Training *for a* Theme *of the* Word

A Bible Study Curriculum for Young Adults

by Christopher Luna

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Preface

After reflecting on a work that is largely a labor of love and which I have, for many hours, lost myself in, it has occurred to me that this work requires a brief preface.

In the following pages you will read my impassioned views on what it means to study the Word of God, and why I think it is important for every Christian to do so well. Providing everyone with the means to study the Word well is what the next hundred or so pages of text will concern themselves with. That being said, I would like to take this brief bit of space to stress that study is not the only, or even the most important part of being a Christian. Being a Christian is about having a relationship with the maker of heaven and earth. It transforms us completely if we allow it to, overtaking every part of our lives and lifting us higher and faster than we ever could on our own. Being a Christian is joyful communion with the body of our church, which transcends all boundaries of nation or denomination. Being a Christian is loving our God, and through that act of love becoming that lamp that shines out on the world.

Being a Christian is so much. This little piece of it is what I have to offer today, that those of us who are called to study may know our God's Word made text a little better. If this labor of mine can help one man or woman to see our God more clearly, I will consider it a success.

It is in that spirit of love and thankfulness, that I dedicate this work

to my mother, Diane Hoyt
who believes in me every day,

to my wife, Tania Marie
whose love gives me strength,

to my Professor, Laura Wenk
who teaches me how to teach,

and to my Lord, Jesus Christ,
without whom I am nothing.

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.
JOHN 1:1-2

Letting the Word speak

The Word, the tie which binds all of Christendom in one body, is often only poorly understood by contemporary Christians who are novices to the meaning of his pages. As modern biblical scholarship adds depth and complexity to the historical and theological study of the Word, there is a glaring dichotomy between the sort of understanding that an episkopos (or church leader) has and the understanding of congregants. One might remark that this is to be expected: after all, an episkopos has more than likely been to seminary school, receiving an advanced degree in theology or religious studies. While every Christian cannot be expected to possess the expertise acquired through several years of advanced and intensive scholarship the problem is not primarily with a lack of knowledge, but the *methods* for understanding the Word that congregants are taught.

An episkopos understands how to derive meaning from the Word: how to decipher the subtleties of a particular phrase in Greek or Hebrew whether they understand the language completely or not; how the meaning of a passage may be illuminated by the historical context of the period in which it takes place; how to read the Word closely to keep track of plot changes through a narrative stylistically different than modern literature; and how to seek insight from the whole of the Word when a particular component may be difficult to understand. Certainly the episkopos has the tools to generate an informed opinion on numerous passages throughout the Word that may confound the average reader, and might be able to expound an exegesis on the passage without consciously using these tools. This is the result of the episkopos' experience. There is nothing a curriculum can do to short-cut the years that an episkopos has spent in study.

What a curriculum can do is begin to teach novices to the Word how to consciously use the tools with which a good episkopos has become an artist. It is in part because of the episkopos' artistry with these tools that they may meet their confusion and struggles in the Word with confidence and perseverance. If these tools are essential to the episkopos, who is so experienced, how much more essential are these tools for the novice to the Word, who lacks the episkopos' immersion?

There are concerns. Believing men and women seeking higher education in their study of the Word are often uncomfortable with some of the conclusions that scholars have drawn from their use of these tools. The general consensus of scholars that the Torah was written by multiple authors and the seeming contradictions between passages throughout the Word can be particularly uncomfortable to novices seeking a deeper understanding; the clash between tradition and scholarship is a classic

problem, and it makes an episkopos particularly wary of teaching the tools associated with that scholarship.[1] There is a sense, at some times unspoken, among episkopos and congregants, that to know with too great an intimacy too much of the Word and the tools with which to understand it is to risk the toppling of one's faith. Better to teach congregants what the Word means and keep their souls faithful, than to teach them how to learn his meaning for themselves and risk an empty pew when they confront difficult passages.

If this was ever a reasonable line of argument, it is becoming untenable. The potentially upsetting issues that the modern novice may have with the Word are moving out of the realm of higher education and into the realm of public awareness. A popular film like *The Da Vinci Code* puts questions of authorship and canon on the lips of millions of Americans, but it misrepresents them and hints at scandalous answers which are insupportable by the evidence. A film like *The Passion of the Christ* attempts to give visual and auditory form to the narrative of the passion story of the Gospels, essentially interpreting the body of the Word, but many viewers do not understand how these interpretations were derived, and from which sources the material for interpretation was drawn. This problem can be exacerbated with clerical endorsement of interpretive films, especially when said endorsement ends questions instead of inspiring them.[2] If Christians are not equipped with the tools that make films like *The Da Vinci Code* laughable, if not offensive, to the educated episkopos and secular biblical scholar alike, they may create doubts based on sensationalism. This is far worse than doubts based on a deep understanding of the Word.

More important than any question of pragmatism in "keeping people Christian," however, is the question of our calling. Are we called to shield congregants from the truth, or are we called to reveal it to them? If the Word is Christ, and Christ is our teacher, why do our attempts at teaching the Word concern themselves more with telling novices "what he means" rather than teaching how to read him?

As popular, and often superficial, culture threatens faith, we must renew *our* faith and place it where it belongs. We must have faith that the Word will reveal himself, if only we can teach congregants how to read him so that they can *see* him. When congregants understand how to read the Word, the Word speaks. When we truly *see* a new part of the Word so that we understand it for ourselves, how much greater is our joy? Can we remember what it was like when, with new eyes, we realized that 'Word' captures only a small part of what λόγος means, and began to taste the fullness of the Greek? When we understood who the Roman centurions were, and what it meant for one of them to exalt Christ? When we followed the intricacies of King David's life through all its twists and turns until it seemed as though we knew him? When we looked across the Word from the Old Covenant to the New and began to see the complexity of the interaction between them? That awe, that sense of adventure, that wonder and illumination is what this curriculum hopes to inspire in every congregant.

Training eyes to see

Still, the question remains, and it remains with some validity: is reading the Word like a modern exegete or a secular biblical scholar what congregants are looking for in their relationship with God? Is source criticism even relevant to the Christian who believes, no matter the penman, that the Word is Christ? In the preface to his translation of a collection of Origen's works, Robert J. Daly, a Jesuit and professor emeritus at Boston College, notes that "the modern exegete applies a sophisticated blend of philosophical, historical and literary tools to uncover the 'literal meaning' of the bible, i.e., the meaning intended by its human authors..."[3] While this can be an interesting field of study, it presupposes that human authors have something to do with the intention of the Word. Most Christians might find themselves closer to Origen, writing in the second or third century, than to the modern scholar in their motives for reading the Word:

> Origen would have regarded such a conception of theology [that of the "modern exegete" above]… as curious, misguided, or even pernicious. For although he was constantly looking to see precisely what Moses, David, Jeremiah, Matthew, John, Paul, etc., were saying and why they were saying it, this was always with a view to hearing and understanding what God, the WORD, was saying.[4]

To the believer, the attempts to tear the Word apart into "component pieces" aren't necessarily unintelligent or unscholarly, but they miss the mark. We cannot help but think of the men and women listening to Christ's parables who "hearing… do not listen."[5]

Of course, modern scholars would probably find Origen's methods equally "curious, misguided, or even pernicious," and might further attest that modern methods have made progress over the patristic methods that are more than a millennia antique. We must not, however, fall into the trap of a "progressive" view of history, assuming that we have nothing to learn from old methods. Origen was "an avid, curious, dedicated and daring biblical 'scientist.' All that could be known about the bible he took pains to learn."[6] Modern scholars use many of the same tools that Origen did: a study of the nuances of the Biblical languages, a close literary analysis of the narratives, a study of the history of the Word's settings, and an intertextual analysis. These tools have not outgrown their use. They are merely being used to different ends than Origen or his contemporaries used them.

Nonetheless, this curriculum will not be adopting Origen's, or any patristic, method as it stands. It is not my contention that modern biblical scholarship has nothing to add to the believer's analysis, and in seeking the tools that this curriculum will teach learners to use I have pulled from modern scholars more than the church fathers. My aim is not to remove more than a thousand years of thought and insight on the Word. My aim is to address that thought and insight with a specific focus. What is important to this curriculum is giving learners the tools to understand the Word as unique—not as just any historical document, or just any religious text, or just any piece of literature, but as God manifest in text.

Old tools and new

How can we train novice eyes to see, and in seeing understand? We cannot do it all at once. This curriculum will focus on training novices to use four key tools to help them read the Word: philological, historical, literary, and intertextual analyses. We will draw learners, through the use of these tools, to confront their preconceptions, often manifested in the form of an anachronistic or "presentist" understanding.

Philological Analysis
This curriculum cannot hope to make a group of novice learners into philologists, but it can expose them to the ramifications of a fact that most Christians are aware of only on an intellectual level: the Word is not written in English. When learners read a word like 'faith,' open a dictionary, see what the modern English understanding of faith is, and apply that definition to the translation, the understanding they reach is anachronistic. In this curriculum, learners will be taught how to derive the meaning of a word from its use in several contexts, through the comparison of multiple translations,[7] and through the consultation of footnotes; they will also be taught how to recognize and address the signs that they may misunderstand or poorly understand a word in translation so that they can address those misunderstandings when they read the Word without the direction of an episkopos or other instructor.

Historical Analysis
Similarly, learners will be taught how to recognize when a situation described in the Word is culturally foreign to them and how the extra-Biblical writings of contemporaries can add to their understanding of the figures and themes of the Word.[8] Learners will be exposed to a first century author, taught to evaluate his biases, and engaged in an activity to deepen their understanding of the Word through his writings.

Literary Analysis
The tools of literary analysis will also be imparted to the learners. They will be taught how to read the Word, and his particular styles, closely.[9] Two styles whose nuances may easily be lost to novices will be examined, and learners will be given the background they require to read these styles for understanding.

Intertextual Analysis
Finally, learners will be taught how to view the components of the Word through his entirety—that is, how to see issues presented in one portion of Word throughout by comparing the treatment of those issues in one place to their treatment throughout the text.[10] Learners will be encouraged to recognize that, even when a given component of the Word is understood within its immediate context, the component will undoubtedly be treated in other places in the text; they will be exposed to the tools with which they may seek through the Word for those other treatments, and taught to remember previous treatments as they discover new ones.

The importance of names

"A Theme of the Word" is exactly what this curriculum is designed to be. Learners will be called to understand a theme within the Word, and it is a theme which binds all pieces of the Word as the tissues of a body. Who is Christ, and who is he to me, the believer? This theme bears fruit in countless smaller themes. Why do we need Christ? What is sin, and how does Christ overcome it? If Christ has overcome sin, how do I overcome it with him? If Christ is like the husband of the church, how does the Word describe relationships between husbands and wives? Why does Christ speak in parables, and what do they mean? Do they have only one meaning? What are the prophecies which tell us of Christ's coming in the Old Covenant? How do we read them? What do the prophecies say he will do, and what can we see of that in his life and his words? Does this point us to how we read the Apocalypse of John? The themes within the Word that branch out from this central theme are endless.

But this curriculum is more than a theme in the most obvious sense of the word, and it will serve us as a reminder that the Word itself has hidden meanings—for this curriculum is also meant to be a theme of the Word in the Greek sense; it is a reference to the Greek term for a Byzantine defensive province when said Empire was under attack by invading Persians. As has been shown, a genuine understanding of the Word is threatened. Although the number of people who identify themselves as Christians is higher than any other religious group in the world, the number of Christians who understand the Word with even the shadow of expertise familiar to episkopos is staggeringly low. Popular culture is filtering down to these Christians, claiming that all the Word must be read primarily as an allegory, or certainly not as truth in the "modern sense;" that the foundation and canonization of the Word is dubious and suspicious, motivated by reasons more political than pious; that so much has been "left out" of the Word, and that it has undergone edit after edit, cycling through translation after translation; until the image of the Word in the popular mind is some grim amalgamation of sinister bias and dubious tall tales.

In that sense, the Word truly is under attack—and the remedy for this attack is not to indoctrinate through drills and memorization that the Word is true and *this is what he means* simply because an episkopos said so. If we, as Christians, are to defend the Word, and really to defend ourselves from rumor and the interpretation that is itself the product of a very specific era, we must understand him. Perhaps when a congregant comes to understand the Word they will consider it allegorical. This curriculum will do nothing to prevent them from coming to that conclusion. Perhaps they will question its historical accuracy. This curriculum will do nothing to prevent them from coming to that conclusion. Congregants are confronting these questions with a tone of dismissal to Christianity all around them. How much better that they confront these questions among believers who understand the Word as deeply as any secular Biblical scholar and more deeply than any sensational popular fiction writer, and have maintained their faith in spite?

Everyone who searches finds

Learners will be prompted to acquire proficiency with the key tools mentioned above in order to answer an essential question:

What is the relationship between Christ and the congregation of believers as described in the whole of the Word?

This question has been chosen for several reasons. First and foremost, this may be considered the central question of Christianity. As followers of Christ, it is essential that we understand the relationship that the Word describes. Congregants may be accustomed to having this relationship explained *to* them, certainly not without exposure to the relevant passages of the Word, but not always with an understanding of how an episkopos learns what they do from said passages. If the congregants understood how an episkopos learned their interpretation, how much stronger would they become? We are "many members… [of] one body"[11] and thus each relationship between a member and the head, Christ, will be different; not contradictory, but different. As we give the learner tools to understand Christ on their own, they may discover new and wonderful revelation in the Word—and they may take surprising roles previously unlooked for in the body of Christ.

Second, this question is very specific but almost impossible to answer in full. The question may be entered through the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Covenant like a doorway to any book in the Word, for the Word itself is primarily a description of the relationship between God and man—and in that relationship, Christ is never truly absent, even if his presence is not obvious at first glance. By engaging the learner in a question that is at once frustrating in its depth and complexity, and transcendent in its diffusion throughout the Word, this curriculum will give the learners authentic exposure to the process of deriving meaning from the Word.

The third reason is related to the second; because this question flows through every book in the Word and every concept of the Word, the question will be narrowed according to the interest of the learner. There are aspects of human relationships which are likened to our relationship with Christ—the learner may research more of their relationship with Christ by searching out the human relationship it is likened to. That Christ is the reliever of sin makes the question, "what exactly is sin?" pertinent—and learners may desire to seek out an answer to this question in order to clarify their answer to the essential question. The possibilities are endless.

Fourth and finally, the diversity of possibilities that this curriculum allows for makes it excellent for use in cycles. Even when a learner comes to an answer, it will be incomplete. Even when they begin to learn how to use the tools of an episkopos, their skill with them can be refined. Even when they have answered narrow questions related to the essential one, there are endless more they might answer. This makes the curriculum reusable. After completing it, the same group of learners could be taken through it again with but limited modification.

The first time through

Before teaching this curriculum, you may find it extremely useful to read it once in full so you that understand how each component of the curriculum fits together; after reading it you may be inspired to design your own lessons or restructure the curriculum at certain points to meet the individual needs of your group of learners. Whether you plan to restructure any of the material in your first implementation of the curriculum or not, you should understand the curriculum from beginning to end.

If you do not have time to read the curriculum in its entirety before beginning, you may wish to read through the introductory material for each Section some time before you plan to implement it. You may also read through the lesson plans and associated materials before teaching any of the lessons to help you plan for each activity.

Whether you read the curriculum once through or not, you may find it helpful to plan your course as follows. Read and consider Section Six, which deals with assessment for the curriculum as a whole. Here you will find resources to help you plan and evaluate a final product for your course. When you decide on the final product, lay out a timeline of your course. How many meetings will you have with your group of learners? How much of that time should be spent freely working with one another in small groups on their final product? How much time will you have for the lessons in this curriculum? Do you want to have all the structured lessons at the beginning of your course and leave the learners free time to complete their final product at the end, or should they be working on their final product throughout with the lessons embedded at well-spaced intervals of your course? Decide on a structure and come up with at least a rough (and adaptable) plan.

The second time through

If you are using this curriculum for the second time, you may find the idea of modifying the curriculum especially attractive. Even though many of these lessons can be used several times on the same group of learners with only the most minor modification (changing the word that your group will examine, or the historical context, etc.), you may make your course more exciting and effective by rethinking lessons and playing around with the structure.

When restructuring the curriculum, you should refer to your notes from your last use of the course. Consider whether there were concepts the curriculum was particularly weak at teaching, and whether there were concepts it was particularly good at teaching. If there are weaknesses in the curriculum for a given group of learners, consider your notes on the assessment in those areas carefully. Were there certain learning goals that they did not understand? Was it difficult to motivate learners? At this point you will know your learners well, and you will have had important experience with how the curriculum works for you. Reflect on these issues as you modify the lessons.

If you find places in the curriculum where you would like to restructure a component, you will find a number of resources that may be helpful. The final section of this document contains an Appendix of Resources; these include recommended books and websites, with a description of each. In addition to these resources, you will find copies of the worksheets and handouts for every lesson, as well as a lesson plan template on the accompanying CD. You may use the template to design your own lessons, and may find the worksheets helpful as examples.

Layout of the text

This document has been divided into an introduction and seven main sections; the first five of these sections have been devoted to lesson plans, with section one devoted to introductory lessons that will establish the overarching activities that your group of learners will be engaged in over the course of their study, and prompting them to answer questions that will demonstrate their current beliefs and ideas about the material.

Sections two through five are devoted to lessons that may be embedded at various points throughout the study as you see fit, each corresponding to one of the tools that this curriculum focuses on. Section two deals with Philological Analysis of the Word, section three Historical Analysis, section four Literary Analysis, and section five Intertextual Analysis.

The first five sections each have an introduction explaining why they are important to the overall study, the learning objectives of the section as a whole, two lessons with detailed plans and associated materials, and ideas for alternative or expansion lessons.

Section six deals with Assessment; how will you be aware of what your learners understand, and where they need help? What kinds of overarching activities can you plan that will be motivating, help your learners demonstrate their understanding, and help cue you in to their strengths and weaknesses? How can you give feedback to your learners that will help them achieve a more complete understanding, and still be encouraging?

The final section, seven, is an Appendix of Resources. Several websites have been listed which may be used free of charge, and several recommended books have been listed with an annotation.

A detailed example of the format of a lesson plan, with commentary on the different components of the plan, may be found on the following four pages.

Example lesson plan

Each lesson begins with a brief synopsis: an overview of the lesson's activities and its expected outcomes. This summary is a good introduction of what to expect in the remainder of the lesson plan.

Rationale

Each lesson is also provided with a rationale, informing you why the author believes that this lesson, or one which teaches its concepts, is important to the curriculum as a whole. It is good to keep this rationale in mind as you read through the lesson plan, and as you consider the lesson's role and placement in your implementation of the curriculum.

Objectives

A list of what learners will be able to do in bulleted format is useful for:

- Keeping track of your goals as a teacher.
- Remembering the key points and concepts to touch on in the lesson.
- Assessing what your learners understand as you proceed.

Tips

The author has provided advice and tips for dealing with each lesson. This advice is tailored to each lesson, and ranges between tips for implementation to important concepts that you, as the teacher, may wish to keep in mind.

Directions

Step 1: *Reading the Directions*
Simple directions for implementing this lesson will be found in a step-by-step format. These directions will give a basic outline for how you may wish to structure the lesson, and will tell you when to use worksheets and handouts that can be found in the materials section of the lesson plan.

Step 2: *Worksheets and Handouts*
Worksheets and handouts for use in this lesson will be referenced in the following format [fig 0.3.2.1] numbered as follows:

<section #.lesson #.2 (for the materials heading).worksheet #>

If you flip to the Materials heading of the lesson plan, you will find a short synopsis of each figure, labeled with the figure numbers. An explanation of the worksheet or handout follows. In addition, a description of alternatives to using the worksheet or handout can be found. A page number and location on the accompanying CD will also be listed.

Step 3: *Using these Directions*
You should go through the directions and brainstorm possible responses. Because the directions are simple and brief, you will have to decide how you plan to present each step of the lesson, and the more prepared and familiar you are with how you would like to present the material, the smoother the lesson will run. For more advice on what to expect when running these lessons, consult the Key Observations summary under the Assessment heading of the lesson plan.

Step 4: *Modifying the Lesson*
If you decide to redesign the lesson plan, there are a number of resources available to you. These directions will often give examples of verses or passages within the Word that can be used at various stages of your lesson. You do not need to use these verses in particular. You may modify the lesson plan to suit your particular group of learners, and if you do so you may wish to research verses and passages that are more tailored to your redesign of the lesson. Some excellent resources for searching the Word may be found in Section Seven, the Appendix, of this work. Whenever you modify a lesson, keep the learning goals and rationale in mind. Work out these aspects of the lesson first, and plan your lesson around what you hope to accomplish.

Key observations

The author has listed a number of learning behaviors to be attentive to: certain problems or difficulties that may arise. If you read these over before beginning your lesson and, perhaps more importantly, remind yourself that it is important to modify and adapt the lesson as you are giving it in order to meet the varying needs of your learners, you will have more of an opportunity to assess your learners' strengths and weaknesses and respond to them in the moment. Moment to moment assessment and response is one of the most difficult and important jobs of a teacher.

The observations that the author may think are key could easily be supplemented by your own brainstorming before the lesson. As you get to know your group of learners, you will be able to envision their individual responses to the material better than someone who is detached from the situation. Consider your individual learners' characteristics, and try to anticipate different questions or concerns that may arise as you move through the lesson, and how you might adapt to those concerns.

Authentic feedback

Giving authentic feedback is crucial to any lesson. This feedback exists in the moment to moment adaptation and flexibility of a lesson, in your comments to the learners, and in your evaluation of their work. These comments should always be both constructive and encouraging. For many learners, this may be their first exposure to serious interpretation of the Word. It will be crucial to foster an excitement about the deep understanding they can derive from their study, while still giving them feedback that will help them strengthen their interpretations.

While the commentary of the author may be useful to get you thinking, here again you may find it more useful to brainstorm different ways to give authentic feedback to your individual learners. Everyone responds differently to different kinds of feedback. Some learners may thrive on direct challenge. Others may find it more encouraging to have feedback phrased as a question, "How would you respond if someone asked you about this passage? How would you demonstrate your ideas to someone who didn't agree?" Every learner is different, and as you come to know your learners you may consider their situations individually and anticipate their responses better.

Figure 0.3.2.1

A description of each worksheet and handout that is available for use in this lesson as well as possible alternatives to using the document may be found here. In addition, the page number where the worksheet or handout may be found, as well as the file on the accompanying CD will be listed here.

Figure 0.3.2.2

In the case of multiple worksheets or handouts, you will find multiple explanations and descriptions in this section.

Getting additional help

If you have questions about the material in this document and you cannot find the answers in this curriculum, the author is more than eager to help you. If you find that a particular lesson does not work, if you believe there is a concept essential to the study of the Word that is missing from this curriculum, or if you devise exciting extensions to the lessons listed here, please share them on the website listed below.

Used properly and widely, it is my hope that this curriculum will represent an important shift in the way many Christians think about, read, and understand the Word. I am eager to see it succeed, to modify it according to the needs of its practical implementation, to assist you with tailoring it to the needs of particular congregations, to receive feedback on its presentation, to hear how it has deepened or fallen short of deepening the way learners consider their relationship to the Word.

To contact the author, check the website for a current mailing address, or feel free to use the email address listed below. Thank you in advance for your thoughts and insight into this work.

http://sunrosefor.us
Website for this Curriculum and an Online Community for Spiritual Conversation

admin@sunrosefor.us
Email Address where you may reach the author

Sources

[1] Alex Sinclair, "A Dialogical Approach to Critical Bible Study: The Use of Schwabian Deliberation to Integrate the Word of Bible Scholars with Educational Philosophy" in *Religious Education* v99 n2, pp. 107-124. Spring 2004.
[2] Peter Gilmour, "Text and Context: The Passion of the Christ and Other Jesus Films." in *Religious Education* v 100 n3, pp. 311-325. Summer 2005.
[3] Robert J. Daley, SJ trans. *Origen: Spirit and Fire* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. xi-xii.
[4] Ibid., pp. xii.
[5] MATT 13:3.
[6] Daley, *Origen: Spirit and Fire*, pp. xviii.
[7] Phyllis Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine" in *Women in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Routlegde, 1999), pp. 99-118 for an example of how minor differences in the wording of the original text, which may in some cases be transmitted differently in different translations, can add to our understanding of the narrative.
[8] Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine" and Mar Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus" in *Purity and Danger: Analysis of Concepts of Purity and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 41-57 both draw on the historical context of the Ancient Near East to aide their analysis of different sections of the Bible.
[9] See Robert Alter. "Biblical Type Scenes and the Uses of Convention" in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 47-62 for a discussion of how methods of literary analysis may be used to derive meaning from the Biblical text, and why this method may be more fruitful for understanding the narrative of the Bible than attempting to "take it apart" through source criticism.
[10] Sinclair, "A Dialogical Approach to Bible Study" promotes the use of Yair Zakovitch's method of "[viewing] any verse in the Bible … through the prism of the Biblical canon as a whole" to engage serious students of the Hebrew Scripture in a scholarly process without an undue focus on reducing the Bible to its "atomic parts." Sinclair argues that the method of viewing the Bible *only* as a collection of independent documents redacted together and the purpose of studying to tear those parts apart is too narrow. Daley, *Origen: Spirit and Fire* pp. xii-xviii for a discussion of Origen's method of reading throughout the Word.
[11] 1 COR 12:12

Meeting *our* **Learners** *where they* **Are**

1.0 Essential Questions

I have become all things to all people, so that I might by any means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.
1 CORINTHIANS 9:22-23

Discovering what we know

As we introduce learners to the essential question from which their study will focus, it will be important for us to understand what and why the learners already believe about this question. Most learners will be able to tell us something about the nature of the relationship between Christ and the believer; some may have a sort of memorized statement handy, and others may find the question too large or taciturn to elucidate a clear or nuanced opinion.

There are undoubtedly a range of opinions and feelings about this question, and in order to assist the learners in their journey of discovery through the Word, we will have to understand what they think and believe going into it. As some learners move through this curriculum, their ideas may be challenged and reformed; their confrontation with the complex theology of the Word may cause them to rethink some of their previously-held assumptions, understandings, or misunderstandings of what it means to be Christian. Others may find their previously-held beliefs reinforced, and may be able to more clearly express what they believe and why. In either case, all learners should come out of this curriculum more proficient at reading, explaining, and defending their interpretations and beliefs about the Word.

In order to help each learner in his or her own journey, we will need to know each learner. No curriculum comes ready made to be generally applied to any possible learner; all of these lessons should be adapted and tailored to the particular group of learners that you are working with. If one of your learners has a hard time explaining what they believe, you will want to focus your attention with them reasoning through the pieces of their belief and examining them. If one of your learners has strong beliefs, but they can not explain them from the Scripture, you will want to focus your attention with them on finding support and challenges to their ideas in the Word, and reasoning through those challenges. If one of your learners isn't sure what to believe, you will want to focus your attention with them on discovering and illuminating the meaning of the text for the first time. If one of your learners has a deeper understanding than the others and is already fascinated by a particular topic, you will want to focus your attention with them on honing the tools they need to explore, and challenging them to broaden their interest and understanding.

There is significant overlap between these scenarios, and learners will constantly surprise you. For this reason, the first section is designed not only to get learners involved in what will become the central activity of the curriculum, but also to prompt learners to show you what they already believe about the question which will occupy your time with them.

Overall objectives

As learners complete this section, they should:

- Be exposed to the essential question of the course.
- Find said question engaging and important to their study of the Word.
- Recognize the complexity of the question and its interpretive nature.
- Understand the curriculum's learning goals, and set personal goals.
- Know what they will produce over the remainder of the course.
- Narrow their examination of the essential question to a sub-question.
- Ask research questions whose answers they will pursue during the course.

You may alter these lessons to:

- Tie more closely to the final product you have chosen for your course.
- Challenge learners' proficiency if this is their second time through it.
- Target the specific interests and concerns of your congregation or learners.
- Prompt a learner-designed final product if they are more experienced.

Procedure

In this section, learners will be asked to consider the essential question of the course:

What is the relationship between Christ
and a believer as described in the Word?

As learners are challenged to seek their own answers for this question, they will reveal their current beliefs and explanations for those beliefs. As they are exposed to the complexity of the question, learners will be shown the curriculum's learning goals, have the opportunity to ask questions about them, and write their own goals. Learners will also understand what they will be producing by the conclusion of the course, start working in their small groups, formulate a narrow question to examine and brainstorm questions that they will need to answer in order to have a deeper understanding of their sub-question.

Possible adaptations of these initial lessons will be discussed in more details as well as the potential for linking an initial set of lessons to specific tools in the curriculum when it is used with advanced learners.

What makes a Christian?

This lesson will present the learners with several hypothetical scenarios, and in each scenario they will be prompted to ask whether they think the person being described has a relationship with Christ. This simple question will be expanded through discussion, prompting the learners to consider if they could know whether someone had a relationship with Christ, and how they could know. As they begin to describe this relationship, they will be challenged to identify certain aspects of it, either in their own perception, or in their perception of others.

Rationale

By examining different scenarios and explaining why or why not a certain person might have a relationship with Christ, and by examining how they know that whether they have a relationship with Christ, learners will be exposed to the complexity and importance of the essential question of the course. This conversation will reveal the learners' current beliefs about the nature of the relationship between Christ and the believer, giving us the insight necessary to meet these learners where they are.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Understand the importance essential question of the course.
- Be involved in a discussion of the essential question.
- Be challenged to support their answer to this question from Scripture.
- Demonstrate their current beliefs and ideas about this question.

Tips

Keep an eye on discussion time, and do your best to observe the reactions of your learners' to this activity. This initial lesson is rather open-ended, and it can be easy to loose track of time or loose track of quieter learners. Try to engage as many of the learners as you can in the activity in a way that would make them comfortable. Some of this activity will be a discussion in which learners may be exposed to opinions which differ from their own, and will be challenged to support their opinions, so handling this initial conversation will shape in the dynamic of your group.

When you challenge learners' ideas, try to phrase your challenges positively. Ask them if they have considered a piece of Scripture that might complicate their opinion. If they don't see the necessity of supporting their opinion from Scripture because they trust their episkopos, you may reinforce their trust, but ask them how they would explain their idea to someone who didn't understand the Word.

Directions

Step 1: *Introduce the Group*
You may choose to open your class in any number of ways to break the ice and get the group comfortable with one another; you might pray together, or go around the group and introduce one another. If you are dealing with a group that already knows each other well, you may choose to engage in a few minutes of casual conversation.

Step 2: *Essential Question*
Share the essential question with the learners and inform them that the study they will be doing as a group will revolve around answering this question: *What is the relationship of Christ to the believer?* If possible, write this question on a board where the group of learners can see it as they proceed through the activity.

Step 3: *Present the Scenarios*
Explain to the learners that, in order to examine this question, the group will engage in a short activity to discuss several scenarios [fig 1.1.2.1] and ask whether the people in each scenario have a relationship with Christ. In each of these scenarios, prompt learners to expand on their answer to this question. If they think the person has a relationship with Christ, ask them why. Can they be sure? If so, how? If not, what would they need to know in order to be more sure?

Step 4: *Challenge the Learners*
As you proceed through the scenarios, you may ask the learners to read verses from the Word that challenge their initial leanings. If the group leans in the direction of saying that only the self-proclaimed Christian could possibly have a relationship with Christ, you may bring the following verses to their attention:
ACTS 17:22-25, ROM 2:14-16, ROM 2:29, ROM 4:1-13

If the group leans in the direction of saying that all of them probably have a relationship with Christ, you may bring the following verses to their attention:
ROM 1:18-20, ROM 9:6-8, 1 COR 10:19-21, 1 COR 12:2-3

If the group leans in the direction of saying that they can't be sure if any of them have a relationship with Christ, you may bring the following verses to their attention:
MATT 18:20, ACTS 9:10-16, ACTS 19:11-16, 1 COR 10:16-17

Try to brainstorm verses that could provide complexity and nuance to any simple leaning the group may adopt in preparation for the lesson.

Step 5: *Finding our Answers*
As the group discusses their varying or similar viewpoints and the challenging nuance that the Word can provide to their views, prompt them to consider how they would find or support an answer to these questions. Redirect the discussion to the essential question, inform the group that they will be learning to use the Word to answer this question for themselves, and have learners jot down their reflections [fig 1.1.2.2].

Key observations

During this lesson, you should endeavor to get a feel for the group and individual dynamic of your learners.

Is the group highly opinionated? Fairly set in their interpretation? Excited to find answers to their questions? Frustrated by the challenges to their opinions? As you run through the activity, observe how the group is responding to your approach, and remind yourself to be ready to adapt. When the first lesson is over, try to write down a characterization of the group.

Were there notable exceptions to the overall dynamic of the group? Were there any learners who were particularly quiet? If so, was there any question or concept that this learner seemed particularly interested in? Were any of the learners exceptionally forceful? Is there any way you might direct some of this learner's energy towards helping others in the group? How else could you balance the group dynamic? Spend a few minutes reflecting on the individual interests and ideas of each of the group members.

Look over the worksheet or brainstorms from the end of the lesson [fig 1.1.2.2] and compare what the learners wrote to your reflections.

How did your attempts to motivate the learners to see the Word as a source of answers to their questions go? Can you think of other ways you might motivate the group? How did they respond to your challenges? Are there ways you could rephrase them to be more encouraging and motivating to the learners?

Authentic feedback

Much of the feedback for this lesson will be implemented "behind the scenes." As you spend time reflecting on the group of learners, give consideration to how you will have to tailor your study to their needs and adapt your methods. Some of your learners may respond well to challenges for them to explain their beliefs from the Word, and others may be intimidated even if the challenges are phrased as opportunities to strengthen their understanding and their faith. Some of your learners may see the course as an exciting opportunity to discover the meaning of the Word, and others may be troubled by the possibility of conflict in what they believe.

Your challenge will be to find a way to encouragingly question a learner's interpretation, and balance the discovery of personal meaning from the Word with a learner's potential misgivings about rethinking or adding nuance to their beliefs. How much to stress that learners need not relinquish their old beliefs, but only seek to understand them, and how much to stress that this is an opportunity for learners to rediscover the Word on their own will be entirely individual to your group.

Figure 1.1.2.1 – The Relationship to Christ

This handout lists the scenarios that the group of learners will address in the main discussion of this lesson. You may make photocopies of the handout, write the scenarios on a board for everyone to see, or present the scenarios orally.

This handout may be found on page 7, or in the folder "Section 1" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 1.1.2.1.pdf."

Figure 1.1.2.2 – What Makes a Christian?

This worksheet prompts the learners to write brief reflections on what they think about the answer to the essential question of the course. You may make photocopies of the handout, or give the instructions orally and have the learners brainstorm their responses on blank paper.

This handout may be found on page 8, or in the folder "Section 1" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 1.1.2.2.pdf."

What is the relationship between Christ and a believer as described in the Word?

Scenario 1

You know someone in your church who attends service every Sunday. They have been baptized, and they have gone to other countries and done charitable missionary work. They are always very kind to you, and everyone you know, and from all you have seen they seem to live a moral life.

Do you think this person could have a relationship with Christ?
Why or why not? Can you be sure?
If you can be sure, what is it about this scenario which reveals their relationship?
If you cannot be sure, what would you have to know to be sure?

Scenario 2

You know someone in your town that is Jewish. They do many charitable deeds and volunteer at a local homeless shelter. They attend synagogue every week, and tells you that they believe ardently in the God of Abraham. They also seem very kind, and they also seem to lead a very moral life.

Do you think this person could have a relationship with Christ?
Why or why not? Can you be sure?
If you can be sure, what is it about this scenario which reveals their relationship?
If you cannot be sure, what would you have to know to be sure?

Scenario 3

You know someone in your town who is Buddhist. They are also very involved in the community, teaching conflict resolution at the local school and helping their neighbors whenever they are in need. They go to temple often, and they tell you that the do not believe in God, but that they may achieve enlightenment one day.

Do you think this person could have a relationship with Christ?
Why or why not? Can you be sure?
If you can be sure, what is it about this scenario which reveals their relationship?
If you cannot be sure, what would you have to know to be sure?

What about you? Do you have a relationship with Christ? How do you know?
How would you explain your relationship to each of the people in the scenarios above?

What is the relationship between Christ and a believer as described in the Word?

Brainstorming

How do you know you have a relationship with Christ? How would you explain that relationship to someone who was not a Christian? What if the person told you they believed in God, but not in Christ? Why do you have a relationship with Christ specifically? Think about these questions, and free write whatever responses come to mind in the box below:

A question within a question

Following the previous lesson, learners will be exposed to the course's learning goals, and go over them as a group. The group will then brainstorm together about different concepts that they think of when they think of the essential question. When the brainstorming is complete, learners will break up into the groups that they will maintain for the rest of the course. The final product of the course will be explained. In small groups, the learners will discuss the essential question and the guiding questions that spring from it, and as a group they will decide on a sub-question that they wish to study. They will be given various verses which discuss different aspects of the essential question as prompts, and they will complete a worksheet brainstorming what they will need to discover in order to answer their sub-question.

Rationale

This lesson is largely concerned with explaining to learners where the course is headed, getting them comfortable in the groups that they will maintain throughout much of their study, and prompting them to narrow their interest for the present study to a specific sub-question. It is important to lay out the logistics of the course early so that learners have a clear idea of what will be expected of them. This lesson will also provide you with your first opportunity to observe the small groups together.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Understand the course's learning goals.
- Generate personal learning goals.
- See that a multiplicity of questions surrounds the essential question.
- Narrow their interest to a specific sub-question.
- Understand that these questions do not necessarily have simple answers.
- Brainstorm some of what they need to know to answer their sub-question.

Tips

You will want to consider how to break your learners up into small groups. Consider your reflections on the learners from the previous lesson as you decide how you will break up the learners; whether to have the learners choose their own groups, or whether certain combinations may be best for the group as a whole.

It will be essential to decide what sort of final product you will have the learners produce for the course before you begin to teach this lesson so that you may introduce it to them. If you have not done so already, read Section Six and formulate your final product for the course.

Directions

Step 1: *Learning Goals*
Introduce the group to the learning goals for the course [fig 1.2.2.1], and go through them as a group. Ask the learners if all of the goals make sense, and whether they have any questions about them. When you are satisfied with their comprehension of the goals, ask them if anything is missing from the list. What do the learners themselves want to get out of the course? Have them complete the worksheet with their own goals, and pass it in.

Step 2: *Brainstorming Guiding Questions*
Present the whole group with the essential question again. Ask them if there are any concepts or questions that this central question brings to their mind. If they get started right away, brainstorm these concepts and questions somewhere where everyone can see them, like a blackboard or a piece of butcher paper hung on the wall. If things begin slowly, you can start by introducing some of the prompt verses, and having one of the learners read them out loud. Discuss how the verses relate to the essential question, and whether they bring up any related questions. You may use the following verses, or any of your choosing that complicate the essential question:
MATT 9:14-17, JOHN 1:1-14, ROM 3:21-26, ROM 6:3-8, 2 COR 11:2-3, EPH 5:25-30

Step 3: *Present Final Product*
Explain to the group of learners as a whole what the final product is, and how it will center on a sub-question of their choosing. Remind them that these questions are all complicated, at that the goal of this course is not necessarily to provide a final answer, but to learn how to come to a better understanding of a question within the Word. Allow them an opportunity to ask questions about the final product, and generate a couple of example sub-questions which are narrow enough to be deeply researched in the time allotted for your course. For example: "What is sin and how does Christ conquer it?" or "What is the Law, and how do I follow it now that Christ has come?" Then, break learners up into the small groups that they will maintain when working on the final product of the course.

Step 4: *Generate Sub-Questions*
In small groups, the learners will generate their sub-questions. Give them a fair amount of time to consider the verses that you have picked out as prompts for thinking about related questions and coming to some consensus about what question they would like to answer. Make sure that there are no voices being lost in the small groups by walking around and asking quieter learners about their interests. As you talk with the small groups, help them to make sure their question is narrow enough.

Step 5: *Reflecting on the Sub-Question*
When the small groups have decided on their sub-questions, they may begin to brainstorm the sub-question [fig 1.2.2.2], asking themselves what they will have to research in order to come to a good answer. Make sure to observe the small groups and help them come up with meaningful research questions.

Key observations

As the learners proceed through this activity, you will want to be especially observant of the dynamic of the small groups that are created. What are the groups' strengths? What are their weaknesses? Is one group particularly directionless? If so, how can you provide that group of learners with a clearer sense of what they are doing and how to accomplish them? Could you prompt them to pick a 'leader' for each activity whose responsibility it is to keep the group moving forward? Is one group particularly decisive, coming to a conclusion without considering the complexities? Because this activity involves brainstorming about what the groups will need to find out in order to answer their question, you may be able to gauge a group's confidence.

In addition to observing the group dynamics, you will want to make sure that their analysis of the questions they need to find an answer to is balanced. Are there a number of terms that the group has acknowledged a lack of understanding about, but no cues that their understanding could be deepened by looking at the historical context? Have they identified any intertextual issues, like interpretations of Old Covenant Scripture or questions about Old Covenant ideas about an issue? Help to prompt the groups to consider a balance of differing questions for their sub-question.

Finally, consider the worksheets [fig 1.2.2.1] that your learners hand in with their personalized learning goals. Consider whether their learning goals reflect realistic expectations from the course. Some of their personal learning goals may be wholly surprising.

Authentic feedback

Like the lesson before it, feedback willin the form of prompts for deeper consideration rather than a direct critique of the learner's work. As learners consider what they need to research in order to answer their sub-question, you will want to prompt them to think of areas within the four categories of their worksheet [fig 1.2.2.2] that they may be neglecting. You will want to help learners focus their sub-question narrowly enough that they will be able to get a deep understanding of its answer in the time allotted to your course. You will also want to help balance group dynamics, involving quieter learners in the discussion of their groups.

When you consider the learners' individual learning goals, your feedback may be most successfully implemented "behind the scenes." How can you help the learners reach and refine their goals during the course? If there are specific questions that the learners seem interested in, consider whether any of the lessons can be adapted to treat those questions. If there are concepts that learners are interested in which are not covered in the course consider creating a lesson to teach them. See if you can tie the learning goals of several learners together, treating many of them at once. You may hand back the learning goals when you have considered and noted them.

Figure 1.2.2.1 – Learning Goals

This worksheet lists the learning goals of the course as a whole and prompts the learners to consider and write their own learning goals. You may make photocopies of the handout, write the goals on a board for everyone to see and make notations of individual learning goals as they volunteer them, or present the goals orally. If you do not use the worksheet, be sure to take careful note of the personal learning goals of individual learners.

This handout may be found on page 13, or in the folder "Section 1" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 1.2.2.1.pdf."

Figure 1.2.2.2 – Group Brainstorming

This worksheet prompts learners to formulate a sub-question that they will use to approach the essential question of the course. They may use this worksheet as they consider the Scripture verses that they brainstorm from, prompting them to figure out what they need to research in order to come to a deeper understanding of their sub-question. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, write the categories on a board for everyone to see or present the categories orally and have learners use blank paper for brainstorming.

This handout may be found on page 14, or in the folder "Section 1" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 1.1.2.2.pdf."

In this course you will be taught how to find a greater understanding of one of the essential questions of Christianity:

What is the relationship between Christ and a believer as described in the Word?

Like most theological concepts, the relationship between Christ and the believer is very complex, and relies upon an understanding of subsidiary questions and concepts in the Word. In order to understand the essential question of this course, you will focus your study on a specific sub-question.

As you progress through this course, you will learn how to use several tools that church leaders and experts in the Word use to decipher their interpretations. As you use these tools to explore the sub-question of your choosing, you will reflect on the insight it gives you into the essential question.

When you have completed the course, you will:

- Have a greater ability to read the Word for understanding.
- Be able to identify areas where your understanding is limited as you read.
- Have learned how to use the following tools to deepen your understanding:
    - Analysis of the meaning of words in Scripture.
    - Investigation of the historical context of the Scripture.
    - Careful readings of complicated plots and arguments in the Scripture.
    - Searching for continuous recurrent themes in the Scripture.

Personal Goals:
List any personal learning goals that you have for this exploration of the Word.

What is the relationship between Christ and a believer as described in the Word?

Group Sub-question:

As you consider the Scripture verses you have been given, brainstorm what information you think you will need in order to answer your sub-question.

What terms do you need to clarify?	What should you know about the history?
Is anything unclear in the narrative?	What verses might clarify your question?

fig 1.2.2.2

Alternative Lesson Ideas

If you are using this curriculum for a second time or if there is anything you don't like about the specific scenarios and presentations of the lesson plans offered here, you may find it useful to adapt the underlying concept of these lessons to a different structure.

You may introduce your first lesson around a scenario (or set of scenarios), hypothetical problem, or difficult-to-answer question. This could be as simple as presenting learners with the essential question of the course and engaging them in a discussion of what they think the answer is, or as complex as a hypothetical situation about a crisis of faith or evangelism. If you tailor this lesson to fit different needs, be sure to brainstorm possible reactions from your learners, so that you will be able to anticipate how to challenge them and which verses may shed particular light on the situation you will be putting forth.

The second lesson should make the learning goals of the course clear, should prompt them to formulate a sub-question, and should get learners thinking about what they will need to know in order to answer these questions. You may make this lesson an extension of the first lesson, relating learners' attempts to narrow the essential question to the specific scenario you lay out in the first lesson.

Linking Lessons

You may also find it useful to link an opening lesson to one of the tools in the Sections that follow, especially if you are adapting this curriculum for a second cycle of use with the same group of learners. You may simultaneously assess what learners remember and how their ideas of the essential question have developed while engaging them in an activity that calls them to use one or more of the tools in this curriculum.

For example, you might present them with several Scripture verses which use an important term in different ways, and ask them to brainstorm meanings for the term. Alternatively, you could pick a single passage, one which likens the body to the temple for example, and ask learners to consider what they know about the temple from Scripture, and form questions whose answers they might seek in primary or secondary literature.

If you choose to link an opening activity to one of the tools, you may wish to plan both the first and second lessons around this activity, involving your group of learners in a refresher of the process by which they come to an understanding about the text without committing them to too deep an analysis of a topic that is not of their choosing.

Jesus answered, '… Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' Pilate asked him, 'What is truth?'

JOHN 18:37-38

Deciphering meanings

When translators choose words in English, or any other language, to stand in for the Greek or Hebrew, they do their best to capture a word that conveys the same meaning and connotation of the original concept. Whether their choice in any given translation of any given word is optimal, there is more to understanding the Biblical concept of a word, especially one which is used to convey a complex concept, than looking up its translation in a dictionary. At best, understanding the modern usage of the word may provide a vague sense of its use in the Biblical text, but at worst it may give the reader confidence in an anachronistic and possibly misleading reading of the text.

Perhaps one of the most obvious examples would be the term flesh, especially in its use in the New Covenant. Flesh may be the best choice for translating σάρκα, but Paul's understanding of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit cannot be clarified simply by opening up a dictionary and finding that flesh means "the soft parts of the body of an animal." Even if a learner reads every definition and chooses the one most appropriate to the passage in question, they are given a gross oversimplification which can lead to a misunderstanding of the concept as it is being used. While it is correct, on some level, that by flesh Paul means "the physical nature of human beings," this understanding falls short of the nuanced concept which is central to a well-understood reading of the Epistles, and indeed the rest of the Word.

The possibility of anachronistic confusion over the meaning of a word increases when that word has more than one meaning whose difference is small but theologically crucial. Again, Paul provides us with an excellent example in his use of the word νόμον, or law. At times it seems that Paul may be working with two different meanings of 'law,' one which might be properly capitalized, and one which might be a newly articulated concept in the 'type' of the Law. Whether there is some clear delineation between Paul's different uses of the word law, it does seem to vary conceptually, and none of his nuanced understandings come through in the definition: "the first part of the Jewish Scriptures."

Dictionaries make a valiant effort in a limited amount of space to provide brief synopses of words with very complex meanings, and they are certainly useful tools. But there are words within the Word which are heavily laden with meaning, that must be understood as the complex concepts that they are if a reader is to arrive at a meaningful interpretation. This section of *Learning for a Theme of the Word* will introduce learners to some of the most basic tools they may use to decipher the meaning of complex words in the Word.

Overall objectives

As learners complete this section, they should:

- Understand how to construct a definition.
- Decipher the meaning of a word from its context.
- Be aware of clues that a word may have multiple meanings.
- Use notation to mark different meanings of a word within the text.
- Explain the meaning of one word related to their sub-question.
- Know the importance of these techniques vs. using a dictionary.

You may design lessons to address:

- The comparison of translations.
- Instances where same word is translated differently in different contexts.
- How to seek out the meaning of a word with a concordance.
- The use of Hebrew or Greek dictionaries vs. English dictionaries.

Procedure

In this section, learners will be asked to consider the way words work, as symbolic placeholders for meaning. They will be engaged in lessons where they examine and learn how to construct a definition for a complex concept. Learners will then begin deriving these meanings from the use of the words in specific contexts. When they are able to derive the meaning of words from their context, they will be prompted to compare the meaning that they have derived to the dictionary definitions, considering the ramifications of any differences and similarities; they may also be given examples of the word used by various contemporary authors to see how modern colloquial usage differs from both the dictionary and the Scripture.

Learners will then be asked to consider passages or long sections in the Word which use a specific word in different ways, and asked to make sense of it. They will have to consider whether there are multiple meanings for the same word, or whether a single meaning can be deciphered from the text that encompasses both of the meanings.

Possible extensions to this section will be discussed, including a lesson based around the comparison of key passages in different translations and a lesson that allows learners to use a concordance to seek out the meaning of a word more independently.

Meaning from context

This lesson will introduce learners to the structure of a definition for a complex concept, and how to construct one. Once learners have been exposed to the framework for a definition, they will be engaged in an activity to derive the meaning of a word from its context, and a second activity to derive the meaning of a hidden word from its context.

Rationale

As learners are prompted to think about and understand how words may stand as placeholders for complex concepts, they will be alerted to the importance of not always assuming that they know what a particular passage means by its use of a word they may be familiar with. At the same time, they will acquire techniques for deciphering the meaning of these words they may find familiar; these are essential skills to have when reading the Word, which uses particular words and phrases in a highly nuanced, meaning-laden style.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Be exposed to the idea that words stand as placeholders for complex meaning.
- Understand how to construct a definition of a complex concept.
- Practice constructing a definition by examining the context of a word's use.
- Try to construct a definition for a word from its context in Scripture.
- Compare the Scriptural definition of a word to the contemporary definition.
- Understand the relevance of a Scriptural definition to theological interpretation.

Tips

This and most of the lessons from this point forward attempt to cover a lot of ground. These lessons have been designed with an hour and a half to two hours in mind, and thus may need to be split into more than one lesson if your time is limited. Keep the learning objectives and the rationale in mind as you present this lesson.

Be sure to stress that this lesson isn't about guessing what words might fit in the context supplied, but to discuss the meaning of the word. Even if they know what word is presented to them in their worksheet, they should try to rethink its meaning, using only the context given to them. If the context is talking about a relationship, ask them to explain the relationship from context.

When learners break up into pairs, try to pair learners who are having trouble with learners who seem to understand the concepts more fully.

Directions

Step 1: *Meaning in Context*
Introduce and explain the overall goal of the lesson, and how learners will get there. Then tell them that they will begin by examining the definition of a word and trying to use it in a specific context. Pass out the first worksheet [fig 2.1.2.1] and go through the definition of the word. Point out how the meaning of this word relies on the relationship between other words which express complex concepts. Then prompt learners to do the first activity of the worksheet. When they have written a sentence, ask for volunteers to read their sentence, and ask other learners to guess which definition they used. When learners have guessed, ask them to explain their choice. Ask the learners if anyone could make a case for a different definition. Ask them to explain their choice. Finally, ask the initial volunteer to tell the class which definition they chose. You may have multiple volunteers. Discuss the methods that learners use to derive the meaning from context. What clues are in the sentences?

Step 2: *Writing a Definition*
Prompt learners to try the second activity on the worksheet [fig 2.1.2.1]. Ask learners to pair up with the person next to them and attempt to guess at the meaning of the word as they have used it in a sentence. Make sure to prompt them to ask what they could do to make their meaning clearer from the context of the sentence. Could they add another sentence to clarify? Come together as a group, and read the dictionary definition of the word. What are some of the differences between this definition, and the definitions that learners wrote? What are some of the similarities? Discuss what this might mean about how people use a word versus a dictionary definition.

Step 3: *Necessity of Contextual Meaning*
Present the learners with a scenario where they would not know what a certain word means, except through context. An example might be that they have a friend for whom English is a second language. Their friend knows English pretty well, but does not know if there is a translation for a certain word in their native language. The friend can describe how the concept makes them feel, or relate the concept to other complex words that they might know in English, but they cannot directly translate it.

Step 4: *Relating it to the Word*
When the learners have considered the scenario, ask them what language the Word was written in. Discuss how many words and phrases in the Word have very complex meanings, which may not match the dictionary definitions. How can they see what a word in the Scripture means if they cannot just look it up in a dictionary? Explain what they will be doing for the final activity of the lesson, and break the learners up into small groups. Explain the worksheets [fig 2.1.2.2 – fig 2.1.2.6], and have learners complete the activity. When they have finished the activity, come together as a group, and go through each of the groups' definitions. Ask them to read their passage, and explain why they defined the word as they did. You may then reveal the word they were defining, discuss differences in definitions, compare their definition to the dictionary, and discuss colloquial use of the word.

Key observations

As learners progress through this unit, make sure to keep an eye on their work. Look for learners who are simply looking for synonyms to the words whose meaning they are attempting to define. If they are looking for synonyms, ask them whether they think the word fits exactly. For example, if you are using the worksheets [fig 2.1.2.2 – fig 2.1.2.6] without modification and thus discussing faith, a learner may write trust as their definition. Ask them whether the kind of trust being discussed in the context is the kind of trust they might have that someone they know who is dishonest will lie to them. If it is different, how can they relate other terms to this one in order to clarify the difference? If they describe the term as a relationship, ask them what kind of relationship it might be. Is it like the relationship between college roommates who have trouble getting along? Is it like the relationship between young lovers? How could they characterize the relationship to?

Additionally, be aware of learners who are having trouble with the verses they have been given. Perhaps they are confused about what is going on in the verse. An attempt has been made to give enough context to make it possible to decipher the meaning of the word, but you should familiarize yourself with the verses and make sure that you understand what it going on in them, so you can help learners who may have trouble.

Take note of their response to the transition between Step 3 and Step 4 of the Directions. Do the learners accept your scenario as a good analogy? Do they accept the importance of understanding words from the Scripture by their context? If not, you may decide to plan an extension to this lesson which picks out several verses that use the same word in ways that are not intuitive given the colloquial meaning of the words in translation.

Authentic feedback

Be sure to move between the groups as they work together and give feedback as they work through these activities. In the moment feedback will be essential to this activity, as a new tool is introduced to learners. You may form your feedback by altering your lesson plan as you go. If learners are having a hard time explaining how they derive meaning from context, you may wish to spend more time on Step 1, working through examples together. Alternatively, if only a small number of learners seem to have trouble, you may focus attention on them during small group work.

As you take note of individual learners' comprehension and acceptance of this material, think of ways you may appropriately challenge your learners when they are not directly involved in a lesson. If some learners are reticent to accept philological analysis, you may challenge them with a philological argument against their interpretation of the Word, and prompt them to devise a counter-argument.

Figure 2.1.2.1 – Definitions and Context

This worksheet has an example of a dictionary definition for a word which expresses a complex concept: spirit. Learners will examine this definition, and are prompted to write a sentence using the word, but expressing the meaning of only one of the definitions listed. Learners are prompted to consider some key questions about their attempt. This worksheet them prompts learners to devise a definition for another word for a complex concept: love. They are prompted to use love in a sentence to express the definition they have written, and may be engaged in an activity with a partner to try to decipher the definition each ascribed to love from context. Finally, learners are prompted to compare their definition to the dictionary definition. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, or write the definition on a board for everyone to see and present the activities orally. In the latter case, make sure learners have blank paper for the activities.

This worksheet may be found on page 23, or in the folder "Section 2" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 2.1.2.1.pdf."

Figures 2.1.2.2 – 2.1.2.6 – Deciphering Meaning

These worksheets are identical except for the verses that have been chosen. For your reference, the first worksheet [fig 2.1.2.2] uses GEN 32:6-12, the second [fig 2.1.2.3] uses 1 SAM 22:11-14, the third [fig 2.1.2.4] uses JOB 39:9-12, the fourth [fig 2.1.2.5] uses MARK 4:35-41, and the fifth [fig 2.1.2.6] uses 1 COR 15:12-19. Be sure to review these passages so that you are familiar with their context before you run this lesson. In each of the quoted passages, the word faith has been blacked out. When you pass out these worksheets, be sure to tell the groups that the goal is not to guess the blacked-out word; even if they guess it, they should try to construct its meaning and definition from the context alone, not from colloquial usage. Each of these worksheets prompts learners to examine the quote that is given, and work in their small groups to try to decipher the meaning of the blacked-out word. They are given several questions to consider as they do this activity. You may make photocopies of the worksheets, or provide one worksheet per group. If you cannot provide the worksheets to the groups, you may have them read the passages directly from their Bibles, and explain the direction orally. If you choose the latter option, be sure to stress that they are to find the meaning of the word faith as it is described in the given passage from context alone.

These worksheets may be found on pages 24-28, or in the folder "Section 2" on the accompanying CD under the filenames "Figure 2.1.2.2.pdf," "Figure 2.1.2.3.pdf," "Figure 2.1.2.4.pdf," "Figure 2.1.2.5.pdf," and "Figure 2.1.2.6.pdf."

spirit - **1 :** an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms
2 : a supernatural being or essence: as **a** *capitalized* **: HOLY SPIRIT b : SOUL** 2a **c :** an often malevolent being that is bodiless but can become visible; *specifically* **: GHOST** 2 **d :** a malevolent being that enters and possesses a human being
3 : temper or disposition of mind or outlook especially when vigorous or animated <in high *spirits*>
4 : the immaterial intelligent or sentient part of a person
5 a : the activating or essential principle influencing a person <acted in a *spirit* of helpfulness> **b :** an inclination, impulse, or tendency of a specified kind **: MOOD**
6 a : a special attitude or frame of mind <the money-making *spirit* was for a time driven back -- J. A. Froude> **b :** the feeling, quality, or disposition characterizing something <undertaken in a *spirit* of fun>
7 : a lively or brisk quality in a person or a person's actions
8 : a person having a character or disposition of a specified nature
9 : a mental disposition characterized by firmness or assertiveness <denied the charge with *spirit*>
10 a : prevailing tone or tendency <*spirit* of the age> **b :** general intent or real meaning <*spirit* of the law>
11 : enthusiastic loyalty <school *spirit*>

- Notice how a definition uses several complex words to communicate a concept.
- Why do you suppose there are so many definitions?
- Could you use the word "spirit" to mean one definition, but not the others?

Write a sentence with the word "spirit" according to one of the above definitions:

Reread your sentence. Could any of the other definitions apply to your use of the word? Would someone be able to figure out which definition you used without asking you?

Now, try to write a definition for love. You do not need to encompass every possibility of what love could mean, but do your best to write detailed definitions for one or two uses of the word, then use one of those meanings of "love" in a sentence.

love -

sentence:

Look up love in the dictionary. Can you find your definitions among the dictionary definitions? How are they different from your definitions? How are they the same?

---

fig 2.1.2.1

Group 1 – Deciphering Meaning

Examine the quote below. As a group, try to formulate a definition for the blacked out word, shown as [redacted], below. If anyone in your group recognizes the passage from the Bible and knows which word has been blacked out, do not reveal it to the other members of the group yet, and try to derive the meaning of the word from the context alone.

If you need help understanding what is going on in the passage in order to derive the meaning, ask your teacher.

The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.' Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, thinking, 'If Esau comes to one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape.'

And Jacob said, 'O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, "Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good", I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the [redacted] that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. Yet you have said, "I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number." '

- While you work, remember how we saw the definitions of complex concepts describing relationships of other complex concepts.
- Do you see any complex concepts in the above passage? How do they relate to the blacked-out word?
- As you come up with pieces of your group definition, you may write them in the box below.

Be sure to read through your passage with your group's definition in mind, and see if it makes sense. Is something missing? Can you modify your definition to fit the context more completely?

---

fig 2.1.2.2

Group 2 – Deciphering Meaning

Examine the quote below. As a group, try to formulate a definition for the blacked out word, shown as [redacted], below. If anyone in your group recognizes the passage from the Bible and knows which word has been blacked out, do not reveal it to the other members of the group yet, and try to derive the meaning of the word from the context alone.

If you need help understanding what is going on in the passage in order to derive the meaning, ask your teacher.

The king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and for all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob; and all of them came to the king. Saul said, 'Listen now, son of Ahitub.' He answered, 'Here I am, my lord.' Saul said to him, 'Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, by giving him bread and a sword, and by inquiring of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as he is doing today?'

Then Ahimelech answered the king, 'Who among all your servants is so [redacted] as David? He is the king's son-in-law, and is quick to do your bidding, and is honoured in your house.

- While you work, remember how we saw the definitions of complex concepts describing relationships of other complex concepts.
- Do you see any complex concepts in the above passage? How do they relate to the blacked-out word?
- As you come up with pieces of your group definition, you may write them in the box below.

Be sure to read through your passage with your group's definition in mind, and see if it makes sense. Is something missing? Can you modify your definition to fit the context more completely?

---

fig 2.1.2.3

Group 3 – Deciphering Meaning

Examine the quote below. As a group, try to formulate a definition for the blacked out word, shown as [redacted], below. If anyone in your group recognizes the passage from the Bible and knows which word has been blacked out, do not reveal it to the other members of the group yet, and try to derive the meaning of the word from the context alone.

If you need help understanding what is going on in the passage in order to derive the meaning, ask your teacher.

'Is the wild ox willing to serve you?
  Will it spend the night at your crib?
Can you tie it in the furrow with ropes,
  or will it harrow the valleys after you?
Will you depend on it because its strength is great,
  and will you hand over your labour to it?
Do you have [redacted] in it that it will return,
  and bring your grain to your threshing-floor?

- While you work, remember how we saw the definitions of complex concepts describing relationships of other complex concepts.
- Do you see any complex concepts in the above passage? How do they relate to the blacked-out word?
- As you come up with pieces of your group definition, you may write them in the box below.

Be sure to read through your passage with your group's definition in mind, and see if it makes sense. Is something missing? Can you modify your definition to fit the context more completely?

---

fig 2.1.2.4

Group 4 – Deciphering Meaning

Examine the quote below. As a group, try to formulate a definition for the blacked out word, shown as [redacted], below. If anyone in your group recognizes the passage from the Bible and knows which word has been blacked out, do not reveal it to the other members of the group yet, and try to derive the meaning of the word from the context alone.

If you need help understanding what is going on in the passage in order to derive the meaning, ask your teacher.

On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no [redacted]?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

- While you work, remember how we saw the definitions of complex concepts describing relationships of other complex concepts.
- Do you see any complex concepts in the above passage? How do they relate to the blacked-out word?
- As you come up with pieces of your group definition, you may write them in the box below.

Be sure to read through your passage with your group's definition in mind, and see if it makes sense. Is something missing? Can you modify your definition to fit the context more completely?

---

fig 2.1.2.5

Group 5 – Deciphering Meaning

Examine the quote below. As a group, try to formulate a definition for the blacked out word, shown as [redacted], below. If anyone in your group recognizes the passage from the Bible and knows which word has been blacked out, do not reveal it to the other members of the group yet, and try to derive the meaning of the word from the context alone.

If you need help understanding what is going on in the passage in order to derive the meaning, ask your teacher.

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your [redacted] has been in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your [redacted] is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

- While you work, remember how we saw the definitions of complex concepts describing relationships of other complex concepts.
- Do you see any complex concepts in the above passage? How do they relate to the blacked-out word?
- As you come up with pieces of your group definition, you may write them in the box below.

Be sure to read through your passage with your group's definition in mind, and see if it makes sense. Is something missing? Can you modify your definition to fit the context more completely?

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fig 2.1.2.6

Multiple meanings

As the previous lesson considered how learners may use the context of Scripture to decipher the meaning of a word, this lesson will demonstrate that words in the Scripture, like words in English, often have multiple meanings. Learners will be taught how to recognize when a word may be used in different ways, and techniques for making sense of these different meanings and their overlap through careful analysis of a passage from Scripture.

Rationale

As learners begin to think more carefully about the meaning-laden words they come across in the Scripture, they will undoubtedly come across words which may be used in different ways, some times right next to each other. If learners are to make sense of these different meanings and appreciate the nuance of Biblical vocabulary, they will need to be exposed to the multiplicity of meaning often contained in a single word, and given the tools to make sense of it.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Be exposed to the idea that the same word can have different meanings.
- Understand how to recognize when a word's meaning is varied in a passage.
- Practice techniques for making sense of different meanings in a passage.
- See the importance of disentangling meanings to making sense of a passage.

Tips

Observe whether learners use the tools they have acquired from the last lesson and pick up on techniques for deciphering the meaning of words from context as you proceed through this one. Help them to remember these tools as they work on the first activity. If the connection is not initially clear to them, ask them to separate the sentences in the first activity and try to derive the meaning of the repeated word in each sentence individually. Is the meaning different for each repetition? If the difference in meaning was more subtle, would they have discovered the difference without examining the context closely?

It may be especially helpful to adapt this lesson to the specific interests of your learners. If you observe their group work toward their final project, you may find them stumbling over a term with a particularly complex meaning. If you do, you may make note of it and adapt this lesson to look at the word which is confusing them before implementing this lesson. When you connect the lesson to learners' specific interests, they are more likely to be motivated to understand and use the tools of the lesson.

Directions

Step 1: *Fun with Wordplay*
Explain to learners where the lesson is going, and explain that in the first activity they will be looking at the way words with multiple meanings can be used together to create sentences or short passages that would be difficult to understand if you were not familiar with the vocabulary. Pass out the worksheet [fig 2.2.2.1] and begin to go through the examples as a group. Point out how each use of the word has its own context, and how this context clues the reader in to its divergent meaning. When you have gone through the examples, prompt the learners to write a similarly confusing sentence, and have volunteers share their examples.

Step 2: *Getting at Nuance*
Point out that the difference in meaning isn't always as obvious as in the words they first considered. Ask them to consider the example at the bottom of their first worksheet [fig 2.2.2.1]. Can they think of other words in English that have subtly different meanings? How would they tell when a reader or speaker was using the word one way, and not another? Prompt them to write a sentence along the model given at the bottom of their worksheet, and have volunteers share their examples. As a group, discuss how the learners who share have used the context of their sentences to convey the specific meaning they had in mind. Prompt learners to consider how they might get at the intended meaning if the context was not as clear or if the author or speaker was varying the meaning of a word from sentence to sentence.

Step 3: *Nuance in the Word*
Introduce the passage that you will be considering for the remainder of the lesson. Tell them which word they will be considering in the passage, then read or have the learners take turns reading the passage out loud to the group. Ask them if everyone can see the multiplicity of meaning in the word.

Step 4: *Disentangling Meanings*
You may have learners break up into small groups, or work individually. Pass out the second worksheet [fig 2.2.2.2] and explain how to use it. Learners will pick two (or more) colors of highlighter, or two or more ways of underlining (for example: meaning1, meaning2) or "tagging" the word they are considering. When they come to an instance of the word they should consider whether it shares a meaning with any of the instances they have already encountered. If so, they should tag it the same way; if not, they should tag it differently. If learners are working in small groups, have them discuss each instance of the word, and consider its context carefully before choosing. Once they have gone through the passage in full, they should make a key and brainstorm the difference between the meanings. Then, prompt them to read the passage again, seeing if their key holds up. Finally, come back together as a complete group and discuss the different meanings that the small groups came to. Is there overlap between the different groups' conclusions? Can the discrepancies between them be clarified? Ask learners to explain their choices in separating the meanings. Conclude with a discussion of how the nuanced understanding adds to the reading.

Key observations

Because of the complexity of disentangling the nuanced meanings of the Biblical vocabulary, you will want to look for a good case rationally argued more than a specific decision in the learners' choices in how they separated meanings.

You may find learners who want to separate the meaning of almost every instance of the word. In this case, pick two occurrences of the word that seem closest to you in meaning, but which the learner has decided to separate, and ask them to explain the difference between these uses. If they can explain the nuance between them, they have understood what is important from this lesson.

You may find learners who are tempted to run all the meanings together. In this case, pick two of the most divergent instances of the word that they consider to have the same meaning, ask them why they chose to categorize those instances as the same meaning. If the learner understands the distinction between them, but feels that the similarities are enough to consider their meaning the same, they have understood what is important from this lesson.

With all of your learners the stress should be on an understanding of the multiplicity of meanings tied to one word in the passage, and whether they choose to categorize them all the same, all differently, or anywhere in between, you should be most concerned with their ability to explain why they have done so and demonstrate an understanding of the similarities and differences of meaning between occurrences.

Authentic feedback

You may choose to collect the worksheets that learners have completed for this lesson. If you do so, go over their brainstorming, and particularly their explanations for why they have distinguished the meanings of words as they have. Here you may find more opportunity to be critical of leanings towards running all the meanings together or separating them. You may comment on their worksheets to consider whether it is as helpful to their reading to think of every use of the word as a "different category" than any other, or consider them all as the same category. In either case, acknowledge the reasoning that would lead them to conclude this: that the every use of the word *is*, in some sense, different, and that the connotations all instances share may unite them. But ask them to consider how their markup of the passage might look if they had chosen a different number of meanings.

Is this passage discussing the different ways one might think of the word? If so, can we get a clearer sense of the comparison going on in the passage by at least attempting to pull apart the different uses of the word, and then read the passage as a whole with this difference in mind? You may ask learners to reconsider the passage, and tell you whether any patterns emerge that they did not notice before.

Figure 2.2.2.1 – Wordplay

This worksheet gives learners several examples of an English word with several meanings used in different ways sequentially. Learners are asked to consider how they disentangle the difference in meaning, almost without thinking about it, and prompted to devise a sentence of their own with a similarly play on words. Learners are then exposed to an English word with a more nuanced difference in meaning. Learners are asked to think of another English word whose meaning is nuanced and prompted to devise a sentence which could be taken several ways, depending on the context. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, write the examples on a board for everyone to see, or present the examples orally. If you do not use the worksheet, make sure learners have blank paper for the activities.

This worksheet may be found on page 33, or in the folder "Section 2" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 2.2.2.1.pdf."

Figure 2.2.2.2 – Multiple Meanings in the Word

This worksheet presents learners with a passage that uses a single word to express different meanings. Learners are prompted to try to disentangle the different meanings by "tagging" them with different colored highlighters or different styles of underlining. They are then asked to brainstorm the meanings that they have tagged in common by reviewing the contexts that they have distinguished. A box has been given for two different styles, and a third box has been given for a third meaning, or as many additional meanings as the learners feel are required. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, or of the passage out of a copy of the Word. Alternatively, if learners have study Bibles that they do not mind writing in, they can do the activity directly in their copy of the Word. If learners do not wish to write in their copy of the Word, they may take notes on the different contexts and do their brainstorming on a separate piece of paper.

This worksheet may be found on page 34, or in the folder "Section 2" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 2.2.2.2.pdf."

Many words have more than one meaning, and these meanings may be confusing or funny when coupled together. Consider the following examples:

I wasn't lying when I told you I was lying on my bed.

No, a right turn isn't right. We need to turn left.

This lamp isn't heavy at all. What a light light!

How pointless! I asked you for a needle, but what you gave me is pointless.

Write a sentence that or two that use the same word to express different meanings. You can use page, part, prime, leaves, bass, cry, rank, or come up with your own:

While a contrived play on words may be obviously funny or confusing, words which have meanings that are very similar, but important in their differences may cause sensitive misunderstandings. Consider the sentence:

Bob is always discriminating.

Discriminating can mean different things in everyday language, depending on the context. If you create the following context for the sentence…

Bob is a member of the local wine-tasting community. Bob is always discriminating. He can tell the difference between very similar wines.

… then Bob has a good palate for wines. If we create a different context, however…

Bob never hires women. Maybe he hasn't interviewed a female applicant who is qualified, but I'm not sure. Bob is always discriminating.

The difference between these meanings is subtler than the difference between lying and lying. The former meaning of discriminating is that Bob can tell very similar things apart. The latter meaning also involves telling things apart, but it includes treating those things differently and unfairly.

Sometimes differences of meaning can only be revealed through context. Try to write a sentence using a word that could be read in subtly, but importantly, different ways depending on its context. You may use narrow (a narrow view), remember (remembering a person), see (what I mean?) or any word with subtly different meanings that you can think of:

---

fig 2.2.2.1

Multiple Meanings in the Word

As you read the following passage, consider the word **law** in bold.
Does Paul use this word to express different meanings in different places? Tag the different uses of the word by underlining or highlighting them in different styles (example: meaning1, meaning2, etc.).

Now we know that whatever the **law** says, it speaks to those who are under the **law**, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For 'no human being will be justified in his sight' by deeds prescribed by the **law**, for through the **law** comes the knowledge of sin.

But now, irrespective of **law**, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the **law** and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what **law**? By that of works? No, but by the **law** of faith. For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the **law**. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. Do we then overthrow the **law** by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the **law**.

ROM 3:19-31

Brainstorm what the different meanings of the word law, as you have tagged them, might be. Why? How can you tell from the context?

Meaning 1	Meaning 2	Other Meanings

fig 2.2.2.2

Additional Lesson Ideas

Your examination of Biblical vocabulary need not be limited to single words. You might examine what a phrase means in different contexts. "Son of man" is an excellent choice for this sort of exercise, and you could implement a lesson like either of the two preceding around this phrase.

For another lesson you might inform learners that there is no capitalization or lowercase distinction in the original Greek, and that all capitalization is an interpretive gesture by translators. You might involve learners in a discussion of the significance of capitalization on their perception of the text. Do they think spirit should ever be capitalized? If so, under what circumstances? What spirit in particular would the capitalization denote? Then, take a passage in which a spirit is sometime capitalized and sometimes left lowercase, and reproduce it without capitalizing anything. Prompt learners to read through the passage, and decide as a group which places it ought to be capitalized in, and which places it ought to remain lowercase. Compare their results with the decision of the translators.

It would also be interesting to design a lesson comparing translations. Particular verses show important differences in the choice of the translators (GAL 3:24-25, for example). Learners could be prompted to consider these differences, perhaps reading the translators' prefaces and discussing their possible biases.

You might also choose to begin working in the original language with an interlinear Greek and English or Hebrew and English translation of the Bible. Learners could be prompted to use a Greek or Hebrew lexicon to gain additional insight into the meanings of the words being considered.

Linking Lessons

It is also easy to link the learners' philological training to the other analyses. Have them examine the meaning of a word in extra-Biblical contexts and compare it to its meaning in the Word; a comparison of Philo of Alexandria (see the attached materials in Section Seven) and John's use of λόγος could be particularly fruitful.

You could also design a lesson that compared how different books of the Bible use the same word in a comparative literary analysis, or you could track the use of a single important term through a larger work.

An intertextual approach to this philological analysis would also be easy to implement. You could design a lesson to teach learners how to use a Concordance to seek clarification on the meaning of a word throughout the Scripture. The word 'marriage' and its associations could be tracked over the entirety of the Word to gain new insight.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee…
LUKE 3:1

A context of history

The narratives of the Word are sparse; when they provide details of time and place it is surprising and often unlooked for. This is in no manner meant to be a critique of the Word's style. Quite the opposite, the Word is sharply efficient, expecting a great deal from the reader if they are to understand its depth. The Word does not bother to explain in overflowing detail the political situation that it alludes to, the kingships of foreign nations, or the implications of a figures' political or social identity in a world several millennia removed from our modern society.

It is not my contention that a learner must understand the history of the near east in order to understand the saving message of the Word, but a historical context gives new meaning to many of the Word's narratives and deepens the understanding of one who comes to his pages as a learner as well as a disciple. If we read that Jesus called Matthew and wish to consider what we would do if Jesus called us, we may be able to do so, but how much more wonderful and personal of a question does it become when we understand what it meant to be a tax collector in first century Israel called out by the Son of God? We cannot approach Matthew's situation as closely without understanding what his role was in society, and why his calling in particular should have meant so much.

An understanding of history is also important for the believer seeking a deeper relationship with the Word because of the rumors buzzing about in popular culture. As has been mentioned, films like the *DaVinci Code* and *The Passion of the Christ* can lead Christians in strange directions, rather divorced from the probabilities of historical criticism. Perhaps worse than a fiction or a largely Scripture-based portrayal of the Passion are so-called documentaries like James Cameron's *The Lost Tomb of Jesus* which, ignoring even secular archaeologists and scholars of first century Israel, paint a historical improbability as a world-changing exposé. The more Christians learn about the history of the Word, the more sensationalism may roll off their back.

Learners who have a greater understanding of the world of the Word will find much of their reading made clearer and will moreover be better able to respond to amateur critics of Christianity from a historical perspective; the history of the Word and the world to which it brought light like a lamp in the darkness speaks for itself; although it may be many things to many people, there is no good historical analysis that can marginalize it or relegate to the realm of fantasy or propaganda. As ideas that the Word is only fantasy or propaganda filter into popular culture, initiation to his historical context can provide ample rebuttal.

Overall objectives

As learners complete this section, they should:

- Know the difference between a primary source and a secondary source.
- Understand how to evaluate the biases of sources.
- Learn several techniques for reading a source with its bias in mind.
- Experience the complexity a historical context can provide to the Word.
- Be exposed to a first century extra-Biblical author.
- Have a list of websites where they can find other primary sources online.

You may design lessons to address:

- Earlier periods of Israelite history.
- Later periods of Christianity.
- The variety through history of methods to interpret the Bible.
- A history of the transmission of the Word.

Procedure

In this section, learners will be prompted to consider the difference in evaluating various types of sources. They will be engaged in lessons that expose them to primary sources and they will be prompted to critique these sources and apply them to their reading of selected passages of the Word. As they become aware of the relevance of a historical context to their understanding of the Word, learners will be prompted to consider this application to passages which are directly relevant to the essential question of the course.

Learners will then be given lists of free, online resources. If you have access to a computer where you hold your lessons, you may wish to give learners a brief lesson on how to use these resources. Learners will be encouraged to use these resources to search through the writings of other first century authors in order to gain a deeper historical perspective on the Word.

Possible extensions to this lesson will be discussed, including a lesson which compares first century Jewish interpretative methods to the interpretive methods employed in the New Covenant, and a lesson which examines some of the earliest extra-Biblical accounts of Christians, comparing the lifestyles portrayed in these accounts to those portrayed in the Epistles. If you have a reasonable budget for your courses, you may consider purchasing secondary sources, which are not often available for free, and design lessons that compare an analysis of primary and secondary literature. Unfortunately, I do not have recommendations of secondary literature in the Appendix, as I have yet to find a good secondary text that I would recommend for use with a Christian study of the Word.

Josephus and the Second Temple

This lesson will prompt learners to consider the different sources that they could use to find information about the history of the Judea in the time of Christ. As they list different possible sources, they will be guided in a discussion to consider how these sources are compiled. Learners will be asked to consider whether they might find useful insight into the Word by reading works which were not authored by the first Christians, but were written in the same era. Then, learners will be introduced to the first century Jewish historian Josephus, evaluating excerpts from Josephus' commentary on his own life, and see if they can decipher what sort of a person he was. Learners will read a passage from his perspective about the Temple, and consider what it adds to their understanding of verses in the Word about the Temple.

Rationale

By prompting learners to consider the difference between primary and secondary sources, an interest may be garnered among learners to read about other views that would add to their understanding of the first century Judaism that Christ ministered to. After motivating learners to take an interest in history, they will learn how to evaluate a source by examining its autobiographical material, and apply this examination to a simple passage. This will be good preparation for more complicated analyses of Josephus' works.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Consider the difference between a primary source and a secondary source.
- Be exposed to a first century historian.
- Practice evaluating an ancient author from autobiographical material.
- Apply their evaluation to a reading of non-autobiographical material.
- Understand the perspective that a historical context can provide to the Word.

Tips

The readings from several of Josephus' works have been selected hopefully to be exciting and interesting to learners. Many learners may have the preconception that history must be boring, and it may be helpful to give them a bit of your perspective on first century Judea when you open the lesson: a land of internal conflict, rebellion against an Empire, and political intrigue. Josephus was a part of this drama.

Be especially attentive to learners' evaluation of Josephus' biases as a source, as the next lesson will rely on this understanding for an analysis of a more complex historical issue.

Directions

Step 1: *Different kinds of Sources*
Introduce the lesson by explaining to learners that they will be examining the historical context of the time of Jesus. Ask them where they could look for more information about the history of first century Jerusalem, and brainstorm their responses on the board. If no one suggests reading the works of Jesus' contemporaries, you may ask learners what the difference is between the Word and a history book. What is the main difference between the authors of the Gospels and the authors of books about the Gospels? See if you can get them to make the leap to eyewitness accounts. If they do not, ask them to consider where historians get the material to write their history books. Do they think people other than Christians were writing histories in the first century?

Step 2: *Understanding Bias*
You may wish to point out that the New Covenant espouses very strong opinions, and often the opponents of Christ are as vehement about their opinions. Hearing what one of Christ's opponents thinks about the situation of first century Jerusalem might deepen our understanding of Christ's censure, but when we read the works of such a person, we should try to be aware of who he is, and what his personal motives might be for writing as he does.

Step 3: *Meeting Josephus*
Split the learners up into small groups and explain that the worksheet they are being given [fig 3.1.2.1- fig 3.1.2.5] has excerpts from an autobiography by Josephus, the first century historian that these lessons will consider. As they read through the passages in small groups, point out the key questions on the worksheet that they should try to answer in their readings. Prompt learners to consider what the answers to these questions mean about how they could color Josephus' opinions.

Step 4: *Josephus and the Temple*
When learners have completed the worksheet, have everyone come together. Each of the small groups can share the answers to the key questions they got from their excerpt, and the group may discuss Josephus' potential bias as a whole. Next, distribute the handout [fig 3.1.2.6] and read through Josephus' excerpt on the Temple renovation as a group. Discuss his portrayal of the Temple, and particularly his portrayal of how other people in his time viewed the Temple.

Step 5: *Relating it to the Word*
As a group, consider several passages from the Word about the Temple. You may use the following verses, or search out your own:

MATT 12:1-8, MATT 17:24-27, JOHN 2:19-21, 1 COR 3:1-17

Discuss what the group's understanding of Josephus and his portrayal of Temple adds to their comprehension of these passages. Brainstorm other issues in the Word where a historical perspective would add depth of understanding.

Key observations

As learners work in small groups to discuss the autobiographical piece by Josephus, pay careful attention to how they translate their answers to the key questions in the first worksheet [fig 3.1.2.1 – fig 3.1.2.5] into decisions about how to read Josephus. They may be too ready to discount whatever Josephus might say, in which case you might ask them to consider how they can get decipher some part of the truth of a story told to them by a very self-interested person. They may be inclined to trust Josephus too much, at which point you may ask them about specific parts of their selection or answers to the key questions that could create a potential bias. If they stray too far to either extreme, point out parts of their selection that might complicate their position.

When learners come together and explain the passages they worked on in small groups, bring out the implications of the different answers the small groups had to the key questions; you may keep track of the different answers on a board that everyone can see. Make sure learners from all the groups are involved in discussing the implications of each groups' answers.

Authentic feedback

You may collect learners' worksheets from the first activity [fig 3.1.2.1 – fig 3.1.2.5], or you may ask learners to write a quick brainstorm about who they think Josephus was, and what his potential biases are on a blank piece of paper. Make sure that learners put their names on either of these so that you may identify their work. Consider what each learner got out of Josephus. If the group as a whole did not understand Josephus very well, you may consider reviewing his work and rethinking his potential biases at the beginning of the next lesson.

As you consider each learner's understanding of how to interpret historical context, you should prompt them to pick a topic that relates to their group's sub-question and research it in any of the primary documents that may be found through the online resources listed in the Appendix in section seven. As they research in the works of Josephus, or any of the other documents available to them, you will have more of an opportunity to evaluate their ability to read a source with an eye to its biases.

As with all the feedback you give, be sure that it is phrased as an encouragement, and always look for a rational explanation for their understanding of source's biases rather than an opinion which agrees with yours. If you find a learner wholly off-base in opinion because of the limited scope of their readings, you may suggest a passage that you think will illuminate the reason for your difference of opinion.

Figures 3.1.2.1 – 3.1.2.5 – Introducing Flavius Josephus

These worksheets give up to five different small groups selections from *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, an autobiographical work by the first century Jewish historian. If you are not familiar with this work, you should reach each selection carefully, and consider reading through the entire text, available online at earlyjewishwritings.com (see the Appendix in section seven). It is not long. If you are familiar with the work, you should at least re-read the selections which have been chosen with an eye to the key questions learners will be prompted to answer. You may make photocopies of the worksheets, or if you have copies of *The Life of Flavius Josephus* you may choose to have learners read directly from the books and write the key questions on a board for everyone to see or present them orally. If you choose not to use the worksheets, be sure the learners have blank paper to take notes.

These worksheets may be found on pages 43 - 47, or in the folder "Section 3" on the accompanying CD under the filenames "Figure 3.1.2.1.pdf," "Figure 3.1.2.2.pdf," "Figure 3.1.2.3.pdf," "Figure 3.1.2.4.pdf," and "Figure 3.1.2.5.pdf."

Figure 3.1.2.6 – The Temple of Jerusalem

This handout presents learners with an excerpt from Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*. This excerpt concerns the renovations to the Second Temple undertaken by King Herod. You may make photocopies of the handout, or if you have a copy of the *Antiquities of the Jews* you make choose to pass the book around and have learners take turns reading out loud from it.

This handout may be found on page 48, or in the folder "Section 3" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 3.1.2.6.pdf."

Group 1 - Introducing Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian living in the latter half of the first century AD who was controversial in his time, and who remains controversial to historians today. Below you will find an excerpt from *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, his autobiography. As you read through this selection answer the key questions below and consider how those questions may bias Josephus as a historian.

Context: During Josephus' life, several wars took place between the Jews and the occupying Roman forces. Josephus participated in these wars, but eventually surrendered and became a Roman citizen. These wars culminated in the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and nearly two thousands years of Jewish diaspora.

65. And now I am come to this part of my narration, I have a mind to say a few things to Justus, who hath himself written a history concerning these affairs… but have little regard to truth, and are not afraid, either out of ill-will or good-will to some persons, to relate falsehoods… Justus undertook to write about these facts, and about the Jewish war, that he might appear to have been an industrious man, he falsified in what he related about me, and could not speak truth even about his own country; whence it is that, being belied by him, I am under a necessity to make my defense … How then comes it to pass, O Justus! thou most sagacious of writers, (that I may address myself to him as if he were here present,) for so thou boastest of thyself, that I and the Galileans have been the authors of that sedition which thy country engaged in, both against the Romans and against the king… For before ever I was appointed governor of Galilee by the community of Jerusalem, both thou and all the people of Tiberias had not only taken up arms, but had made war with Decapolis of Syria… Nor is it I only who say this; but so it is written in the Commentaries of Vespasian, the emperor;… But, as thou sayest, I was then the author [of their revolts]. And pray, O Justus! who was that author afterwards? For thou knowest that I was in the power of the Romans before Jerusalem was besieged, and before the same time Jotapata was taken… Yet cannot I but wonder at thy impudence, when thou hast the assurance to say, that thou hast better related these affairs [of the war] than have all the others that have written about them, whilst thou didst not know what was done in Galilee; for thou wast then at Berytus with the king; nor didst thou know how much the Romans suffered at the siege of Jotapata, or what miseries they brought upon us; nor couldst thou learn by inquiry what I did during that siege myself; for all those that might afford such information were quite destroyed in that siege.

Key Questions:

How does Josephus establish his authority?

How does Josephus describe his role in society?

What do you think is Josephus' motive for writing this selection?

fig 3.1.2.1

Group 2 - Introducing Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian living in the latter half of the first century AD who was controversial in his time, and who remains controversial to historians today. Below you will find an excerpt from *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, his autobiography. As you read through this selection answer the key questions below and consider how those questions may bias Josephus as a historian.

Context: During Josephus' life, there was a great deal of strife in the near east. During this time Josephus served as a priest and political leader to several communities, and he was beset by other Jews who opposed his stance towards Rome and other aspects of his politics. Josephus paints these antagonists as robbers and thieves, although nothing remains of their perspectives.

15. I was now about the thirtieth year of my age; in which time of life it is a hard thing for any one to escape the calumnies of the envious, although he restrain himself from fulfilling any unlawful desires, especially where a person is in great authority. Yet did I preserve every woman free from injuries; and as to what presents were offered me, I despised them, as not standing in need of them. Nor indeed would I take those tithes, which were due to me as a priest, from those that brought them. Yet do I confess, that I took part of the spoils of those Syrians which inhabited the cities that adjoined to us, when I had conquered them, and that I sent them to my kindred at Jerusalem; although, when I twice took Sepphoris by force, and Tiberias four times, and Gadara once, and when I had subdued and taken John, who often laid treacherous snares for me, I did not punish [with death] either him or any of the people forenamed, as the progress of this discourse will show.

Key Questions:

How does Josephus establish his authority?

How does Josephus describe his role in society?

What do you think is Josephus' motive for writing this selection?

fig 3.1.2.2

Group 3 - Introducing Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian living in the latter half of the first century AD who was controversial in his time, and who remains controversial to historians today. Below you will find an excerpt from *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, his autobiography. As you read through this selection answer the key questions below and consider how those questions may bias Josephus as a historian.

Context: During Josephus' life, a fair portion of the Jewish population chafed under Roman occupation, and sought a means for independence. This was often envisioned as being accomplished through violent rebellion by the most extreme zealots. Eventually these rebellions broke out in a series of wars that culminated in the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and nearly two thousands years of Jewish diaspora. Josephus participated in these wars, but eventually surrendered and became a Roman citizen.

4. And now I perceived innovations were already begun, and that there were a great many very much elevated in hopes of a revolt from the Romans. I therefore endeavored to put a stop to these tumultuous persons, and persuaded them to change their minds; and laid before their eyes against whom it was that they were going to fight, and told them that they were inferior to the Romans not only in martial skill, but also in good fortune; and desired them not rashly, and after the most foolish manner, to bring on the dangers of the most terrible mischiefs upon their country, upon their families, and upon themselves. And this I said with vehement exhortation, because I foresaw that the end of such a war would be most unfortunate to us. But I could not persuade them; for the madness of desperate men was quite too hard for me.

Key Questions:

How does Josephus establish his authority?

How does Josephus describe his role in society?

What do you think is Josephus' motive for writing this selection?

Group 4 - Introducing Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian living in the latter half of the first century AD who was controversial in his time, and who remains controversial to historians today. Below you will find an excerpt from *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, his autobiography. As you read through this selection answer the key questions below and consider how those questions may bias Josephus as a historian.

Context: During Josephus' life, religious life among the Jews was divided among various sects, some of which are mentioned in the New Covenant. These sects had varying degrees of popularity and political power.

2. Now, my father Matthias was not only eminent on account of is nobility, but had a higher commendation on account of his righteousness, and was in great reputation in Jerusalem, the greatest city we have...I was commended by all for the love I had to learning; on which account the high priests and principal men of the city came then frequently to me together, in order to know my opinion about the accurate understanding of points of the law. And when I was about sixteen years old, I had a mind to make trim of the several sects that were among us. These sects are three: - The first is that of the Pharisees, the second that Sadducees, and the third that of the Essens, as we have frequently told you; for I thought that by this means I might choose the best, if I were once acquainted with them all; so I contented myself with hard fare, and underwent great difficulties, and went through them all. Nor did I content myself with these trials only; but when I was informed that one, whose name was Banus, lived in the desert, and used no other clothing than grew upon trees, and had no other food than what grew of its own accord, and bathed himself in cold water frequently, both by night and by day, in order to preserve his chastity, I imitated him in those things, and continued with him three years. So when I had accomplished my desires, I returned back to the city, being now nineteen years old, and began to conduct myself according to the rules of the sect of the Pharisees, which is of kin to the sect of the Stoics, as the Greeks call them.

Key Questions:

How does Josephus establish his authority?

How does Josephus describe his role in society?

What do you think is Josephus' motive for writing this selection?

fig 3.1.2.4

Group 5 - Introducing Flavius Josephus

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian living in the latter half of the first century AD who was controversial in his time, and who remains controversial to historians today. Below you will find an excerpt from *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, his autobiography. As you read through this selection answer the key questions below and consider how those questions may bias Josephus as a historian.

Context: During Josephus' life, and throughout Jewish history, the position of a priest was hereditary: to be a priest, one often had to be the son of a priest. In Josephus' time, Jerusalem and Judea were ruled by a hereditary King, under the supervision of a Roman governor.

1. The family from which I am derived is not an ignoble one, but hath descended all along from the priests; and as nobility among several people is of a different origin, so with us to be of the sacerdotal dignity, is an indication of the splendor of a family. Now, I am not only sprung from a sacerdotal family in general, but from the first of the twenty-four courses; and as among us there is not only a considerable difference between one family of each course and another, I am of the chief family of that first course also; nay, further, by my mother I am of the royal blood; for the children of Asamoneus, from whom that family was derived, had both the office of the high priesthood, and the dignity of a king, for a long time together...

Key Questions:

How does Josephus establish his authority?

How does Josephus describe his role in society?

What do you think is Josephus' motive for writing this selection?

The following is an excerpt from a work called *The Antiquities of the Jews*, written by Josephus. This work was probably written in the late 90s AD.

If Josephus' works are correctly dated and the details of his autobiography are to be believed, he saw the same Jewish Temple that existed in Jerusalem in the time of Christ. As you read, take note of Josephus' description of the Temple. How do the Jews in Josephus' portrayal of history feel about the Jerusalem Temple? How does Herod feel?

Book XV, Chapter 11

And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection; and that this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him; but as he knew the multitude were not ready nor willing to assist him in so vast a design, he thought to prepare them first by making a speech to them, and then set about the work itself; so he called them together, and spake thus to them: "I think I need not speak to you, my countrymen, about such other works as I have done since I came to the kingdom, although I may say they have been performed in such a manner as to bring more security to you than glory to myself; for I have neither been negligent in the most difficult times about what tended to ease your necessities, nor have the buildings I have made been so proper to preserve me as yourselves from injuries; and I imagine that, with God's assistance, I have advanced the nation of the Jews to a degree of happiness which they never had before; and for the particular edifices belonging to your own country, and your own cities, as also to those cities that we have lately acquired, which we have erected and greatly adorned, and thereby augmented the dignity of your nation, it seems to me a needless task to enumerate them to you, since you well know them yourselves; but as to that undertaking which I have a mind to set about at present, and which will be a work of the greatest piety and excellence that can possibly be undertaken by us, I will now declare it to you. Our fathers, indeed, when they were returned from Babylon, built this temple to God Almighty, yet does it want sixty cubits of its largeness in altitude; for so much did that first temple which Solomon built exceed this temple; ... since I am now, by God's will, your governor, and I have had peace a long time, and have gained great riches and large revenues, and, what is the principal filing of all, I am at amity with and well regarded by the Romans, who, if I may so say, are the rulers of the whole world, I will do my endeavor to correct that imperfection, which hath arisen from the necessity of our affairs, and the slavery we have been under formerly, and to make a thankful return, after the most pious manner, to God, for what blessings I have received from him, by giving me this kingdom, and that by rendering his temple as complete as I am able."

And this was the speech which Herod made to them; but still this speech aftrighted many of the people, as being unexpected by them; and because it seemed incredible, it did not encourage them, but put a damp upon them, for they were afraid that he would pull down the whole edifice, and not be able to bring his intentions to perfection for its rebuilding; and this danger appeared to them to be very great, and the vastness of the undertaking to be such as could hardly be accomplished…

But the temple itself was built by the priests in a year and six months; upon which all the people were full of joy; and presently they returned thanks, in the first place, to God; and in the next place, for the alacrity the king had showed. They feasted and celebrated this rebuilding of the temple: and for the king, he sacrificed three hundred oxen to God, as did the rest every one according to his ability; the number of which sacrifices is not possible to set down, for it cannot be that we should truly relate it; for at the same time with this celebration for the work about the temple fell also the day of the king's inauguration, which he kept of an old custom as a festival, and it now coincided with the other, which coincidence of them both made the festival most illustrious.

fig 3.1.2.6

First century Jewish debate

Having become acquainted with the figure of Josephus in the previous lesson, learners will be exposed to his views on a more subtly complex and often overlooked issue than the social importance of the Second Temple. Learners will be exposed to the sectarian nature of first century Judaism and the debates that took place, both in the Word and in the histories of Josephus. This activity will divide the learners into three groups, each being responsible for deciphering the differences and potential debates between the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. Because there is no direct reference to the Essenes in the Word, this group will only work with the texts of Josephus. At the end, learners will come together and teach each other about the different groups.

Rationale

While understanding the social magnitude of the Temple is a good introduction to the power of history in broadening a learner's understanding of the Word, this lesson will engage learners in the process of reconstructing a pivotal first century debate over Jewish theology which Christ entered, founding the only movement of the four which continues in its original conception today. By understanding a variety of important Jewish opinions on the relationship between God and man which were contemporary to Christ, learners will be able to better understand what Christ advocated by comparison.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Apply their analysis of a historical figure to their reading of complex texts.
- Decipher the nature of opposing first century sects from primary sources.
- Explain their historical analysis to one another.
- Discuss the clarification offered by a historical context for the debates.
- Be motivated to learn more about the history of the world of the Word.

Tips

When learners are working in their groups, you will have an excellent opportunity to work closely with those who need the most help with historical analysis. Although you may find this a good opportunity for working closely with learners who are struggling, you should spend time between the three groups, and be particularly aware of learners relying on their assumptions about the sects being discussed, especially the Pharisees.

Directions

Step 1: *Reviewing the Historian*
Inform learners that they will be taking a closer look at a subtler social issue and its history in the Word through other works of Josephus. Let learners know that they will be attempting to decipher the debate between three rival sects of first century Judaism that existed during the time of Christ, and remind them of Josephus. Brainstorm the answers to key questions you came up with in the last lesson, and the possible biases the group anticipated from those questions. You may do this activity on a board so that everyone can see. Make sure that everyone remembers that Josephus himself claims to have been a Pharisee, well acquainted with all the sects.

Step 2: *Assigning the Sects*
Divide learners up into three groups, giving one group the Pharisees, one the Sadducees, and a third the Essenes. Before you distribute the handouts, you may ask the group as a whole if they have heard of these Jewish sects before, and engage in a brief discussion to get at learners' prior understanding of this theological battle. Make sure everyone understands that the sects being examined all considered themselves Jews, and were all active in Judea in the first century. Next explain the sources that the handouts [fig 3.2.2.1 – fig 3.2.2.3] will be presenting, and how to use the worksheet [fig 3.2.2.4] that accompanies them; distribute both.

Step 3: *Deciphering a Theological Debate*
Learners will work in their groups to complete the worksheet [fig 3.2.2.4] based on the information they can decipher from the passages. Learners should use the worksheet, which has a column for notes on each of the three sects, to explain their opinions about their own sect at this point, leaving some space in their own column, and lots of space in the other groups' columns; explain that they will be teaching each other about their sect, so they should take notes that will allow them to sum up what they think are the key distinguishers of their sect. They may also highlight or underline a few key lines form their selections that they wish to share.

Step 4: *Coming Together Again*
Come back from the smaller groups, and have each of them take turns sharing what they found about the particular sect they were assigned. Remember to challenge groups as to where and how they deciphered an interpretation from the selection. Involve the whole group in a discussion of each other's methodology. As each group is sharing, the other two groups may take notes on the blank columns of their worksheet [fig 3.2.1.4].You may ask the groups individually, or the collection of learners as a whole to consider how the selections from Josephus added to their reading of the passages from the Word. Did it deepen their image of Christ and his ministry to understand the complex theological debates that surrounded him and the position he took within them? How? Are there other complex social situations implicit in the Word which might be deepened by an understanding of historical context? The Roman occupation? The Israelite struggles with idolatry? The conflict between Israel and Babylon?

Key observations

As learners go through the selections from Josephus, listen to their conversations and see whether they are actively taking their reading of Josephus from the previous lesson into account. Are they jumping right into his depiction of the sects without considering his own potential bias? If they are, the simplest of reminders may be all that is required. You might ask them why Josephus in particular describes the Sadducees the way that he does. Would the Sadducees describe themselves differently? What can you tell about them from the text?

When learners begin coming to some understanding of the sects, ask them to explain it. Do they provide a rationale from the text? A learner might say, "Josephus says that the Pharisees were the most popular, but he was a Pharisee himself, so we can't be sure of this." A good rationale will demonstrate an understanding of the author an accurate knowledge of the text, and a compelling application of the one to the other.

As the learners discuss their findings with the group as a whole, observe learners' reactions to the descriptions that other groups give, and their comments. Are the learners building their understanding of their own sects as other groups fill in the blanks of first century Jewish life for them? You might transition between the small groups' sharing by asking the next group if their understanding of the sect the previous group explained has added anything to their understanding of their own sect.

Authentic feedback

If you collect learners' worksheets at the end of the discussion, you may look over their notes and consider their comments during the discussion. If there were any learners who had a particularly hard time grappling with the historical material, you might consider whether they are motivated to look at the historical material or not. Some of the learners may have the lurking fear that is sometimes implicit in considering what a non-Christian thinks about theology or the history of the time of Christ. If the issue is not motivational, you may search through the works of Philo or Josephus for his interpretive work; perhaps there is some interpretive work that relates to their sub-question, and you could get them excited about looking into it for their final product. This would give you an opportunity to work more closely with the learner, and give them individual help.

On a more general scale, you may wish to observe whether learners are asking more historical questions after this lesson. If they are, be sure to give them the help and encouragement they need to scour the sources that are available for pertinent material. If they are not, try to think of questions you could ask them that would tie back to the lessons you have given them. If they are examining an interpretive concept in the Word, you may ask them to consider what other people thought about it. Are there any concepts which are unclear? Is there a debate to which we only have one side?

Figures 3.2.2.1 – 3.2.2.3 – First century Jewish Debate

These handouts give three groups of learners access to various selections from Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Wars of the Jews* which describe one man's perspective on the historical debate between Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes in first century Judaism. These selections are compared to selections from the New Covenant which portray the above sects, and in the case of the Essenes, seem to address similar theological issues to the ones Josephus focuses on in these selections. So you may review the context, the handout on the Pharisees uses the following selections from the Word: ACTS 23:6-9, MATT 15:1-9 and MATT 23:1-7. That handout on the Sadducees uses: MATT 22:23-32, ACTS 4:1-4 and ACTS 23:6-9. The handout on the Essenes references: MATT 5:31-33, MATT 12:1-6 and MATT 19:16-24. You may make photocopies of the worksheets, or if you have copies of *The Wars of the Jews* and *Antiquities of the Jews* you might find the passages in question and choose to have learners read directly from the books and the Word.

These worksheets may be found on pages 53 - 55, or in the folder "Section 3" on the accompanying CD under the filenames "Figure 3.2.2.1.pdf," "Figure 3.2.2.2.pdf," "Figure 3.2.2.3.pdf."

Figure 3.2.2.4 – Comparing First century Jewish Sects

This worksheet provides learners with a space to take notes on the three sects of the first century debate. Learners will take notes on the sect that they are assigned to for the first part of the activity, and then when they come together as a complete group they will take notes as the small groups explain their sects. The worksheet has a few key questions for learners to consider as they read or listen. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, write the key questions on a board for everyone to see, or present the key questions orally. In the latter two cases, make sure that learners have blank paper for taking notes.

This handout may be found on page 56, or in the folder "Section 3" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 3.2.2.4.pdf."

First century Jewish Debate – The Pharisees

From the Word

When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead.' When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) Then a great clamour arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, 'We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?'

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat.' He answered them, 'And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, "Honour your father and your mother," and, "Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die." But you say that whoever tells father or mother, "Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God", then that person need not honour the father. So, for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:
"This people honours me with their lips,
  but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
  teaching human precepts as doctrines." '

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honour at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have people call them rabbi.

From Josephus

But then as to the two other orders at first mentioned, the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe all to fate, and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does co-operate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, - but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment… Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public.

What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side.

And now the Pharisees joined themselves to her, to assist her in the government. These are a certain sect of the Jews that appear more religious than others, and seem to interpret the laws more accurately. Alexandra hearkened to them to an extraordinary degree, as being herself a woman of great piety towards God. But these Pharisees artfully insinuated themselves into her favor by little and little, and became themselves the real administrators of the public affairs: they banished and reduced whom they pleased; they bound and loosed [men] at their pleasure.

fig 3.2.2.1

First century Jewish Debate – The Sadducees

From the Word

The same day some Sadducees came to him, saying there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, 'Teacher, Moses said, "If a man dies childless, his brother shall marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother." Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died childless, leaving the widow to his brother. The second did the same, so also the third, down to the seventh. Last of all, the woman herself died. In the resurrection, then, whose wife of the seven will she be? For all of them had married her.'

Jesus answered them, 'You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is God not of the dead, but of the living.'

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand.

When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead.' When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) Then a great clamour arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, 'We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?'

From Josephus

But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades… but the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild, and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them.

What I would now explain is this, that the Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers. And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side.

At this time there were three sects among the Jews, who had different opinions concerning human actions; the one was called the sect of the Pharisees, another the sect of the Sadducees, and the other the sect of the Essens. Now for the Pharisees, they say that some actions, but not all, are the work of fate, and some of them are in our own power, and that they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate. But the sect of the Essens affirm, that fate governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination. And for the Sadducees, they take away fate, and say there is no such thing, and that the events of human affairs are not at its disposal; but they suppose that all our actions are in our own power, so that we are ourselves the causes of what is good, and receive what is evil from our own folly.

fig 3.2.2.2

First century Jewish Debate – The Essenes

From Josephus

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essens. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essens reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons' children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.

And truly, as for other things, they [Essens] do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators; only these two things are done among them at everyone's own free-will, which are to assist those that want it, and to show mercy; for they are permitted of their own accord to afford succor to such as deserve it, when they stand in need of it, and to bestow food on those that are in distress; but they cannot give any thing to their kindred without the curators. They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury for they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned.

Although there are no direct references to the Essenes in the Word, you may wish to compare these descriptions of the Essenes by Josephus to the following Biblical verses:

MATT 5:31-33
MATT 12:1-6
MATT 19:16-24

What they [the Essens] most of all honor, after God himself, is the name of their legislator [Moses], whom if any one blaspheme he is punished capitally. They also think it a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part. Accordingly, if ten of them be sitting together, no one of them will speak while the other nine are against it. They also avoid spitting in the midst of them, or on the right side. Moreover, they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labors on the seventh day; for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place, nor go to stool thereon. Nay, on other days they dig a small pit, a foot deep, with a paddle (which kind of hatchet is given them when they are first admitted among them); and covering themselves round with their garment, that they may not affront the Divine rays of light, they ease themselves into that pit, after which they put the earth that was dug out again into the pit; and even this they do only in the more lonely places, which they choose out for this purpose. And although this easement of the body be natural, yet it is a rule with them to wash themselves after it, as if it were a defilement to them.

Moreover, there is another order of Essens, who agree with the rest as to their way of living, and customs, and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage, as thinking that by not marrying they cut off the principal part of human life, which is the prospect of succession; nay, rather, that if all men should be of the same opinion, the whole race of mankind would fail. However, they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgations thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them. But they do not use to accompany with their wives when they are with child, as a demonstration that they do not many out of regard to pleasure, but for the sake of posterity. Now the women go into the baths with some of their garments on, as the men do with somewhat girded about them. And these are the customs of this order of Essens.

fig 3.2.2.3

Comparing First-century Jewish Sects

As you take notes on the sect you are reading about, consider how the authors phrase their theologies in terms of conflicts (for example: The Sadducees think this, but the Pharisees think that). What are these groups arguing about? When reading, try to make sense of the selections together to reconstruct the position of the sect in question, and see how it fits into the Word's portrayal. How do the theologies of these groups compare with Christ's message?

The Pharisees	*The Saducees*	*The Essenes*

fig 3.2.2.4

Additional Lesson Ideas

There are all sorts of places you could go with historical context. These lessons focus on a single figure, and due to the relative scarcity of first century sources who were familiar and concerned with Jewish life in the levant, comparison of multiple historical perspectives may continue to be difficult. Still, even where we do not have historians, something can be gained from theological documents. The comparison of Josephus' method of commentary on the Word to Philo's to Christ's could be engaging. If you wished to take it in another direction, you could look forward to later Jewish and Christian commentaries, drawing on Augustine, Origen, and Talmud. How has the Word been interpreted over time? Do these interpreters take the Word in directions we would not have expected?

Alternatively, you could examine the letter of Pliny the Younger to Trajan, giving it a close read and comparing it to what the Word says about the earliest churches. You could also adapt a whole course around a specific historical work or two if learners are interested. You could use a historical text as a lens through which to enter the Word and get a deeper perspective on the world which he entered.

Linking Lessons

The historical analysis could also be linked to any of the other tools. For a literary approach, you could compare a portion of the Word to ancient literature, examining them for their differences and similarities. For a philological approach, you could take a closer look at how specific words developed the complexity of their meaning over time, and look to the history for indications of how this revelation of new meaning affected the societies the Word influenced. Alternatively, you could look to word usage in texts contemporary to the Word and compare. An intertextual approach is almost a historical approach already, searching through the long years of the Word's composition to see the development of meaning throughout it—and this could be linked to examination of similar words or phrases in Ancient Near Eastern literature. The possibilities are numerous; check section seven for a list of resources that may help you brainstorm new ideas.

Then he said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.'
GENESIS 32:28

Reading for understanding

The narratives of the Word are not only sparse; they are stylistically different from any contemporary literature. At times the Word is only concerned with giving a simple history: from a genealogical progression to a list of Israelite Kings and one or two or of their deeds. When the Word follows a figure more closely, it often skips around in time, telling the stories in a meaningful, but not chronological, order. Often the Word will tell the same story more than once, emphasizing something different in each telling.

While the narratives of the Word are difficult for a novice, they are only the beginning. Hebrew poetry and the hymns of the New Covenant are also stylistically unlike anything a contemporary reader will be familiar with. They have little discernable rhythm, they do not employ end-rhyme, and they do not seem to have any consistent convention of phonological play. As the nuance of Hebrew poetry is often based on near-repetition, an unaccustomed reader may find it incomprehensible, and what is incomprehensible can be boring. In order to appreciate the subtleties of Hebrew poetry, readers must understand what to look for.

Different styles within the Word have different methods of approach. We cannot expect a learner to read an excerpt from Isaiah and understand its potential modern applications unless they understand who Isaiah was, how the prophets prophesied, and the double meanings or typologies inherent in the prophetic literature. While the Israelite prophets are sometimes looking forward to and speaking about the coming of Christ, this becomes more evident when we understand the meanings of the prophetic critique to its contemporary audience.

If readers understand how to approach the prophetic literature of the Old Covenant, they will be better prepared to approach and learn meaningful interpretations from the prophetic literature of John. Learners will also be better prepared to contemplate the significance of New Covenant interpretations of prophecy, and the application of this method of interpretation to their reading of all the Old Covenant prophets.

As learners proceed through their study of the Word, the techniques for making sense of the particular literary styles and conventions employed throughout may seem to be the most obvious and necessary of tools to with which to gain proficiency. A secular teacher would not, it is hoped, hand Shakespeare to a novice and send them home to read it without further instruction. How much more essential is it, then, that learners be given an initiation to the structure and conventions of a document two or more millennia separated from them in style and composition?

Overall objectives

As learners complete this section, they should:

- Gain a conscious familiarity with at least two styles of Biblical writing.
- Learn techniques for understanding content expressed in those styles.
- Experience the clarity that accompanies a familiarity with Biblical style.
- Be motivated to ask questions about style rather than meaning.

You may design lessons to address:

- Styles of Biblical writing not covered in the given lessons.
- Comparisons of different styles of writing within the Word.
- The varying intentions of different Biblical styles.
- Extra-Biblical styles and conventions from the same time period.
- Similarities and apparent differences between the Gospel accounts.

Procedure

In this section, learners will gain an initiation to Hebrew poetry and the prophetic literature. These particular styles have been chosen over the narratives of the Gospels or the dissertations of the Epistles because Christian congregations tend to have greater exposure to New Covenant material. Additionally, an understanding of Hebrew poetry supports an understanding of parts of the prophetic literature, and the content of both these styles are drawn upon heavily in the New Covenant.

As learners work through this section they will be asked to consider the difference between asking what a passage means and asking how to read a passage. Although many informal Bible study courses may not lend themselves to assigning homework, the clarity and benefit that is gained from the understanding of Biblical literary conventions can be reinforced if learners are prompted to read longer selections from the Word on their own. As they use the tools they have gained from these lessons to they read and understand their passion for reading the Word will be fostered.

In addition to gaining a more thorough comprehension of different styles in the Word, learners will be implicitly encouraged to read a smaller selection slowly by spending an entire lesson on two proverbs. Learners are encouraged to read for understanding, rather than trying to get through as much of the Word as they. As learners become accustomed to the varying styles of the Word, their reading will come more easily and they will be able to move more quickly: but this only comes with practice and understanding.

Possible extensions to this section will be discussed, including a lesson which compares an account which appears in all four of the Gospels, and ideas for teaching other styles than those covered in the lessons given in this section.

The art of Hebrew poetry

This lesson will introduce learners to some of the nuances of Hebrew poetry. As learners are exposed to the structural conventions of Hebrew poetry, they will be shown how the Word plays with this structure to accomplish different stylistic ends. Understanding the form of this poetry will build a framework with which learners can begin to understand and appreciate the content of numerous books within the Word: Psalms, Proverbs, the Song of Songs, as well as the poetry in numerous others interspersed throughout the Old Covenant.

Rationale

Hebrew poetry is difficult to understand, and if the reader is not aware of the stylistic conventions that said poetry employs they miss nuanced meanings that would otherwise be revealed by structural patterns that recur throughout the Word. Learners' independent confidence and interest in the Word will grow as they grapple with one of the more challenging styles of Biblical writing and learn to read it so that they understand it.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Gain conscious awareness of the diversity of styles within the Word.
- Familiarize themselves with some of the structural patterns of Hebrew poetry.
- Use their familiarity with Hebrew poetry to interpret examples of it.
- Discuss their interpretations together, considering their peers' alternatives.
- Have an increased interest in and appreciation for Hebrew poetry.

Tips

One of the most important components of this section is fostering confidence and interest in books of the Word which are often frustrating or confusing to novices. As important as it is for learners to connect their newfound familiarity of this style to their investigation of the essential question, you may find it more fruitful to foster an enthusiasm for exploring Hebrew proverbs and poems for their own sake.

As has been said, prompting learners to read selections of the material they are learning about in this lesson would be helpful in fostering this enthusiasm. When learners understand how to read Hebrew poetry to get at some of the nuance of its content, they will find reading it easier. Careful consideration of individual proverbs or stanzas will also be more fruitful and enjoyable than they have before. Thus, you may wish to consider prompting learners to read on their own, outside the course, and share their favorite proverb or poem that they come across at the next meeting.

Directions

Step 1: *What isn't Hebrew Poetry*
There are many styles within the Word. List a few, and then ask your group of learners what sort of things normally come to mind when they think of poetry. Does it rhyme? Does it use alliteration? Is there a rhythm? Make a list on a board or somewhere where everyone can see. When you have gone through the list, point out which of their ideas, if any, Hebrew poetry employs. Stress that it does not normally employ rhyme, alliteration or rhythm. Instead it employs unique structural patterns.

Step 2: *Patterns of Parallelism*
Introduce learners to the pattern of parallelism: two lines of poetry that echo one another, the second line taking the first line further, adding nuance and specificity to the description of the line that came before. Pass out the first worksheet [fig 4.1.2.1] and go over the example at the top of the worksheet as a group. Then, have learners complete the "fill in the blank" section below it on their own, or in small groups. When they are done, have learners come together and take volunteers to share some of their examples. With each volunteer, discuss how their word choice added nuanced and specific description to the simple action described in the first line.

Step 3: *Subtleties of Number Games*
Introduce learners to the number games of Hebrew poetry by going over the example on the worksheet [fig 4.1.2.1] together. As a group, answer and discuss the questions listed below the example. Then have learners complete the final "fill in the blank" section of the worksheet. As with the activity on parallelism, ask for volunteers and discuss their choices in light of the questions posed for the example.

Step 4: *Reading Hebrew Poetry*
Inform the learners that they will now be looking at examples of Hebrew poetry from the book of Proverbs. Break learners up into small groups; learners can work individually if you prefer. Pass out the second worksheet [fig 4.1.2.2] and go over the directions. Give learners time complete the activity and discuss the proverbs together.

Step 5: *Discussing Interpretations*
Have learners come back together, and have groups share the patterns of parallelism that they found. Discuss their interpretation of these patterns as a group, and see if any of the learners have differing interpretations. Do the same for learners' analyses of the second proverb and its play with numbers. Engage learners in conversation with each other on the various interpretations one could apply to the proverbs. As learners discuss, be sure to prompt them for explanations of their interpretations. Prompt them to explain their interpretation from the consideration of word choice (as in parallelism) and a close analysis of the difference between the description given in the "Three things are…" and "four I do not…" lines of the second proverb. Prompt learners to consider where in the Word they can find Hebrew poetry. Point out that it is not just confined to the Old Covenant, but is interspersed throughout. Close with: ROM 12:18-22 and PROV 25:21-22. Hebrew poetry is relevant to the New Covenant.

Key observations

Pay close attention to learners' explanations of the proverbs that they have read [fig 4.1.2.2], both while they are working in small groups and while they are sharing with everyone together. Have they applied the patterns they learned in the first activities [fig 4.1.2.1]? Does their explanation of the proverbs employ a close reading of the differentiated echo between parallel lines? Have they grasped the concept of the "odd line out" in the number game proverb (i.e., one of the examples in the second proverb the author "does not understand," but is not necessarily "wonderful").

If they have grasped these concepts, can they apply them to a nuanced interpretation of the proverb in question? Are there different ideas among your learners about which example is the "odd line out"? Are learners engaged in fruitful discussion of their differing interpretations? Are learners respectful of differing interpretations? You may wish to ask learners to consider whether there is necessarily one and only one correct interpretation of the proverbs.

Authentic feedback

As learners complete the activities of the first worksheet [fig 4.1.2.1], be sure that they are making word choices that echo and add nuance to the first line. You don't want them to do fill in the blank with something like: "She tripped, she __ran__." If they are grasping the concepts, they will be more likely to make word choices that could either continue the action of "she tripped," with words like "fell," "toppled," or "hit the ground," or words that truly echo the first line like, "stumbled," "tumbled," "pitched," or "plunged." If learners are not making choices that reflect a good understanding of parallelism, you might find ways to suggest better words from the words they have chosen. If a learner has chosen "ran," as in the first example given, ask them what it would look like if someone tripped and then ran. How would they run? Is there a better word than "ran" to describe the sort of stumbling movement that would happen?

In the second activity, you are looking for learners to pick up on a nuanced understanding of the number games. Do their choices for filling in the blanks on the first two lines reflect categories that work with their choices on the four subsequent lines? Are their choices for the first two lines contradictory, like "Three __things__ are __wonderful__, four __are terrible__"? Are they overly simplistic, like "Three __things__ are __good__, four __I really like__"? In this activity, you can help learners understand the number games even if they choose simplistic or somewhat contradictory choices for the first two lines. If a learner chooses "wonderful" and "terrible," as in the first example, ask them what sort of things are both wonderful and terrible? What sort of things are terrible but not wonderful? If they choose "good" and "I really like" ask them what sort of things they like that aren't necessarily good.

Figure 4.1.2.1 – Parallelism and Number Games

This worksheet introduces learners to the concepts of parallelism and number games with non-Biblical examples. Learners are prompted to consider some key questions pertinent to each of the structural styles, and then to try their hand at employing those styles. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, write the examples and key questions on a board for everyone to see, or read them aloud. If you do not use the worksheets, be sure to give the prompts for the "fill in the blank" activities to the learners, and provide them with blank paper.

This worksheet may be found on page 65, or in the folder "Section 4" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 4.1.2.1.pdf."

Figure 4.1.2.2 – Reading Hebrew Poetry

This worksheet prompts learners to read two proverbs. Learners read the first proverb, PROV 4:1-9, looking for parallelism. Learners read the second proverb, PROV 30:18-19, looking for the nuanced number games. In both cases, learners are given space to answer, brainstorm and reflect on several key questions. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, or have learners read the proverbs directly from their copies of the Word. If you do not use the worksheets be sure to write the key questions on a board that everyone can see, or present them orally. If you do not provide learners with copies of the worksheet, make sure they have blank paper to write notes and responses to the questions.

This worksheet may be found on page 66, or in the folder "Section 4" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 4.1.2.2.pdf."

Parallelism and Number Games

Hebrew writers can pull of subtle tricks of language through *parallelism*. Consider the following pairing:

She tripped,
she flew!

These two lines use extremely simple language, and they echo one another. The second line repeats what the first line said with a subtle differene in wording.

If you just read the first line, would you have the same impression of what happened? If you read the second line without reading the first, would it mean the same thing? What do the two lines mean together, that neither could convey on its own?

How would the image change if the last word was "rolled" instead of "flew"? What other words could you use to altering the meaning? Fill in the blank lines below with one word each, using similar tricks of parallelism:

She tripped,	The bird sang,	He danced,
she _____	it _____	he _____

Hebrew poets also like to play games with numbers. Considering the following:

Three foods are delicious,
four you need to survive:
a hot stack of pancakes,
a warm bowl of soup,
a fresh baked loaf of bread,
and liver and onions with cabbage.

How many foods are listed? How many does the poem say are delicious? How many do you need to survive? How many foods do you need to survive that aren't necessarily delicious? Which food do you think it is? What do you think the author is trying to say by including this food in a list with delicious foods?

Try and write your own poem with number games. Fill in the blanks:

Three _____ are _____,
four _____:
_____,
_____,
_____,
_____.

---

fig 4.1.2.1

In Proverbs, Wisdom is personified. She is with the Lord from the beginning. Keeping this context in mind, read the following excerpt. Pick out two or three examples of *parallelism*, and underline them. In the box to the right, answer:

- How do you know that these lines echo each other?
- How are the two lines different?
- What does the language of the second line add to the first line?

Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight; for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender, and my mother's favorite, he taught me, and said to me, 'Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get Wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. The beginning of Wisdom is this: Get Wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.'	**Example 1:** **Example 2:** **Example 3:**

Read and consider the following poem, which uses a number game. In the box to the right answer the following:

- What line describes all of the examples? What line describes all but one?
- What is different about the description of the first line and the second line?
- Which example do you think fits only the second line's description?
- Why do you think the examples are "too wonderful" to the author?
- What is it about the examples that you think he "does not understand"?

Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a girl.	

fig 4.1.2.2

Calling the prophets

In this lesson, learners will be introduced to some of the key components of prophetic literature by comparing two of the latter prophets to Moses. By comparing and contrasting different elements of the prophetic career from the Old Covenant, learners will gain a deeper understanding of a style of Biblical writing which is difficult for novices to read. In addition, learners will be exposed to the immediate context of the prophets' careers, and prompted to consider what this context adds to their understanding of the prophets' words. This understanding will be supplemented by their brief exposure to the application of Old Covenant prophecy to Christ, a theme which will be taken up again in the next section.

Rationale

Not only are prophetic narratives some of the most difficult in the Old Covenant for novices to understand, they often explain a great deal about the relationship between Christ and the believer. Many of the prophets foretold the coming of Christ, as can be seen in the quotations of Isaiah and Hosea in the Gospels. It is not only the prophets who are quoted in the New Covenant who foretold him. The apocalypse of Daniel and visions of Ezekiel have lush imagery that is echoed in the Revelation of John, and both speak of figures that are "like a Son of Man." By gaining the tools necessary to read prophetic literature for understanding, learners will be better equipped to understand the relationship between Christ and the believer throughout the Word.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Gain an awareness of the presence of prophetic quotation in the New Covenant.
- Understand three key components of most prophetic literature:
    - The impact of the *Divine Presence*.
    - The response to God's *Call to Prophecy*.
    - The content of the *Prophetic Message*.
- Compare these components between Moses and two latter prophets.

Tips

This lesson will act an important transition between the previous lesson and the next section. Learners will apply their understanding of Hebrew poetry to the latter prophets considered here, and the following section will engage learners in a lesson that prompts them to consider how New Covenant authors interpret Old Covenant prophets. Be sure to make these connections explicit, reminding learners that Hebrew poetry shows up outside of the books that are devoted to it solely, and previewing the application of this lesson to their intertextual analysis of the following section.

Directions

Step 1: *What is a Prophet?*
Begin by reading MATT 3:3 and asking your learners what they think a prophet is. Brainstorm their ideas on a board for everyone to see. If they do not volunteer that a prophet speaks about what is happening in their own time, ask them about Moses. Did he prophecy only about things that were to come much later, or did he prophecy about his own time? Ask learners to consider whether understanding the prophets' contemporary messages might help them understand their long-term application.

Step 2: *Introducing the Prophets*
Introduce the learners to Ezekiel and Daniel. Give them a brief context on these prophets: when they lived, and the political situations they prophesied to. Tell learners that they will be considering these prophets in light of this context.

Step 3: *Key Components*
Like Biblical poetry, prophetic literature has a sometimes predictable structure. Most of the prophetic works have the following key components: an experience of the *Divine Presence*, a *Call to Prophecy*, and the *Prophetic Message* itself. Discuss the key components, and inform learners that they will be reading examples of these key components from the prophetic careers of Moses, Ezekiel and Daniel.

Step 4: *Reading the Prophets*
Break learners up into two (or more) groups. Pass out the handouts. Half of the groups will consider Ezekiel [fig 4.2.2.1], and half of them will consider Daniel [fig 4.2.2.2]. Make sure each group has at least one Bible. Have learners assign different roles for each group member. One group member will read the passages aloud, one will take notes for the group and one or more of the group members can be given specific questions to consider carefully for each of the passages. Then, have learners complete the activity for the key components. Ensure that everyone is participating in the discussions, and help groups who are having difficulties.

Step 5: *Identifying Key Components*
When learners have considered the passages for the key components given on their handouts, prompt the groups to consider the final activity. Have the learners keep their roles as they move through the chapter(s), and make sure they are keeping track of which verses they think correspond to each of the key components.

Step 6: *Comparing Categorization*
Bring learners back together, and begin discussion by going through the first questions on the handout for Ezekiel, and then for Daniel. Engage the groups in discussion about the similarities and differences between these latter prophets and Moses, and between each other. Then discuss the groups' categorization of the key components. Do the groups agree with each other? Why or why not? How has learning to read the prophets helped them discover the meaning of these passages for themselves? Do they think they could read other prophets more easily now?

Key observations

As learners work in their small groups, eavesdrop on their conversations and see if they are having trouble answering any of the questions about the key components. Do learners recognize certain elements of the text that set each key component apart? Do they recognize the conventions of fearing the divine presence? The overawing imagery? Do they recognize the reluctance, or other emotional reactions, to the calling God gives these prophets? Do they recognize the often repeated format: "Thus says the LORD… " when the prophetic message is being proclaimed?

If learners recognize these major distinctions between key components and the textual clues set them apart in the selections they are given, do they apply these distinctions in their attempt to select which verses correspond to which components in the chapters they are reading without explicit guidance?

Look out for learners who may be taking a passive role in the groups. Ask them about the reading. Sometimes learners who are quiet are still engaged in the activity. If a learner seems to be left out, prompt them to answer one of the questions about the passage their group is considering and help them work through it.

Authentic feedback

If learners are not getting the distinctions between the different key components, ask them what is different about the language, setting and format of the passage for one of the given key components and another. Is there something similar between Moses' and Ezekiel's *Divine Presence* that is different from Moses' and Ezekiel's *Call to Prophecy*? How would they characterize that difference?

As learners understand some of the similarities between the key components, what sets a *Divine Presence* component apart from a *Call to Prophecy* component, try to tease out some of the differences between the latter prophet they are considering and Moses. Both Moses and Ezekiel see the image of smoke and fire, but Ezekiel sees a divine chariot in overwhelming detail. In Ezekiel, the cherubim are present and in Moses' passages they are not. Does the narrator follow Moses up Mount Sinai? In Ezekiel, are we getting a peek beyond the veil of smoke?

If learners are very successful at reading the chapter and separating the key components for themselves, prompt them to consider the differences between Ezekiel and Daniel as they did between the latter prophets and Moses. Are there things that the latter prophets have in common that are different from the narratives of Moses? What could account for these differences? You may also point out the Hebrew poetry in the latter prophetic messages, and ask learners if they see any examples of parallelism. Be sure to leave time for discussion of the difference between understanding to read the prophets, and just understanding "what they mean."

Figure 4.2.2.1 and Figure 4.2.2.2 – Comparing Prophets

These handouts give learners a brief context for Moses' prophetic career, and one of the latter prophets. The first handout deals with Ezekiel [fig 4.2.2.1], and the second deals with Daniel [4.2.2.2]. After presenting the learners with a context, the handouts prompt learners to compare how three key components are treated with the prophets under consideration.

Both handouts prompt learners to consider Moses by looking at several passages from Exodus. For an example of the *Divine Presence*, learners are prompted to read EXO 3:1-6 and 19:16-20. For an example of the *Call to Prophecy*, learners are prompted to read EXO 4:10-17 and 34:29-35. For an example of the *Prophetic Message*, learners are prompted to read EXO 3:16-21 and 20:1-26.

The first handout [fig 4.2.2.1] prompts learners to consider Ezekiel's vision of the *Divine Presence* by reading EZE 1, his response to the *Call to Prophecy* by reading EZE 2-3:15 and his *Prophetic Message* by reading EZE 7.

The second handout [fig 4.2.2.2] prompts learners to consider Daniel's vision of the *Divine Presence* by reading DAN 8:15-18, his response to the *Call to Prophecy* by reading DAN 8:27 and his *Prophetic Message* by reading DAN 8:1-14 and 8:19-26.

For each of these key components, learners are prompted to answer and reflect on three questions.

Finally, both handouts prompt learners to read a chapter from a different prophetic book than the one they have been considering, and attempt to pick out which verses correspond to the key components. The first handout [fig 4.2.2.1] prompts learners to switch from Ezekiel to Daniel by reading chapter 10 of Daniel. The second handout [fig 4.2.2.2] prompts learners to switch from Daniel to Ezekiel by reading chapters 10 and 11 of Ezekiel.

You may make photocopies of these handouts, or write the passages and questions under consideration on a board for everyone to see. You could present the information from these handouts orally but there is a lot of information for learners to keep track of, so you should prompt them to write it down. Learners may use blank paper or the back of their handout to take notes.

These worksheets may be found on pages 71 and 72, or in the folder "Section 4" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 4.2.2.1.pdf," and "Figure 4.2.2.2.pdf."

Comparing the Prophets – Ezekiel and Moses

A Context for Prophecy

Moses, the first prophet, prophesied to an Egyptian Pharaoh while his people were enslaved. His message was directed at the situation Israelites faced in a foreign land. Later, Moses also gave the Law to the Israelite people.

Ezekiel also prophesied about conflict between Jews and foreign peoples. Ezekiel lived in Judea, and later in exile in Babylon. His message was directed at Israelites and Judeans, foretelling the destruction at the hands of the Babylonian Empire.

In light of this context, consider the key components and answer the questions:

Key Component: Divine Presence

Each of the prophets sees and reacts to the divine presence differently. Compare the following passages:

Moses: EXO 3:1-6, 19:16-20 **Ezekiel:** EZE 1

- How does the divine presence affect Moses? How does it affect Ezekiel?
- What might account for the differences and similarities in their reactions?
- How can you tell that this is a depiction of the divine presence?

Key Component: Call to Prophecy

Each of the prophets sees and responds to God's call differently. Compare the following passages:

Moses: EXO 4:10-17, 34:29-35 **Ezekiel:** EZE 2-3:15

- How does Moses respond to the call? How does Ezekiel respond?
- What might account for the differences and similarities in their responses?
- How can you tell that this a depiction of God calling the prophet to his task?

Key Component: Prophetic Message

Each of the prophets is called to proclaim a different message to their people. Compare the following passages:

Moses: EXO 3:16-21, 20:1-26 **Ezekiel:** EZE 7

- What is Moses' message? What is Ezekiel's message?
- What might account for the differences and similarities in their messages?
- How can you tell that this is the message God wants the prophets to speak?

Identifying the Components

See if you can pick out the key components from another prophetic book. Read chapter 10 of Daniel, and write which verses you think correspond to the different components of prophecy listed above.

Comparing the Prophets – Daniel and Moses

A Context for Prophecy

Moses, the first prophet, prophesied to an Egyptian Pharaoh while his people were enslaved. His message was directed at the situation Israelites faced in a foreign land. Later, Moses also gave the Law to the Israelite people.

Daniel also prophesied about conflict between Jews and foreign peoples. Daniel lived in Babylon, in exile from Judea. His message was directed at the future persecution of Jews by foreign Empires.

In light of this context, consider the key components and answer the questions:

Key Component: Divine Presence

Each of the prophets sees and reacts to the divine presence differently. Compare the following passages:

Moses: EXO 3:1-6, 19:16-20 **Daniel:** DAN 8:15-18

- How does the divine presence affect Moses? How does it affect Daniel?
- What are the similarities in their reactions? The differences?
- What might account for the differences in their reactions?

Key Component: Call to Prophecy

Each of the prophets sees and responds to God's call differently. Compare the following passages:

Moses: EXO 4:10-17, 34:29-35 **Daniel:** DAN 8:27

- How does Moses respond to the call? How does Daniel respond?
- What are the similarities in their responses? The differences?
- What might account for the differences in their responses?

Key Component: Prophetic Message

Each of the prophets is called to proclaim a different message to their people. Compare the following passages:

Moses: EXO 3:16-21, 20:1-26 **Daniel:** DAN 8:1-14, 8:19-26

- What is Moses' message? What does Daniel see? What does it mean?
- What are the similarities in their messages? The differences?
- What might account for the differences in their messages?

Identifying the Components

See if you can pick out the key components from another prophetic book. Read chapters 10 and 11 of Ezekiel, and write which verses you think correspond to the different components of prophecy listed above.

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fig 4.2.2.2

Additional Lesson Ideas

There are all sorts of lessons you could design to explore different literary styles throughout the Word. The narratives of the Gospels have their own style, with noteworthy variation between each of them. A close examination of the Gospel accounts could take the form of a comparison of style, or an attempt to construct a timeline of the events of the life of Christ by a close consideration of the chronologies of each of the Gospels. You could also design a lesson to explore the style of Jesus' parables in the New Covenant, or the theological dissertation style of the Epistles. For more exploration of the Old Covenant, the narrative style of Genesis and the former prophets could be compared and contrasted, or an introduction to the style of the Law could be devised.

Alternatively, you could design extensions to the lessons on the styles given above. Proverbs is only one book of Hebrew poetry. Learners could take a close look at Psalms, or the Song of Songs. Learners could compare the Song of Miriam and the Song of Deborah with later Hebrew songs. Similarly, learners could explore the key components of prophecy through the book of Judges. Are there recurring themes in the book of Judges that make sense for its time and place? How do the prophecies of the Judges lead up to Samuel, Saul and David?

Linking Lessons

Linking a literary analysis to other forms of analysis is easy and fruitful. A philological analysis could employ a Hebrew lexicon to look at word-play in the Genesis narratives, typology in the prophetic literature, and subtleties of connotation in Hebrew poetry. Any of these activities could be adapted to a look at the New Covenant in Greek.

A historical analysis could be pared with a literary analysis by considering the style of ancient literature or poetry to Biblical styles. Learners could be prompted to consider whether the stories of King David could properly be called an epic, and what, if anything, Hebrew poetry and Christian hymns owe to their contemporary styles of songs and writings.

It is hard to do a literary analysis *without* it becoming intertextual. Whether it is a comparison of prophets written several centuries apart to comparisons of different forms of Hebrew poetry, literary analysis almost always looks at and compares different books of the Word. However, you could design lessons to take an intertextual literary analysis in another direction. Are there recurring themes throughout the Word that transcend different styles? What does the Word say about the suffering servant? About the nature of God? About the relationship between God and Israel? There are countless themes that could be explored by examining their portrayal in different styles used throughout the Word.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets;
I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.
MATTHEW 5:17

An intertextual approach

Ultimately, all approaches to the Word must become intertextual approaches. There is no section of the Word that does rely on, add nuance to, or carry another section further. When Christ and the Apostles talk about marriage, they are talking about Scriptural marriage, laden with all the connotations and cultural influences of the Old Covenant. Sin, the law, anointing, prophecy, and every theme within the Word are developed over thousands of pages, and an understanding of each of these pages adds nuance and complexity to our understanding of any other.

Sometimes, this reliance is made explicit: one book of the Word will quote or refer to another. While most novices are aware of this fact on some level, they may not be aware of all its implications. Like any good teacher, when the Word interprets or applies himself to new situations he is not just telling his readers what he meant by the earlier passage; he is giving us cues on how to do good interpretation of the passages he does not directly interpret for us.

This section has been saved for the end of the course in order to give learners the tools they need to make sense of various passages in the Word. They will now be asked to rely on these tools to do learn higher order interpretation of concepts and themes that recur throughout the Word. Still, it is useful to remember and take this moment to remind learners, they have actually been engaging in some level of intertextual analysis throughout the course.

In the first section, learners generated a sub-question to guide their independent work by considering verses from across the New Covenant. In the second section, different groups examined the use of a single word from various writing styles in the Old Covenant and the New. In the third section, learners compared the writings of Josephus to different writings within the New Covenant. In the fourth section, learners compared two latter prophets with each other, the latter prophets with Moses.

Now, learners will be looking to the Word himself for guidance on how to make sense of the application of one text to another. The decisions implicit in the curriculum's design to consider certain texts next to one another will be made explicit, and learners will be taught how to search out these connections for themselves. When learners feel empowered to search out the meaning of the Word without always requiring the assistance outside their copy of the Word, their interest and passion for him will be fostered. If the course is a success, the questions that learners pose to experts will also improve. Rather than asking for the meaning of a passage, learners will ask for the tools they needs to read it.

Overall objectives

As learners complete this section, they should:

- Gain a conscious awareness that the Word interprets himself.
- Know some explicit cues that an interpretation is being presented.
- Understand where to find citations when they recognize said cues.
- Consider the techniques for interpretation presented in the Word.
- Apply these techniques to their own searches for meaning in the Word.

You may design lessons to address:

- Less obvious cues than those considered in the following lessons, like:
    - References to Wisdom literature.
    - Retellings of previous stories like the creation in JOB and JOHN.
    - Recurrence of important words or phrases like "Son of Man."
- Specific recurring themes that are of interest to your learners.
- Nuanced and sweeping intertextual concepts, like that of a "new Adam."

Procedure

In this section, learners will begin by reading several passages in the Word that make direct reference to earlier figures or use direct quotation of earlier passages. Learners will consider the editorial cues (like placing a passage in quotes) and textual cues (like the phrase "You have heard that it was said…") that should alert them to a citation to other Scripture. Learners will then investigate several of these references, drawing on their understanding of the tools from sections two through four. They will then discuss the importance of understanding the cited Scripture to understanding the later Scripture that made reference to it.

After they have been exposed to the basics of an intertextual approach, learners will be prompted to consider *how* the Word interprets himself. Does the New Covenant take old passages and cast them in a new light? If so, is something about the meaning of the passage in the Old Covenant maintained? What? Is there a pattern or patterns to how the Scripture's methods of interpretation? Learners will be prompted to consider how they may learn to interpret the Word from the Word himself.

Additional lesson ideas will then be discussed, with a particular emphasis on incorporating an intertextual approach explicitly to all of the sections, especially when the curriculum is being used for a second time on the same group of learners. By making the intertextual approach explicit throughout the course in subsequent uses, the fifth section may continuously be used as a jumping-off point for deeper and more nuanced intertextual analysis. Repeated cycles will then loop around on themselves, creating a rhythm for continued use that carries learners higher with each journey through the curriculum.

Scripture citing Scripture

In this lesson, learners will be made consciously aware of the cues in a text that can indicate the Scripture is citing Scripture. Learners will examine a passage of the Word which makes reference to another part of the Word with one of these cues. This lesson has been designed to examine two of Christ's references to Old Covenant prophets, so that learners may use the tools they acquired in the last lesson of section four to analyze the prophetic reference. They will read the New Covenant passage and the prophetic literature, and be prompted to consider how an understanding of the Scripture being cited adds to their understanding of the initial passage.

Rationale

As learners may or may not be aware, their entire course has dealt with the tools they have been learning through an intertextual approach. It is time to make the intertextuality of the Word more conscious. As learners hone their proficiency with the tools this curriculum has taught them, it will be advantageous for them to consider how they can read across the Word in order to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts within. The first step of this process will be recognizing some of the cues that the Scripture is citing Scripture, learning what to do when they recognize those cues, and having a demonstration of the depth of understanding that an intertextual approach contributes to.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Gain conscious awareness of the intertextuality of the Word.
- Familiarize themselves with some cues that the Scripture is citing Scripture.
- Discover how to find the source of the citations when they recognize them.
- Use their understanding of prophetic literature to analyze a citation.
- Discuss the importance of an intertextual analysis to their understanding.

Tips

As learners proceed through this lesson, they will have to rely on the tools they have acquired in previous sections. Although they may do this without prompting, this will lesson will be an essential opportunity for you to tie the course together. Foster learners' use of the other tools in their analyses of both the initial passage, the cited passage, and the initial passage in light of the cited passage.

A great deal of this lesson will be done in small groups, so this will also provide you with an opportunity to work with individuals who are having trouble with any of the previously learned tools by helping them apply said tool to their intertextual analysis.

Directions

Step 1: *Awareness of Intertextual Analysis*
Begin by asking learners about the different situations during the course when they have looked at different books within the Word to understand a concept. Brainstorm with learners on a board where everyone can see some of the activities they have done together. Then, go through some of the examples and ask learners if looking at different books in the Word helped them to understand the concepts they examined.

Step 2: *When Scripture cites Scripture*
If an intertextual analysis has helped learners to understand the concepts, how can they know when and where to look in the Scripture to find the passages that will help to illuminate their present study? Are there cues in the formatting and style of the Scripture that indicate a reference to earlier figures or quotations? If learners volunteer the answers (the use of quotation marks, or a phrase like "You have heard it has been said… "), ask them to explain how they know that what follows will be a quotation. Engage learners in a brief discussion of these two conventions.

Step 3: *Where do you Look?*
Once learners have identified a citation of Scripture, where would they look for the relevant passage? Here, it will be helpful if the Bibles that your learners are working with have footnotes that reference book, chapter and verse for quotations. If they do, go over how to read the footnotes. If they do not, go over the list of books that most copies of the Word have before Genesis. If there is a book named after the figure in question, you can look there. Alternatively, you could prompt learners to find the reference for themselves using a searchable version of the Word online (see the Appendix in section seven for possibilities), or a hard copy of a concordance.

Step 4: *Gaining Context*
Break learners up into several groups, and explain that they will be examining a passage of Scripture that cites earlier Scripture. Pass out the worksheet [fig 5.1.2.1], and prompt groups with their initial verses. This lesson is designed for the examination of two initial passages, one of which cites Isaiah (MARK 1:1-7), the other which cites Jonah (MATT 12:38-41). Give half the learners the passages citing Isaiah, and half the passage citing Jonah. Have them begin to answer the questions on the worksheets, giving them assistance as needed. Prompt learners to read outside the direct quotation from Isaiah, and to read the full book of Jonah. Give the groups a brief context for the prophets. Isaiah is preaching to Judea before the Assyrian invasion and Jonah is preaching to the Assyrians, who were enemies of Israel. Prompt them to look for the three key components they learned about in the last lesson. The learners with the passage from Isaiah may require help finding the *Divine Presence* and *Call to Prophecy* (ISA 6).

Step 5: *Discussing Intertextual Context*
When learners have completed the questions and had fruitful discussion in their small groups, bring everyone together for a discussion of the final question.

Key observations

As learners work in their small groups, be attentive to their use of the other three tools in their analyses of both passages from Scripture. Take particular note of their ability to pick out the three key components of the prophets in order to get a handle on the character of the prophet they are considering. Take note of which learners are using which tools most readily, and which learners immediately recognize the utility of these tools in the current context.

You should also look for groups or individual learners who are stuck. Are they having trouble finding the *Divine Presence* and *Call to Prophecy* components in Isaiah? Or even in Jonah? Are they having trouble making sense of the character of Jonah? Some learners may find it easy to understand what is going on in the initial and cited passages, but may have trouble relating their understanding of the one to the other.

Authentic feedback

If learners are having trouble applying their understanding of the key components of prophetic literature to their analysis of the present material, it may be beneficial to review those components together as a full group, and then resume small group work. If individual learners are having trouble with it, encourage their peers to help them, or work with them yourself. You might pick out an individual passage from the cited selection and ask them which of the three components they think it is a part of. Ask them what they think the message means in light of the context you have given them.

If learners have a good handle on the basics of this lesson, encourage them to use more of their tools in their analyses of both passages. If there is an important word in the quotation that is used more often in the prophetic call, ask them for a philological analysis of the word. If the analysis of the word in the cited context reveals something unusual, ask them to consider what that means for its use in the initial passage.

If your learners have a fair grasp of the basics of Biblical history, you might ask them whether the historical context of the Babylonian Exile or the impending Assyrian invasion has something in common with the Roman occupation. Does this similarity add to the link between the initial and cited passages?

When the prophets in the cited passages speak their prophecy, do they speak it in Biblical poetry? If so, do the learners notice any important parallelisms? Or more overarching, do the learners notice a recurring theme between the initial and cited passages? Does a theme in one of the passages add to their understanding the theme in the other? Ask questions of your learners to tease out their use of the other tools.

Figure 5.1.2.1 – Adding a Scriptural Context

This worksheet prompts learners to answer a few basic questions about the initial and cited passages that they will be considering for this lesson. As it does not provide the reference for the verses on the worksheet, this lesson can be modified very easily to use different passages within the Word. After learners have answered the basic questions, they are prompted to reread the initial passage, read the cited passage and reflect on a few key questions. Finally, learners are asked an open-ended question meant to prompt discussion about the relationship between the initial and cited passages. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, write the questions on a board for everyone to see, or present them orally. If you do not make photocopies of the worksheet, make sure learners have blank paper for note taking.

This worksheet may be found on page 81, or in the folder "Section 5" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 5.1.2.1.pdf."

Adding a Scriptural Context

Write the book, chapter and verse your group is considering: _____

Read the passage under consideration. What verse(s) contain a reference to earlier Scripture or a figure from earlier Scripture?

_____

How do you know?

_____

What passage(s) or book(s) are cited?

_____

Reread the passage under consideration, and then read the cited passage(s) or book(s). For each, answer the following questions:

- What is going on in the selection? What is the context?
- Are there any discussions? Between who? What is being said?

Initial Passage:	**Cited Passage:**

What does an understanding of the cited passage add to your understanding of the initial passage?

---

fig 5.1.2.1

The Word's method of interpretation

In this lesson, learners will take a closer look at several passages in the Gospel of Matthew that directly quote from the prophecies of Isaiah. Learners will begin by reviewing Isaiah. Then, learners will be prompted to put themselves in the shoes of an eighth century (BC) Jew. They will read the quoted passages from Isaiah and try to consider how a contemporary of Isaiah would interpret them. They will compare this interpretation to an interpretation based off its quotation, with an eye to key questions that will give learners clues to the Gospel's interpretation methods.

Rationale

Now that learners have acquired the basic tools for recognizing cues that a passage is being cited or refers to an earlier passage in Scripture, they will be asked to consider how the Word interprets himself. As they are exposed to the Word's own methods of interpretation, they will be made aware of the Word's ability to teach them how to read for understanding. Learners will be exposed to the idea that the Word can teach them even when they don't have the guidance of an outside expert, fostering their enthusiasm for exploration and reading on their own.

Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- Gain an increased familiarity with the prophet Isaiah.
- Practice putting themselves in the shoes of the prophet's contemporaries.
- Compare the Word's method of interpretation to human methods.
- Apply their understanding of the other three tools to nuance their comparison.
- See how the Word himself can model how to read for understanding.

Tips

A good understanding of Isaiah and the context of the passages from Matthew under consideration will be crucial to learners' ability to grasp the concepts being modeled in this lesson. In order to assist learners to the best of your ability, you may wish to read through all of Isaiah, and certainly review the passages from the Gospel of Matthew that will be quoted. Additionally, if you are unfamiliar with the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy, you should research it before you run this lesson. Some study Bibles will have a good historical context "crash course" before each book, and a thorough reading of such an introduction should be sufficient for this lesson.

Don't let learners get stuck. If they don't have enough of a grasp on Isaiah to do the activities in this lesson right, do not be afraid to change the lesson into a close reading of the prophet. Postpone this lesson's activities until learners are ready for them.

Directions

Step 1: *A New Teacher*
Begin by telling learners that they will be meeting a new teacher in this lesson. This teacher understands how to read the Word for understanding better than anyone, is always accessible and will model his methods for you if you know how to listen. This teacher is the Word himself. Ask learners to consider the quotation and references they examined in the last lesson. The Word is quoting himself, and applying the passages from older books to new situations. If we examine how he does this, we will understand how to interpret the Word ourselves.

Step 2: *Remembering Isaiah*
In order to understand how the Word interprets himself, we will have to have a good grasp on the passages he is interpreting. Review the figure of Isaiah from the last lesson. What do learners remember about him? Where was his *Divine Presence* and *Call to Prophecy* component? Have learners read these sections aloud, and engage them in a discussion about the personal character of Isaiah as compared to that of Ezekiel, Daniel and Moses. If necessary, you may review their *Divine Presence* and *Call to Prophecy* components. Next, introduce learners to Isaiah's historical context.

Step 3: *Putting on Old Shoes*
Break learners up into groups, pass out the worksheet [fig 5.2.2.1] and inform learners that they will be taking on the role of eighth century (BC) Jews living in the time of Isaiah. You may do this in a number of ways. You might assign half the groups to the perspective of eighth century Jews and half to the perspective of the New Covenant. Alternatively, you might assign half the learners in each group to one role, and half to the other. If you don't like dividing the learners this way, you can prompt each learner to consider both perspectives in turn. Have them go through the passages, considering these alternate perspectives.

Step 4: *Comparing Methods of Interpretation*
If you have divided learners up, bring them back together (either in their groups, or everyone together) and have learners share their interpretations based on the perspectives they adopted. If learners have each considered the different perspectives, set aside time for them to discuss the difference between these perspectives in groups. Then, give learners time to write their summary based on the last activity on the worksheet [fig 5.2.2.1] in their groups.

Step 5: *Characterizing the Word's Method*
Bring everyone together again, and have groups share their summaries. Discuss similarities and differences that may come up among the summaries, and prompt learners to explain what clues they found in the passages that lead them to summarize the differences as they did. Engage the learners in a discussion of the final question on the worksheet [fig 5.2.2.1]. Does the method of interpretation that the Word models supersede the human method? Does it build upon it? Leave learners with a prompt: consider how else they might learn to read the Word from the Word himself.

Key observations

Keep a close eye on learners' understanding of Isaiah. Are they bringing their awareness of the contemporary threats to Israel and Judea into account when they attempt to interpret the passages from an eighth century Jewish perspective? Do they come up with vague ideas about the savior figure foretold in the book of Isaiah, or do they specify that Isaiah probably expects a savior to deliver Judea?

If learners are grasping the book of Isaiah pretty well, be more attentive to their use of the three other tools they have learned. As they go through and answer the key questions for each passage, do they use their understanding of Hebrew poetry to examine the parallelism in the prophetic message? Do they look at the use of key words or phrases between Isaiah and the Gospel account? Do they apply the historical context that has been given to them to their reading well? If they do, are they asking any good research questions to deepen their understanding of the historical context? Who were the Assyrians? The Babylonians? What is the difference between the northern and southern kingdoms?

Authentic feedback

If the majority of learners are not grasping the Isaiah material well enough to do a close analysis of it in comparison to its quotation in the Gospels, you may seriously considering bringing the learners together and running an impromptu lesson based around a close reading of Isaiah. If you anticipate this as a possibility, you may wish to brainstorm some notes for how you would run such a lesson before you begin this one. If you go this route, spend the time you need with learners to understand Isaiah before you come back to this lesson.

If learners are grasping the Isaiah material, challenge learners with questions that prompt them to use the three tools they have learned in the previous sections. Pick out a word or phrase that carries its connotations forward to Christ, and ask them what they think the phrase means. Alternatively, you can ask them about parallel lines in the prophetic message, whose nuanced meaning you believe adds to the connotations in the Gospel account. Prompt learners to consider what the nuance might be in its immediate context versus what it is in the quotation. If learners need more of a context on a particular passage, do not hesitate to encourage them to read beyond the given selection.

Try to drive home the notion of the Word as a teacher. As learners realize that they are gaining a deeper understanding of how to read the Word simply by examining the Word himself their enthusiasm for reading and understanding on their own time will be fostered.

Figure 5.2.2.1 – How does the Word Interpret Himself?

This worksheet provides learners with a limited historical context for Isaiah's prophecy. It prompts learners to consider several passages in the Gospel of Matthew that quote from the book of Isaiah. In their consideration of these passages, the worksheet asks learners to reflect on several key questions. Finally, the worksheet prompts learners to summarize their understanding of the Word's method of interpretation against the methods of interpretation they think an eighth century (BC) Jew might employ. You may make photocopies of the worksheet, write the context, questions and passages on a board for everyone to see, or present the material orally. If you do not make photocopies of the worksheet, make sure learners have blank paper for note taking.

This worksheet may be found on page 86, or in the folder "Section 5" on the accompanying CD under the filename "Figure 5.2.2.1.pdf."

Looking at Isaiah

Isaiah lived in the eighth century (BC) before the Assyrian Empire invaded Israel, destroying the northern kingdom and making the southern kingdom of Judea into a vassal state. Isaiah prophesied about the internal wars, the coming Assyrian invasion, and the Babylonian Exile which would come centuries later.

To get a better idea of Isaiah's personal character, read the *Divine Presence* and *Call to Prophecy* components of the book. On a separate sheet of paper, note how Isaiah's character differs from the character of Ezekiel, Daniel and Moses. How would you describe Isaiah?

Isaiah in the New Covenant

Isaiah is the most quoted prophet in the Gospels. In the Gospels, Isaiah's prophecies are given new meaning and are interpreted as talking about Christ. Read the following passages in Matthew, find their quotation from Isaiah and read the surrounding context.

For each passage, reflect on:

- What it would mean to an eighth century Jew who did not know of Christ.
- What it means in the context of its quotation in the New Covenant.
- Images or phrases that mean different things in each context, and:
  - How the connotations of the original context change our perception of the concept in the New Covenant.
- Whether there are images that are not quoted that apply to Matthew.
- Literary themes, words, phrases, or historical situations that recur.
- The method that the figure quoting Isaiah uses to interprets prophecy.

Quotation in the Gospel of Matthew	Passage in the book of Isaiah
MATT 3	ISA 40:1-11
MATT 12:10-21	ISA 41-42:4
MATT 13:10-17	ISA 6:9-13
MATT 15:1-20	ISA 29

Method of Interpretation

When you are done going through the passages above, try to summarize the key difference between the New Covenant's method of interpretation of the passages, and the method you think an eighth century might Jew employ:

Does the method of the New Covenant supersede the older method or build upon it?

Additional Lesson Ideas

Lessons on intertextual analysis take a great deal of care and thought to write, but there are countless variations that you could explore. Instead of focusing on New Covenant interpretations of the Old Covenant, you could look at Old Covenant interpretations of earlier books. Such a lesson could deal with a single figure that crosses several books (like King David), or a concept that crosses several books (like the Law). Learners could construct a timeline of David's life by examining Samuel and Kings, or read about the specification of certain laws between Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Linking Lessons

It is easier to brainstorm lessons that would link an intertextual analysis to the other analyses of the curriculum. You could create a lesson using a concordance or online searchable version of the Word (see the Appendix in section seven) to track the use of a single word or phrase across several books in the Old and New Covenants. Such a lesson would expand on learners' use of the philological analysis tool.

Alternatively, you could examine the historical context of several books of the Word, comparing them to one another for differences and similarities in their response to a similar political situation. Is there a trend in how God reacts to certain kinds of disobedience? In God's mercy? In the Israelite response to oppression?

Lessons exploring a literary style can easily be linked with an intertextual analysis. Learners can track the changes in a particular style over several book of the Word, or attempt to construct a timeline for the life of Christ based on the Gospel accounts. You could also design lessons where learners compare the styles of the different Epistles. How does Paul's writing differ from Peter's, James' and John's?

An intertextual analysis is of such paramount importance to an understanding of the Word that it could be used as a central theme for subsequent courses with the same group of learners. Each lesson could use an intertextual analysis to hone and develop learners' understanding of the other three tools. If you have some learners that are new to the course and some who have been through it once already you could prompt the more experienced learners to teach and guide their peers, creating a community of learners within your course.

Taking learners' intertextual analysis to a deeper level can also be an opportunity for learners to demonstrate their proficiency with the other tools that the curriculum seeks to teach them. This makes it an excellent open-ended culmination of your course, requiring learners to reflect on and use the tools they have acquired in order to take their analysis deeper.

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.
ROMANS 15:4

What is assessment, anyway?

If you have read this curriculum straight through, you will already have noticed my copious use of the word assessment; it is in every lesson plan, and you may find it scattered about the rest of this work. I have also devoted an entire section of this curriculum to discussing it. You may be wondering why.

When we read the word assessment among words like study, curriculum and lessons, there are certain things which may immediately come to mind. Tests, grades, passing and failure might name a few, and obviously these have little place in the informal sort of setting you will find in most Christian Bible study groups (there are very reasonable debates about whether these things belong in our schools, but that is another issue). Does that mean assessment has no place in our Bible studies? If I don't mean tests and grades, what do I mean by assessment?

The aspiring philologist in me cannot help but ask, what does the word assessment mean? One of the definitions we find when we open our dictionary is to determine the value, significance or extent of a thing. Can we determine the value, significance and extent of someone's learning without a test? Without a giving them a grade? To what end should we assess our group's learning, you might ask. To which I would pose another question. Can we effectively help a learner with the concepts and skills they find most difficult if we have not assessed their learning? Isn't the very act of finding out where a learner is having difficulty an act of assessment, no matter its form?

In the lesson plans above, I have often given you my advice on key observations—things to look for that may cue you into the learning of your group as a whole, and your individual learners. This can be observation of discussion or of the answers provided on the learner's worksheets. I have often included questions that you may find helpful to ask learners. Observation is a key component of assessment and as teachers we do this often, sometimes without thinking about it. Our learners give us feedback when they are struggling with a passage or have something in mind they want to share; they give us feedback through their facial expression, their tone of voice, or perhaps their nervous fidget. The first part of helping students to learn more effectively will be becoming more conscious of your observations.

This can be facilitated when we have more and different kinds of the learner's feedback to observe. We already have their voice, their face, the way they sit or move around, but they will have more opportunity to tell us what they are struggling with and what they are doing well when we prompt them to give us feedback.

Production as feedback

There are ways that we already prompt our learners for feedback. The worksheets that go along with each of the lessons can be collected, providing insight into how successfully they were able to apply the concepts you taught them. What this curriculum does not provide explicitly is a final product that learners will work on throughout the course—a meaningful expression of their attempt to answer the essential question that can be checked periodically as a gauge of learners' progress.

This isn't the sort of product that learners will be 'graded' on. There is nothing at stake here except what is obvious: if we are good teachers and the learners are good students, then we will all come out of the course with a better understanding of how to read the Word, and how to find the depth and nuance of our beliefs in the Word. If we are unsuccessful teachers, or learners are unsuccessful students, then we will not come out of this course with a better understanding. No one will get a letter on a report card, and hopefully no one will be grounded. Still, there is some reason that your group has gotten together every so often to study the Word. If your aims align with those of this curriculum, or this curriculum as you have adapted it, then it is time to begin thinking of something that learners could produce with the skills this curriculum teaches that will be engaging, motivating and fun.

Personally, I like something with a written component because you can collect it and observe what learners are doing at a more measured pace than the often busy gatherings of learners. This doesn't have to be an essay, but it could. It could also be a class journal where learners reflect on what they have found within the text, and take notes on the development of their answer to the essential question. You can give learners a cue that they do not want a part of their journal read (they could fold a page in half, for example), and collect journals at the end of every meeting. If you don't like the idea of a journal, you might give the small groups an opportunity to lead a sermon at the end of their course, or if a sermon would not be appropriate for your church, they could teach each other or younger learners in Sunday school. In this case, you might give them notepads and a few copies of the blank lesson plans (on page 100) for several drafts of their lesson. You could collect their notepads after each gathering, and review them on your own time. Alternatively, you might have learners make a little skit that demonstrates the answer to their sub-question, and its relevance to a Christian's life. In this case, you could have them make scripts, and again collect their work at the end of each meeting.

If the idea of having a written component to the course does not sit well with you, you can implement other prompts for feedback. You might ask learners to spend the sessions where you don't have explicit lesson plans discussing a particular passage of the Word. It could be one learner's assignment each week to pick a passage relevant to their group's sub-question. You could alternate between small-group and full-group discussions. Whatever you do, but especially if you do not prompt learners for a written product, you should keep a journal or note pad of your observations.

Evaluating your learners

Coming up with a good initial idea for your final product is only half the battle of assessment. Once you have that idea, you will have to flesh out some of the details for what learners will be producing, so you can explain how to accomplish their learning goals in the form of this product; you can do this with any product, written or not. If learners will be teaching a lesson, you can tell them that their lesson should include certain key components. If learners will be having conversations, and picking out the passages to be discussed week by week, ask learners to pick a passage that ties into the concepts you would like to assess.

In order to do this you will have to know what you are assessing; assessing how well learners are accomplishing the objectives of your course can be divided into five general categories.

The first is the essential and sub-question of the course. Are learners' investigations geared towards answering these questions? If they are giving a teaching, do their teaching notes get at these questions? If not, are there ways you could redirect learners, prompting them to consider how their work might be used to answer these questions? If not, how can you redirect them, or help them rethink their questions?

The rest correspond to the specific tools being taught in the course. Does the learner's teaching or discussion prompt take a close look at the way a word is being used, or examining how a word in the passage is used differently than its modern usage? If the learner is making a point, do they point out different places where the word does not have the same meaning, and offer an alternative meaning that fits?

Does the learner's product play off the historical contexts you have learned about, or does it incorporate a passage from a historical text to supplement the passage from the Word? If the learner is making a historical point, is it supported from the text, accounting for the author's biases?

Does the learner's product focus on a stylistically challenging portion of the Word, or does its choice demonstrate a comfort with challenging styles? If the learner is making a point, do they draw on a good understanding of Biblical style to do so?

Does the learner's product show an intertextual understanding of the concepts that they are dealing with? If they are making a point, do they drawn on a discussion of the concept in question over the body of the Word, or do they focus on a single selection that works well with their initial theories?

As learners demonstrate their understanding or struggle through their product, evaluate their work, giving them encouraging help where they most need it and making encouraging compliments where they are really understanding a concept. Assessment is hard work, but if you make good observations and think carefully about what you ask learners to do, your learners will understand and grow.

Appendix *of* Resources

7.0 Expanding your Curriculum

Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.
ROMANS 1:20

How to use these resources

If you wish to do research on any of the topics covered in the lessons of this curriculum, the resources that follow will provide a good starting point. If you choose to design new lessons or extensions to the lessons listed here, you will almost certainly find these references useful. An excellent place to start is always the homepage for this curriculum, which undergoes frequent updates. There you will find new lists of resources, and new editions of this curriculum available for download. Visit the homepage of this curriculum at http://sunrosefor.us.

The other resources listed in this Appendix have been divided into two main sections: the resources that may be found online, and the book resources that may be purchased or borrowed from many libraries.

I would encourage you to explore the internet resources before you consider buying books to use with your course. Most of the resources that can be bought can be found online, free of charge. Online searchable versions of the Word are often easier for novices to use than hard-copy concordances, and there are several websites which maintain archives of English translations of ancient literature pertinent to the study of the Word. In addition to being an excellent resource for lesson design and modification, the resources are fun to explore and read.

If you find a resource that you believe will be particularly useful for a lesson or group of lessons that you would like to design, you may consider purchasing it. In such a case you may find the book resources listed in this Appendix more useful.

As you begin to think about lesson design, you may consult the blank lesson template given in the very last pages of this document. Think about what goes into a good lesson and consider how this curriculum has attempted to present the material in a way that fosters a deep understanding of the tools necessary to read the Word. Then, explore the resources looking for themes that you would like to explore.

If you need help developing lessons for a specific theme, try your hand at filling in the templates offered with the curriculum's materials, and then visit the homepage for the curriculum. You may feel free to email your work to the author and ask for specific help with the issues that are making your lesson design difficult. You may also feel free to email the author for advice on specific resources or selections that would be good to explore whatever themes you had in mind.

I have listed the URLs for a number of free websites that may be helpful in planning or modifying lessons for this curriculum; many of these lessons may be incorporated into a course. You may teach learners how to use internet resources to search the Bible, find additional linguistic information about a passage, and find extra-Biblical texts which may be helpful for their understanding of the Word.

Help with this curriculum

The Sun Rose for Us
http://sunrosefor.us
This website is always undergoing revision, so check it often to give and receive specific feedback about this curriculum. You may email the author, download lesson extension as they become available and share your ideas with other people using this curriculum. You may also find updated lists of links.

Versions of the Word

Unbound Bible
http://unbound.biola.edu/
This website allows you to search the New and Old Covenants in a number of English translations, or in Greek or Hebrew. You may search by book, chapter and verse, or by word. In addition to the options for searching the Word, this website offers Greek and Hebrew Lexicons searchable by word, definition or Strong's number.

The Bible Gateway
http://www.biblegateway.com
This website allows you to search the New and Old Covenants in a number of English translations, as well as translations into other languages. You may select your translation and search by book, chapter and verse, or you may search for a specific word. In addition to the search options, this website offers an index of topics.

oremus Bible Browser
http://bible.oremus.org
This website allows you to search the New and Old Covenants, as well as the Apocrypha, in the New Revised Standard Version. In addition to searching by book, chapter and verse, you may search for a specific word, and may limit your search to any book or books of the Word. If you recommend the use of this source for your learners, you may want to discuss what the Apocrypha is.

New Testament Greek
http://www.laparola.net/greco
This website allows you search the New Covenant in Greek by verse, chapter or word. Each word in Greek links to information about the word, including definition and Strong's number, with links to more detailed information accessible from other free websites.

Mechon-Mamre's Hebrew-English
http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm
This website provides a browsable copy of the Old Covenant with Hebrew and English side by side. It is not searchable, but it is organized by book and chapter, and you can always search within a page with the 'Find in this Page' feature of most web browsers, accessible by holding the Control key and pressing 'F.' In addition to the text version, there are downloadable MP3s of the selections read in Hebrew.

Historical resources

Early Christian Writings
http://earlychristianwritings.com
This website provides numerous writings from first and later century authors who identified themselves as Christian. This includes numerous non-canonical materials, including gospels and patristic literature.

Early Jewish Writings
http://earlyjewishwritings.com
This website provides numerous writings within and beyond the canon including the work of first century Jewish interpreters like Josephus and Philo.

Project Gutenberg
http://gutenberg.org
This website is a database of all kinds of free texts, searchable by author and includes numerous primary sources.

Language resources

Biblical Greek Online
http://www.mythfolklore.net/bibgreek/
If you or your learners should be inclined to learn Greek for free, here is a website.

Hebrew Language at the University of Texas at Austin
http://www.laits.utexas.edu/hebrew/
If you or your learners should be inclined to learn Hebrew for free, here is a good starting point.

I have given a bit of brief information about a number of texts you could use with this course, with my own personal thoughts about a few different English translations of the Word. These thoughts are my own personal reflections, and though I do not believe you should adopt them yourselves, you may wish to consider the particular strengths and difficulties that your favored translation will present to learners. You may also wish to purchase several translations of the Word, designing an extension for section one or section four based around a comparison of translations.

In the other sources, you may find it of particular interest to design an expansion to section three, exploring primary sources while using a secondary source as a guide, or going into a more in-depth analysis of a primary source. I have not included any secondary sources simply because I am not very familiar with secondary sources in Ancient Israel or the first century levant that would be appropriate and accessible to a group of novices, so I feel unqualified to make recommendations.

Translations of the Word

The New Revised Standard Version

This is the version that I use most often for my study of the Word. I find a number of the translators' choices irritating. The convention to translate the Greek ἀδελφός to "brothers and sisters" throughout the New Covenantin in an attempt at political correctness seems to remove what may be a very real issue of the roles of men and women in the church from scrutiny; it presumes an answer to the question without engaging the reader in the process by which these translators came to their decision. There are other points in the text where similar irritations occur, but in many versions there are notations which explain the alternate or more precise translations. The footnotes in the study versions of this Bible provide an interesting counterpoint to the footnotes of many study Bibles, but they still espouse a specific understanding of the text and do not often expose readers to the complexity and variety of the debate underlying their conclusions. They do a fine job with limited space, and may be useful, especially if learners are engaged in lesson extensions to evaluate the biases of translators.

The King James Version

I find the style of the King James translation excellent for certain books of the Bible, but it can often be less accessible to modern readers. As with all translations, this one presents irritations which will vary based on the reader. I take some exception to the translation of ἀγάπη to "charity. There are other points of frustration for me in this translation, but readers who are unaccustomed to its style may have two hurdles to overcome: the style of the King James Version, and the fact that the King James Version is itself a translation. If your learners work with the King James Version, you may design a lesson extension for section four around grappling with the style of the Word's translation.

The New International Version

I am not much of a fan of the New International Version. Its word choices for translation are frustrating to me, and I often find places where I believe that translators have purposely simplified a complex message in the Greek to make it more 'readable;' in so doing, they often simplify the passage to a specific theological interpretation which may loose some of the nuance that can be essential to understanding the New Covenant. For example, in GAL 3:25 παιδαγωγός is translated as law. Obviously this is done to break down Paul's analogy and make the reference more explicit, thus cutting out any possible confusion. But, what is lost? The law is likened in this passage to a παιδαγωγός, the role of which was not entirely oppressive and certainly not villainous in Paul's world. When correctly translated, this word adds a level of nuance to Paul's discussion of the law.

The New Jerusalem Publication Society Translation of the Tanakh

I find the Jerusalem Publication Society's Tanakh to be a fairly good translation, and often use it as my comparison to the New Revised Standard Version when I am working with a passage in the Old Covenant. I have not yet encountered particularly troubling translations in this version of the Word, but it often expresses connotations that are markedly different from the other translations I have used. Stylistically it is not my favorite, but I don't have an issue with the accuracy of their word-choice.

Original language versions of the Word

The Septuagint

The Old Covenant in an early Greek translation can be an excellent tool if learners are interested in becoming more immersed in the Biblical languages, and if you happen to have one it can be an excellent visual representation of the fact that the Word was not cwritten in English.

The Tanakh

The Old Covenant in Hebrew is also a fascinating text, both for the visual reality of the fact that it was not written in English, and to add nuance to the learner's understanding of the translation process. A brief lesson on Hebrew could be given explaining the components of the Hebrew words: that there are consonants, and vowels. While the vowels often determine the precise meaning of the word, they are absent from the original text. You could design a lesson where learners have to 'translate' an English text without vowels or spaces, and consider the interpretive nature of this process.

The Greek New Testament

The New Covenant in Greek, as the other texts which have been mentioned, is an excellent reminder of the difference between the Biblical language and English. In addition, it could be used in lessons for learners who have a greater desire to become acquainted with the Biblical languages.

Primary sources

While I think it is extremely important to have at least one hard-copy version of the Bible for every learner (multiple translations might require multiple copies per learner), I would suggest purchasing the following books only if money is not a concern, or if you plan to use them closely in your course. Most of the work contained in the texts below may be found online for free in the resources listed above.

The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged

by Flavius Josephus, translated by William Whiston

This first century Jewish historian, leader, priest, soldier, and Biblical commentator is one of the most important sources available outside of the Bible for reconstructing the life of Jews in the levant. In addition to being pivotal in the study of this era of history, his stories are exciting, controversial, and well-written, making them an excellent entryway into what is sometimes viewed by novices as a tedious profession: that of the historian.

The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged

by Philo of Alexandria, translated by C. D. Younge

Another first century Jewish writer, Philo of Alexandria lived at the time of Jesus, but was unaware of him. Living in Alexandria with a classic philosophical education, Philo wrote interpretations and commentaries of the Old Covenant which have illuminating and often surprising connections with Christian theology. Philo's commentary and interpretation of the Old Covenant could be compared with the commentary of Josephus, and both of these compared to Christ and his disciples' interpretations of the Old Covenant in a lesson extension on section three, historical context.

The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English

translated by Geza Vermes

Incorporating the Dead Sea Scrolls into an analysis of the historical context of the Word is a tricky task, but it could be rewarding. These scrolls and scroll fragments were recovered from a small Jewish community that lived outside the mainstream ritual practice of Temple Judaism. They can add to the nuance of learners' perspectives on first century Judaism, especially in the interpretation of prophecy.

The Seven Tablets of Creation

with commentary by Leonard W. King

The Babylonian creation epic has been compared to the account of the first three chapters of Genesis, with implications that the Biblical account was influenced by the Babylonian; this conversation has been moving into popular discourse. Rather than avoid the issue, learners could be exposed to the Babylonian epic and compare it to Genesis, focusing on the relationship between God and man, versus the Babylonian gods' relation to man.

The Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon

translated by Robert Francis Harper

Similarly, the legal Code of Hammurabi has been compared to the Law of Torah. Learners could be prompted to read selections from both, and compare them. How is Hammurabi's code different from the Law? Are there similarities? Why or why not?

The Epic Voice

edited by Alan D. Hodder and Robert E. Meagher

This collection of ancient epics provides the learner with examples of ancient literature. It categorizes the Biblical tales of David as an epic, and puts it side by side with the Odyssey, Gilgamesh and other ancient works. While this comparison might not be entirely appropriate to all Christian perspectives, a lesson for section four could easily be designed to compare and contrast the style and content of David when compared to the ancient epics given in this selection. Does David fit with these? What are the similarities and differences?

On Genesis

by Augustine of Hippo

This collection of Augustine's writings and commentaries on Genesis is intriguing and may surprise many learners. How does Augustine talk about the relationship between God and man in Genesis? What is the role of sin? What about the fall of man? You could design a series of lessons to compare the commentaries of Christians with the commentaries of first century Jews, comparing Augustine and Origen with Philo and Josephus.

Homilies on Genesis and Exodus

by Origen, translated by Robert E. Heine

This collection of Origen's writings and commentaries on Genesis and Exodus is equally as surprising and intriguing to modern Christians who may not be aware of the nuanced development of theological thought in Christendom. Particularly, Origen pioneered some fascinated methods for interesting the Word which could be examined and evaluated. How does Origen interpret the Word? How does Christ interpret the Old Covenant? What are the similarities, and what are the differences?

Designing a lesson

When you decide to design a lesson of your own, you may make photocopies of the blank lesson template given on the following pages or you may open and modify the digital version of the template. The digital version may be found on the accompanying CD in the file "Blank Templates" under the name "Lesson Plan Template.doc." You may also make worksheets for your redesigned lessons by opening and modifying "Worksheet Template.doc," which may be found in the same location as the Lesson Plan Template on the accompanying CD.

When designing a lesson, you may wish to consult the Example Lesson Plan on pages xii-xv. Each section of the lesson plan is explained, and it will give you a good prompt from which to design your own lessons.

Once you have a fair idea of how the lesson plan is laid out, you can begin the hard work. What is your lesson? Why are you designing a lesson of your own?

Does your lesson get at a key concept within one or more of the tools that is not covered in this curriculum? Does it get at a tool that isn't in this curriculum at all? Or, are you redesigning a lesson that teaches some of the same concepts as one of the given lessons for another reason? Perhaps you want to make the lesson interesting to a group of learners who have already been through the lesson once, or you don't like the material covered in the given lesson.

Changing the material that a lesson covers will be much easier than designing a lesson to get at a whole new concept, but both of these are fruitful activities. If you wish to change the material of an existing lesson, ask yourself how the lesson uses the content it does. What sort of content would you prefer to use? Can you find a place in that content where the same concept can be illustrated? Restructure the lesson for the new content, and be sure to read through it for any directions or questions that will have to be changed to fit your new lesson. You may also design worksheets to go with it.

If you are designing a lesson to get at a different concept or carry one of the concepts covered above further, your job will be more difficult. Does your lesson fit one of the four tools that this curriculum is designed to teach? Does it use more than one of them? What concept are you trying to get at that the lessons above do not cover?

Consider how you would go about using the concept you wish to teach learners. If you are designing a lesson to track the meaning of a word across several books within the Word, how would you go about doing that? What steps would you take? Try and do the task you wish to teach, going through each step carefully and taking note of them. How can you illustrate those steps to a group of novices? Is there a particular passage or passages that would provide good material to work with? Once you have answered these questions, you may begin to design a lesson around those answers.

Lesson _____ - Description

Title: _____

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Rationale

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Objectives

In this lesson, learners will:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Tips

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Directions

Key observations

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Authentic feedback

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