

To: Brothers and Sisters at ECBF

From: Jack Towe

If you plan to attend this Wednesday's Bible class at 7 p.m., "Surprised by Scripture; Surprised by God," then you'll need to print out the two items below. Note: If you misplace the pages, you can also access them by going to my web site, www.leadings.squarespace.com

For a change, the weather may be with us. With rain and 41 degrees on Tuesday, with some sun and 38 degrees on Wednesday, much of the snow and ice may leave us. If you can join us Wednesday evening, we'll be doing Bible study in a different way.

Below are the two pages you'll need to prep for the class. If the first page seems complex to you, no worries. In the class, you'll also learn how to mine the Bible using only two simple tools.

Internet Tools for Digging

Bible Gateway. biblegateway.com There is also an app for your cellphone.

Instant access to any Bible verse, word, or topic.
You can zero in on the Old or New Testament or any one book.
Your choice of any Bible translation.

Blue Letter Bible. blueletterbible.org There is also an app for your cellphone.

Instant access to any Bible verse, word, or topic.
You can zero in on the Old or New Testament or any one book.
Your choice of any Bible translation.
Once you have a key word identified in the King James Version, you can open "Tools" next to the word on the left side of the page. This gives you access to six major resources. If you click on the first item, "Interlinear," you will see the Strong's number for each word in Hebrew or Greek. ("Strong's" refers to Strong's Concordance.) If you click on the Strong's number, you will be taken to a wealth of information about the word. By scrolling down the page, you get a listing of every use of the word in the Bible.

Bible Study Tools. biblestudytools.com

Gives access to several Bible dictionaries, concordances, and interlinear Hebrew and Greek with the English.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament. studylight.org

Vine's Dictionary explains in detail the usage of key words in the New Testament.

Bible Maps

There are Bible map sites, but I find them infuriating to use. I have better results with Google Images. For example, you can Google "Map of Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus" and you get several choices. A good map can often give you insights to a Bible passage.

Sefaria. A Living Library of Jewish Texts. safaria.org

This is a specialized source. And yet, access to the Jewish Talmud—a commentary on the books of Moses—can give insights to the New Testament. Two examples:

In John 13:6-9, there is a strange dialogue between Peter and Jesus when Jesus offers to wash Peter's feet. The dialog is more understandable when you know that a Jewish slave could not be compelled to wash the feet of another Jew. That was a task for a Gentile slave. So, Peter's horror and confusion are understandable, because Jesus' action was unthinkable.

The priestly courts in Judea did not permit women to testify because they were considered unreliable, too flighty, too emotional. God's great joke on Resurrection Sunday was having Jesus appear only to women. And the disciples did not believe the women. (Mark 16:11, Luke 24:11) Jesus appeared to the disciples that evening, but in the Judean culture, the day began at sundown. So for the disciples, Jesus appeared on Monday.

We'll begin with an easy problem, where Scripture gives sound advice. However, to crack the case you need to know the passwords. Our Bibles use many words from seventeenth-century British law courts, including the key words in this case. They are "surety" and "pledge." You should be able to get a good understanding of God's will in this situation with one to two hours of preparation.

Be My Co-Signer

You've known Eva since she was born. Her Mother, Esther, is your friend, and Esther is a prayer warrior in your congregation. Her daughter Eva is now twenty-two. Eva has grown up in the congregation, but she no longer attends Sunday worship. She shows up occasionally on Wednesday evenings when she can get a free meal.

Yesterday, Eva came to your office and asked you to be a co-signer on a loan so she can buy a new Ford for \$24,000. She's making a 10% down payment, so the amount of the promissory note is \$21,600. She says, "You know me. You know I'm good for the loan."

Here's what you already know about Eva. She's very bright but dropped out of college after two years to have her baby. She's now a teller at Bank of America. She's worked there for five months. She has another child on the way. You know the father, but they're not married.

She tells you that her take-home pay is \$1,020 every two weeks. That works out to \$2,210 a month, or \$26,520 a year. She comments that she can easily make the monthly payments of \$389

a month. You work out a monthly budget with her, including amounts for gas, insurance, and maintenance on the car, plus living expenses for rent, food, child care, medical and dental, and other needs. If she buys the car, she will have only \$104 in discretionary funds each month.

You encourage her to buy a less expensive model. You know where she can get a good, used 2008 Ford Taurus for \$4,000. With the \$2,400 down payment, she would have a monthly payment of only \$47. She insists that she needs a new car.

You bring up a legitimate concern. “Eva, the word in the congregation is that you have a drinking problem.” Her response is a tirade about the gossip of the hypocrites in the congregation.

You want to help her but asked for a day to make your decision. She calls to find out what you have decided.

What are the relevant passages of Scripture?

What would you pray?

What would you say?

What would you do?

What is the Gospel message here?