

# CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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## STUDYING BIBLICAL PREACHING

Justin Gonzalez

Throughout the Bible, God communicates with people through words (Gen. 1:28). Words, and our ability to reason with them, are how God intended people to learn His ways (Isa. 1:18). Whether orally spoken to the prophets, passed down in conversation with descendants, written down as Scripture, or preached from the mouths of saints and evangelists, people are meant to hear and learn through the preaching of the Gospel (Heb. 1:1–2; Deut. 6:3–4; Exod. 24:12; 2 Tim. 4:2).

When studying preaching in the Bible, there are many preachers and instances to consider. Though there are many preachers and diverse preaching styles, the core message of the Gospel remains the same. First and foremost, preaching can only be an exposition of what God has already declared in His Word—nothing more and nothing less (2 Pet. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 4:11). Preaching was done in a way that convicted people of sin so that the option of repentance was ever before the listener (Acts 2:40; 3:19). Preaching should not be about self-recognition or earthly gain; it should be solely focused on Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:5).

When studying preaching, we must remember that the power of this communication style is in the Gospel, not in the individual delivering the message (Rom. 1:16). The Apostle Paul clarified that the central focus of preaching is Christ and Him crucified, which gives people the opportunity to accept Christ in obedience to the Gospel (1 Cor. 1:23). Preaching must be done boldly, with love and power, to the fullest of one’s capability (Acts 4:31; Eph. 4:15; 1 Cor. 16:13; Rom. 15:19).

The Word of God must be shared not in part, but in

full. The whole counsel of God’s will must be expounded upon throughout the life of a preacher (Mark 16:15–16; Matt. 28:19–20; Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:6–7). A minister of Jesus Christ must carefully preach in accordance with the correct form and doctrine, lest he be in danger of leading souls astray (Rom. 6:17; 1 Tim. 4:6).

Biblical preaching was done in a way that was easy to understand. It was done this way because people’s souls

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## MARCH 2026

*“Study to Show Yourself Approved”*

Studying Biblical Preaching JUSTIN GONZALEZ.....	1
Studying Narrative Accounts ROSS HAFFNER .....	2
Studying Bible Prophecy TROYSPRADLIN.....	3
Studying Biblical Poetry BRYCE MAYFIELD.....	3
Studying Bible Archaeology GARRY L. HILL , D.MIN.....	5
Studying the Epistles DANLEE QUEEN.....	6
From the Director’s Desk TRENT KENNEDY.....	8

# FROM THE EDITOR:

## STUDYING NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS

Ross Haffner

**D**id you know that over 40% of the Bible is narrative? When studying the Bible we need to treat apocalyptic literature like what we find in the book of Revelation or Ezekiel differently than an epistle like Colossians or 1 Peter. We have to consider the differences between a work of poetry in the Psalms and a Persian official's letter in Ezra. We want to read to understand what God has given us in His word so we must take different forms of literature into account.

The “stories” in Scripture are not fairy tales or legends. They are historical events. History is good storytelling — the telling of real events in story form. But the word “story” reminds us that the Holy Spirit told us what happened in a particular way for specific reasons. Analyzing the text can help us to see what we are intended to glean and not get lost in the details.

God uses language to its greatest potential, providing themes and character arcs that give us the best opportunity to understand and apply the Bible. Literary devices such as metaphor, theme, foreshadowing, and allusion are used to deepen our connection with what God is saying in the text. These narratives convey deep truths through implication and approved example rather than direct commands. Sometimes when studying the Scriptures with someone we hope will become a Christian we notice they are understanding the truth of the Bible intellectually but are not connecting emotionally. In this state they are unlikely to change their lives to obey the gospel. If we want to reach someone emotionally, Bible narrative is the way to do it!

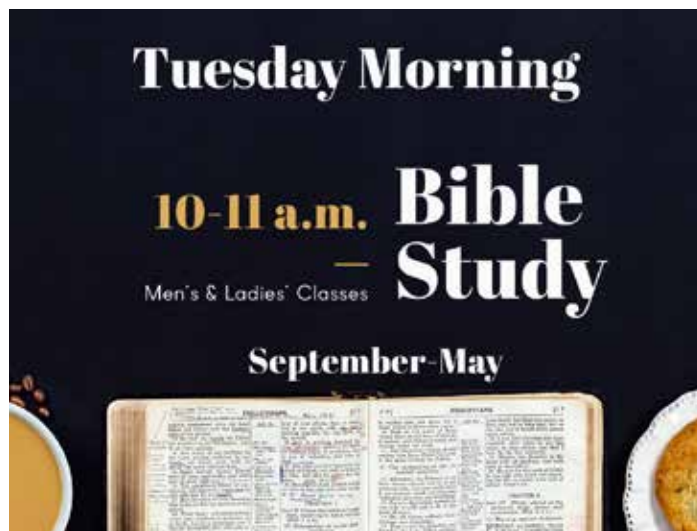
Great narratives in the Scriptures would include but not be limited to the creation, the flood, the life of Abraham, the life of David, the life of Christ, and the beginning and growth of the church. You could even include the overall story of the Bible, God's scheme of redemption as one massive narrative. Other, smaller narratives can be helpful as well. Studying the narrative

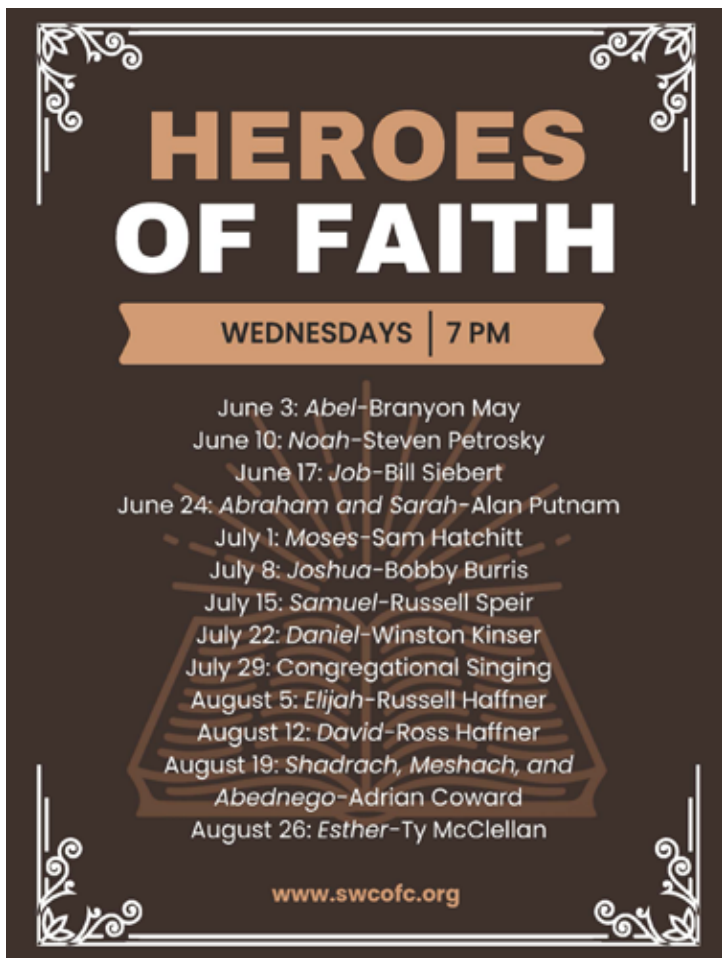
of Cain and Abel can teach the slippery slope of sin and to not to allow our own wrongdoing to lead to hating the righteous (Gen. 4:1-15). Examining Joseph's actions surrounding the conception of the Savior helps us to appreciate his character and draws us to defend innocent Mary, who needed him by her side (Matt. 1:18-25). The lame man at the temple healed by Peter gives us insight into our deep need for the Savior (Acts 3:1-11).

You can also study entire Bible books that are narratives. The book of Genesis teaches us about sin and death, faith, and the consequences of deception. The book of Acts provides invaluable insight into the way the church can continue to operate despite challenges from persecution, unruly members, periods of quick growth, racial and cultural prejudices, and forgiveness of deeply wrong actions.

Narrative is how children are often introduced to the Bible. These Bible accounts fascinate them and they become hungry to learn more. The lessons we can draw from these accounts increase and deepen as we age. Reaching adulthood is not a good reason to move on from studying Bible narratives.

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In fact, that is exactly why Jesus taught some of His disciples, “‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44-45) On that particular occasion and throughout much of His ministry, Jesus frequently explained how prophecies were being fulfilled in Him and in His actions. (cf. Luke 4:21; Matt. 5:18, 13:14, 26:56; Mark 1:15, 14:49; Luke 21:22, 22:16; John 13:18, 15:25, 17:12).

While the sheer number of prophecies may seem overwhelming, it is possible to more easily digest them by “dividing” them into manageable categories. For example, of all the prophecies in Scripture, a large majority point directly to the Christ. This grouping is known as “Messianic Prophecies” and can be subdivided by His birth, ministry, death, and resurrection (cf. Deut. 18:15; Isa. 53; Ps. 22; Mic. 5:2). Another large classification relates to the various milestones of God’s “Scheme of Redemption.” These include the destruction and restoration of the promised land and the remnant of Israel within the rise and fall of empires (cf. Isa. 44:28-45:13; Jer. 32:36-38; Ezek. 37:1-28). A third, large grouping of prophecies is known as “End of Time” predictions (cf. Matt. 24:36-25:46; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Pet. 3:10). Alternatively, prophecies can be categorized by speaker or by the book in which they appear. The books with the highest density of prophecy are: Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Revelation. Categorizing Biblical prophecies also provides a more comprehensive view of the Bible’s purpose and message.

## STUDYING BIBLE PROPHECY

Troy Spradlin

To encourage a young preacher named Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). His wise counsel remains as relevant today as it was then. Christianity is a learned religion. To be a faithful disciple, studying God’s Word is essential. A key area that should be included in one’s efforts to increase their knowledge of Scripture is a diligent study of Bible prophecy.

It is a rather extensive topic because many scholars estimate that the Bible contains as many as 1,200 prophecies in the Old Testament and more than 500 in the New Testament. Analyzing so many prophecies individually requires a significant effort, but it will certainly be worthwhile, as such knowledge only strengthens the foundation for one’s faith.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of studying Bible prophecy is how it can increase one’s faith, as it provides clear evidence of the Scripture’s divine inspiration and reliability. For example, consider Daniel’s prophecy, which predicts a future fourth regime in which the Messiah would establish His kingdom (Dan. 2:39-44). History reveals that the Roman Empire was the fourth kingdom after Babylon. Thus, it happened exactly as was foretold, confirming its divine inspiration and producing further trust in the Scriptures. In addition, the more one studies Bible prophecy, the more one will see the truth of what King Solomon once declared, “Blessed be the LORD, ... There has not failed one word of all His good promise, ...” (1 Kings 8:56). If one simply considers the numerical probability of “not one word” of the many prophecies failing, the odds are so astronomical that they strongly reinforce the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Indeed, Paul’s advice to “be diligent” in one’s study is still relevant to Christians today. One can certainly increase

one's faith and knowledge by examining Bible prophecy. The Lord's fingerprint is apparent in every one of them, aiding His disciples in understanding the Father's will and enabling them to "present themselves approved to God, as a worker who does not need to be ashamed.

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## STUDYING BIBLICAL POETRY

Bryce Mayfield

In his book, *Words of Delight*, Leland Ryken said, "...the ability to interpret poetry is a requirement, not an option, when we read the Bible" (pg. 160). Considering roughly one-third of the Bible is poetry, Ryken's statement is absolutely true. There are 150 Psalms, 31 chapters of Proverbs, poetic prophecy sprinkled throughout the major and minor prophets, and poetry can even be found in the teachings of Jesus Christ and other places in the New Testament. If we want to be good Bible students, we need to learn how to study and interpret Biblical poetry. If you are like me, you might be intimidated by such language. This is likely because poetry is not the primary way we speak, nor is it the most common way we write. For these reasons, we shy away from it altogether. Brethren, we sell ourselves short and hinder ourselves from knowing God and His word, as He desires, if we do not challenge ourselves to study poetry. So, here are several keys and figures of speech to look for as you study poetry in the Bible.

### Images

Images are the heartbeat of poetry. They help us to "feel" and "see" what the author is trying to convey. When a poet writes, they write in pictures. This is the first clue to look for. For example, consider Psalm 1. As you read this Psalm, there are two images given: a tree and chaff. As we look at the picture painted of the tree in verse 3, the author conveys the idea of stability ("*planted*"), nourishment ("*streams of water*"), productivity ("*yields its fruit*"), persistence ("*leaf does not wither*"), and prosperity ("*In whatever he does...*"). The chaff in verse 4 brings to mind the direct opposite of the tree ("*which the wind drives away...*"). In a narrative - the most common form of literature in the Bible - the writer might use a character to convey what stability and prosperity look like, but in poetry, you will see pictures like a tree. If you can find these images, you are one step closer to interpreting Biblical poetry.

### Metaphors and Similes

Often within painted pictures of poetry, we find metaphors and similes. These figures of speech are identical; their purpose is comparison. A simile will use the words "like" or "as" to show comparison - "*I am poured out like water*" (Psalm 22:14, NASB 95). A metaphor more boldly asserts a comparison - "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*" (Psalm 119:105). When studying similes and metaphors, Ryken offers a two-step process that I submit to you for consideration (a more detailed explanation of this process begins on page 166 of *Words of Delight*). First, one must *identify* the literal reference being made. In Psalm 119:105, the reference is to a lamp and light. The picture is someone using light to guide their walk down a dark path. The light reveals the direction in which the traveler should go. With that image in mind, step two of the process is *interpretation*. Now that we have identified the image of light, we interpret the text by connecting the picture painted to the object it is being compared to. According to Psalm 119:105, God's Word (object) is our guide (picture). It directs us in the way that we should go. It provides "light" in a world of "darkness." When we learn to identify the reference and then interpret it, we learn to study and apply comparisons made in poetry.

### Other Figures of Speech

Unfortunately, word count hinders me from discussing all the figures of speech used in poetry. We could spend much time discussing hyperbole, apostrophe, personification, parallelism, and many others. I leave that to you and your continued study of Biblical poetry. Why did God decide to use poetry in His Word? In reality, we do not know. God

decided to, and that is enough to conclude it is important. However, as humans, we have two sides to our brains. These sides play different roles in how we think and act. Some of us use our left side more (logic and reason), and others tend to use the right (creativity and imagination). While narrative causes us to use the left side more, poetry appeals to the right side of our brain. In other words, there is writing in the Bible that appeals to every single one of us. Poetry may be difficult for some of us, but we ought to be thankful to God because His Word appeals to and challenges all of us! May we never neglect parts of His Word, for every word will bless us all.

Source: Ryken, Leland. *Words of Delight*. Baker Books, 1993.

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## STUDYING BIBLE ARCHAEOLOGY

Garry L. Hill, D.Min.

One of the great privileges of my life has been to be involved in various archaeological digs in Israel and Jordan. I have excavated at Khirbet Iskander in Jordan, Tel Rehov and Tel Beth Shemesh in Israel, and recently at Shiloh, where the Ark of the Covenant resided during Israel's early history. This region is commonly called the Bible lands, or the Holy Land.

I became interested in doing archaeology there because of the rich and helpful lessons it brings to the student of the Bible. The Scriptures are filled with references to the lands, peoples, and cultures of the biblical world. The more we understand the background of the biblical text, the better we can understand the message that is given. Christianity is a historical religion. The characters of the Bible are historical figures, and the events of the Bible—such as the Exodus, the last week of Jesus' life, and the spread of the early church—really happened.

Brother Jack Lewis offers some helpful advice concerning the nature of archaeological evidence. He counsels us by saying, "The aim of Biblical archaeology is to illuminate the Bible rather than to prove the Bible... One will be blessed by the study of Biblical archaeology if he studies with Bible in hand to 'test everything; hold fast what is good.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jack P. Lewis *Archaeology and the Bible* (Abilene, Texas: Biblical Research Press, 1975) VI

For all students of the Bible, archaeology gives us firm confidence that the Bible is true, historically accurate, and tells the real story of God's plan for saving mankind.

Bible archaeology is also another confirmation of the inspiration of Scripture. Second Timothy 3:16 tells us that "all Scripture is breathed out by God." Thus, when the Bible speaks of peoples, lands, cultures, and historical events, it speaks the truth. Many today want to discount the biblical accounts, calling them myths or made-up stories. However, students of the Bible can point to archaeology to demonstrate that this is not the case.

There have been numerous confirmations of biblical events and people discovered through archaeology, showing that many skeptics have been mistaken in their claims. Some men, such as William Ramsay, even began their archaeological investigations as skeptics but became believers through their research. Ramsay wrote:

"I found myself often brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth."<sup>2</sup>

As more archaeological work continues, we can expect additional discoveries that will continue to illuminate the Scriptures. Edwin Yamauchi, a well-known archaeologist, speaks to this when he writes:

"In the light of past discoveries, one may expect that future archaeological finds will continue to support the biblical traditions against radical reconstructions. Such finds will further illuminate the background of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, making clear what has been obscure."<sup>3</sup>

Yes, the Bible student can learn much from the study of biblical archaeology. The Scriptures come alive when we study the discoveries and sites where biblical events took place. Archaeology illustrates the Scriptures for us and helps explain the times, people, and cultures described in the Bible.

Secondly, archaeology is a powerful tool in answering skeptics of the Bible. There have been more than one hundred inscriptions and other archaeological discoveries confirming people mentioned in the Scriptures. Entire

<sup>2</sup> William M. Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1895), 8

<sup>3</sup> Edwin M. Yamauchi, (*The Stones and the Scriptures* Philadelphia J.B. Lippincott Co., 1972), 164-5.

civilizations, cities, and actual locations referenced in the Bible have been uncovered by archaeologists.

These discoveries help Bible students not only have confidence in the inspiration of Scripture, but also allow us to see where many of these events took place. Archaeology reminds us that the Bible is not merely a book of ideas—it is a record of God’s work in real places and real history.

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## STUDYING THE EPISTLES

Danlee Queen

“**W**hat is your favorite book or author?” This may have been a question you have been asked if you are a big reader or not. In one way, shape, or form, we can most likely answer this question as we have read a book that has left some impression on us, whether that is reading for leisure or out of obligation, such as an assigned reading in school. Our answers would reflect our preference for genre or author. This preference would guide us in our selection of books and reading. We would look for similar genres or works from the same author whom we trust. We may own every book of a particular author or subject due to our preference that we have. However, in doing so, we can be quick to neglect and overlook other notable authors and works that would otherwise be beneficial for our consideration and reading. Scripture is not excluded from this practice as the Bible is composed of several different literary genres in its 66-book composition. As we study Scripture, we may be more inclined to study or consider one genre over the other, neglecting key information and insight that is beneficial for our understanding. This applies to the study of the epistles/letters in the New Testament. Furthermore, one may ask, why are the epistles worthy of study and consideration? Let us examine a few key fundamental reasons why the epistles should be studied and examined.

### The Epistles’ Composition

First, we do not have to go far in our Bibles to see that the epistles take up most of the New Testament composition. If we looked simply at the “Table of Contents” in our physical Bibles, we would see that the New Testament comprises 27 books. Out of these books, there are only 5 that are not classified and designated as epistle or letter (Matthew, Mark,

Luke, John, and Acts). This allows us to see the importance of studying the epistles because of it making up the majority of the New Testament. Furthermore, when we see the author using repetition of words or themes throughout a book we are reading or studying, it is to provide emphasis to the reader to pay attention and to take note. We could argue that the epistles’ composition does just that, providing key repetition and emphasis for Christians to take note of.

### Instruction, Conviction, and Encouragement

Secondly, the composition of the Epistles provides key information for Christians for daily life and spiritual living. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Though Paul is describing the Old Testament, Paul’s letters, and several others in the New Testament, are divinely inspired and achieve the same result as the inspired Old Testament Scriptures. The Epistles seek to convict Christian readers to continue to pursue Christ and His faithful teaching (Heb. 4:12-13). The Epistles also seek to encourage downtrodden and discouraged Christians who struggle with worries of life, previous lifestyle, and other teachings that would lead them astray (Heb. 13:21-22; 2 Tim. 4:1-4). For the Christian today, these are present things that we would find relatable and relevant. Christians today need instruction on daily living and operation as the Lord’s church (1 Tim. 3:14-15), conviction to continue to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14), and encouragement whenever our “hands are weak and the knees that are feeble” need to be strengthened. The Epistles provide key insights crucial to the Lord’s people in their pursuit to glorify Him.

### Demonstration of God’s Gracious Dealings

Lastly, the Epistles greatly demonstrate God’s gracious dealings and the spiritual transformation of His church. As mentioned, the Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century struggled through the transition from their previous life to a new life in Christ. With that, we see many imperfections of God’s people in the Epistles. For instance, many problems are described in the book of 1 Corinthians and many other letters in the New Testament. With these problems, solutions are provided. This is a demonstration of God’s gracious dealings with his people. This is something applicable and relatable to each Christian. It is because of God’s grace and mercy that allows for people worldly and “dead in trespasses” to be made alive and able to approach the Holy God (Eph. 2:1-6). God is gracious in dealing with His people today, despite our imperfections and mistakes. He has provided solutions to problems the church would

face that we should fully adhere to.

In conclusion, the Epistles matter to the reading and study of the Christian for a multitude of reasons. The composition of most of the New Testament is a flag for us to pay close attention to what has been written and preserved for centuries. They provide the Lord's church with instruction, conviction, encouragement, and demonstrate God's grace fully. They allowed us to see how truly relatable, despite being removed culturally and temporally from its original audience, and applicable Scripture is to its readers today.

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were on the line; if they could not understand and obey the Gospel message, they would be lost. Spiritual life and death were in the balance, and a clear, simple, and concise message was necessary. Preaching must be done simply so the audience has the opportunity to hear, reason, choose, and act upon those words (1 Cor. 2:1-5; Acts 16:30-31). Although every preacher—old and modern—has his own unique style, we must never find ourselves using vocabulary that complicates the message instead of making it plain.

Preaching is done to transform minds and give people new life (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24). Preaching gives people the opportunity to obey God's glorious message and be part of His glorious church (Eph. 5:27).

Although we cannot cover this entire subject in one article, we can see a good picture of what Biblical preaching looks like.

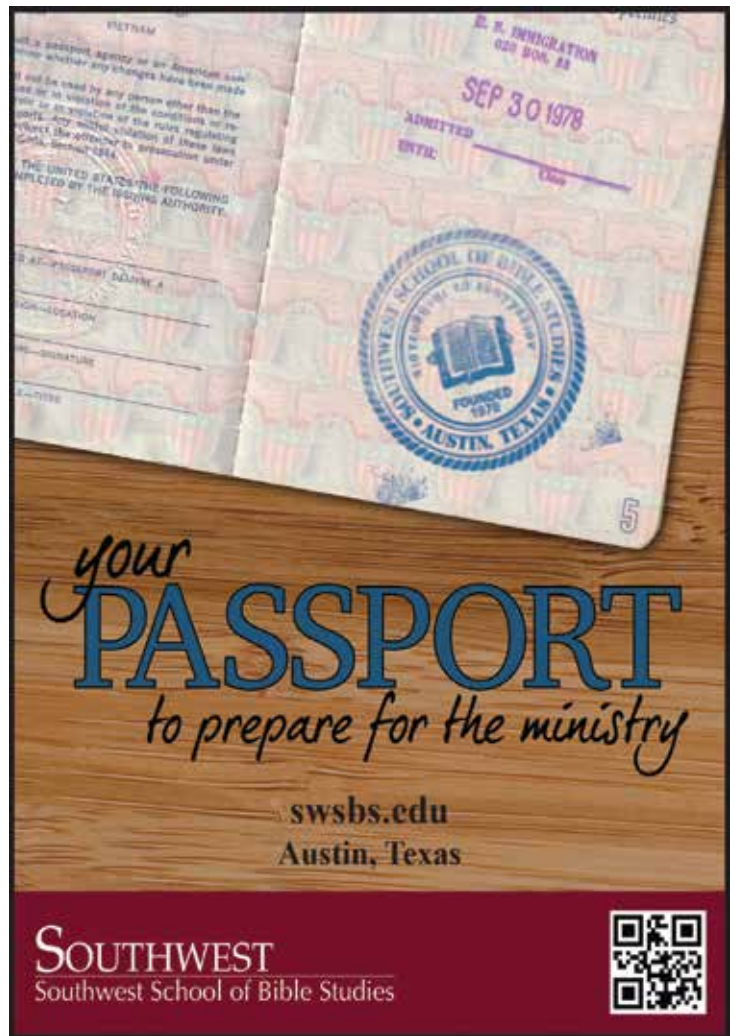
### A General View of Biblical Preaching

- Preaching and hearing the Word is God's chosen method to reach man (Heb. 1:1-2).
- The Gospel is the power to save souls (Rom. 1:16).
- The message cannot change and must remain pure (2 Pet. 1:20, 1 Pet. 4:11).
- Preaching must convict the hearer of sin and bring forth repentance (Acts 2:40, Acts 2:38).
- Preaching must never be about the preacher but rather the message (2 Cor. 4:5).
- Preaching must bring a central message of Christ, and

Him crucified (1 Cor. 1:23).

- Preaching must be bold, full, and with love (Acts 4:31, Eph. 4:15, 1 Cor. 16:13).
- Preaching was designed to be shared (Mark 16:15-16, Matt. 28:19-20)
- The whole counsel of God's word must be preached (Acts 20:27).
- Preaching must be of sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6).
- Preaching must be simple and easy to understand (1 Cor. 2:1-5).
- Preaching transforms lives (Rom. 12:2).
- Preaching gives people, a chance to obey the Gospel (Rom. 10:16, 2 Thess. 1:8).
- Preaching is urgent and necessary (1 Cor. 9:16).

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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

## From the Director's Desk



Trent Kennedy  
Director  
SWSBS

Each year on the weekend of the first Sunday in March, the Southwest congregation hosts its *Arise!* workshop. This is a blessing and benefit to our congregation and the SWSBS student body. The study, singing, and social fellowship are hard to beat.

One of the best parts of the *Arise!* weekend is the opportunity to spend time with alumni. Most SWSBS graduates work as local preachers. They have pulpit and evangelistic works that bless those churches whom they serve. But, we also have a very diverse group of alumni. Of those who were able to join us for *Arise!*, we had directors of schools of preaching, teachers in such schools, youth ministers, college ministers, evangelists, foreign missionaries, a recovery home director, associate ministers, elders, deacons, even an insurance salesman. Each of these men work faithfully in various capacities to serve the church of God's glory. We were also blessed with some of our alumnae who taught in ladies' classes, served tirelessly, and helped wherever they were needed. Each of these ladies also work with their congregations, not in violation of 1 Timothy 2:8ff, but within their God-given roles to His glory.

In settings like *Arise!*, the SW elders and SWSBS staff are reminded and encouraged by the work we do each day, each week, each quarter, and each year. We love the work we do, but the work isn't in simply the training at SWSBS. The real fruit is when we get to sit at the feet of those we've taught, when we get to listen to the lives they are impacting, and when we get to see the gospel impact the lives of their students. Because then, we see the eternal good of places like SWSBS in carrying out God's will (2 Tim. 2:2) to His glory.