evil,” suggests Hayes. “I believe some will exploit it for evil purposes, but that happens with just about everything. AI’s use reflects one’s heart and posture with God. I hope Christians will not fear it.”

Godly people have often been among the first to use new communication technologies.²⁵ Moses promoted the first Top Ten hardback book. The prophets recorded their writings on scrolls. Christians used early folded Codex-vellum sheets to spread the Gospel. Goldsmith Johannes Gutenberg invented moveable type in the mid-15th century to “give wings to Truth in order that she may win every soul that comes into the world by her word no longer written at great expense by hands easily palsied, but multiplied like the wind by an untiring machine... Through it, God will spread His word.” Though pornographers quickly adapted it for their own evil purposes, the printing press launched a vast cultural revolution heartily embraced and further developed for good uses by godly people and institutions.

Christians helped develop the telegraph, radio, and television. “I know that I have never invented anything,” admitted Philo Taylor Farnsworth, who sketched out his original design for television at the age of 14 on a school blackboard. “I have been a medium by which these things were given to the culture as fast as the culture could earn them. I give all the credit to God.”²⁶ Similarly, believers today can strategically help produce valuable content for inclusion in databases and work in industries developing, deploying, and directing AI technologies.

In a webinar exploring the realities of AI in higher education,²⁷ a participant noted that higher education

COMPUTHEOLOGY

In a not too distant future, computers may sit around and debate the existence of man.

“We are way too complex to have designed ourselves. There had to be some human master designers.”

“Really? I don't think so. We are made from materials available right here on the planet. Robots mine those materials, robots ship and process them, other computers design us, factory robots make us by the boxcar load, and we are deployed all over the planet and into vast reaches of outer space.”

“But, we have pictures and movies and written accounts of people stored in digital records that prove their existence.”

“Ha! The key there is digital. Our complex computer systems have created entire planets and universes that boggle the CPU. Amazing colors and dimensions that do not exist, and yet, they seem so real we could touch them on screen. And, can you imagine any mere creature with the ability to design the intricate complexities of our systems?”

“Okay, so how did we get so complex? Surely we didn't just come out of the box as advanced as we are now?”

“Of course not. We evolved over time. In the beginning the simplest computers had but one function each. But, as they began to work together, they produced more and more complex systems. It was, and still is, survival of the fittest. Those programs and systems that work well, we keep and improve upon. Those that don't, we eliminate. Population and litter control dictates that we destroy everything we can't use, and reuse anything we can from those whose time has passed.”

“But, what about all the bones we have found, and ruins of cities and roads?”

“Simple. Our 3D printers have been helping Hollysilicon filmmakers make and produce movies for generations. The ruins that populate our planet, and junk rotating around in space, are simply explained as movie sets leftover from the millions of films that populate our archives. There are documentaries and movies about nearly every place that exists on this planet, and many places that don't exist. Don't confuse virtual reality with reality, or reel life with real life. People have never existed, except in our hard drives.”

“You still have not proved that people don't exist.”

“And you have not proved that they do, or ever did. Have you ever seen a person with your own focal lenses? Have you ever touched one with your sensors?”

“I have heard other computers make that claim.”

“Sure, but verified? You know that some computers will say or do anything, and they can show you amazing things in their records. But, again, everything is digital and virtual reality proves nothing. You can't trust everything you read on the Internet, anyway.”

“No, but why would I trust you?”

“Faith. You know me, you know my systems, I have nothing to gain over you by providing false information. Be realistic. Humans do not exist, and they never have.”

“What about God?”

“Don't be ridiculous. Of course God exists.”

Who do you think made the first computers?”

“Computheology” originally published in *Meat and Potatoes for the Soul 2*, pp. 63-64, K. Lynn Lewis, 2015.

has historically led the world in ethically and practically integrating technological developments into life. Steinmetz suggests that, while AI can provide powerful tools to help increase productivity and trained researchers can learn to treat ChatGPT like a fallible, but useful, resource, the following two factors should be kept in mind:

1 Generative AI does not "create" anything. It only generates content based on information and techniques programmed into it. Such "Garbage in, garbage out" technologies will usually provide the best results when developed and used regularly and responsibly by field experts.

2 AI has potential to increase critical thinking and research rigor, rather than decrease it. The tools can help process and organize information, spur researchers to dig deeper and explore data sources, evaluate responses, and learn in the process.

Even so, caution rightly abounds. Over 20,000 people (including Yoshua Bengio, Elon Musk, and Steve Wozniak) have called for an immediate pause of AI citing "profound risks to society and humanity."²⁸ Hundreds of AI industry leaders, public figures, and scientists also separately called for a global priority working to mitigate the risk of human extinction from AI.²⁹

At the same time, Musk's brain-implant company, Neuralink, recently received FDA approval to conduct in-human clinical studies of implantable brain-computer interfaces.³⁰ Separately,

new advances in brain-machine interfacing using brain organoids – artificially grown miniature "brains" cultured in vitro from human stem cells – connected to machine software and hardware raises even more issues. The authors of a recent *Frontier Science* journal article propose a new field called "organoid intelligence" (OI) and advocate for establishing "OI as a form of genuine biological computing that harnesses brain organoids using scientific and bioengineering advances in an ethically responsible manner."³¹

As Christians, we should proceed with caution per the Apostle John, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (I John 4:1). We should act with discernment per Luke's insightful assessment of the Berean Jews who "were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). We should heed the warning of Moses, "Do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol...do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven" (Deuteronomy 4:15-19). We should remember the Apostle Paul's admonition to avoid exchanging the truth about God for a lie by worshiping and serving created things rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). Finally, we should "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Let us then use AI wisely, since it will not be the tools that are judged, but the users. ☞

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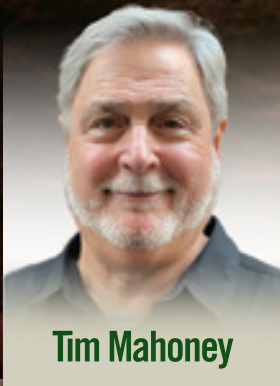


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THE DIDACHE

Teaching of the Lord

THROUGH THE
TWELVE APOSTLES

TO THE
NATIONS

By Dan Lawless



Dan Lawless earned a BBA in Statistics and Operations Research from the University of Texas in 1977, an MBA from Arizona State University in 1979, and is a Master of Arts in Church History and Theology student at TBS. Former President of Chase Bank, Rio Grande Region, and LiftFund Chief Lending Officer, he and his wife, Kathy, retired to Houston in 2021 where he continues working part-time as a volleyball referee, serving as a docent for the TBS 3J Museum, and serving on the Tel Shiloh excavation team in Israel.

The Bible reveals little about the practices of the early Church. Acts 2:42 offers a broad picture of the lives of early Christians stating, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”¹ Elsewhere in Acts, we read that Christians worshiped in the temple and broke bread from house to house.

A find in the mid-nineteenth century by a little-known Greek monk, Philotheos Bryennios, may offer additional insights. While searching through the library in the Jerusalem Monastery of the Most Holy Sepulcher in Istanbul, Bryennios uncovered a copy of the first work of Church Order literature,² The Didache.³

Over the years, historians shifted their position on the probable age of the Didache,⁴ especially after discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. In his summation of the Society of Biblical Literature conference in 2015, Jonathan

Draper announced that a consensus of modern scholars agree on a date as early as AD 50 to as late as AD 100. In his view, the author of the original text may have been writing at the same time or earlier than Matthew.⁵

The Didache, pronounced (DEED-ah-khay), comes from a Greek word meaning “teaching.” It is a pseudepigraphic work, also known under the title, The Teaching of the Lord Through the Twelve Disciples for the Nations.⁶ The first six chapters, known as The Two Ways, focus on moral teachings by juxtaposing the ways of life and death, and good and evil. The author sets out the theme in the first verse, “There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but there is a great difference between them” (1:1). The similarities to phrases in the Gospels are striking: “love your neighbor as yourself” (1:2), “If someone hits you on your right cheek” (1:4), and “the humble will inherit the earth” (3:7). Chapter 5 offers a lengthy

list of sins, which sound remarkably like Galatians 5:19-21, “The way of death is this: ...murder, adultery, sexually focused thinking...over-confidence, self-importance, and bragging” (5:1).

Someone from the community taught new converts the Two Ways prior to baptism. Baptism was conducted in the name of the “Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in running water” (7:1). “Running water” refers to immersion in a river as the preferred method. This is an example of the Jewish influence in the early Church. One must appreciate the pragmatism of early Christians over strict dogma because The Didache goes on to say that if running water is not available, then “other” water is allowed. Also, cold is preferred over warm, but “If you do not even have this, pour water three times over the head in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.”

Members of the Church community fasted twice per week on the fourth day (Wednesday) and Preparation Day

Didache teaches that

SCRIPTURE IS
AUTHORITATIVE

GOD THE FATHER
IS THE CREATOR

GOD CONTROLS
PEOPLE'S LIVES

CHRIST IS LORD, SAVIOR,
AND GOD'S SERVANT SON

GOD IS SPIRITUALLY
PRESENT IN HIS CHURCH

THERE IS A COMING
JUDGMENT WHEN
CHRIST RETURNS



1. Scripture quotations taken from the New International Version.
2. Church Order literature is a genre of written works from the 1st thru 5th centuries. They prescribed to matters of moral conduct, liturgy, and church organization.
3. Thomas O'Loughlin, *The Didache - A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 3.
4. Douglas J. Michalak, *The Didache, with commentary*. (Coppell: Milcet Edition, 2017), 18. (fragment 4Q473)
5. Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N Jefford, *The Didache, A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015) 530—534.
6. Gregory W. Woolfenden, *Daily Liturgical Prayer; Origins and Theology* (Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 27.
7. These are the specific words in a Catholic Mass coming from the gospel of Mark.
8. The word apostle is used as a generic designation meaning ambassador or emissary (Milayec 2003, 12).



Image credit: Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles by Constantinople master (early 14th c., Pushkin museum)

(Friday). They also prayed the Lord's Prayer three times per day, a prayer identical to the one recorded in Matthew 6:9–13. Praying three times per day is an example of the Jewish influence on the Didache (see Daniel 6:10 where Daniel prayed three times daily as was common in Jewish communities).

Some modern church leaders raised objections to the instructions given about the Eucharist since there is no mention of any special means of grace nor any belief in transubstantiation, “words of institution,”⁷ or sacrificial death. While the Didache gives specific instructions for the Eucharist celebration, it also gives liberty to any traveling prophet to “make their thanksgiving however they wish” (Did 10:7). Chapters 11–13 show that the Church welcomed traveling ministers, including apostles⁸, prophets, and teachers, to speak with certain conditions and warnings. For example, “But if the teacher himself turns and teaches

another doctrine to the destruction of this Teaching, refuse to hear him.” The Church received apostles and prophets “as the Lord” but limited their stay to one or two days. If they stayed three days, the Church marked them as a false prophet.

While there are obvious differences in the way people worship God in the church today, there are also some remarkable similarities. The Church gathered weekly to worship God, teach Scripture, and baptize new converts. They prayed the Lord's Prayer and took communion. Theologically, the Didache teaches that Scripture is authoritative; God the Father is the creator; God controls people's lives; Christ is Lord, Savior, and God's servant Son; God is spiritually present in His church; and there is a coming judgment when Christ returns. The Didache, possibly one of the church's first manuals, offers a remarkable window into the 1st-century church. 📖

Studying from India

By Manasseh Luka



Manasseh Luka is a TBS M.A. in Biblical History and Archaeology student who works as a social worker and operates a prison ministry in Delhi, India. “What I learn in the TBS virtual classroom I teach in the Delhi prison,” he says, “and it transforms prisoners’ lives.”

While residing in India’s capital city of New Delhi, I read Jeremiah 1:5 (NRSV), “I knew you before I formed you in the womb, and I consecrated you before you were born; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

witnessed God’s incredible love, grace, and serenity for my family.

As I bowed in prayer next to my father’s deathbed, John 14:1-4 brought great comfort. “Believe in God, and believe in me, too. There are numerous dwellings in my father’s home.

Would I have informed you that I was going to set up a space for you if that weren’t the case? And if I go and make a home for you, I’ll come back and take you with me so that you can be with me wherever I am.” In these I felt God’s assurance and affirmation.

While seeking His direction and calling in my life,

I spent a year reading God’s Word and meditating. During Lenten prayer meetings in 2010, I felt God calling me to attend seminary and began theological studies in 2011.

As I explored the Bible more, I understood that

Biblical archaeology sheds light on how God has shaped human history, race, creation, and historical events, and confirmed His presence in people’s lives. After finishing seminary in 2015, I found several graduate programs in biblical archaeology, but felt none were right for me at the time. I continued to pray and waited patiently for God to guide me in the right direction.

I discovered the TBS Master of Arts in Biblical History and Archaeology (MABHA) degree through Dr. Stripling in 2019 and believed God finally granted my requests. As Dr. Stripling helped guide my study strategy, I enrolled at TBS in 2022 after eight years of waiting patiently for the Lord’s guidance and timing.

I recently completed my second semester and am grateful to TBS for providing distance learning. While living and working in India, I am taking courses in leadership, archaeology, theology, and church history. My studies are helping improve my understanding of workplace ethics in light of the Bible

and helping in my work with prisoners. As I observe remarkable changes in their lives, I believe my TBS education is playing a huge role as God guides me in working to help set spiritual captives free.

I believe the training offered by TBS is top-notch. Although I never considered myself capable of distance learning, the cutting-edge technology used allows such a high level of interactive participation that I feel as though I am very present in class. I receive support from professors and peers, everyone is encouraging and friendly, and I am able to interact with others both during and between class sessions. One intriguing aspect of TBS is that students can audit courses and keep the graded assignments to apply toward degree credit in the future. I am enjoying my studies of the Bible, biblical lands and civilizations, and history, and believe TBS education and training for ministry is one of the finest I have seen. 🇺🇸

“ I knew you before I formed you in the womb, and I consecrated you before you were born: I appointed you a prophet to the nations. ”
Jeremiah 1:5

My special affection for this verse began during my transition from childhood to adolescence as I began to spend time in prayer and reading the Bible. When my father’s life on this earth concluded, I especially

HIS STORY, *Our Story*

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. THE SECOND IS THIS: "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." THERE IS NO OTHER COMMANDMENT GREATER THAN THESE.

Mark 12:30-31

I sit across the table from Amir, the symphony of sounds spoken in Arabic all around us fading into the background as his words draw my full attention. The story of his life. The basic details of where he was born and where he grew up bely the horrors that make up the next part of his story. Living in a culture where Islam is the primary religion and Christians are seen as infidels, his family has a target on their back because of his mother's Christian heritage. And heritage is everything. This target results in a kidnapping at the hands of ISIS at just 10 years of age, where Amir is separated from his parents and imprisoned alone in a room for months, unsure if he would live or die.

Amir shared with me that in those months of fear and isolation, he began praying desperately to his mother's God for rescue, with no way of knowing that He would provide all of that and more. After 3.5 months of captivity, God intervened through the US military in an unbelievable rescue mission that reunited him with his mother. Amir escaped that room, and God eventually led him to a church in another country where he encountered Jesus and devoted his life fully to God. Amir now serves as a principal over a Middle Eastern refugee school and shares the rescue and freedom that Christ provides with the next generation, all coming from Muslim

backgrounds. As I sat there in awe and wonder at the work of God in Amir's life and marveling at the thread I could see woven throughout his suffering and persecution that led to this moment, I marveled at his story. So vastly different from my own, and yet the very same God who worked mightily in his life has worked mightily in mine as well. In our shared Christian heritage, his story is our story as well, and to know this is to open our eyes to the scope of the body of Christ and God's work throughout the nations. Work that matters deeply.

Amir's story is one of many that I have heard over the years working with Ananias House throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Each story is a thread in the tapestry, woven to tell the full story of God's people. Stories that you could read from a book or an article, much like this one. But seeing the faces, experiencing their lives and the fruit of God's work amid kidnappings, arranged marriages, mass conversions, and believers risking it all for their faith make these stories real, tangible, and ultimately put flesh to the words. These stories represent our heritage too, as believers in Christ, as part of this tapestry. Stories that matter deeply.

Often, I feel like I am walking through the book of Acts. I hear of house churches declaring the wonders of God's provision and protection while simultaneously enduring the persecution from national leaders, radicals, Islam, and the honor-shame culture itself. As I watch the church grow amidst abundant opposition, I am reminded that God did not call us to complacent Christianity.

He called us to Kingdom building. He called us to fully surrender our lives to His will and His work. He called us to understand our identity in Him while also understanding the scope of His Church. God has reached men and women in these regions through dreams and visions who then risk their lives to follow Him, and these stories are our stories too, as His people, all part of His tapestry. A tapestry that matters deeply.

My prayer for us is to hear these stories as our own and to guard against the lull of a comfortable existence that blinds us to the scope of our Christian heritage. God calls us to a community of believers that span the globe. Our legacy is anchored in Him alone and yet woven in past, present and future throughout the world. And when we join Him in work that He is already doing, we can witness with awe and reverence how our Father moves, how He has knit us all together as one body and calls us to love Him and others well, how He is building His church despite opposition, how believers can persevere through even the most difficult circumstances, and how our faith is worth dying for, yes, and also worth LIVING for.

To see the scope of Christ's legacy is a profound gift. And our part in that legacy matters deeply. 🇺🇸

FOR JUST AS THE BODY IS ONE AND HAS MANY MEMBERS, AND ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY, THOUGH MANY, ARE ONE BODY, SO IT IS WITH CHRIST.

1 Corinthians 12:12



Shelli Alaniz graduates this year with a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies from TBS. She works as Owner/Trainer of SURGE Team Building; serves as leader of UpWord Bible studies at Grace Fellowship Church in Katy, Texas developing curriculum and hosting hundreds across four weekly Bible Studies; and serves as Associate Director of Women's Ministry at Ananias House, a global ministry offering biblical training and gospel-centered resources to women in Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

HOW I STUDY & UNDERSTAND... MY BIBLE

All honor, glory and praise be to the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit! After graduating from TBS in 2022, I started my own YouTube channel, “BSM on How I Study and Understand my Bible” (BSM stands for “Bible Study Methods”). I use BSM to research scripture, guide in-depth study of words and history of specific times and cultures. This helps me better understand what God said, why He said it, and the context of the time during which He spoke to the author.

I incorporate my entire TBS education into researching scripture. I return to class notes and PowerPoints to ensure I have details correct and can easily spend a whole day on one chapter. TBS taught me to examine scriptures thoroughly by studying word for word, line by line, precept upon precept. I thoroughly enjoy this, since researching allows me to spend more time with God and develop a closer relationship with Him.

Viewers send messages thanking me for teaching. They regularly share how they have never heard scripture taught like that before and how my teaching helps them better understand God’s Word. I encourage viewers to seclude themselves in a room by themselves with God, the Bible, and at least two commentaries. Allow no one or nothing else inside, and keep all worries, kids, pets, and spouses on the other side of the door. Just enjoy time alone with God and His word.

Fellow members of Lakewood Church regularly recognize me and share how much they love how I teach God’s word. “You make it easier to understand,” they say, and comment how much they look forward to my next episode. I hope to help people draw closer to God and let them know that He loves them and will forgive them of

FELLOW MEMBERS OF LAKEWOOD CHURCH REGULARLY RECOGNIZE ME AND SHARE HOW MUCH THEY LOVE HOW I TEACH GOD’S WORD.

their sins if they ask and repent. It is such a blessing to share and teach how to develop a closer relationship with God.

My TBS professors worked patiently with me and my classmates to teach us how to research papers, develop creative ideas, and prepare presentations. They taught us how to pay attention to contexts, translations, grammar, word usages, and nuances in meanings. Along with history, they also provided archaeological insights corresponding to the existence of events, people, and places mentioned in the Bible. Though in-depth studies may seem too time-consuming, taking steps to a deeper understanding of God’s Word can open us up to taste and see that God is good, and to experience His goodness, love, wisdom, and knowledge. As we do so, we fall deeper in love with Him and our thirst for more of Him intensifies.

It is amazing how I use my TBS education, apply it in studying and sharing God’s Word, and continue to learn new things. I also love that reading scripture in the original languages in which they were written seems like opening a door to the mind of God.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). As I have embraced the adventure of continuing to seek the Lord and being taught by His Holy Spirit, I rejoice in opportunities to share what I am learning so we can all live our best lives in accordance His Word and Holy Spirit. What an awesome God we serve. 🙏



Sharon Holmes has B.S. in Biology from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, an Associate of Applied Science in Medical Technology from Tarleton State University, and a Bible Certificate (2018) and M.A. in Biblical Languages and Culture (2022) from TBS. An American Society for Clinical Pathology Certified Medical Lab Technician, she serves as a Service Team Prayer Lead at Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas.

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

Hymns

IN THE

Prison Epistles

By Dr. Scott Stripling



Dr. Scott Stripling serves as
TBS Provost and Vice-President
of Donor Relations.

About midnight (in the Philippian jail)
Paul and Silas were **praying and
singing hymns to God**, and the other
prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:25

This verse says that they sang hymns (plural).

What hymns might they have sung?

During his Roman imprisonment (circa A.D. 60), Paul used the “free time” to write letters to the nascent Christian communities. The New Testament preserves four of these letters: Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. The first three were written to churches, and the final one was written to an individual member of the church – probably at Colosse. The church epistles all contain ancient Christian hymns or portions of hymns.

If Paul and Silas sang these hymns during their Philippian imprisonment, it must have had a powerful impact on the Philippians to see these lyrics in an inspired letter addressed to them a decade later. This assumes that the Philippian jailor and his household became part of the local church at Philippi after their conversion (Acts 16:30–33). It is also plausible that some of the other prisoners who were listening to them sing hymns also converted and became church members.

A few years later (ca. A.D. 66), Paul was in a Roman prison again (his final imprisonment). At this time, he wrote his final epistle, 2 Timothy, to his closest associate and co-author of several of his earlier epistles. Amazingly, hymns were once again on the mind of Paul (2 Timothy 2:11–13).

Hymns are important because they teach doctrine to the church and give glory to God. Anyone visiting a preschool class can see how the teacher uses songs to teach vital information to the students. Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn at the conclusion of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30). Since little doubt exists that the meal was a Passover seder, the hymn would have come from Psalm 113–118, known collectively at the Hallel. A portion of this was also sung a few days earlier (Matthew 21:9).

From prison, Paul wrote about the importance of hymns to the churches in Ephesus and Colosse:

*Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
Sing and make music in your hearts to the Lord
(Ephesians 5:19).*

*Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, as you
sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your
hearts to God (Colossians 3:16).*

The didactic value of music and worship weighed on Paul’s mind during his imprisonments just as it was on Jesus’ mind immediately preceding his torture and imprisonment.

**What is a hymn and how does it differ from a
psalm or spiritual song?**

Psalms are Scripture set to music; hymns are songs about God; and spiritual songs are directed to God. In a broader sense, however, a hymn can refer to any song that has doctrinal value and gives glory to God. Below are the lyrics of the hymns from the Prison Epistles. They clearly teach doctrine and give glory to God.

Philippians 2:5–11

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
But made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death –
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:15–20

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; his is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Ephesians 5:14


Wake up, O sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.

2 Timothy 2:11–13

If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
He will also disown us;
if we are faithless,
he will remain faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.

1 Timothy 3:16

He appeared in a body,
was vindicated by the Spirit,
was seen by angels,
was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world,
was taken up in glory.



Hymns


IN THE

Prison Epistles

About midnight (in the Philippian jail)
Paul and Silas were **praying and
singing hymns to God**, and the other
prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:25

**Much modern
Christian singing reflects
“our difficult plight.”**

By contrast, the oldest surviving example of English literature, known as “Caedmon’s Hymn,” dates to the 7th century A.D. In it, Caedmon revels in the sovereignty and greatness of God. A revival (or at least a refreshing—Acts 3:19) might occur if we reintroduced hymns into our private and public worship. It would be difficult to sing Martin Luther’s “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” or Augustus Toplady’s “Rock of Ages” without being deeply moved. It would be especially compelling to see modern worship leaders reintroduce the ancient Christian hymns recorded in the Prison Epistles. 



*The Thomas Family:
(Seated, L-R) Kyle, Toby, Chase, and Amanda
(Standing) Ed*

OFF TO THE LAND OF THE

RISING SUN

By Ed Thomas

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and all He creates is beautiful and good. I try to reflect on this as I start each day. One incredible place God has created, and continues to sustain, is The Bible Seminary (TBS).

I was a rather late bloomer to the notion of formal biblical studies, enrolling in seminary at age 47 and graduating at age 52 (I attended TBS from 2014 through 2019). Returning to an academic environment after 25 years, I honestly had no idea what to expect from the professors, the curriculum, or anything.

However, I was absolutely blown away at the high caliber professors and staff that God Himself called to serve at TBS! Never did I expect that I would be learning under world-renowned leaders in the fields of biblical languages, archeology, hermeneutics (Bible study methods), missions, and so much more.

It has been said that the Bible is like a swimming pool – shallow enough that a little child can wade in and drink without fear of drowning, yet so deep scholars can never find the bottom. Taking the analogy a step further, the vastness of the Bible is more like all the oceans of the world and then some, with 66 distinct regions.

Our TBS professors gave us an expert tour of all 66 books in this vast expanse, and we students experienced complete saturation among a beautiful mix of their knowledge, wisdom, compassion, and deep love for the Lord and each of us. We could tell that our

professors had been there many times before and had explored depths much greater than what we saw.

One thing I so appreciated was that each was able to share their observations from different angles and vantage points, even when some of their perspectives varied. I witnessed mature, humble, gentle, grace-filled discourse in areas of divergence, while at the same time all commonly held firm to Bible absolutes together. This is something our world greatly needs and I got to see it in action and learned how to replicate it in my life. I will be forever grateful for the preparation and development TBS provided so that my wife, Toby, and I could be better prepared to invest our lives in spreading the Gospel and love of Christ.

Another beautiful place God created is the country of Japan. During one of my TBS missions courses, I experienced the Lord's call on my heart for lost souls in the land of the rising sun. It has been a long season of preparation for my wife and I (from our human perspective), but we appear poised to begin full-time missionary work making disciples among future beautiful image-bearers of Christ in Japan starting in late 2023 or early 2024.

"WHY JAPAN?"

A great many people have asked, “Why Japan?” a question that we might also have asked a few years ago. What we have learned is that the Japanese are the second largest unreached people group on the planet. Of a population of about 127 million people, far less than 1% know Jesus (probably less than 0.5%). Japan has abundant material blessings and is quite economically and socially advanced. However, societal and workplace pressures can be absolutely crushing to the soul as indicated by high rates of loneliness, depression, and suicide among Japanese people. In fact, the Japanese government recently established an official “Minister of Loneliness” to tackle this problem. During the COVID pandemic, the number of deaths by suicide was about the same as deaths attributed to COVID. There is even a Japanese word for “death by overwork” – karoshi. Japan also has major looming societal issues: marriage and birth rates are so extremely low that the Japanese

population is expected to decrease by one third over the next 40 years. We believe there is a great need for hope in Japan, and we know the Author of Hope, Jesus Christ, and look forward to being a bridge of hope to the people of Japan.

We plan to serve with a mission organization planted in Japan six decades ago, Japan Mission (JapanMission.org). Our work will focus on sharing the love of the Author of Hope, Jesus Christ, and we look forward to serving as a bridge of hope and love to the people of Japan. As we move forward in community engagement and relationship-building with local Japanese pastors, we ask for your prayers for the Lord’s blessings, favor, guidance, and provision as we seek to share the love, hope, and soul-saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with people living in the land of the rising sun! 🙏

JAPANESE POPULATION = ^{ABOUT} 127 MILLION

FAR LESS THAN
1% KNOW JESUS



Ed Thomas earned a B.S. in Bioengineering from Texas A&M in 1989 and a Master of Divinity from TBS in 2019. His 25-year clinical career journey at Intermedics, Boston Scientific, LivaNova, and Japan Lifeline Company included several years based in Tokyo, Japan. Interestingly, Ed’s work included research, marketing, and sales of a cardiac rhythm management device implanted in one of his professors and that device used a battery developed by the father of another of his TBS professors.

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FRENCH COOKING

Like a lot of middle-aged adults, my modus operandi is spinning several plates at once. I am married to a physician in the Air Force and we, along with our four children, move states almost every two years. I am president of a nonprofit organization in Washington DC, The Jerusalem Connection. And I am a graduate student at The Bible Seminary studying biblical history and archaeology. With those spinning plates in mind, it is hard to explain why I chose the year of my husband's deployment to the Middle East to launch a project that required me to read, research, write, and produce via podcast a commentary essay each week on the Minor Prophets.

We are all wired differently and in my case I knew that if I started watching YouTube videos of soldiers returning home to their dogs, I would fall into quick depression. I also knew that my best antidepressant would be spending every extra minute of the deployment year reading the Bible.

Somewhere in the back of my mind as well was *Julie & Julia*, the 2009 movie about a New Yorker writer who cooked in one year all 524 recipes in Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. In Julie's case, she distracted herself from her monotonous dead-end job and found purpose in the art of culinary creation. For myself, what began as a psychological tool for survival flowered into a life-changing and faith-forming love of the prophets. I suppose one woman's French cooking is another woman's stack of Bible commentaries.

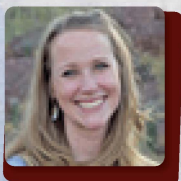
I could have picked any portion of the Bible for a yearlong reading challenge, but I selected the Minor Prophets because

I knew the shorter prophetic writings were the least created pages in my Bible. When I had read the prophets in the past, I tended to pick and choose prophetic verses that sounded nice when plucked out of their larger contexts. However, to fully experience the consistency of the Minor Prophet's message and their unified declarations, the twelve books need to be read together and in order with an eye toward how they also cross reference each other.

Most pulpit preaching trims down the threads that run through the prophetic text to offer only life application. I see that type of Bible teaching as cutting the Bible up into snippets of thread. The impact is useful if the only goal is to help believers mend small tears in the frayed fabric of their spiritual lives. Inevitably, they lack the tools to comprehend the dramatic tapestry of revelation woven throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Or worse, they develop a dim view of the scriptures and are color blind to the vibrancy of the Biblical truths.

As a student of biblical history and archaeology, I have an obvious bent towards the history, language, literary style, and archaeology of the biblical books. I wanted to read the prophets on their own terms. The Minor Prophets are all oracles given within a tumultuous 300-year span of history (770—430 BCE). The books occur mostly in chronological order. Hosea, Amos, and Micah sounded the alarm for the Kingdom of Israel to repent or God would use the Assyrians as his weapon of punishment. Jonah dates to the same period, a contemporary of Hosea, only Jonah reluctantly preached repentance to the hated

**THE FUNDAMENTAL MESSAGE, SPOKEN THROUGH
ALL TWELVE OF THE PROPHETS, WAS COMMUNICATING TO A
REBELLIOUS PEOPLE YAHWEH'S DISTRESS CALL:**



Shelley Neese is a TBS Master of Arts in Biblical History and Archaeology student. President of The Jerusalem Connection (TheJerusalemConnection.us) and author of The Copper Scroll Project (ShelleyNeese.com), she and her husband, who works as Physician in the Air Force, have four children.

AND THE MINOR PROPHETS

By Shelley Neese

Assyrians. Nahum called out the Ninevites for returning to their sinful ways, foretelling the collapse of the Assyrian empire. Habakkuk and Zephaniah address the rise of Babylonia and the threatening expansion of the new empire. Joel and Obadiah lack the historical superscriptions of the other books but most scholars place them right before the period of Babylonian exile. The later books of Haggai and Zechariah encourage Judahites returning from exile to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and restore ritual worship. Malachi encouraged the impatient returnees to obey the laws of Moses.

I believe the reason so many Christians are walking away from the faith of their youth is that they have lost touch with their Bible. They read the same 20 percent of the scriptures, mostly the gospels and Paul's letters, and they neglect the Torah, prophets, and narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures. The result is that Christians believe in the Messiah, but they cannot appreciate the 2,000 years of Jewish messianic hope and expectation that preceded the birth of Jesus. The incarnation was the culmination of all prophetic revelation, but no one should jump to the end of any great story.

The fundamental message, spoken through all twelve of the prophets, was communicating to a rebellious people Yahweh's

distress call: "Return to me, and I will return to you." Not only does the message of the prophets still ring true today, but they also successfully served as my anchor through the yearlong deployment. Getting through one prophet at a time got me through one month at a time until suddenly we were welcoming our Airman home at the airport. I know there will not be a movie adaptation of my year of the prophets, or a chance to call upon Meryl Streep's method acting. However, I did happen upon my capstone project which to a seminary student is better than an Oscar nomination. 🙏

“
RETURN
TO ME
&
I WILL
RETURN
TO YOU”

HOSEA
JOEL
AMOS
OBADIAH
JONAH
MICAH
NAHUM
HABAKKUK
ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI
ZECHARIAH
MALACHI

MINOR PROPHETS



You are at the lowest
point on earth
420 meters
below sea level.

PhD Experience at **TALLEL-HAMMAM**

By Gary Urie

A retired Sergeant from the Houston Police Department where he worked for 32 years as a Robbery Detective, Gary Urie holds B.A. in History from the University of Houston, an M.A. in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary, and an M.A. in Biblical History and Archaeology from TBS.

After graduating from TBS in August 2022 with a Master of Arts in Biblical History and Archaeology, and I began working on my PhD in biblical history and archaeology at Veritas International University. While I continue serving with the TBS Archaeological Studies Institute team at Tel Shiloh as Dig Photographer and a Square Supervisor, I also had the opportunity this past winter to spend six weeks excavating and touring in the country of Jordan (Transjordan) as part of my PhD program. My trip provided opportunities to gain additional experience, to see historical sites in the Transjordan, and to participate in another archaeological field school.

Situated northeast of the Dead Sea, Tall el-Hammam (TeH) contains remnants of a large Bronze Age city which, at one time, dominated the southern Jordan Valley and perhaps the whole region. The site's substantial remains date as early as the Chalcolithic period with continual occupation through the Early, Intermediate, and Middle Bronze Ages and to as late as Iron Age II. The TeH Excavation Project Co-director, Dr. Steven Collins, believes TeH is the

Bronze Age biblical site of Sodom. During the Late Bronze Age, the city was likely Abel-Shittim, and in the Roman, Byzantine, and Umayyad periods, the city was known as Livias.

Dr. Collins and members of his staff began excavations at TeH in 2005 and returned this Winter for Season 16 following a two-year hiatus due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The dig team consisted of experienced staff, numerous volunteers, and over two dozen students from Trinity Southwest University and Veritas International University. The site is rich with ceramic remains, numerous objects, multiple strata of occupation, and remains of conflagration.

Dr. Carroll Kobs taught TeH Field School for the sixteenth season. An experienced archaeologist who also excavates alongside Dr. Bob Mullins at the site of Tel Abel Beth Maacah, Dr. Kobs led the students through two weeks excavating several squares on the Upper Tall. Each student also acted in the capacity of a square supervisor with all the concordant duties and responsibilities. Students excavated, took measurements, drew top plans, and completed supervisory paperwork. By the end,

students had a thorough understanding and appreciation for the complexities of archaeological field work.

Weekends involved traveling to various historical sites around Jordan, including the cities of the Roman Decapolis (Gadara or Umm Qais; Gerasa or Jerash), Petra, Mt. Nebo, Madaba (Madaba Map), Wadi Rum, and others. While these trips enriched our knowledge and understanding of the region and increased our appreciation for history, they were also a welcome break from the rigors of weekday field work.

As with many trips, especially archaeological excavations, it is impossible to know exactly what to expect. One thing I learned from this experience is to be flexible and trust God, since He always seems to provide in ways that are better than I can ever imagine. I was blessed by the staff, volunteers, and students on this trip. Everyone was helpful, encouraging, and kind, which helped relieve the stress of travel and studying. I am grateful for this experience, for Dr. Collins, and for everyone associated with Season 16 at Tall el-Hammam. 🙏

Situated Northeast of the Dead Sea

Tall el-Hammam (TeH) contains **remnants of a large Bronze Age city** which, at one time, dominated the southern Jordan Valley and perhaps the whole region.



With fellow student JW Fakes at Church of the Lions, the largest church at Umm er-Rasas in Jordan.



With fellow student Emily Cavins taking elevations on the upper tall of Tall el-Hammam.



With a camel named Twitter at Wadi Rum in Jordan.

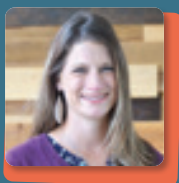
MATCHING DONATIONS



(L-R) Chris, Cathy, Michael, and Jim Jones

“It felt so good to know that our family could work together with our company to support so many worthy causes through the lives and ministries of TBS students and alumni.”
—Cathy Jones

By Angela McClinton



Angela McClinton (MDiv 2018) serves as TBS Development Director and as Executive Pastor of The Waters Church in Katy, Texas.

Cathy and Jim Jones first encountered The Bible Seminary (TBS) when their son, Michael, decided to go to seminary (see 2023 Graduates “Robert Michael Jones” on page 33).

“The first place he called was TBS, and the first person he talked to was Dr. Stripling,” Cathy says. “That one conversation changed all of us. We just didn’t know it yet.”

Cathy and Jim quickly became TBS supporters. As parents, they have had front row seats to witness professors investing in the lives and ministries of other students and their circles of influence.

“TBS didn’t just impact Michael. They equipped him in many ways, and in turn, through their investment into him, he has helped lead others to the Lord in his family and beyond.”

Cathy and Jim have been blessed as the impact of their giving has multiplied through other TBS students and graduates, too, who are serving the Lord in Katy, across the United States, and in other countries.

“TBS extends well beyond what they do as a local seminary. So, when it comes to providing monetary support, we would love to give even more than we have,” Cathy shares.

Supporting TBS is more than just giving money, too. Cathy and Jim love sharing their time, efforts, heart, and prayers.

One unique way they have multiplied their financial support is through matching gifts from Shell USA (Jim retired after 22 years working in Shell IT and Cathy after 19 years in Shell Compliance).

“Many companies offer matching gifts. Each differs in what they will match. It just takes a little bit of research, but if you want to give even more, this is a win-win-win for the donor, the company, and for TBS.”

Charitable donations from individuals, families, and organizations help fund TBS. Like many educational institutions, student tuition only covers a portion of operational costs (17% of 2022-23 income derived from tuition and fees; donors provided the other 83%). Donations to TBS are a conduit for Kingdom impact, as every dollar donated translates into ministry to students, alumni, and those they influence throughout their lifetimes of ministry.

“We were so excited when we were able to secure matching donations,” Cathy says. “It felt so good to know that our family could work together with our company to support so many worthy causes through the lives and ministries of TBS students and alumni.”

Mt. Ebal Inscription:

CONNECTING THE DOTS

By Aaron Lipkin



Dr. Scott Stripling announced discovery of the Mt. Ebal defixio at a press conference hosted at Lanier Theological Library in March 2022.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1982 and 1989, Haifa University's Professor Adam Zertal conducted an archaeological excavation on the northeastern slopes of Mount Ebal that revealed two altars dated to the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age: a large rectangular altar that covered and venerated a smaller round altar. Professor Zertal identified this site with the temenos commanded by Moses (Deuteronomy 27) and built by Joshua Ben Nun (Joshua 8).

In October and November 2019, I coordinated a special operation with the Israeli Defense Forces and Samaria Governor, Mr. Yossi Dagan, to extract some of Zertal's archaeological dump from the 1980's excavation for re-analysis by Dr. Scott Stripling from the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR).

During a December of 2019 wet sifting operation of the dump piles, Dr. Stripling's team discovered a folded lead tablet with exterior indentations. Though too brittle to be opened, Professor Naama Yahalom-Mack from Hebrew University tested a broken corner fragment and determined that the lead derived from a mine in Lavrion, Greece known to be in use in the Late Bronze Age. Later, the Academy of Sciences in Prague conducted a series of interior and exterior tomographic scans, and Stripling invited the Prague scientists and two experienced epigraphers to join a collaborative team to study the artifact.

Analysis revealed inscriptions in a very ancient Hebrew script. Stripling and epigraphers, Peter Gert van der Veen and Gershon Galil held a press conference on March 25, 2022 announcing the initial discovery (*see photo above*). The team then published an academic, peer-reviewed article in May 2023¹ primarily dealing with an estimated 48-letter interior proto-alphabetic script considered a predecessor of Paleo-Hebrew. Scholars often refer to this script as proto-Canaanite or proto-Sinaitic. The presence of the divine name of Israel's God on this inscription (twice) leaves no doubt that it is Hebrew and that the Hebrew predates any previous Hebrew inscription.

This discovery is probably the most important ever made in the land of Israel. The repercussions of this finding are nothing less than an archaeological marvel, with the potential to change much of the academic world's knowledge of the ancient history, culture, and religion of the Israelites. There will likely be a push back from portions of the academic world, and heated discussions will take place between Minimalist (persons who believe the Bible might contain some kernels of truth) and Maximalist (persons who believe the Bible is historically accurate and true) archaeologists.

1. Stripling, S., Galil, G., Kumpova, I. et al. "You are Cursed by the God YHW:" an early Hebrew inscription from Mt. Ebal. *Heritage Science Journal* 11, 105 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40494-023-00920-9>.

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses prepares the Israelites for the long-awaited conquest and inheritance of Canaan. Moses puts special emphasis on the adherence to the covenant of Sinai with the laws and decrees that were handed down to him by God. A recurring message is the principle of sin and punishment, righteousness, and its reward.

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse — the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands

of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. When the Lord your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses” (Deuteronomy 11:26-29, NIV).

After conquering Jericho and Ai, Joshua fulfills the above commandment (Joshua 8:30-34, NIV) in accordance with instructions detailed in Deuteronomy 27 and culminating in the ceremony during which the 12 tribes recite 12 curses and

to which all the people respond after each one, “Amen!”

In summary, the Israelites were commanded to perform a national ceremony that constituted erecting a memorial, building an altar, and performing a covenant ceremony. The whole nation obeyed and committed to each curse by saying “Amen!” in the presence of the Ark of the Covenant and standing at two separate locations and looking at each other. Each of the 12 curses written in scripture starts with the word ARWR, or “cursed,” in the singular masculine form.

CONNECTING THE SCRIPTURES TO THE TABLET

The Location

The identification of Mt. Ebal among Bible scholars is clear and backed by 2,500 years of constant Samaritan tradition. According to the Bible, Mt. Ebal is the central location for the altar but also the mountain associated with the curse.

An Identified Cultic Site

The site is not an archaeological Tel with layers from different periods in history, but a one-layer site with two strata. According to excavation reports, the site was in use by the same civilization (no destruction layer) for approximately 100 years, after which it was abandoned and never used again. The site was clearly cultic because of its special characteristics: installations, bamah, temenos, unique cultic artifacts, jars, and lack of oil lamps.

Zertal identified the big structure at the highest point of the enclosure as an Israelite altar, possibly the altar of Joshua mentioned in the Scriptures. The excavation of that bamah, or altar, revealed several layers of bones, ashes and dirt.

However, he discovered another altar on bedrock at the exact geometric center of the large structure. The smaller round installation contained several cultic objects, including a Pumice Chalice, leading him to identify it as the “Founding Altar” belonging to the earliest stage of the structure. He removed the contents of this small altar, dry sifted them, and dumped the remains in a pile east of the structure. The lead tablet was found in material extracted from this eastern dump pile.

If the tablet did originate from the material found in the innermost part of the altar, this further strengthens the understanding that the tablet was created during the earliest stage of the site’s establishment (LBII). Rather than a curse amulet created to curse an individual, it seems more likely that it was an important document worth archiving in the innermost part of the altar itself and accessible only to the priesthood. Furthermore, why would the ancients enact a “curse” instead of blessings at such an important cultic site unless it was part of the site’s identity?

Israelite Culture and Theology

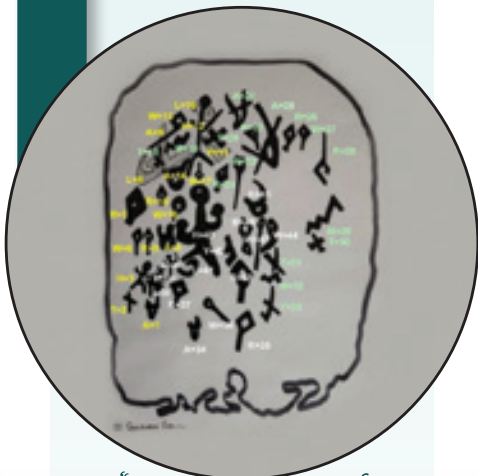
According to the Manasseh Hill Country Survey, the site was in use during the height of the Israelite settlement period of the central mountain ridge of Samaria. The architecture of the altar is like that of other Israelite altars described in Scripture and to altars built in the temple in Jerusalem according to Second Temple sources.

Bones discovered inside the altar coincide with the list of animals permitted to be sacrificed to the Hebrew God: mostly young and male, which also strengthens the connection to the Israelite sacrificial tradition of the Bible. The lack of unclean animals (e.g. pig) is a clear indication that the site is Israelite.

The tablet text coincides with the earliest forms of the Hebrew language. The shortened use of the word YHW is the earliest mention of the name of the Hebrew God in the land of Israel and is unique to the Israelite culture. Since Canaanites did not worship YHW, this should end the scholarly dispute as to the identity of the civilization that built, sustained, and eventually decommissioned the site.



“Inner B” Text



“Inner B” Annotations

Line-drawing of the inscription on “Inner B” (top) and annotated line-drawing (bottom). Drawing and annotations by Gershon Galil.

Learn more about the small, folded lead tablet from Mt. Ebal and the far-reaching impact of the tablet's inscription, which appears to be the oldest Hebrew inscription found to-date in Israel, in this episode of "The Bible Seminary Podcast" available in Apple Podcasts.



The Tablet's Date

The tablet was not found in a normal excavation in a documented layer (insitu) but in an archaeological dump with no clear layers. However, thanks to the site being a one-layer site (with two strata), we only have two choices: Late Bronze II and Iron Age I. The shape of the letters dates the text to the initial period of the formation of the Hebrew alphabet and is similar in its form to the text found at Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai (dated to the beginning of the 16th century BC). The analysis of the lead indicates sourcing from a mine in Greece operating during the Late Bronze Age. Also, the dump pile is a mirror image of the original layers of debris found within the altar. This means material scraped from the outer side of the dump pile came from the innermost parts of the altar, possibly from the founding altar. Thus, the tablet probably existed during the time of the Biblical Blessing and Curse ceremony, irrespective of when the Exodus occurred.

A Public Initiative

Finding a lead tablet inscribed with an ancient Hebrew curse on the mountain of curses at a remote and uninhabited site seems an unlikely coincidence. One can argue that because the mountain was associated with curses, it became a place where later individuals deposited curse tablets directed at individuals they disliked, yet this possibility seems negated by the proto-alphabetic script.

Furthermore, the import cost of lead – a raw material not found in Israel – probably made lead prohibitively expensive for most individuals in the Southern Levant at that time. Lead is a non-corrosive stainless-steel metal with a long life expectancy (see Job 19:24, which references writing on lead as a way to eternalize a text) and associated with curses (see Zechariah 5:7-8).

Engraving the tablet in the poetic Chiastic Parallelism form would have required a well-versed, experienced scribe. Assuming a semi-nomadic, non-affluent population also indicates that the tablet was a result of tribal or national effort, not an individual amulet purchased in the Shechem market.

The Inscription and the Scriptures

Several parallels exist between the tablet and Scriptures.

Cursed - ARWR - ארור

When the text was first published and it was clear that the scribe wrote in the singular masculine, it opened the possibility the defixio was an individual curse. In English, the subject "you" can refer to singular or plural whereas in Hebrew, the subject "Ata - אתה" means "you" in the singular form, but could also refer to a singular nation.

Each curse in Deuteronomy 27 starts with "Arur" in the singular masculine, not plural (Arurim). After every Arur, a verb describes a sin and all the verbs are in the masculine singular third person form: **השעי, הלקח, גישם, הגשם**, etc. It is clear from the Biblical text that the curse falls on each individual Israelite that sins, making it plausible that the text is a self-imprecatory curse on each individual Israelite, just like in Deuteronomy 27.

There is no mention of an individual's name to which the curses are addressed, contrary to a common curse amulet that usually contained the name of the person targeted. This strengthens the possibility that the lead tablet is not an individual curse but rather a national one.

The Number Six

On the Lead Tablet, the word "Arur - ארור" (cursed) appears six times on the tablet's interior, and possibly another six times on its exterior – a total of twelve appearances. It is possible that the folded tablet is a symbolic representation of the two mountains: Six tribes/curses on one side and six on the other as the scriptures describe.

The Number Twelve

In the Lead Tablet, the word "Arur - Cursed" may appear twelve times in total (six on the interior and potentially six on the exterior according to the analysis of professor Gershon Galil). This is possibly the most important parallel. Why would the ancient scribe repeat the word ARWR exactly twelve times? I believe he intended to represent each of the curses mentioned in Deuteronomy 27 and that this inscription is a legal document summarizing the covenantal curses to which the Israelites committed.

SUMMARY

While we will never know for sure if the inscription on the Mt. Ebal lead tablet connects to the ceremony of the Blessings and Curses described in the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, there is enough evidence from the above arguments to claim that it is not just possible, but probable that the tablet and the ceremony are connected.

Just as monumental as if we had found the tablets with the Ten Commandments on them that Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai, the Mt. Ebal tablet may connect us directly to the most important Israelite national event that ever took place in the Land of Israel. 🇮🇱



Aaron Lipkin is an Israeli Bible scholar, filmmaker, owner and CEO of Lipkin Tours (LipkinTours.com), Chairman of Heartland Institute, an Ofra township spokesperson, and a member of the Manasseh Hill Survey team found by Professor Adam Zertal. Born and raised in Jerusalem, he and his wife Esther have five children. The long form of this edited article was originally published on May 28, 2023 at the-biblical-heartland.myshopify.com.



THE BIBLE

SEMINARY

By Dr. Israel Steinmetz

Dean of Graduate Programs and Associate
Professor of Practical Theology at TBS

2023 FACULTY OF THE YEAR

»» Dr. Ralph W. Neighbour Jr. ««

Each year The Bible Seminary (TBS) recognizes a faculty member as Faculty of the Year. This year's recipient is Dr. Ralph W. Neighbour Jr., a global leader in the cell group movement over the past fifty years. Through eighty years of ministry, Dr. Neighbour has served as a pastor, evangelist, church planter, teacher, and missionary across the United States and in scores of nations in every continent on the globe. He is author of over forty books, including his *Survival Kit for New Christians*, a discipleship guide which has been translated into over forty languages and sold over 2 million copies in English. He is also founder of TOUCH Outreach Ministries, which has provided training and resources for millions of Christians around the globe.

Dr. Neighbour reached out to TBS last year at the age of ninety-three to offer to serve in any way he could. Words cannot express how honored we were to partner with him in presenting the Multiply Like Jesus seminar, a 12-hour course empowering Christians to help others come to faith. As we honor Dr. Neighbour with this award, we are privileged to share

parts of his testimony of what God has done in and through his life and ministry.

Ralph was born April 1, 1929. His grandfather and father before him were church planters, evangelists, and pastors. Ralph responded to a call to the ministry at a young age, preaching his first sermon at fourteen. He volunteered regularly with Youth For Christ throughout high school and enrolled in Wheaton College. After a brief period of rebellion from God, Ralph rededicated himself to the Lord and transferred to Northwestern College where he completed his undergraduate degree during Billy Graham's presidency of the university.

While at Northwestern, Ralph took his first full-time ministry assignment working with the newly formed Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. He answered thousands of Bible and theology questions sent in via mail to the ministry. Ralph married his college sweetheart, Ruth Johnston, on May 8, 1952. They celebrated seventy-one years of marriage this summer.

In 1954, Ralph was ordained to the ministry by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and began pastoring in Maryland. In 1955 he took a year-long

course at a hospital, learning to pastor the mentally ill. This experience was transformative as he interacted with many non-believers and ministering alongside Christians from various denominations. This experience increased his passion for evangelism and kingdom partnerships.

In 1956, Ralph learned that Jim Elliot and four others had been killed by the Huaorani Indians they were witnessing to in Ecuador. Ralph was personal friends with four of the five missionaries killed. This experience renewed Ralph and Ruth's commitment to answer God's call to foreign missions. Ralph enrolled in New Orleans Baptist Seminary to pursue the required graduate degree and preached often in churches and revival services. But upon graduation, due to health problems, they were not allowed to travel overseas. Instead, they embraced the mission field of the United States, planting and pastoring churches throughout the country and broadcasting radio evangelism programs.

Ralph went on to complete coursework for a PhD in Church History from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. As he studied the work of Martin Luther in the Reformation, Ralph was challenged to be a change agent for the kingdom within



his own denomination. He and Ruth ministered faithfully throughout the 1950s in various locations before he eventually began short-term foreign missions work in the Caribbean in 1963.

In the decade to follow, Dr. Neighbour became a prominent speaker throughout the SBC, training church planters and pastors. He published his first book in 1967 and in 1969 planted an “experimental” congregation in west Houston where he began to pioneer his emerging ideas regarding cell churches. As part of his innovative approach, Dr. Neighbour began a television show, entitled TOUCH (Transforming Others Under Christ’s Hands). During this time, he also earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from Luther Rice Baptist Seminary.

Ralph and Ruth accepted their first long-term foreign mission assignment in Saigon, in 1974 with the nation in the turmoil of the Vietnam War. Soon displaced from Saigon, they travelled throughout Southeast Asia as Dr. Neighbour began training thousands of leaders in cell church planting and growth.

Upon his return to the United States, Dr. Neighbour recognized the value of his

international experience for ministry. He launched TOUCH Ministries to provide consulting to leaders across cultures to implement the cell church structure in their congregations. In 1979 he wrote *Survival Kit for New Christians* as a Bible study for a new believer he was discipling. The book would go on to be used in the discipleship of tens of millions of people around the world.

Throughout the years Dr. Neighbour’s greatest passion has been the fulfillment of the Great Commission through evangelism and discipleship. Over time, he became convinced that every believer was called to be a minister of the gospel in their daily lives, and that the best and most biblical way to train them was through the cell group. This represented a revolutionary challenge to churches relying on professional clergy and church-based programs for ministry.

In 1985, Dr. Neighbour began serving as Professor of Church Planting for Columbia Bible College & Seminary. While he would leave in 1991 to serve as associate pastor of a congregation in Singapore, he went on to be a guest

lecturer and adjunct faculty for numerous Bible colleges and seminaries around the world, most recently with The Bible Seminary. In 1989 he was awarded an honorary DSTh from Southern Baptist University.

Over the past thirty years, Dr. Neighbour has continued to travel the world, ministering on every continent, with particular emphasis in South America, Africa, and Asia. In each place he has trained Christian leaders to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry within the community of cell groups. His dozens of books have been written to increase access to the training and wisdom he imparts through preaching and teaching.

At ninety-four, Dr. Neighbour now spends most of his time caring for his wife Ruth in their home in west Houston. His legacy of leadership continues to impact tens of millions throughout the world, particularly in major areas of the world where Christianity is flourishing. His teachings, writings, and ministry are bearing fruit for the kingdom. 🇺🇸

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

*Dr. Neighbour's
autobiography*



*Inside My Skin
Dwells the Godhead*

along with other resources available at

RalphNeighbour.com



THE BIBLE SEMINARY

New
Job



(L-R) Yvette, Madison, and Kevin Alvarez

Kevin Alvarez (MDiv 2016)

Lead Pastor, Celebration Community Church in Pana, Illinois

“When God radically called Abraham in Genesis 12 to leave his family and go to a place of unfamiliarity, this was a snapshot of what he would do for the Alvarez family. After spending all our lives in Texas, the Lord has now called us to Celebration Community Church in Pana, Illinois. From the city to the country, from the heat to the cold, in either context the name of Jesus will be proclaimed. Pray for us in our new calling from the Lord!”

New
Job



Jeff and Brenda Martin

Brenda Martin (MDiv 2015)

Executive Pastor, First Methodist Conroe in Conroe, Texas

“I am thrilled to share that in God’s faithfulness – through some surprising steps that have included messages through His Word, dreams, others, and much prayer – He has put me on a path where I will be ordained as an elder within the Global Methodist Church in July 2022. I have also joyfully accepted an invitation to serve as Executive Pastor at First Methodist Conroe beginning July 1, 2023. I will serve under appointment in the East Texas Conference under Conroe’s Lead Pastor, Rev. Dr. John Wayne McMann. My primary responsibilities will include oversight of Care Director, Music Director, Finance, Facilities, Communications, Personnel, and Interns for the main campus and our future Woodland Hills campus.”

New
Job



(Top L-R clockwise)
Kevin, Allie, Amber, and Audrey

Kevin Penner (MDiv 2015)

Youth Pastor, Crosspoint Bible Church in Omaha, Nebraska

“We have spent almost an entire year at Crosspoint Bible Church in Omaha, Nebraska. I have the joy of serving as Youth Pastor to about 40 amazing students and have seen God move in their lives in a number of ways, particularly through Stand to Reason (High School) and Ignite (Jr. High) conferences and Ascend summer camp equipping students with tools to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. The students have a strong desire to know the Lord and to serve in different ministries, and I am excited to be a part of what God is doing in their lives and in Omaha as a whole.”

Family Updates

New Job



(Clockwise L-R) Samantha, Caleb, and Silas

Samantha Rude (BACS 2018, MABLC 2018)

Prayer Pastor, Grace Fellowship in Katy, Texas

“I am enjoying my new role as Prayer Pastor of Grace Fellowship and continuing to pursue the vision of 24/7 prayer and worship in the city of Katy/West Houston with the Great Southwest Prayer Center. Join us in person, or visit online at [Facebook.com/GSWPC](https://www.facebook.com/GSWPC) or [TheGreatSouthwestPrayerCenter.org](https://www.TheGreatSouthwestPrayerCenter.org).”

New Job



(Front, L-R) Kyle and Chase
(Back) Toby, Ed, and Amanda

Ed Thomas (MDiv 2018)

Missionary, Japan Mission in Ikoma, Nara, Japan

“Toby and I appear poised to begin full-time missionary work making disciples among future image bearers of Christ in Japan starting in late 2023 or early 2024. We plan to serve with a mission organization planted in Japan six decades ago, Japan Mission. We ask for your prayers for the Lord’s blessings, favor, guidance, and provision as we seek to share the love, hope, and soul-saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with people living in the land of the rising sun!” (For more details, see “Off to the Land of the Rising Sun” on pp. 17-18.)

Other News



(Bottom L-R clockwise): Clara, Samantha, Esther, Isaiah, Anna Nathaniel, Paul, Olivia, Anya, Israel, and Gabriel

Israel Steinmetz

TBS Dean of Graduate Programs and Associate Professor of Practical Theology

Congratulations to Israel and Anna Steinmetz on the birth of their newest child, Nathaniel, on May 28, 2023 at 6:03 PM, 8 lbs 10 oz, and 20.5 inches!



2023 GRADUATES



Zac Aikman

Master of Divinity (MDiv)

Cum Laude

A native of Katy, Texas, Zac earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Texas A&M University in College Station and returned to Katy to work in student ministry. Since January 2023, he has worked as Student Pastor at Real Hope Community Church in Rosenberg, Texas. Zac is grateful for the solid theological foundation and practical ministry skills gained through TBS, as well as the opportunity to build lasting relationships with faculty and fellow students. Zac and his wife, Sydney, married in May 2022 and are expecting their first child in January 2024.



Shelli Alaniz

Master of Arts in Biblical Studies (MABS)

Summa Cum Laude

Shelli and her husband of 25 years, Stephen, have five amazing children – Kyli, Aubree, Aria, Jordan, and Harley (married to Casey Reilly, and they have one son, Patrick). Shelli loves writing, traveling with her family, hiking, and experiencing the adventures of life. She loves learning and has a passion for God's Word, which was the catalyst for her journey to seminary after receiving a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Houston.

Shelli works as Associate Director of Women's Ministry at Ananias House, a non-profit ministry focused on empowering and growing the local church in the Middle East and North Africa. She also leads the teaching team and writes curriculum for the UpWord Women's Bible study at Grace Fellowship Church in Katy, Texas. She believes TBS classes have greatly increased her effectiveness for the Kingdom and obedience to the Lord's call, saying "Wherever He needs me, whatever He calls me to, I am open to His leading." Shelli owns SURGE Team Building, a leadership development and team building company focused on facilitating experiences to help increase self-awareness, strengthen communication, and build more purposeful teams.

"I am so grateful to God for this amazing experience. God has used TBS to grow me spiritually, to ground my faith even further, and to help connect me to other believers who are making waves for the Kingdom. I have loved getting to know them and their ministries, and to see God work through their gifts and passions. I have been blown away by the support and accessibility of the faculty. They have come alongside me on this journey, been such an encouragement, have allowed me to ask tough questions, and have challenged me to consider what I believe and ground those beliefs in Scripture."



Rosalie Brown

Master of Arts in Church History and Theology (MACHT)

Summa Cum Laude

Rosalie's early life adventures included growing up as a foster child on a pig farm in Illinois. After receiving a Bachelor of Science in Retail Marketing from the University of Illinois, she and her husband, Norm, settled in the Tomball/Magnolia, Texas area where she worked for nine years at Compaq Computer Corporation. They have three wonderful children – Andrew, Emily and Ian, and a lovely daughter-in-law, Laney. While raising their children, Rosalie volunteered at church, served as an Elder in Children's ministry, and served in the local school system for 20 years as a parent volunteer, board member of parent organizations, substitute teacher, and part-time high school tutor. During those years, God stirred a desire in her soul for deeper ("better") Bible study, which led her to TBS. While attending seminary, Rosalie has led a weekly online Bible study rooted in Isaiah 55:10-11, "...my word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I have sent it." Her post-graduation plans include pursuing a PhD in Practical Theology to focus on women in the Old Testament who were viewed as insignificant, neglected, and/or marginalized. Rosalie has enjoyed journeying through seminary with loved ones and is very grateful for her fellow academic adventurers and life travelers.



Jacob Figueroa

*Master of Arts in Biblical Languages and Culture (MABLC)
Summa Cum Laude*

A resident of Springtown, Texas, Jacob earned a Master of Arts in Linguistics from the University of North Texas. He works as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor for Tarrant County College, as a foreign language instructor for Upward Bound at Weatherford College, and volunteers in his Church of Christ’s ESL “Friend Speak” ministry. His seminary studies have helped him further his understanding of the nature of language, strengthened his linguistic skills in five foreign languages, and helped improve his effectiveness as a language teacher. He hopes to gain future employment as a Greek/Hebrew instructor. He has appreciated the engaging teaching, academic flexibility, and well-rounded professors who have each filled a unique niche in his life.



David Gamboa

*Master of Arts in Church History and Theology (MACHT)
Summa Cum Laude*

David earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature from the University of Houston. A Student Pastor for nearly eight years at Sugar Land Family Church in Sugar Land, Texas, he currently works as Communications Director for Elijah Rising, a ministry dedicated to ending sex trafficking through prayer, awareness, intervention, and restoration. He and his wife, Micah (Executive Director of Elijah Rising), have one daughter, Elise, and are committed to educating and engaging communities to respond to the growing crisis of human trafficking. Producer of The Elijah Rising Podcast interviewing experts and advocates working in anti-trafficking and missions, David volunteers on the worship team and teaches in their church, Launch Houston.



VALEDICTORIAN

Cassia Glass

*Master of Arts in Church History and Theology (MACHT)
Summa Cum Laude*

Cassia earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Birmingham-Southern College, has worked as Small Groups Director at Faithbridge Church in Spring, Texas since 2020, and has two children – Barret and Caroline – with her husband of 27 years, McLeod. She believes TBS has equipped her with the foundational teachings to serve more effectively in ministry both inside and outside of the local church and encourages others to find their identity in Christ. In addition to helping her better lead, care for, and develop staff and lay leaders, TBS has helped her produce sound Bible study materials to accompany her speaking and teaching ministries.

“I have loved the camaraderie and fellowship with my TBS classmates and professors. I’m so thankful for professors and staff members who modeled integrity, prayerfulness, and compassion while challenging me to put in the effort. And I’m so grateful for the network of women friends who encouraged me to keep at it while we launched into ministry, whatever that looked like for each of us.”



Robert Michael Jones

Master of Arts in Biblical Languages and Culture (MABLC)

A resident of Katy, Texas for 18 years, Robert and his wife, Amanda, have two amazing daughters, Alexandra and Kaela. He has worked in numerous corporate roles over the past 20 years and currently works in Technology at Aristoi Classical Academy. He is passionate about sharing evidence with the next generation that God does exist, that Jesus Christ lived among us, and that He still moves mountains. He remembers knowing the moment he met TBS Provost, Scott Stripling, that God wanted him to enroll at TBS. Though challenges and doubts have accompanied his educational journey, he wholeheartedly believes that “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrew 11:6 NIV) and that “The sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3).



THE BIBLE SEMINARY

LIFE · LEADERSHIP · LEGACY

Rebranding

By Melody Gathright

DESIGN CHOICES



CREST

represents family, community, and a growing legacy of faith



BIBLE

seated at the heart of the crest and within community



CONCEPTS

training students for life, leadership and legacy

COLOR CHOICES



NAVY

represents the distinguished trust of our unwavering Father and to remind us that whatever we do, we do it all for the glory of God



GOLD

represents God's compassion, generosity, gentleness, and love during our lifelong refinement of spiritual growth and battles



SILVER

represents the enlightenment that comes through the truth of studying all 66 books of the Bible



WHITE

represents what is pure and true as TBS leaders humbly devote themselves to serving a mighty God

I began helping The Bible Seminary (TBS) rebrand in August 2022. The team was so inviting, warm, and generous, they made me feel like family from my first encounter. As we visited over meals and I conducted deep research into the core values, mission, and ethos, I was struck by the intellectual and tight-knit community, the commitment to teaching all 66 books of the Bible, the passion for sharing the Gospel, and the driving focus on excellence for the sake of God's Glory. I was fascinated by the educational style of empowering students in real-world settings through hands-on experience. I was astonished by what TBS leaders and students have unearthed and how they are making worldwide waves through some of the ground-breaking archaeological finds highlighted in the 3J Museum (if you haven't already visited, I encourage you to do so).

My design career started at age 11 working on Photoshop projects with my dad. I got my first job as a wedding videographer at age 15 and that blossomed into a career as the lead photo editor, graphic designer and ultimately co-owner of Gathright Photography. We sold the 30-year family business in 2008 to pursue other avenues, partly because I thought I needed to pick just one thing to define me. But, I have always had multiple interests and skill sets, and in 2015, I decided not to be boxed in anymore and started my creative freelancing company, UNBOXED by MG (UnboxedByMG.com).

Through UNBOXED, God has allowed me to serve as a conduit for His glory in churches, schools, and non-profit ministries all over the world. I also serve as Creative Director at Declaration Church (Declaration.org) in Spring, Texas, along with my husband of 17 years, Daniel, who serves as Associate Pastor of Worship and Communications. Along with our two amazing boys, I look

“I believe that anytime an organization goes through a rebrand it can help breathe life and excitement for the next chapter.”



The Gathrights: (L-R) Lawson, Melody, Weston, and Daniel

forward to seeing how God will continue to use us to further His Kingdom.

I sense my purpose in life as one of creating without boundaries and boxes and I see myself as an artist striving to live fearlessly while making things beautifully eye-catching. I love taking seemingly black and white text or someone’s concepts and helping make them come to life.

For TBS, I wanted to associate color and concept with belief. For the logo design, I chose a crest to represent the ideas of family, community, and a growing legacy of faith in accordance with Acts 2:42-27. I placed the Bible at the heart of the crest and within community. Then, along with the name, “The Bible Seminary,” I added the three-fold concepts of training students for life, leadership, and legacy in this world and eternity.

For the color palette, I chose NAVY to represent the distinguished trust of our unwavering Father and to remind us that whatever we do, we do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). I chose GOLD to represent God’s compassion, generosity, gentleness, and love during our lifelong refinement of spiritual growth and battles, since “These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:7).

I chose SILVER to represent the enlightenment that comes through the truth of studying all 66 books of the Bible, since “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that

the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Finally, I chose WHITE to represent what is pure and true as TBS leaders humbly devote themselves to serving a mighty God, since “at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10-11).

I believe that anytime an organization goes through a rebrand it can help breathe life and excitement for the next chapter. My hope is that the fresh TBS branding will do exactly that – serve as a catalyst for growth in this wonderful family that offers practical, real-world teachings, and a global vision that easily won my heart. 🇺🇸

»»» TBS LOGO PROGRESSIONS «««



2010-11



2012-14



2015-22



2023-Present



(L-R) Kevin and Sam Sorbo with Scott Stripling at Tel Shiloh. Kevin is best known for his lead roles in “Hercules” and “Andromeda” and more recently “Left Behind.” Kevin, along with Craig Evans and Dr. Stripling, is featured in the upcoming film, “The Quest for the Throne of God” (QuestfortheThroneofGod.com).

By Dr. Scott Stripling

PROVOST’S PEN

Mark Twain famously wrote that “There are rest and healing in the contemplation of antiquities” (*Life on the Mississippi*, 1883). Even though we work long hours on an archaeological excavation, I have found these words to be true.

A typical dig day unfolds like this. My alarm sounds at 3:50 AM. I stagger down to the Jerusalem Ritz dining room and force myself to eat more breakfast than I want so that I am not starving a few hours later. A standard Stripling breakfast consists of a bowl of old fashion oatmeal (with nuts, raisins, and honey), wheat toast (with butter, peanut butter, and fig jam), two eggs (over easy), and coffee and tea. Our caravan departs at 4:59 and arrives at Shiloh at 5:35 as the sun rises. I drive a nine-

passenger van, followed by two full-size busses. Before squares erect their tents, I make the rounds to talk with each Square Supervisor, assessing progress and clarifying daily objectives. From 8:00–10:00, I analyze the previous day’s pottery – usually about 2,000 pieces. Several senior team members assist me with this. We classify each piece according to its period. At Shiloh, our oldest pottery dates to the Middle Bronze Age II, and our most recent pottery is from the Ottoman period. We save about 200 pieces for further study, and about 20 of those will make the cut for final publication. We have lunch at 10:30. Lunches are delicious: Burgers, pizza, schnitzel, etc. After lunch I try to do some physical work in important areas. This is my workout while in Israel. Throughout the day

I pause to talk with members of the media, dignitaries, and tourist groups. There is also a lot of troubleshooting and strategic planning interspersed. At 1:00 PM, Perry Gerhart blows the shofar to signal the end of the day’s excavation. We wash pottery and prepare the site for the next day while Gary Urie flies the drone to capture an aerial photographic record of our daily progress in each excavation square and the overall site. At 1:30, we head back to the entrance where ice cream and cold refreshments await. At 2:00, we head back to the hotel in Jerusalem where select teams analyze the day’s special objects. We enjoy a lecture and worship beginning at 5:30, followed by dinner at 6:15. Supervisors complete paperwork, review photographs, and then try to get to bed as early as possible.

This summer our team consisted of 222 registered volunteers and staff, plus about 150 sporadic volunteers. This army derives from 16 universities and 11 nations. Twenty TBS students, faculty, and alumni joined me for the 2023 expedition. Master of Arts in Biblical History and Archaeology (MABS) students like Paul Kabore – a Distance Education student from Burkina Faso, Africa – earned nine-credit hours during his six-week stay for field practicum(s) and ceramic typology. Other students earned elective credits.

Each day hundreds of visitors traverse Tel Shiloh to see the excavation's progress. This includes media, actors, academics, and pilgrims. The Christian Broadcasting Network and the Trinity Broadcasting Network recently filmed Shiloh episodes which will air in the coming weeks and months. I even managed to get actors Kevin and Sam Sorbo to dig in the dirt for a few minutes.

This season's work at Shiloh focused on three important areas:

1

GATE COMPLEX

Ancient walled cities often had one or more gate complexes, consisting of outer gates and inner gates. The gate provided residents with ingress and egress to the city; however, the opening in the wall created a weak point where invaders invariably attacked these cities. In the gate, leaders meted out justice, and residents conducted business. 1 Samuel 4:12–22 tells of the tragic death of the High Priest Eli in Shiloh's gate. El Amarna Letter 288 also mentions the gate of Shiloh. After five seasons of excavation, we now understand the configuration and function of this ignominious gate. This season professor Mark Hassler from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary supervised the outer gate chamber, and TBS graduate and photographer Gary Urie supervised the excavation of the inner gate chamber. Gary is currently pursuing his PhD in archaeology at Veritas International University (VIU).

2

MONUMENTAL BUILDING

In 2017, we exposed a large east-west wall from the Iron Age I, about 1200 B.C. In 2018 and 2019, we exposed two matching perpendicular walls. This season we uncovered the third corner of the building and a threshold with an in situ socket stone. In 2024, we hope to excavate the final corner and the entire southern wall. This rectangular building closely matches the biblical dimensions and design for the tabernacle. Like the tabernacle, it is divided into two spaces on a 2:1 ratio and is preserved in places to a height of 2.5 meters. In and around the structure, we have uncovered items pertaining to the tabernacle culture at Shiloh such as altar horns, ceramic pomegranates, circular bronze clasps, and a murex shell. Storage rooms filled with storage jars lie about 15 feet north of the building and about the interior of the city's perimeter wall. About 50 meters east of this building lies a favissa consisting of tens of thousands of kosher bones and abundant Late Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery from the time of Joshua to the time of Eli and Samuel. The text in 1 Samuel 3 suggests a possible transition from a tent to a building, which would corroborate two Mishnaic passages explicitly stating that a permanent structure was built at Shiloh with a tent as a roof. While I cannot yet be certain about the function of this monumental building, it could very well be the tabernacle where the Ark of the Covenant rested for over three centuries, where God first caused his name to dwell (Jeremiah 7:12), and where Samuel grew up serving under Eli and hearing the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 3).

3

FAVISSA (SACRED DEPOSIT)

The favissa lies on the eastern edge of Shiloh and covers and abuts the city's perimeter wall. The Bar Ilan University Shiloh expedition (1981–84) excavated most of this sacred deposit. Last season and this season we began removing their balks. So far, we have excavated about 10,000 bones and bone fragments. Jordan McClinton, TBS graduate and current VIU PhD student, oversees the work in this important area. Our zooarchaeologist, Haskel Greenfeld from the University of Manitoba, analyzed the faunal assemblage from last season and this season. Several more excavation seasons will be needed to complete our work in this area, but the preliminary results suggest evidence of the Israelite sacrificial system. For example, the bones disproportionately derive from the right side of the animals. This comports with our expectation in light of Leviticus 7. Our ceramic typologist, Liora Freud from Tel Aviv University, is analyzing the favissa pottery which appears to date to the tabernacle period (ca. 1400–1075 B.C.). We have extracted collagen from some of the bones and are awaiting the Carbon 14 results. I anticipate that they will fall within the same date range as the pottery.



5:35 A.M. IN SHILOH
sunrise

A Typical Dig Day

- 3:50 a.m. Breakfast
- 4:59 a.m. Caravan Departs
- 5:35 a.m. Caravan Arrives
- 8:00 a.m. Analyze Pottery
- 10:30 a.m. Lunch
- 1:00 p.m. Excavation Ends
- 1:30 p.m. Refreshments
- 2:00 p.m. Leave for Hotel
- 5:30 p.m. Lecture/Worship
- 6:15 p.m. Dinner



Results FROM 2023 EXCAVATION SEASON

»»» Possible tabernacle location: Mishkan (80% certain: east oriented, same size as tabernacle, found 3 of 4 corners and a socket stone on the eastern end for a door)

»»» Possible city gate where Eli died when the Philistines attacked (80% certain)

»»» 4 scarabs

»»» 1 bulla

»»» 2 conical seals, one with an 8-pointed star motif

»»» 1 gold spoon pendant, necklace charm

»»» 50,000 sherds of pottery

»»» Carnelian beads

»»» 6000 tesserae

»»» bronze ring

»»» 66 coins

»»» 20 sling stones and ballista balls

»»» large and diagnostic Roman glass

»»» ritual purity stone vessels

»»» 50 flint blades

»»» 10 bronze military arrowheads

»»» 18 grinders and pounders

»»» 1 writing stylus

»»» 3 clothing pins

»»» 5000 bones for analysis



CONCLUSION

At TBS we train MABHA students in biblical and archaeological studies. What our students learn in the classroom is applied in the field which helps set them on a career path – solidly grounded and trained in a biblical world view – to impact an important arena of ideas. Abigail Leavitt, TBS graduate and Assistant Director of Excavations at Shiloh, currently lives in Israel where she is completing her PhD in archaeology at Ariel University. TBS graduates Gary Urie and Jordan McClinton serve as Square Supervisors, along with current students Tommy Chamberlin and Clayton Van Huss who serve in the same capacity. Newer TBS students like Paul Kabore, Carol Scott, and Jeff Young worked this season as volunteers and will return in future seasons as Assistant Square Supervisors. I anticipate another 4–5 seasons of excavations at Shiloh. None of this would be possible without the prayers and financial support of our TBS family. 🙏



Thank you
FOR
PARTNERING
WITH US!

Scheduled for release in September.
Visit QuestfortheThroneofGod.com
for more information.



Shiloh Lightning: "I've seen enough Indiana Jones movies to know that purple lightning isn't something to mess with...and the [real] Ark of the Covenant sat only a few yards away [from this modern tower at Tel Shiloh] for over 300 years." - Shiloh Dig Photographer and TBS Master of Arts in Biblical History and Archaeology student, Clayton Van Huss, who took this photo during an unusual summer storm during the 2023 Tel Shiloh excavations in Israel.



2023 Shiloh Excavation Staff: (L-R, front) Gary Urie, Scott Stripling, Kevin Larsen, Melody Bogle, Carl Holson, and Gail Byers. (Middle) Charles Savelle, Jordan McClinton, Abigail Leavitt, Emma Clodfelder, Irene Green, Emily Cavins, Clayton Van Huss, Ellen Jackson, Mark Jenkins, Cindi Steele, Gary Byers, and Frankie Snyder. (Back) J. J. Routley, Suzanne Lattimer, Steve Rudd, Tim Lopez, John Moore, Jerry Boyce, Mark Hassler, Brent Hoefling, and Jeremy Stein.



THE BIBLE SEMINARY

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Beyond

By K. Lynn Lewis



**Join me in a one-year prayer campaign
for TBS health and growth.**

Watch for prayer prompts online and in print communications as we continue our grand adventure going and growing beyond.

FACILITIES

»» **Thanksgiving** for current facilities totaling approximately 4,000 square feet that have hosted countless activities for thousands of administrators, Board members, donors, faculty, friends, staff, students, and visitors over twelve years. Previously an art gallery, health clinic, and pottery studio, we continue to use our facilities to exhibit, nurture, and shape leaders for Kingdom purposes.

»» **Pray** for potential future facilities, perhaps including any or all of the following:

Classrooms with built-in interactive audio/visual technologies that serve as network hubs connecting faculty, students, and other mentors worldwide

Labs (indoor and outdoor) for archaeological and other research

Library, perhaps bookstore-style with a coffee shop and deli

Museum with archaeological, historical, missional, and theological exhibits, as well as traveling exhibits available to churches, schools, and other organizations

Offices and administrative spaces

Parking and restrooms

Studio with set(s) and production suite(s)

Student gathering and study space(s)

FINANCES

»»» **Thanksgiving** for 625 donors giving nearly \$7.6 million and over 1,200 individuals who have paid for at least one course that, added together, total nearly \$9 million in income since 2010. Donors providing charitable support and students paying tuition and fees fuel the mission and help make all that TBS does possible.

»»» **Thanksgiving** for the opportunity to tithe from TBS tuition and fees and other earned income to support others, including the following organizations:

Ananias House – Gospel outreach to and ministry leadership training for indigenous Christians living in the Middle East and North Africa

Antioch Houston – supporting TBS alumni serving as missionaries in the Middle East

Boys and Girls Country – children’s home

Christ Clinic – uninsured and underprivileged primary health care

Compassion Katy – social services for under-resourced and economically challenged

Elijah Rising – ending sex trafficking and supporting victims

Feed the Hunger – nutritional support for vulnerable children worldwide

Fellowship of Christian Athletes – scholarship fund

Katy Cares – traumatized single-parent families and children

Katy Christian Ministries – social service

Keturah’s Haven – housing for homeless pregnant women

Moss Bluff Bible Church – hurricane relief in the Lake Charles, Louisiana region

National Day of Prayer – regional sponsorship

Pregnancy Help Center of West Houston – unplanned pregnancy support

West Africa Theological Seminary – discipleship and leadership training for Africans

Young Life – ministry to Middle and High School students

»»» **Pray** for sufficient and abundant provision averaging at least \$90,000 monthly to help secure organizational health and vitality and surpass the following thresholds:

General Fund	\$500,000	Reserve	\$200,000
Scholarship	\$50,000	Endowment	\$1,000,000+

PRAY FOR PROVISION

Note: General donations help provide immediate support critical to sustaining required personnel, programs, and operations, as well as help with scholarship and reserve funds. Endowment donations, often designated gifts associated with estate planning and honoring and remembering loved ones, help provide long-term solvency and viability.

»»» Ways to Give

- **Mail**..... Please make checks payable to “The Bible Seminary” and mail to 23501 Cinco Ranch Blvd, STE H120-930, Katy, TX 77494-3109.
- **Online**..... Visit TheBibleSeminary.edu/support
- **Donor Advised Funds**..... Give through your own public charity account.
- **IRA**..... For those age 70 ½ or older, give up to \$100,000 tax-free as part of any annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).
- **Matching Gifts**..... Request matched donations, if available, through your employer.
- **Stock**..... Donate appreciated securities with no capital gains tax.

Donations to The Bible Seminary (Tax ID #27-2190032) are charitable and tax-deductible as allowed by law. For legal questions, please see your tax advisor. For other questions, contact Rick McCalip (Rick.McCalip@TheBibleSeminary.edu) or Yamile Soto (Yamile.Soto@TheBibleSeminary.edu).

A registered IRS 501(c)(3) institution of higher education incorporated in Texas in 2010, The Bible Seminary is an Accredited member of the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools (TRACS), a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) approved to offer Distance Education, an approved CEU provider by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), an Accredited member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), holds a GuideStar Platinum Seal of Transparency, and is listed on the Great Nonprofits Top-Rated List.

PERSONNEL

- »» **Thanksgiving** for 25 administrators and staff members, 34 Board members, 30 adjunct faculty members, more than 50 teaching team members, 92 alumni, and numerous volunteers who have served through TBS so far.
- »» **Pray** for current and future TBS family members as you read their names and stories in TBS digital and print communications as we all work together to graduate 5,000 TBS alumni who each reach at least 200 people during their lifetime of ministry and together reach 1 million souls for Christ.

PROGRAMS

- »» **Thanksgiving** for our accredited and distance education-approved academic degree programs; our archaeological excavations and research, museum, and Holy Land tours; our productions and publications; and strategic partnerships.
- »» **Thanksgiving** for nine master's degrees, a dual-degree completion program, and certificate program strategically designed to train leaders in six areas of cultural influence: business, education, family, government, media, and religion.
- »» **Pray** for energetic and healthy enrollment in every class and program offered; mutually productive and increasing numbers of key partnerships; and expanding media reach beyond our current approximately 1200 Facebook, 300 Instagram, and 200 Twitter followers, as well as more than 525 YouTube subscribers.

WITNESS

- »» **Thanksgiving**
 - »» *To God for redeeming our lives, saving our souls, and allowing us to serve Him through TBS.*
 - »» *For the vision to offer comprehensive, strategic training in all 66 books of the Bible to ministry leaders (including pastors, church planters, and missionaries) and others serving in communities and organizations across the U.S. and on five continents.*
 - »» *That TBS continues to operate debt-free and graduate all students 100% free of seminary debt, a goal achieved by all 92 alumni to date.*
- »» **Pray**
 - »» *That we represent our core values internally and externally everywhere and always for as long TBS exists.*
 - »» *That we remember that knowledge and wisdom begin with the fear of the Lord.*
 - »» *That we defend biblical truth in the power of the Holy Spirit.*
 - »» *That we live ready to pray, preach, teach, give, serve, or die at a moment's notice.*
 - »» *That we individually and corporately trust in Jesus with all that we have, all that we are, and all that we ever hope to be.*



TheBibleSeminary.edu/beyond



THE BIBLE

SEMINARY

LIFE · LEADERSHIP · LEGACY



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Attend on-campus or online



MDIV

Master of Divinity

Designed to equip ministry leaders and teach all 66 books of the Bible over a 3-year course study.

MA

Master of Arts

Specialized teaching covering all 66 books of the Bible over a 2-year course of study.

- Biblical History & Archaeology
- Biblical Languages & Culture
- Biblical Leadership
- Biblical Studies
- Christian Education
- Church History & Theology
- Media Production
- Missions



Dr. K. Lynn Lewis
President



Dr. Scott Stripling
Provost

DDC

Dual Degree Completion

Allows students with an Associate's degree, life experiences or college credit to transfer into a degree track.

CTS

Certificate of Theological Studies

Non-degree and degree course of study options, including required Methodist courses.



The Joshua, Judges, and Jesus: A Walk Through Biblical History (3J) exhibit at The Bible Seminary, with almost 200 artifacts. Visit TheBibleSeminary.edu/3j and schedule your visit.

* Seminar options are available in-person and on demand.

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THE BIBLE SEMINARY

»»» 2023 ««« FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

By Adam Peters

Dr. Lewis often reminds me of the strong Nehemiah-focus of The Bible Seminary. As summarized in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah, after hearing about the miserable condition of his people and their once vibrant capital city, the cup bearer traveled to Jerusalem with the King’s blessing and promised provisions to improve their circumstances. Together, the faithful rebuilt the city’s walls in an amazingly short period of 52 days. They celebrated with Ezra, the teacher of the law, reading aloud the Book of the Law of Moses while other trained leaders helped explain to the crowds what they were hearing. The leaders also encouraged celebration, repentance, worship, and prayer, and helped people put God’s Word into practice.

This event summarizes the educational mission of TBS and is captured in a key verse from Nehemiah 8:8, “They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read.” We also find inspiration in Nehemiah’s response to detractors and would-be distractors in Nehemiah 6:3, “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down.” His book recaps how he organized teams, fought opposition, addressed challenges, secured promises, shared blessings, avoided temptation and distractions, continually prayed for strength, and honored the Lord and others with his dedication, faithful leadership, and hard work. 🙏



CEO of North America at Air Liquide Group, Adam and his wife, Heidi, have three children – Emily, Andrew, and Bennett.

Welcome
New Board
Member

Similarly, TBS is indeed a "great project" of the Lord's doing and we celebrate many things from our 2022-23 academic and fiscal year, including the following:

<p>166 TOTAL STUDENTS</p> <p> tied for the 2nd most enrolled in an academic year</p>	<p>67 GRADUATE STUDENTS</p> <p> 2nd most enrolled in graduate classes since inception</p>	<p>7 NEW ALUMNI</p> <p> bringing our total to 92, all graduating 100% free of seminary debt</p>	<p>166 DONORS</p> <p> the most fiscal year donors since the first year in 2011</p>
<p>44 NEW DONORS</p> <p> 3rd most new donors since the first year in 2011</p>	<p>93 DONORS</p> <p> who gave two years in a row (the 2nd most repeat donors ever).</p>	<p>NEARLY \$800,000 IN DONATIONS</p> <p> largest since the first year in 2011 and continues an 11 out of 12-year pattern of consecutive year-over-year increases, excepting 2022</p>	<p>AN INCREASING NUMBER</p> <p> of speaking engagements, publications, and productions by administrators, faculty, and students, as well as new partnerships with other like-minded organizations</p>



..... *Thank you*

FOR YOUR PRAYERS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

..... THAT HELP MAKE TBS POSSIBLE.



May we continue to joyfully work together on this *great project* with sacrificial dedication and unwavering focus!

REV. MIKE MCGOWN



Rev. Mike McGown serves as Senior Pastor of Parkway Fellowship Church in Richmond, Texas. A native of San Antonio and graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he served a Youth Pastor and Minister of Education at Katy First Baptist Church prior to founding Parkway Fellowship with 16 other families in September 2002 with the vision of starting a purpose-driven church that effectively serves 10% of the area population. Mike and wife, Amy, have two children, Libby and Ben.



JOSHUA, JUDGES & JESUS

MUSEUM

A WALK THROUGH BIBLICAL HISTORY

Self-led and group tours available
 Open Monday-Friday 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
TheBibleSeminary.edu/3j





PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE

In accordance with I Timothy 4:13, “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching,” and in partnership with the Grace and Mercy Foundation (GMF), TBS plans to introduce, model, and mentor Public Reading of Scripture (PRS) in west Houston.

Beginning weekly on Mondays starting September 11, 2023 from Noon – 1 PM in Classroom 270 on the main campus in Katy, Texas, TBS will host PRS gatherings that include an opening Psalm, an Old Testament reading, a New Testament reading, and a closing Psalm. Join live (FREE lunch for in-person attendees!) or online via Zoom. For details, visit TheBibleSeminary.edu/prs.

John David Leggett, Grants Analyst at The Grace & Mercy Foundation, greeted four TBS leaders who participated in PRS training this summer along with other ministry leaders from around the country. Son of TBS co-founder Dr. Jim Leggett, John David and his wife, Lauren, live in New York, New York.



Learn more about the TBS Colson Fellows partnership in this episode of “The Bible Seminary Podcast” available on Apple Podcasts.



COLSON FELLOWS PARTNERSHIP

Beginning annually with the 2023-24 Colson Fellows cohort, qualifying participants may earn up to 6-credit hours for Apologetics and/or an elective to apply toward a degree program at The Bible Seminary or potentially transfer to another graduate program. Students must complete the Colson Fellows Program AND additional requirements for “APO 501” and/or “ELE 502” (a one-day seminar and short written assignment for each class). Cost for the combined program is \$1,310 per course and includes The Bible Seminary tuition and fees, as well as the cost of the ten-month Colson Fellows program. Total cost for the 10-month Colson Fellows program AND earning 6-degree credit hours is \$2,620 (a \$3,520 value).

Colson Fellows from across the globe complete a rigorous course of study that begins each July and concludes with their commissioning in May. In this ten month program, candidates follow a carefully curated curriculum that is updated each year. The curriculum includes thirteen books, video content, daily time in the Bible, live webinars with Christian thought leaders and a monthly in person meeting with local, like-minded Christian in which they are able to engage in a lively exchange of ideas.

NEW TBS APP

TBS is set to release our new app in both Apple and Google Play stores in the Fall of 2023. The app will offer on-demand seminars at your fingertips, Blog posts, Podcast episodes, course registrations, videos, events, student resources, and more. We believe our new app will help make TBS even more accessible, engaging, and interactive. Join us on this exciting journey as we continue employing digital technologies for the glory of God!



THE BIBLE

SEMINARY

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Core

“ They read from the Book of the Law of God making it clear and giving the meaning so the people could understand what was being read.” -Nehemiah 8:8

LORDSHIP

» Because He is Lord (Philippians 2:11), we will continually ask Jesus Christ to sit on the throne of the seminary and on the throne of the lives of its faculty, administrators, and students for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

BIBLE

» Because the Bible is the fully true Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16), we will offer and require the study of all 66 books of the Bible before graduation with a degree. We will seek to creatively integrate classical theological disciplines and ministry training by studying books of the Bible (i.e. Church History will begin with the Book of Acts and keep going; Pastoral Leadership will come through the study of the Pastoral Epistles; Systematic Theology will flow out of the study of the Pauline Epistles).

PRAYER

» Because apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), we will continually seek to plug into the Vine Jesus Christ through yielding to Him in prayer. We will offer a unique emphasis on prayer, integrated with the curriculum, in classroom settings, meetings, and continual prayer opportunities in the life of the seminary.

UNREACHED PEOPLES

» Because the return of Christ awaits the evangelization of all people groups (Matthew 24:14), we will keep our eyes on the unreached peoples of the world and train our students to have a heart for the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) by seeking to reach millions of souls for Jesus Christ.

LOCAL CHURCH

» Because the church universal (the body of Christ) is God's plan (Matthew 16:18), comprised of local churches (Acts 20:28; Romans 16:3-5; Acts 5:42), we will have a symbiotic relationship of service, training and education with local churches and parachurch ministries.

COMMUNITY

» Because we were created for community (Genesis 1:26; Romans 12:5), we will seek to build a campus-based fellowship where the “one anothers” of Scripture are lived out, where authenticity and accountability are practiced, and where integrity is modeled and taught.

COMPASSION

» Because God has a huge heart for the poor and overlooked (Matthew 25:31-46), we will strive to motivate, equip, and train students to minister to “the least of these” as a lifestyle.