

EMMAUS EQUIPPING COLLEGE

Grasping God's Word - Assignment 12

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Assignment 12:1

Once upon a time there was a man with two PhDs in New Testament studies, both from prestigious universities. His academic credentials were impeccable, and he constantly devoted himself to the study of the New Testament. The Gospels were his specialty. He did not, however, claim to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The professor's wife was a mature believer, with "only" an MA in biblical studies. They had a nine-year-old daughter who had just returned from a Christian children's camp, where she made the decision to give her life to Christ. In light of what you have learned in this chapter about the Spirit's role in biblical interpretation, describe how each member of the family might approach **John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** Write at least one paragraph from the perspective of each family member.

The Professor

I ponder as to what motivated the Father, a professor, to take on (and continue in) theological studies at such a high academic level – Double Doctorate in New Testament studies – and yet, according to the text, **"did not, however, claim to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."** Is he a historian, an archaeologist, a lecturer in philosophy, sociology or antiquity? Was the double theology degree complementary to his profession? Why didn't he study the Old Testament? Would it have made a difference if he did? Is he an atheist, a partial believer, a "closet Christian", or was he a believer and has fallen away? Was he traumatised at a younger age and as a result, now has a distorted perception of what love is or should be, whether from God or people?

If it's the case of his state of mind or attitude; being **"wise in his own mind"** then the obvious is at play here. The Bible strongly warns against being **"wise in your own mind"** or **"wise in your own eyes"**, viewing it as a dangerous form of pride and a mark of **"foolishness"**. It is an attitude that rejects God's guidance in favour of human rationalization, ultimately leading to spiritual ruin.

Specific warnings and descriptions of this mindset include:

It is worse than actual foolishness: Proverbs 26:12 explicitly states; ***"Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him".***

A person who thinks they know everything is unteachable.

It is associated with self-deception and is a barrier to following God.

Proverbs 28:26 warns, ***"Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered"***. Human reasoning alone is prone to self-serving justifications.

Proverbs 3:7 counsels; ***"Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil"***. True wisdom begins with humility and reverence for God.

New Testament warnings include 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, the Apostle Paul instructs believers of the wisdom and power of Christ;

18 "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written,

***"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."***

***20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?***

***21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it
pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.***

22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,

23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

***24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the
wisdom of God.***

***25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than
men.***

***26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly
standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.***

27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

31 so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

And then there is 1 Corinthians 2:14;

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

The Professor’s Wife

Again, I ponder as to what motivated the Professors wife, to also have taken on theological studies at such a high academic level – Postgraduate Master of Arts (MA) – even though the text describes this academic level as **“only”** perhaps suggesting that her level is far inferior to her husband’s Double Doctorate. Yet, in stark contrast to the husband, the text describes her as a **“mature believer”** – ***in the Bible I assume*** as the detail in the text is very scant.

The Bible defines a mature believer as someone who reflects the character of Jesus Christ, moving past spiritual infancy to live a life marked by deep faith, humility, and active love. Excellent point, thanks Carlo

Rather than being swayed by deceptive teachings, mature believers apply biblical truth in their daily conduct. If this is the case with the professor’s wife, then John 3:16 would be one of her most anchoring scriptures serving as a core anchor for her because it summarizes the central tenets of the Christian faith.

The Nine-Year-Old Daughter

One can only imagine what the conversations amongst these three people would have been like on the topic of historical records and accounts (scripture), the love of God, the value of faith, the power of belief and the command to be discipled and then baptised in the name of Jesus. And how would these conversations, with or without bias, influence the thoughts

of the impressionable nine-year-old daughter. Her getting baptised may have been something she decided to do on the spur of the moment together with her friends who were also at camp. Or perhaps, in part for her immature understanding and “**love**” for the same Jesus her mother seems to have a “**mature belief**” in and in part in rebellion against her Father who may have, in a condescending way, mocked his wife’s strong desire to be all in when it comes to believing, expressing and living out the Gospel message and its expectations of every “**mature believer**”— all based on “**only**” an MA in Biblical Studies. I would strongly recommend that the camp leaders be counselled in the discipleship of children as baptism of nine-year-olds seems premature.

Assignment 12:2

Lectio Divina

I will have to reserve my comments on this methodological form of worship.

Lectio Divina is a traditional Catholic practice and to be honest, as a person born into a Roman Catholic indoctrinated family, I’m wary of anything that derives its origin from Roman Catholicism or is presented as a set formula of worship.

New Christians learning how to study God’s word may find it of some use.

If I were to introduce this methodology to a beginner, I would rather introduce them to the Protestant reformed adaptations of the ancient *Lectio Divina*.

Theirs shifted the focus from monastic contemplation toward rigorous, theologically-driven meditation. English Puritan Richard Baxter (1615–1691) championed this, particularly emphasizing the mind's active engagement with heavenly truths through systematic, step-by-step reasoning.

Puritan meditation often followed a structural flow similar to traditional *Lectio Divina*, but with distinct reformed characteristics:

- **Reading & Collecting (*Lectio*):** The process began with the careful, analytical reading of Scripture. Rather than simply letting the text "shimmer," Puritans focused on interpreting the grammatical and theological meaning.
- **Reasoned Meditation (*Meditatio*):** Puritans viewed meditation as "work" for the mind. Baxter famously compared meditation to using a scale; believers were

encouraged to mull over biblical truths, add reason upon reason, and argue with themselves to let the Word affect their hearts.

- **Active Prayer (*Oratio*):** The meditation would naturally erupt into fervent, extemporaneous prayer, applying the scripture specifically to the believer's life, family, and congregation.
- **Application & Contemplation:** Unlike monastic contemplation, which emphasized mystical, wordless union, the Puritan version focused on resting in the glory of God and actively resolving to live out the scriptural truths in daily obedience.

But as a true believer's faith "*matures*", so should their **intimate relationship with God** especially by way of partnering with the indwelling Spirit of our Holy Father and **being doers of the word always trusting and believing**, this is where the living word really comes alive in us - all the while having His living word written on our hearts and constantly resounding in our minds, bringing us a constant flow of His peace, strength, joy, discernment and grounding us on the rock who is Jesus Christ.

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