

Feature

# The Pastoral Obligation To The Task Of Theology

by Todd L. Miles



At the end of the Apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus, he gathered together the elders of the church to tell them good-bye. The pastor-teacher-evangelist-church planter reminded the Ephesian leaders of his work over the years, telling them that he had not shrunk from declaring to them the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26). Paul charged them to pay careful attention both to themselves and the flock which constituted the precious church of God. It was Paul's burden to warn the elders to be alert because fierce wolves would arise from within their ranks, attempting to draw away the disciples through twisted words (Acts 20:29-30). Challenges to the church would come from within and without, but the elders were responsible to protect by teaching, preaching, guarding and guiding. In short, Paul was calling the Ephesian elders to a theological task.

In the post-Christian West, theology has fallen into disrepute. Often seen as a hindrance to authentic relationships and ministry, theology is dismissed as irrelevant to the pastor and minister. At a recent meeting of missionaries, one of the participants, while praying, asked that we would not "use theology to bash people over the head." Clearly, this is not what Paul had in mind. Yet, some Emerging Church leaders treat theology with a disdain that borders on contempt. What has happened?

## **Everybody is a Theologian**

Everybody is a theologian. From seminary-trained pastors and academicians, to Bible-reading Christians, to occasional pew-sitters, to pagans who walk down the streets of any Pacific Northwest city, everybody we encounter is a theologian.

Let me explain. Though some may define a theologian as someone formally trained in the doctrines of the Western Church (usually at the graduate level by an Anglo-Saxon male), such a definition is entirely misleading because it ignores the task of theology. Theologians are those who practice theology. Theology is the task of applying the powerful word of God to the questions of life. Everybody has thoughts and convictions about God. The reason for this is God's revelation of Himself is expressive and powerful. He will not be shut out of His world. From the grandeur of creation (Rom 1:20) to the moral compass of the conscience (Rom 2:14-15), all people have true knowledge of God (Rom 1:21) for which they are, self-consciously, morally culpable (Rom 1:32). What is more, peoples' lives are directed by their convictions on the nature of reality, and beliefs about answers to questions regarding God, His character, His governance, and his judgment. The answers may be conscious or sub-conscious, semi-accurate or just plain wrong, honoring or idolatrous, exalting or blasphemous, orthodox, heretical, or some combination thereof. But the question is not whether one is a theologian; the question is one of faithfulness.

## **Pastors must be Theologians**

The Spurgeon Fellowship Journal Feature – Fall 2008

If theology is not relegated to the ivory tower, but is in fact the normative experience of all, how much more so should those who are called to shepherd the church of God be intentionally theological? Consider Paul's parting words to Timothy. As the young pastor's mentor, Paul exhorted Timothy to "follow the pattern of sound words" spoken by Paul and to "guard the good deposit entrusted" to him (2 Tim 1:13:14). In fact, he was to take that which Paul taught him and "entrust it to faithful men" who would be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2). At the end of the letter, Paul exhorts Timothy to "preach the word" because there would come a time when people would not "endure sound teaching" but surround themselves with teachers to cater to their desires (2 Tim 4:2-4).

So important to the life of the church is the task of contending for the faith, and thus the ability to teach is fundamental to the role of the elder. A quick survey of the requirements for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 are similar, with the notable exception that the elder must be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2). In Titus 1:9 Paul requires that an elder "hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

### **The Lord Requires we Think Rightly About All Things**

Paul instructed the church in Corinth to "destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). How does one "take every thought captive to obey Christ?" Is it just a matter of thinking about the right things? After all, did not Paul instruct the saints in Philippi to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, etc. (Phil 4:8)? The faithful pastor does not have the privilege, nor the time, to limit the subjects of his thought to such things. He is called to think rightly about all the different subjects in all the different circumstances to which the Lord calls him. We do not obey the mandate to take every thought captive to Christ by merely limiting our thoughts to the right things. Rather, we have to think rightly about all things. This is a difficult task because worldly wisdom is not usually synonymous with godly wisdom. The Lord declared through Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:8-9).

Thinking rightly about all things is never more important than when it comes to the leadership of the Lord's precious church. Why is this so? If we are not intentionally biblical and theological in our decision-making, then it is all-to-easy to make decisions according to different criteria. In many churches, the pastor is under pressure to keep the pews and coffers full. The postmodern Western church is all-to-often populated with consumers rather than servants. In the desire to maintain numbers, pastors are tempted to take the pragmatic route. Decision-making can deteriorate to the pursuit of cultural relevance in the impossible quest to keep people happy. But the Lord calls His pastors to something far greater than the pursuit of numbers. Elders have to teach the church to think the thoughts of God. As shepherds, elders have a theological task.

The theological task of pastors is to teach and train the church to apply the powerful word of God to all the questions of life addressed in the Bible. Lest anyone think that the theological task is purely academic and esoteric, I would like to address seven practical and significant repercussions to theological negligence on the part of pastors. When theology is neglected or disdained by the shepherds of the church, the results are moralism, denial of the sufficiency of Scripture, unheard and unanswered prayers, idolatrous worship, neglect of the gospel, deficient and distorted understanding of God, and apathy in missions.

#### **1. Neglect of theology leads to moralism**

When theology is neglected, the teaching and preaching of the church tends to devolve into moralism. This is very much the case when biblical theology is ignored. In contrast to systematic theology which brings questions, categories, and vocabulary to the biblical text, biblical theology seeks to discuss both the form and content of Scripture from the point of view of the revealing activity of God. Kevin Vanhoozer argues that the task of biblical theology is to "present the theology of the Bible—the parts and the whole—in

a manner that lets the texts, in all their peculiarity and particularity, set the agenda.”<sup>a</sup> The goal of biblical theology is to understand the story of Scripture; that is, the Bible as a unified whole.

In biblical interpretation, context has long been understood to be the primary determiner of meaning. The largest context of any particular passage of Scripture is the Bible as a whole and any text that is read should be consciously interpreted in the light of the themes that stretch across the Canon, finding its place in the grand story.

The twenty-fourth chapter of Luke records two critical teachings by the Lord Jesus Christ on the nature of Scripture. Following his resurrection, Jesus Christ walked with two disciples who did not recognize Him. Responding to Cleopas and his companion who were troubled over the events of the recent days, Jesus called them “foolish” and “slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:27). Jesus then seized the opportunity, beginning with “Moses and all the Prophets,” to interpret to them “in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (24:27). Though we are not told which passages Jesus interpreted for his listeners, from Luke’s perspective it does not matter. The ministries and teachings of Moses and all the prophets, just as all the Scriptures, point toward Christ and his glory through suffering. The two disciples had to have the Scriptures interpreted for them because they did not read them correctly.

In Luke 24:36-49 Jesus joined a larger gathering of disciples and the same lesson was taught. In 24:44 Christ claimed that his ministry was the focal point of the “Law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms” (metonymy for the entire Old Testament and its tripartite division). Just as Jesus opened the eyes of the two disciples so they could recognize him (24:31), so Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”(24:45). The parallel establishes that one sees and understands Scripture correctly when one sees and recognizes Christ as pervasive throughout. Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but He is also the central figure in a divine drama that dominates all of human history. This is demonstrated by Christ’s statement, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:46-47). The use of the term “it is written” indicates that Jesus is referring back to the Old Testament. Jesus’ statement, however, was not an explicit quotation of any biblical passage, but was the implicit teaching of the entire Old Testament. The correct reading of Scripture, therefore, is not merely an academic exercise. The heart of biblical interpretation is christological; the goal of obedient reading is to see Christ.

When the story of Scripture is ignored, the teacher or preacher often misses the forest for all the trees. The individual stories lose their interconnectedness and become a collection of isolated and unrelated stories. That is, the stories in the Bible are ripped from the context of redemptive history, and their part in the overarching plot of God’s salvation culminating in the coming of the Davidic heir, Jesus Christ, is completely ignored. The inevitable result is the wonderful stories in the Bible are reduced to nothing more than character studies. The story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 becomes an example of how little people can do big things for the Lord. The story of Joseph becomes an example of persevering during difficult times. The story of the binding of Isaac becomes an example of obedient faith. The story of Jesus feeding the multitudes becomes an example of what the Lord can do when people share. Much that passes for children’s curriculum is notoriously problematic in this regard.

Do not mistake me here. Clearly, there is much value in studying the lives and actions of the biblical characters. They were real people making real decisions in real settings. The biblical saints are offered as examples and there is much in their lives and stories to follow and much to avoid. The problem emerges when the biblical stories are taken in isolation, ripped out of the context of God’s glorious plan to redeem humanity and the cosmos. All that remains is moral example. The Bible is effectively reduced to a collection of moral tales, on par with Aesop’s fables. The implications are terrifying. Is there anything more antithetical to the gospel of grace than naked calls to moral conformity? Imagine the results on our youth who grow up on a steady diet of moral story after moral story. Are they in a position to understand the gospel? When we send them to the often hostile environs of high school and college, are they in a position to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” when they do not understand

the Bible as a whole?

## **2. Neglect of theology leads to a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture**

A critical issue that faces the church at this present time is whether or not we really believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. Do we believe the Bible contains all the divine words that we need for any and every aspect of our lives?<sup>b</sup> Do we *really* believe that, regardless of the situation or issue, we can go to the Bible to hear the voice of God, and be given specific guidance to obey? In my judgment, the answer is no. For many Christians, if the Bible does not specifically address an issue (that is, if the issue cannot be found in the concordance at the back of the Bible), then apparently the Lord is silent on the subject and does not care what we do or how we behave. But is this really the case? We are told about murder and adultery, but there is no specific guidance on things such as stem-cell research, abortion, pornography and gambling. Perhaps these are gray areas, many are tempted to reason. Can it be that there are decisions we face and issues we confront that the Lord does not care about? Can it be that the Lord has left us to face the issues of contemporary culture without revelation or guidance?

2 Timothy 3:16 is clear that the divinely-inspired Scriptures are sufficient to equip the man of God for every good work. The word *every* points to sufficiency. It may be that many issues we face are not specifically addressed in Scripture, but this does not mean there is not divine guidance by implication or logical inference and deduction. The task of theology is to bring to bear God's powerful revelation upon all of life's questions. Recall Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees in Matthew 22. Jesus corrected the leaders for denying the resurrection by quoting from Exodus 3:6 and then rebuked them by saying, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt 22:29). The Sadducees denied the resurrection because they believed that it was not taught in the Pentateuch (apparently the word did not appear in their concordances). But Jesus pointed out that the Lord had given revelation on the reality of the resurrection, even though it was not specifically mentioned. In Jesus' economy, inability to apply the Scriptures (even on issues not specifically mentioned) results from not knowing the Scriptures. Jesus believed in the sufficiency of God's Word.

The pastor has a profound responsibility to proclaim the whole counsel of God to his congregation. This requires that he train the church to think biblically and theologically—to think rightly about all things. He ought not say more than the Lord has spoken, but he cannot say less if he desires to fulfill his God-given mandate. When the moral convictions of our church members are not grounded in the authoritative word of God, they will inevitably drift towards the world's way of thinking. The reality of this drift is painfully evident in the social-ethical arena. Take, for example, the volatile issue of homosexuality. I have participated in multiple public debates on the issue of same-sex marriage and I am concerned that many of my brothers and sisters in Christ can give neither a biblical defense of marriage nor a biblical case against homosexuality. Many Christians are consciously against same-sex marriage, but when asked to give a reason for their stand, they are unable to make a clear and simple case. In my discussions, I have found the best most Christians can do is offer the following two arguments: First, many Christians are against same-sex marriage because as Christians, they think they are supposed to be against same-sex marriage; and second, homosexual activity is distasteful. Given the highly successful efforts by its advocates to mainstream homosexuality into the public consciousness, how compelling are these two arguments? How likely is it that Christians will successfully remain steadfast in their convictions when they rest on such a foundation? How many Christians would deny that the Lord has spoken sufficiently to give guidance on issues surrounding stem-cell research, pornography, or gambling? Jesus' response to us would be the same: "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." Pastors have to train the church to be faithful in how she thinks about all things. This is a theological task.

## **3. Neglect of theology leads to unanswered prayers**

The clearest way to determine a church's theology is by listening to the church pray. If the task of theology is to apply the powerful word of God to all the questions of life, what and how we pray will give voice to our truest convictions about the Lord, His nature, and how He governs. Because the Lord is a real person, not a figment of our individual and corporate imaginations, it is possible to be wrong about

who He is. The cost of misunderstanding the Lord and His will is steep. Our prayers will not be heard. The apostle John is clear: "And this is the confidence we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15; cf. James 1:5-8). Jesus was equally clear: "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). For many, praying in the name of Jesus means adding the magic words, "in Jesus' name," to the end of their prayers. But praying in Jesus' name is to pray consistent with who He is and what He would do, according to His nature and reputation. To pray in Jesus' name is to be confident that our prayers are consistent with the very requests Jesus would make. If we do not know Christ, how can we pray in His name? If we do not understand who God is and how He governs, how can we pray according to His will? If we cannot pray according to the will of God, why would we expect Him to hear us? It will not matter how sincere or heartfelt the prayers of the people are if they misunderstand the Lord and the way he exercises his lordship. Scripture provides some powerful examples of godly, Spirit-inspired prayers. Read the prayers of David (e.g., 1 Chron 17:16-27), Solomon (2 Chron 6:12-42), Hezekiah (Isaiah 36-39), or Jesus (John 17) for guidance. Under-shepherds to the church of God, it is your responsibility to model and teach your congregation how to pray. Studying the nature and work of God (what theologians call "the doctrine of God," or "theology proper") is an essential aid to prayer. This is a theological task.

#### **4. Neglect of theology leads to idolatrous worship**

Worship is never to occur in a vacuum. It ought to be the response to the Lord's revelation. In his excellent book, *Worship Matters*, Bob Kauflin writes, "Our relationship with God has always been characterized by the ebb and flow of revelation and response. If God hadn't revealed himself to us, we wouldn't know who to thank, who to obey, or who to serve. We wouldn't know how to worship him. But God does reveal his character, nature, and promises to us, and we respond with gratefulness and obedience. We respond with worship. At least that's the way it's supposed to work."<sup>c</sup>

It is the responsibility of the pastor to lead the congregation in worship. Scripture reading, giving, praying, preaching and singing are part of the typical Sunday morning service in the North American evangelical church. Each component is a response to the Lord, and each part is worship. I am taking it for granted that pastors are spending a significant amount of time preparing to preach the Word of God to their congregations (I hope that is a valid assumption!). But how much time is spent preparing the other aspects of the worship service? When preparing a sermon, the pastor ought to be careful to rightly handle the word of truth and to proclaim with authority that which the Lord has spoken in His Word. Should we be any less careful in the other aspects of the worship service? How many times have we heard an offering meditation that essentially calls for people to give out of a sense of guilt and effectively denies the Lord's self-sufficiency and independence (e.g. "God needs you to give . . .")? How many times, during a communion meditation, have we heard someone (unintentionally, I hope) thank God the Father for dying on the cross? To affirm that God the Father died on the cross is to affirm the heresy of patripassionism. Heresy prayed or heresy spoken in a meditation is no less heretical than when it is preached. Wrong ideas about the Lord and his ways are no less harmful when they are sung than when they are preached. In fact, they are probably more harmful when sung because music usually has more staying power in our memories than the spoken word.

Worship ought to be the right response to the Lord's revelation of Himself and His ways. If we do not listen to the revelation of God then we will respond to our own imaginations and worship a god of our own making. The biblical word for this is idolatry. I am not calling for an invasion of the heresy police. But I am imploring the pastor to be intentional (act like you care!) and use the guidance of God's word to inform what we do in worship. Shepherds of the Lord's church must teach, preach, pray, plan, and lead with a biblically informed intentionality. This is a theological task.

#### **5. Neglect of theology leads to inevitable neglect of the gospel**

The gospel is the only hope for humanity precisely because it is the good news of our sovereign Lord's action to rescue humanity, redeem the cosmos, and restore his Kingdom. The gospel is remarkably simple to articulate (see 1 Cor 15:1-4) but, unfortunately, easy to forget. One would not think this is not the case, but the church has demonstrated a stunning proclivity to drift away from the gospel. Consider the following recent example.

There has been a revival of interest in the Kingdom of God by the Emerging Church and younger evangelicals. Reasons for this renewed interest include the centrality of the Kingdom in the Scriptures and the missional impulse of younger evangelicals. Many Emerging Church leaders have chosen to utilize the Kingdom of God as the paradigm for revisioning church practice. Rethinking the practice of the church is always necessary. We ought always to evaluate the church's practice and teaching according to the Word of God as guided by the Holy Spirit. This is why it is essential that pastors be biblically and theologically grounded. In the case of many Emerging Church leaders, however, there is a deficient and distorted understanding of the Kingdom of God, in that the "Kingdom" references are just a means of justifying a shift in priorities at the expense of fidelity to the biblical witness. Specifically, many Emerging Church leaders use the Kingdom of God as a call to social action while ignoring the centrality of the kingship of Jesus and his work on the cross to make the Kingdom possible. A notable example is Brian McLaren and his book, *The Secret Message of Jesus*.<sup>d</sup> The entire book is structured around the Kingdom of God without any significant reference to the cross, sin, or the authoritative kingship of Jesus. He wants the Kingdom of God without the King!

When the story of Scripture is ignored, it is easy to make the *results* of the gospel the priority. When the gospel is diminished or distorted, history has demonstrated that we will inevitably resort to a reliance on works (the social gospel) in our proclamations and ministry. Shepherds have been called to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). This requires that pastors continually remind their congregations of the content and centrality of the gospel, a theological task at the most foundational level.

## **6. Neglect of theology leads to a deficient and distorted understanding of God**

Pastors must intentionally teach the whole counsel of the Lord. This is absolutely necessary when it comes to God's revelation of Himself and His works (theology proper). As I mentioned earlier, God is an absolute person who exists independent of our thinking. Because the Lord is a real being with many attributes, we must take into consideration all that the Lord has revealed of Himself if we are to know and understand Him. We do not have the freedom to pick and choose the attributes we like, focusing on them while neglecting the attributes that do not resonate with our ever-changing sensibilities.

Focusing on one attribute while ignoring or denying other attributes will result in a distortion of who the Lord is. Further, if we focus on one attribute while denying the rest of the Lord's revelation, we will ultimately distort the attribute of our focus. For example, most people (even at the street level) believe that God is love (1 John 4:8). But if we focus solely on the love of God, and forget/ignore/deny His holiness or self-sufficiency, we not only distort the character and nature of the Lord, we will not even rightly understand His love. The Lord is able to love us precisely because of His self-sufficiency. If the Lord did not possess everything inherently, then his love for us would ultimately be conditioned on our meeting some kind of need in Him. That is a precarious, if not impossible, place to be. Praise God for his love for us. But praise him also for his self-sufficiency that makes His unconditional love possible.

This is my biggest concern with William Young's popular book, *The Shack*.<sup>e</sup> It focuses on the love, grace, and mercy of God, but denies and/or ignores such attributes and actions as holiness, wrath, judgment, justice and the atonement. I think it is fine to deliver sermons or write articles or books on certain divine attributes, but when writing a narrative in which God explains who He is and how He governs (*The Shack* is a theodicy), we cannot ignore or deny parts of God's revelation of Himself without distorting the attributes of our focus. By writing a narrative that highlights the grace of God while ignoring and denying God's holiness and justice, Young has left the grace and mercy of God groundless. Pastors have to teach and preach the whole counsel of God, His attributes and actions. This is a theological task.

The Spurgeon Fellowship Journal Feature – Fall 2008

## 7. Neglect of theology leads to apathy in mission

North America, particularly the Pacific Northwest, is post-Christian and religiously pluralistic. This points to the simple reality that many religions exist among us. No longer do Americans have to go overseas to find religious others. Today, we live next door to those who worship different deities in different ways. Religious pluralism also embodies an attitude that the reality of many religions is not only how things are; it is how things ought to be. Religious pluralism is cherished.

Religious pluralism has placed enormous pressure on Christians who have historically carried an exclusive message of salvation: You must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. The perception that such an attitude is intolerant, coupled with questions about the fate of those who have never heard the gospel, has given rise to a call for an investigation into the biblical understanding of world religions and how the major religions of the world fit into the redemptive purposes of God.

Some Evangelicals are also reconsidering the exclusive claims of Christ, suggesting that it is not necessary for one to know of or believe in Christ to be saved. This more inclusive position tends to focus upon the Holy Spirit as the agent of redemption in the world. Specifically, these evangelicals confess, the Holy Spirit is at work in the world, even in the context of world religions, applying the work of Christ apart from any conscious faith in Christ. The result of the proposal is to assert a relative independence of the Spirit from the Son.

Can such a proposal be sustained? And what happens to the motivation for missions if belief in the gospel is not necessary for salvation? Contrary to those who assert either an independent work of the Holy Spirit apart from the Son, or a work of the Son that is subordinate to the Spirit in world religions, the roles of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are inextricably linked. How are they linked? The Holy Spirit always seeks to glorify the Son. When Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14), Christ was not merely defining one aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, He was declaring the nature of the relationship between Himself and the Holy Spirit within the broad scope of trinitarian life and redemptive history. Spirit-enabled conscious faith in Christ as necessary for salvation is perfectly consistent with the Christ-glorifying nature of the Spirit's work.

The biblical response to the question, "What about those who have never heard the gospel?" is "Go tell them!" The Christian mandate is gospel proclamation (e.g., Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom 10:14-15). When pastors fail to teach the whole counsel of God, thereby not training the church to think biblically, the tendency will be to follow impulses which are decidedly pluralistic and belligerent to the exclusive truth claims of Jesus. But when pastors preach the Bible, imploring the church to do that which the Bible mandates, then the church will be motivated to tell the nations. This is a theological task.

### Conclusion

The task given to pastors is to care for the flock, the precious blood-bought church of God, and to protect it from those who would assail it from without and from within. This is accomplished primarily through the careful ministry of the Word: a teaching, correcting, rebuking, and training ministry for which the Word of God is completely sufficient. If theology is the task of applying the powerful word of God to the questions of life then, by definition, the task of the pastor is fundamentally a theological task. This task is not about discussions regarding angels dancing on pinheads or debates over infralapsarianism versus supralapsarianism. It is the glorious and essential task of bringing the word of God to bear with confidence on every aspect of the lives of those who name the name of Christ. Training people to think God's thoughts after Him, to bring every thought in obedience to Christ, to think rightly and intentionally about all things, is absolutely a theological task.

*Todd Miles, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Theology and Hermeneutics at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. A frequent guest speaker in several churches, Dr. Miles serves as an elder at Hinson The Spurgeon Fellowship Journal Feature – Fall 2008*

Church. He regularly contributes to theological journals and is the author of the forthcoming *Son and Spirit: A Christian Theology of Religions*. Dr. Miles and his wife Camille, are the parents of three children and reside in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Miles will address **The Spurgeon Fellowship** on October 14, 2008.

---

<sup>a</sup>K. J. Vanhoozer, "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Alexander, T. Desmond, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 53. The *NDBT* is an excellent resource and I give it my highest recommendation.

<sup>b</sup>I follow John Frame's definition of the sufficiency of Scripture. For an excellent discussion, see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), 156-175.

<sup>c</sup>Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Encountering the Greatness of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 90. I highly recommend this book.

<sup>d</sup>Brian McLaren, *The Secret Message of Jesus: Uncovering the Truth that Could Change Everything* (Nashville: Word Publishing Group, 2006). I cannot endorse this book at any level. It is so fundamentally deficient in its treatment of the Kingdom even the sections that are insightful ultimately cannot carry any weight.

<sup>e</sup>William P. Young, *The Shack* (Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2007). I cannot recommend this book. The number of pastors who have recommended the book is surprising to me, given the host of theological errors and the disdain for the Lord's church that permeates it (which is itself a profound theological error).