

Volume II
2026

THE Bull Pen REVIEW



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface: What is the Bull Pen Review?	<i>1</i>
Culture: Deep Discipleship	<i>3</i>
Historical Retrieval	<i>6</i>
Theology	<i>9</i>
Book Review	<i>12</i>
Thought for Food	<i>13</i>
Vice, Virtue, Verse	<i>15</i>
Ask a Pastor	<i>16</i>
Gratitude	<i>18</i>

Preface: What is the Bull Pen Review?

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, WHENEVER reformation has seized the Church, the first mark has usually been a revival of Word-centered worship. The driving element of this has historically been *expository preaching*.

This reformation of preaching has consistently been followed and bolstered by efforts of writing and publication, for the education and edification of the people of God. The audience and circulation runs a wide breadth. Charles Spurgeon published *The Sword and the Trowel*, which focused on engaging pastors and church leaders. More recently, John Piper during his time at Bethlehem Baptist Church would send out a weekly newsletter titled “The Bethlehem Star,” written strictly for his own congregation. Pastors like John Newton were known for a robust ministry of personal correspondence via letters.

And of course, writing for the local church is at the very foundation of our faith: The New Testament is an arrangement of twenty-seven *written* documents, *most* of them letters to specific local churches, all aimed at instruction and edification and equipment of the saints.

Our aim is similar for the Bull Pen Review. We long to strengthen, edify, educate, and inform the congregation God has graciously entrusted to us through the ministry of not only proclamation, but the pen. We aim to continue in this tradition, and enrich the love of Bull Street Baptist Church for Christ Jesus through this bi-monthly periodical.

A word about the layout.

Culture: At BSBC, we have six distinctive cultures which the elders hope to see our church treasure and continue to grow in. These articles will explore different topics and answer different questions to help our church grow in these “cultures.”

Historical Retrieval: To study history is to practice humility. Whether it’s events, theological developments, or historical figures, we are part of a great tradition, and we want to appreciate the house on which we are building.

Theology: The church thrives on a diet of healthy doctrine. Every sermon has to weigh the balance between that doctrine and its application. These articles are a way for us to help the church continue growing in a more systematic understanding of God, his Word, and his world.

Book Review: Of the writing of many books there is no end—how much more so when it comes to reading them! (Also, another reason why we’re writing *articles*, and not full books!) Some books are worth reading; some are not. We hope in these reviews to commend some good resources to you, and suggest how to read others with a careful and critical eye.

Thought for Food: More of a devotional thought, based usually on a single passage or pair of Scripture, written for your reflection and spiritual benefit.

Vice, Virtue, Verse: A brief definition and description of a vice and a complement virtue, along with a “fighter verse” you can memorize to grow in this area. If you don’t have a plan for memorizing scripture, start here!

Ask a Pastor: Do you have a question you'd like answered by all of the pastors, or by one in particular, which might be helpful for the rest of the congregation to hear? Send Pastor Andrew an email with the topic line "Ask a Pastor." We will answer no matter what—but perhaps you'll spark a conversation that could benefit others as well!

CULTURE: DEEP DISCIPLESHIP

Scripture, Singing, and Deep Discipleship

Tim Kurtz

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

— Colossians 3:16

IT HAS BEEN said that the two best indicators of a healthy church are the sounds of babies crying and men singing. This article is more interested in the second sound. Specifically, I seek to answer the question, How does *singing* serve the aim of *Deep Discipleship*? My answer is that singing serves deep discipleship by its relational and physical dimensions.

Singing is Relational

Discipleship is more than the transfer of information. It is growth in a relationship and involves the heart and affections. We *relate* to God not simply by learning more facts about him, but by growing in greater affection for him and devotion to him. He has given us tools of the mind to do this—tools like study, meditation, and memorization. He has also given us the tool of music. To put it simply, singing moves us along in loving the God whom we know.

God made his image bearers distinctly musical. We have the ability to create poetry, lyrics, melody, and harmony. Something greater than the sum of the parts is created when there is artistry behind the words—and when the words are voiced artistically. Music taps into something deep inside us.

For this reason, music is an essential element of discipleship. When the Bible

instructs us to “praise the Lord,” that exhortation does not have a caveat; it’s not just for the musically *talented* Christians. God sings over all his people (Zeph. 3:17), so it is fitting that God’s people delight to sing back to him.

We want the word to dwell in us *richly*, and Paul says that happens through singing, so you could say singing is how we enculturate *rich* discipleship at our church. Singing takes the knowledge of our mind and expresses it through our bodies toward one another. God has revealed himself to human beings through the written word. Therefore, the discipleship of singing must start by embracing the right information (for example, the gospel). The key word here is *embracing*. James reminds us that “even the demons” have an intellectual understanding of God, but they do not love him. Scripture is our starting place, but we must not stop at the start, and singing is a necessary step for us to advance in love of God.

Singing is Physical

The goal of discipleship is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your *strength*” (Mark 12:30). Strength is *physical!* You cannot say you’ve loved God with all your strength until you’ve loved him with the strength of singing.

Perhaps you might not think about the physical quality of music. It's invisible, after all, so doesn't that mean it's immaterial? Well, no. Music is indeed physical, as material as the air we breathe. Sound waves are molecules being pushed through space.

We are *embodied* souls. We are *physical* beings, and singing is a *physical* act. The Bible tells us human beings are fearfully and wonderfully made creatures—ordinary matter (dust) which God imparted with immaterial spirituality (a soul). Justin Whitmel Early writes, “Our bodies are in no way barriers to spirituality; instead they are starting points for it.”¹ We must reject the ancient heresy of gnosticism, which would say that only the spiritual is valuable. God put this body/soul image-bearer together by *breathing* life into us. Breathing is a core survival function that often happens unconsciously, and yet we are also able to consciously control it. We can inhale deeply and then push the air back through our vocal cords on a specific pitch.

This is true at a physical level, with an individual body. But what about when we sing as a *corporate* body? Ryanne J. Molinari has an insightful observation:

In one study, researchers measured the respiration and heart rate variation of a group of singers. ... The researchers from this study concluded that when individuals sing together, they become more physiologically unified and may thus also be better prepared to uphold shared perspectives. Put simply, singing forces us to breathe together as we participate in a common rhythm and proclaim the same phrases. Naturally, this requires us to adapt to, rely on, and relate to one another. This cooperation tends to then transcend

music-making to influence community-building—transposing individual singers into a choir. ... Singing together propels us into relationship with one another. It prods us toward love.²

This is true *horizontally*; when we sing, it literally, physiologically strengthens our bonds. It is true *vertically*, as we sing to the Lord and exalt him as the object of our affection. And it is also true in *both* directions, with reference to Jesus Christ, our Immanuel, who is both the recipient *of* our singing (as God) and who participates *in* our singing as a brother in the midst of the congregation (see Heb. 2:11–12)!

In its physical dimension, singing is also *beautiful*—and beauty is a vehicle for experiencing transcendence, which makes singing an appropriate means of experiencing our transcendent God! Beauty has always been central in the worship practices of the church. We could just state propositions about God on Sundays. But we choose to praise God through music, poetic liturgy, church architecture, and other forms of beauty. The physical rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper show the importance of embodied forms in the shaping of our hearts. The manifest actions help us not only to *know* Jesus, but also to *love* him, to feel him in our bones, to remember him *physically* as we take and eat the bread and drink the wine of communion.”³

Conclusion

We don't simply want to know more things about God, we want to better know God. God is in a relationship with us. Music helps us relate to him. The form itself is an enjoyable gift. We are able to stir our affections toward God. You *decide* to sing. Perhaps you

2 Ryanne J. Molinari, *Spirit-Filled Singing*, 17.

3 McCracken, *The Wisdom Pyramid*, 141.

1 Justin Whitmel Early, *The Body Teaches the Soul*, 40.

feel vulnerable. But in the act, and in the content (if you're choosing good songs), you are able to experience love and acceptance in Christ. You are able to grieve the suffering of this life or sin. You are able to rejoice in the hope of the gospel.

So sing. Sing! Sing what? Sing the Psalms. There is a movement today, a recovery of the lost art of psalm-singing, a magnificent effort to re-establish the Psalter in its honored position in public worship. Look for artists who sing the Psalms well, so that you can learn them and use them as they were originally intended. Sing doctrine and theology. Sing the story of God's glory. Our elders do not have the conviction that we must only sing the Bible (after all, Paul writes twice in the New Testament to sing "psalms AND hymns AND spiritual songs," not to sing "psalms, and some more psalms, and even more psalms"; see Col. 3:16–17 and Eph. 5:19). But we do believe we must only sing what is biblical. So sing the themes of Scripture: Sing about Jesus the Serpent-Crusher, or about the God who saves through judgment. Sing the doctrine of Scripture: Sing the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Sing new songs. Sing old songs. Sing songs that used to be new. Sing songs that look old and sound new. Above all, sing what is true and good as loudly and as beautifully as you know how to. In the morning, in the car, after breakfast, with the church—anywhere and everywhere, but especially with the gathered church, google some lyrics or pick up a hymnal—and *sing!*

HISTORICAL RETRIEVAL

Clement of Rome

Andrew Ballard

AS PROTESTANTS, WE believe only Scripture is divinely inspired and ultimately authoritative for the life and practice of the Christian church. We do not view tradition as authoritative, though it may be helpful.

Unfortunately, many evangelicals (to riff on one author) affirm not *Sola Scriptura* but *Solo Scriptura*, which is kind of like the difference between being the final authority on the ship versus being the only person on the ship. But the Reformers' rallying cry was *Ad fontes*, meaning, "To the sources." To be a Protestant is to re-form the Church to be more biblical and more in line with all the traditions and precedents insofar as *they* are biblical. So we should appreciate the saints who have gone before us, learning from them wherever possible, agreeing with them wherever permissible, and diverging from them wherever necessary.

For this reason, I commend to you *1 Clement*, a letter written within, by, and to the early Church. It is *not* inspired Scripture, but it *is* a helpful resource which will encourage you, especially because it is a *font* (a source, a foundation, a precedent) for our value of *cooperative congregationalism* and our doctrine of *justification by faith alone*.

The Context

A few years ago, there was an epidemic of division over racial issues, and a number of Christians made a point to "Leave Loud." The local church became a proxy for the culture war, and some Christians parted with their fellow

congregants in the most public way possible in order to have maximum cultural impact.

This is similar to the occasion of *1 Clement*. The church in Corinth was experiencing bitter schisms, and a group had succeeded in expelling some of the pastors, though they were not disqualified biblically. When the church in Rome heard what was going on, out of care for their sister church, they sent a letter asking them to reconcile, reinstate the wronged pastors, and maintain unity.

Cooperative Churches

Clement of Rome is a man whom I, as a reformed Baptist, can deeply appreciate. Clement seems to share the understanding of pastoral ministry our elders would affirm: There are two offices of the church, "bishops" (we would say "pastors") and deacons (see *1 Clement* 42:1–5).¹ The apostles passed their authority on not by establishing a "bishop of bishops" and not by selecting anyone to be the "next apostle," but by appointing "bishops and deacons" (42.5). These men were elected by the congregation; as long as they have not morally disqualified themselves, church members ought to submit to their leadership. Clement has only the two offices, but he views them in high esteem. He exhorts the Corinthians,

Let each of you, brothers, give thanks to God *with your own group*, maintaining a good conscience, not overstepping the designated rule of his ministry [that is,

¹ *Clement* treats "bishops" as interchangeable with "elders" (44.5; 47.6; 54.2; 57.1; 63.1), just like Paul does in *Titus* 1 and in *Acts* 20:18–35.

the biblical hierarchy of elders], but acting with reverence. (41.1)

So Clement, a prominent pastor in the Patristic Era, had a robust understanding of the role of elders to rule their local church.

He also had an equally robust respect for the role of the local church, something which we as baptist *congregationalists* can appreciate. The letter is introduced with “The church of God that sojourns in Rome to the church of God that sojourns in Corinth” (Salutation). He appeals to the “brothers” in Corinth. This is a letter sent from one church to another church. He entreats them, “Let us unite with those who devoutly practice peace, and not with those who hypocritically wish for peace” (15.1).² Clement never suggests Rome has authority over Corinth, nor that he (“successor” to Peter) has authority over Corinth *or* Corinth’s pastors.³ He affirms that bishops (elders) are selected not by apostolic succession/affirmation, but “by other reputable men *with the consent of the whole church*”—that is, the whole church in that locality. Corinthian believers select Corinthian pastors, and Roman believers select Roman pastors.

It would be anachronistic for us to say, “Clement was a congregationalist!” But we can certainly say that we, as congregationalists, find exceptionally warm company in this apostolic father.

Justification by Faith Alone

1 Clement also contributes a wonderful perspective on justification. At first glance, it seems he is taking a Roman Catholic view:

Seeing then that we are the portion of the Holy One, let us do all the things that pertain to holiness. ... Let us therefore join with those to whom grace *is given* by God. Let us *clothe* ourselves in concord, being humble and self-controlled, keeping ourselves far from all backbiting and slander, *being justified by works and not by words*. (30:1–3)

Uh-oh. Isn’t that legalism? “Justified by works”? No. Clement is not affirming the meriting of salvation by works any more than James did in his letter. By “justification,” he does not here mean *made* righteous but rather *shown to be* righteous. This is evident from the fact that he thinks the grace is *already* given, not being now earned by our works. He explains his point in 6–7, saying, “Let our *praise* be with God, and not from ourselves. ... Let the *testimony* to our good deeds be given by others, as it was given to our fathers...” (30.6–7)

So he is dealing here not with the “justification” that makes one righteous before God, but with the justification that *demonstrates* one’s righteousness before other people. He reiterates this point again in 33.7–8, arguing that the righteous are “adorned with good works” just as “*the Lord himself*” adorned himself with good works when he created all things (33.7–8).⁴ Surely we must recognize that God’s creation of the world in Genesis 1–2 did not *make* him righteous, but *showed him to be* righteous. That’s the type of “justification” Clement has in mind (as does James in his epistle).

² Note that not everyone who says they want peace actually does! We are to be hands-on peace-makers, not wistful peace-wishers.

³ In this way, Clement does not present a good case study for those who seek warrant for the Roman papacy in the ranks of the early church fathers.

⁴ When he argues this, Clement does not try to motivate Christians to do “good works” as an outworking of their salvation, but of their *imago dei*. Which is to say: God does good works; we’re created in his image; so *we* should do good works. This expands the idea of “good works” to include much more than benevolent/religious acts; it literally includes everything under the sun, whatever action we might do in reflection of our Creator.

Clement goes to great lengths in the rest of his letter to communicate that he does *not* mean we are made righteous *by* our works, writing:

All, therefore, were glorified and magnified, not through themselves or their own works or the righteous actions that they did, but *through his will*. And so we, having been called through his will in Christ Jesus, *are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety, or works that we have done in holiness of heart, but through faith*, by which the Almighty God has justified *all* who have existed from the beginning; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. (32.3–4)

When the reformers argued for “justification by grace alone through faith alone,” they viewed their understanding of the gospel to be a return to the earliest and most faithful tradition—and *1 Clement* is clearly one of the “sources” to which they returned.

As a reformed and baptist pastor, I find great encouragement to find the *fonts* of cooperative congregationalism and of justification by faith alone in this letter. I would recommend you read *1 Clement* in the same way you might read a devotional from a Puritan or listen to a sermon from a preacher you like. Let Clement point you to Scripture and to the God who has been faithful throughout the ages.

We do have to be careful when talking about the Apostolic Fathers and any figure from church history. They were men of their times, just like we are today. We don’t want to judge them by our standards, nor to read ourselves into their stories. It would be anachronistic, for example, to call Clement a Calvinist. But he does preach the same gospel I find in

Calvin and Luther and Zwingli, so perhaps you could call them—you could certainly call me—a Clementine.

THEOLOGY

Sola Scriptura: God's Word Alone

Taylor Lazenby

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION did not come from a vacuum. Many cultural, social, and geopolitical factors coalesced under the outworking of God's sovereignty to bring about the recovery of the biblical gospel that had become shrouded by the unnecessary extrabiblical and magisterial accoutrements of the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.

Since the time of the early church, the worship of the church was served by the education of her leaders. Men like Augustine, Jerome, and Thomas Aquinas used their expertise in the biblical languages to help the church through preaching and writing.

Over time, as the church took on a more institutionally Roman Catholic shape, church leaders grew insulated from the general population. Latin became the parlance of the liturgy, while Greek stayed in the countryside, creating linguistic distance between leaders and laity.

Simultaneously, the Roman Catholic Church developed extrabiblical notions and practices, such as the exaltation of church tradition, the redefinition of sacraments as a means of grace and merit, the veneration of saints and relics, and the growing authority of papal decrees and conciliar rulings. These practices arose gradually and increasingly obscured the clarity and sufficiency of Scripture. The word of God was no longer the final authority for faith and practice, but rather one voice among many—and *under* one in particular. The institutional church leadership

did not merely interpret Scripture—it stood over Scripture as sole guardian and arbiter, leaving the ordinary Christian dependent upon the mediating magisterium and distanced from experiencing God's voice most directly.

God's Providence in a Secular Movement

Providentially, the kindling was being laid for the recovery of the gospel through a secular movement called *humanism*. By God's grace, Renaissance humanism unintentionally prepared the soil for the Reformation by reorienting scholars toward the original sources of the Christian faith.¹

As scholars returned to the original biblical languages, the cracks of the medieval Roman Catholic Church began to show. Church tradition, the sacramental system, veneration of saints and relics, the authority of papal decrees, purgatory, and indulgences were tested against the Scripture itself. Wherever the Bible was read, studied, and translated directly from the original languages, many began to see that Christian practice had drifted from the New Testament. The Word of God was regaining position above the church, rather than beneath it.

The Reformation and God's Word Alone

In the spirit of *ad fontes*, "Scripture alone" was understood by the Reformers to be

¹ The humanist motto *ad fontes* ("to the sources") reflected a growing dissatisfaction with secondhand authorities and medieval scholasticism, and carried a renewed commitment to primary documents in their original languages. The same tools used to recover Aristotle and Cicero were soon applied to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

the ultimate governing agent of life and the church. The phrase means Scripture is *inspired, inerrant, clear, sufficient, and authoritative*.²

Inspired

Matthew Barrett has a helpful definition of *inspiration*:

The inspiration of Scripture refers to that act whereby the Holy Spirit came upon the authors of Scripture, causing them to write exactly what God intended, while simultaneously preserving each author's writing style and personality. This supernatural work of the Holy Spirit upon the human authors means that the author's words are God's words and therefore are reliable, trustworthy, and authoritative.³

The inspiration of Scripture affirms that the original manuscripts were the very words of God himself (2 Tim. 3:16). When Scripture is read, preached, and faithfully proclaimed, God himself addresses his people. The Reformers understood reform would never come through institutional adjustment alone; we needed the recovery of God's own Word speaking clearly and powerfully to his people.

Inerrant

Inerrancy simply means that in its original manuscripts, Scripture did not err in anything the biblical authors asserted.⁴ The Reformers staked their lives on this conviction. It was

the foundation for every other doctrine of the Reformation. If the Bible can err, its promises can be doubted. If its promises can be doubted, the gospel itself becomes uncertain. Inerrancy guards the integrity of everything Scripture teaches.

Inerrancy also means the Bible is true and accurate in all it addresses.⁵ This is why inerrancy matters pastorally. Uncertainty about the Bible's historical claims soon becomes uncertainty about its spiritual claims. The two cannot be neatly separated. Jesus himself treated the Old Testament Scriptures as historically reliable, citing the creation of Adam and Eve, the flood of Noah, and the experience of Jonah as genuine historical events. He did not approach the Bible as a collection of spiritually useful myths or allegories, but as the very Word of His Father. A church that follows Christ will share his posture toward Scripture, receiving it as God's own truthful and trustworthy Word, on which we stake our very lives and our very eternity.

Clear

Scripture is *clear* in what God intends to communicate. If God were not clear when he says he is, then he would either be incompetent or a liar. Thankfully, we can trust the clarity of Scripture because of God's character and promises (see again 2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Bible readers often find some parts are clearer than others. However, this is not a shortcoming of the Scriptures; the problem lies within the reader. Because of our sin or simple shortcomings, we can struggle to understand God's word. This should not surprise us. After

2 For more information on *Sola Scriptura*, see *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* by Matthew Barrett.

3 Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture*. (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2016), 229.

4 This does not mean every copyist across history was supernaturally preserved from error, nor that every translation is flawless. Rather, it is a claim about the original writings themselves. When God breathed out his Word through human authors, they wrote without any mistake or falsehood.

5 Obviously, the Bible is not a book about everything—the authors do not speak to vitro fertilization or artificial intelligence directly. But in what Scripture does address, it is true and accurate. Wherever it makes a doctrinal, ethical, moral, historical, and even scientific statement, this is the accurate and truthful word of God.

all, the Apostle Peter struggled to understand Paul's writings (2 Pet. 3:15–16)! But a keyword there is *struggled*. If a portion of Scripture is difficult to understand, we should seek greater clarity from related Scripture passages, ask the Holy Spirit for clarity of mind, and/or seek help from a trusted Christian.

Sufficient

The sufficiency of Scripture means the Bible contains everything necessary for salvation, godliness, and the life and ordering of the church.

Again, this was a direct challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, which argued Scripture alone was not enough. The Christian needed the magisterium, the tradition, the sacramental system, and the hierarchy of the church to access God. The Reformers rejected this emphatically. Peter writes that God “has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Pet. 1:3). *All* things. He wrote that before all these Roman traditions developed. All things necessary for life and godliness, are already granted through the knowledge of Christ as revealed in his Word.

Authoritative

Scripture is *authoritative* for the Christian in all matters of this life. In other words, it is the standard by which everything should be tested. If Scripture clearly commands something, we are to submit to it. If a principle can be clearly derived from the text, then it should be implemented in the life of a Christian.⁶ The Bible is the lens through which we view all of life. God's Word shapes our view

of politics, marriage, parenting, service in the church, generosity, hospitality, suffering, and hope. Nothing is outside the authority of God's Word.

When Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms in 1521 and declared that his conscience was captive to the Word of God, he was making a statement about final authority. He was declaring that no pope, no council, no tradition, and no emperor held a higher claim on his life (or any Christian's life) than the Word of God.

Conclusion

While *Sola Scriptura* may not be a salvific issue, it is important for every Christian. Who will have the final say in your life? Where will you go first when you need wisdom? How do you know you can trust the Bible? The best answer to these questions is summarized in the phrase *Sola Scriptura*.

At Bull Street, we seek to put everything under the authority of the Word of God. We do not hold *Sola Scriptura* as a relic of the Reformation. We hold to it because we are convinced, as the Reformers were, that the Bible is God's own Word—inspired, inerrant, clear, sufficient, and authoritative. A church that truly believes this will always return to Scripture, submit to it, and be transformed by it, to the glory of God and for the joy of the bride of Christ.

⁶ It is also authoritative in the lives of non-Christians, even though non-Christians disobey. This is a topic for a different article!

BOOK REVIEW

Leadership and the Sin of Empathy

Book by Joe Rigney

Review by Taylor Lazenby

IN BOTH *LEADERSHIP* and the *Sin of Empathy* and its companion, *Leadership and Emotional Sabotage*, Rigney sticks his finger in the eye of the secular world. Building on the work of philosopher Edwin Friedman regarding the failure of nerve in modern day leadership, Rigney successfully integrates biblical teaching and biblical virtues into the conversation.

In our broken world, nothing is untainted by sin, including the human capacity for pity/compassion. Rigney argues that, counterintuitively, a primary way that pity/compassion becomes sinful is not because it is *undervalued* and *underused* in our society, but rather because it is *overvalued* and *overused*.

This is Rigney's main point: **that we must understand what biblical compassion/pity is and use it correctly.**

When we mishandle compassion or when a sense of pity is abused, the result is often that this "allow[s] the least mature and most reactive members of a community to hijack the community's agenda." When leaders allow emotional volatility to rule, the most *distressed* voice becomes the *controlling* voice for the entire community. *Instead of truth governing compassion, compassion begins to overrule truth.* Decisions are increasingly determined not by what is right, good, true, or faithful, but by what will most quickly relieve any discomfort or pain of those with the loudest voice. In short, the leaders and the entire community are held hostage by the emotions and passions of the few. This can happen when a school is

upholding academic standards, when a church votes on an annual budget, or when your family is taking a walk in the neighborhood.

According to Rigney, having a *tethered empathy* (as opposed to an *untethered* one) is the only solution to such an issue. *Tethered empathy* is compassion that remains anchored to the truth of God's word, submitted to His authority, and has a biblical moral clarity that withstands the throes of emotional intensity. Additionally, leaders must resist the tyranny of the urgent and seek the long-term good of the person rather than simply the short-term relief of pain.

I thought this was an incredibly insightful book (even if I would include a little less C. S. Lewis). I happily recommend this resource to you, especially if you have any leadership responsibility or are part of an institution you want to succeed.

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

The Scarcity and Abundance of Glory

Andrew Ballard

GLORY IS A scarce commodity—but it is not a limited resource.

When we think about *glory*, we go quickly to the glory which is God’s alone, and rightly so. God is indeed ultimately glorious. His glory is in a category of its own, and when it comes to worship and veneration *as God*, he refuses to share his glory with competitors and charlatans (see Isa. 42:8; 48:11). Yet Jesus claimed glory with the Father before any creation existed, which says something about who Jesus is (John 17:5).

It also says something about what *glory* is. At the least, it is something which can be shared. It is no injustice to the Father to share glory with the Son, and vice versa. The communicability of glory does not stop there: When Christ states his claim to God’s glory, he then says, “The glory that you have given me I have given to [my disciples]” (John 17:22).

The idea that we should somehow share in the glory of God is nearly too much to bear—it is, in fact, this truth which glory-seekers have isolated from the complex of orthodox doctrine and mangled into false religions such as Mormonism, the Watchtower Society, and Islam. In each of these, man seeks to grasp the glory of God to the detraction of God himself. Man seeks to take God’s glory at God’s expense, rather than participate in God’s glory for God’s increase.

This reveals the difference between two approaches to glory. One man loves the glory that comes from God and belongs to God, and he wants it to stay where it belongs. He knows

glory is scarce, in the sense that it is *rare*. But he knows glory is not a limited resource, because it comes from the Lord, whose glory is abundant. This man will share in God’s glory, because he seeks to show God as glorious, rather than himself.

The other approach loves the glory that comes from man and begrudges the glorification of any other. He sees the scarcity of glory as evidence of a limited resource. So he hates it when others receive praise—even if he himself is *also* praised! He must receive all the honor primarily and *alone*, because glory is a zero-sum game.

Let’s call this the difference between a “scarcity” mindset and an “abundance” mindset. One example of the scarcity approach is King Saul. He had in his troupe the greatest warrior in the land: David the giant-slayer. David fought for Saul and gained victory for Israel. He became the king’s armor-bearer. He sought only Saul’s interest and honor—which is to say, he sought the king’s glory. Every victory of David reflected well on Saul. And so the women of Israel sang,

Saul has struck down his thousands,
and David his ten thousands. (1 Sam. 18:7)

Saul could not stand it. *What more could David have but the kingdom?* he said to himself (which gives you an idea of *just* how important public opinion was to the king ordained by God).

So he assaulted and exiled his greatest servant—and his best shot at regaining a good

reputation. When you view glory as a zero-sum game, there is no room for other players.

David proved a different kind of king. He knew that honor can be—must be—shared. Not awarded cheaply, but earned, and when earned, recognized and welcomed. While Saul cast away his one “mighty man,” David gathered around himself many. Look at 1 Chronicles 12, and you will see the awesome list. There were the thirty, and the three, and the chiefs who stood among them. There were the Gadites, the least “a match for a hundred men and the greatest for a thousand” (1 Chron. 12:14). There were Israelites and Philistines, men from many tribes and varied nations.

David welcomed them all. They came to him “until there was a great army, like an army of God” (1 Chron. 12:22). Many had been, like David, run off by Saul. They came “with a whole heart” to establish David’s kingship, and to share in his glory (1 Chron. 12:38). Because David welcomed them and enabled them to do good and great things, his name increased, their names increased, Israel flourished, the kingdom was established, and God showed himself to be a God like no other, who seeks his own glory in the good of his people.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, there are different types of bodies and so different types of glories:

There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. (vv. 40–41)

In another place, he acknowledges that man is himself the “glory” of God, and woman is the “glory” of man. This is a mindset of *abundance*, not scarcity. Every person and

thing has its own glory, its own honor and dignity and worth and capacity for greatness, according to the boundaries and capacities and contexts in which God has placed it. Each is meant to glorify God. For us creatures made in his image, we are meant to share in God’s glory, and to share glory with one another. We are meant to be like the mighty men of David, not pursuing glory for its own sake, but pursuing good and mighty works, which God has prepared for us, which we are to be rich in, which will *yield* a glory that redounds to others, to our communities, and to our God.

We serve a King who deserves all glory, all honor, all praise. Yet he welcomes us onto his stage and invites us to stand next to him. May we learn to share not only in his glory, but in his heart of abundant generosity and selflessness, and may we with a whole heart do the good and glorious works he has prepared for us.

A Prayer from Abundance

Lord, let me pay no mind to the glory of others, except to rejoice when they are rightly honored. Teach my heart to give glory away like it is the rarest resource that costs me nothing. Teach me to love the glory that comes from you alone, and to forget about the glory that comes from man. Please give me the wide-heartedness of David, welcoming others and their gifts, and celebrating their opportunities and strengths. Be glorified in me, and let that be more than enough for my heart. Amen.

VICE, VIRTUE, VERSE

DDOUBLE-MINDEDNESS could be transliterated as “two-lifed” from the Greek ΔΨΥΧΟΣ. The double-minded man is at war with himself. Imagine a Siamese twin who must constantly attend couple’s counseling. Clement (see the earlier article in this issue) uses Lot’s wife as an example: She was *double-minded* and turned back toward Sodom. She both doubted the Lord’s faithfulness *and* his wrathfulness, both his power and his promises (1 Cl. 11.2). She obeyed half-heartedly and, desiring both the deliverance of God and the treasures of the world, lost both. James warns not to be double-minded and doubting when we ask God for wisdom (Jas. 1:7). The *single-minded* man (in contrast) doesn’t ask out of curiosity, but out of a desire to obey. In James 4, he adds that double-mindedness is a matter of submission.

Diagnostic questions: Are you single-minded in your service to the Lord? Or are you trying to serve two masters? When you ask others for wisdom, are you looking for permission to do what you already want to do? Or are you really, genuinely seeking to understand God’s will so you can obey him?

INTEGRITY— *The quality of being incorruptible due to one’s commitment.* One’s integrity is demonstrated when, at the moment of testing, they show they are not double-minded, but single-minded. It is a unity of thought and intention and commitment that makes you unwavering in the face of opposition, difficulty, or temptation. Not that you do not behave differently in different roles, but that you remain devoted to God in every circumstance. The man or woman of integrity lives consistently and righteously before God.

PSALM 26:1— Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.

ASK A PASTOR



QUESTION: “Do you have any reservations about using A.I., especially in Bible Study?”

ANSWER: Well, to put all my cards on the table, I *do* use Artificial Intelligence, both in my freelance work as an editor and in my Bible Study. *Logos* Software, a popular tool program for pastors, has A.I. built into the platform, so I started using A.I. by default. That raises an interesting question—will the advent of A.I. be more like the development of the touch screen, or the development of computers? More like a new website, or like the internet itself? More like a new publisher, or like the printing press? I’m sure we’ll have a good answer to that question in a couple of decades.

Let me start by commending resources to you, and then hazard some scatterplot comments.

Ploductivity by Doug Wilson is a helpful book for thinking about wealth and technology. He defines *wealth* as “the technical ability to summon the labor of others, either in person or through the application of tools.” In that sense, all technology, including A.I., makes us wealthy. Someone said that he who has much owes lots, and the heavenly accountant is pretty good at bookkeeping. So we’d best beware the Luddite ditch.

Another good book is Tony Reinke’s *God, Technology, and the Christian Life*. He is more focused on technology specifically, and I bet he’ll produce some good material on A.I., if you can keep your eye out for it. I know he’s given one talk you can find on *Desiring God*, wherein he said, “I can testify that AI is very good at

spitting out orthodoxy. No surprise there. Paul says orthodoxy has a pattern to it (2 Timothy 1:13). Sound doctrine is patterned. And AI is pattern recognition.”¹ Food for thought.

Let me offer some thoughts which (like with A.I.) are informed by others, and which (unlike A.I.) are genuinely mine. “Artificial intelligence” as a name is only half right. Artificial intelligence is actually *dumb*. Just like your “smart phone” is actually dumb—as in, mute. It cannot speak on its own. All technology is ultimately puppetry. It might be a sock puppet, which you use to talk to yourself (such as is the case when I type these words on my laptop screen). Or it might be a fancy marionette, which seems to have a life of its own and responds to you—just so long as you ignore whoever’s pulling the strings.

No technology is ultimately intelligent; they are only intelligent derivatively. All technology must, eventually, have prompts and inputs. This makes technology rather like the idols God warned Israel not to worship. People tricked themselves into *thinking* the statues could speak, but it was just man *using* them to speak. Man uses half a log for a fire (good), and half of it he worships and serves (not good). Isaiah also says the product was not the problem, but the heart deceived by sin and hardened by God. The idolater is marked by an inability to recognize the “lie” in his own right hand (Isa. 44:20). Of course, this is only a problem for idolaters. *We* certainly don’t have any handheld deceivers. Even if we did, I’m sure we could Google a solution.

¹ Tony Reinke, “Authentic Preaching in the Age of AI,” (2025), *Desiring God*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/authentic-preaching-in-the-age-of-ai>.

A.I. can never be nor make people wise. But, like any other tool, it may be a means of accomplishing work. That is its use. Not as a companion, not as a source of wisdom, but as a tool for doing more work, quicker work, and better work. Think of the ox in Proverbs. It's annoying to take care of and learn how to use an ox—but you'll get more done in the long run. I do use A.I. in some editing and office work. But I use it so I can *do* more. I do not let it do my "thinking" for me, and certainly not my feeling or believing or loving.

What would some good uses of A.I. in Bible study be?

Word studies. "Give me all the occurrences of 'grace' or 'justification' in the English Standard Version."

To suggest passages that might address certain topics. "List all passages that deal with time-management in descending order of relevance."

Recommend reading or resources. "Give me a recommended reading list of political theology from a conservative Protestant perspective. Include no more than 15 books, and make sure that I can procure them for no more than \$150 total."

Create products and tools that might be helpful. "Here is my lesson plan on *How to make godly decisions*. Can you turn this into a flow-chart that would look good as a bookmark for college students?"

Something like that.

What would be some bad uses of A.I. in Bible study?

Well, I would not go spelunking in the caverns of Scriptures with my rope of assumptions tethered to ChatGPT's axioms, since I don't share a statement of faith with the puppeteer. I would not use A.I. as goggles, scuba-diving into the world of scholarship and

study through epistemological lenses hand-crafted by Google. I would not use it to create content others would think was my own. I would not use it as a substitute for any ministry of the Word, which is, in my understanding, a soul-to-soul interaction facilitated through spiritual means.

To come full circle, A.I. is most helpful for increasing productivity. But we have to ask the question: Is the main reason we are reading the Bible for *productivity*? That question is probably upstream of the one I've answered here.

As a robot never could, I have written to you.

Warmly,
Pastor Andrew

P.S.- In full disclosure, this was all written with the help of A.I.—That is, *Andrew's Intelligence*.

GRATITUDE

Many thanks to Brenna Mudge for your help with the design, formatting, and printing of this work, and to Corrine for your assistance as well. We also thank Taylor Lazenby for the vision and direction, Andrew Ballard for his editorial work, and the authors for their labors.



Bull Street Baptist Church
1400 Bull Street
Savannah, GA 31401
bullstreet.org