

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 3, How the Bible Teaches Us. Three Levels of Bible Teaching, Part 1.

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 3, How the Bible Teaches Us. Three Levels of Bible Teaching, Part 1.

Well, greetings and welcome to the third video in our series on 1 Corinthians.

We're still involved with doing some introductory matters. In our first two videos, we discussed the issue of being aware of the Bible translations that are available, particularly in this series in English, and how you can make the best use of a variety of Bibles in your study of Scripture. I trust that you've thought about that and you've kind of gotten in your minds this difference between formal and dynamic equivalence of translations and how you can use a series of translations in that continuum to do a better job of explaining Scripture, learning things yourself about translation, and being able to help other Christians who sometimes struggle with what the Bible says and why Bibles differ.

I think out of what we talked about in our first two lectures, you should be able to begin to make your way in a better understanding of that and be able to explain it to others. Now, another item I want to do in this introduction, as we get ready to deal with the text of 1 Corinthians, is to talk about how the Bible teaches us. We spend a lot of time thinking about what the Bible teaches us, but I would like to think a little bit about how the Bible teaches us.

I've done this in a variety of arenas, and my handout was prepared for a certain situation, which isn't exactly the introduction to 1 Corinthians, but it will be very germane, I think, as we move along in this. And I call it, How Does the Bible Teach Us? Three Levels of Biblical Teaching. And we'll explore that in the handout, or as the subtitle says, a primer for understanding theological differences that arise in the church.

The first time that I brought this lecture together in this manner, even though I had been teaching these items separately in a variety of ways, was in a situation where Christians were trying to work through differences in theological opinions. And that can get pretty volatile, particularly when an organization has been committed to something for a long time, and as time goes on, perhaps we have a better understanding of the Bible, and that begins to get challenged. And so, Christians are constantly under this stress of deciding why we have different opinions. And I think that I can give you a model today, and the handout that you have, which is file

number 3, the handout that you have is stated in a full way, and you'll be able to work through it, and come to some sort of consciousness as to what it means to use the Bible in conversation with others, particularly others with whom you disagree.

I think it can take a lot of the volatility out of that conversation and put it on the grounds of what the Bible actually says and how it applies to us. Now, let's think about this. One of the fascinating aspects of our Christian journey is to observe how many different assertions many different interpretations can be made from the same biblical text.

You don't have to live very long before you confront this. In recent decades, 1 Timothy 2:12, where Paul talks about the question of women and teaching, has been a very volatile text. How have you come down on that? And you know that if you've researched the question of 1 Timothy 2:12, even 2:12-15, you can very quickly retrieve a number of views and positions on just what that text means.

Well, which one is correct? Or what is your view on the role of miraculous gifts today? I'm sure that in an audience such as biblical e-learning, we have a variety of views about the charismatic expressions that we find in the book of 1 Corinthians, and we'll talk about that later. Well, how do you discern which of those is the most accurate position? It depends on who you ask, I suppose, or perhaps what book you read. Perhaps you read a book that just really grabs you, and it seems so persuasive, and you say, ah, that's the view that I'll take.

And then you pick up another book, and it's just as persuasive in a different direction. How do you work through these kinds of conflicts and claims? That's what I want to talk about. The fact of this variety opens up a vista of something else in relation to how God has created his world to operate and our position within that world.

The fact of this variety does not argue that all views are equally valid. That's not where we want to go. The fact that we have a multiplicity of views and interpretations on the text doesn't mean we throw our hands up and say, well, take whichever one impresses you the most.

Because at the end of the day, in most texts, maybe not all, but in most texts, there will be a view that is most compelling. But how do you get to that, and what do you do if someone else feels another view is more compelling? We have this constant tension of which view is the best choice. This variety illustrates that throughout the history of the Bible, we have observed that the Bible is subject to many readings.

This was true almost immediately. Even in the book of Acts, we see some controversies among the Christian workers that reveal this. And so, consequently, we want to talk about how we can work through the variety of opinions about verses, and I want to give you a paradigm to help do that.

Now, this variety of opinions covers a wide range. They can be as serious as major religious constructs. Judaism, Christianity, in the United States, what we call Mormonism, and Seven-Day Adventism are pretty major constructs in relation to certain religious views.

And of course, you have in the world today the question of the Koran and Islam, which is outside our spectrum because we're talking about the interpretation of the Bible itself. We've got a variety of denominations, a variety of ways to baptize, a variety of views on the role of women in ministry. We have a variety of views on the end times, which is what we call eschatology.

When will Jesus come? How will Jesus conclude earth's history? Everybody uses the same text and makes different assertions about the meanings of those texts. That's a fact. If you go to any library and get down ten books on a subject written by people who are competent to write on those subjects, you will not find a unanimous opinion.

You will find a variety of views. You'll find them all studying the same biblical text, but they're coming to different conclusions about those texts. Does that throw the Bible into an abyss of relativity? No.

What it does is illustrate the fact that God gave us one scripture, and we have many, many different interpreters. We have one inspired text and one authoritative text of scripture, but we find ourselves with many uninspired, so to speak, interpreters of scripture who come to different opinions. That is a part of the Christian worldview to see and to grasp the fact that there are differences even in a church that is held together by what we would call orthodox common denominators about God, Christ, and the authority of scripture.

So, we all need to work through that. And in a book like 1 Corinthians, we're going to see that there are certainly a lot of different approaches to text. Now, it's no wonder that the church has fallen on hard times in terms of reading and using the Bible when we see this mass variety of interpretations.

Now, let's think a little more on page 9, which is the second page of this particular handout. Rather than just wallowing in the variety or the confusion of it, I think there's a better way. And I want to talk about a few things.

First of all, I want to talk about locating the Bible and its readers. When we use the Bible as a source of knowledge and make claims about what it teaches, we engage a discipline known as epistemology. Now, don't be afraid of that big word.

It's part of the field of philosophy. Epistemology merely means what do we know and how do we know it. And it's a very practical way of saying it, but that's the bottom line.

We engage the issue of epistemology. Technically, epistemology has to do with the sources of our knowledge, the nature of our knowledge, and how we validate the knowledge that we claim. Now, as we think through that, the fact that we have one inspired text and yet many uninspired interpreters and their interpretations is evidence that the great variety of views that do exist in some sense owes itself to the way God has allowed the world to operate.

God hasn't given us some central inspired interpreter of the Bible to whom everybody has to go. There have been perhaps some smaller models in the history of the church where those things happen, but that's not the way that the scriptures present it. We have this variety, so the fact that we have an inspired scripture and we have many interpretations, we have to work through that in our Christian worldview and come to grips with the fact that, in some sense, that reflects God's world.

One Bible, one God, and yet we have never achieved absolute unity in regard to all of the teachings of scripture. We have a good core of unity that keeps us together, but we have great diversity after that. Now, some might claim that the Holy Spirit is the trump card in knowing what a passage teaches.

We'll talk about this a little more when we get to 1 Corinthians 2, but the role of the Spirit is not to convey to you the content meaning of scripture. The role of the Holy Spirit is to convict you that the scriptures are necessary and authoritative and that you need to be very serious about probing the meaning of the text. The role of the Spirit is a role of conviction.

In fact, that's a term that's used in the study of the scripture in relation to these issues. It's the concept of conviction, not the concept of content. We created in the image of God and are responsible for studying the Bible and coming to conclusions about its meaning.

And even though we have this variety of conclusions, we have to live with the conclusions that we perceive in unity, even with others who may have some different views, under that large umbrella that's acceptable, that we call orthodoxy. Now, as I mentioned, because we have this great variety of interpretations, and yet we have this one Bible that's read differently by people, does that mean that we're condemned to relativism in interpretation? That anything is okay. The phrase has been used in culture, the culture that I have lived in over the last few years, called whatever.

People just throw their hands up when they get into a testy discussion, and they say whatever, which becomes sort of a cop-out phrase to avoid discussing the question. No, we don't throw our hands up when it comes to the interpretation of Scripture and say whatever. We probe.

We try to discover what are the best lines of reason that a certain view claims and compare those lines of reason to another so that we work through the variety of interpretations and come up with what we see as a continuum of interpretations that are in a good ballpark, and then we may make a choice about one, we may sometimes choose to live with a variety. So, God, in some way, has ordained this diversity because it exists. God gave us the Word.

God created us in His image, and I think that as image bearers, we glorify God as we engage in the risk, the struggle, and the task of unpacking God's Word for us today. God's Word, in terms of Scripture, is fixed. It's not a moving target.

It doesn't redevelop itself as we go through succeeding generations. There may be some who treat Scripture in that manner from time to time, and every generation of the church has to reinvent the wheel. I don't see the Bible that way.

I see us as having the challenge of understanding what it meant and dealing with the questions of how we transfer that to our own context in time and space so that we can say what it means in our current setting. So, God has ordained to allow this diversity, and not intervene. And I think that the secret is that, in a sense, this time before the culmination of history, God is expecting us to take responsibility as image bearers.

We've been created to think, to choose, to live out our lives in a community, and He wants us to engage that seriously and to do so in a way that will glorify Him. Now, let's come to the main subject of the day, and that is how the Bible teaches us. I have a paradigm that I have developed over the years.

This paradigm actually came to me in an interesting situation of a friend of mine, whose name I won't mention, but is a very well-known Christian leader. He was lecturing in Australia, and after his lecture, a biblical scholar, whom I can't identify, I'm not really sure who it was because my friend didn't know at the time, but the biblical scholar came up to him after his lecture and said, is your teaching the direct teaching of the Bible, implied teaching of the Bible, or is it a creative construct that you've put together from the Bible? Now, those are three levels of thinking—direct teaching, which you can prove from a context.

Implied teaching is what many contexts compel us to come to but do not directly say. We've put together creative constructs and large systems to claim that this is the

best way to make sense of the Bible. Now, I'll try to explain each of those categories just a little more as we go along, but I want you to nail those.

Direct, implied, and creative construct. Now, my friend had been talking about a biblical view of something, but this stimulated his thinking about just how it was a biblical view. Not what it was, but how it was and how it relates to the Bible itself.

I believe there's a paradigm, and this is the paradigm of direct, implied, and creative construct that can help us reflect on how to understand and deal with the unity and diversity of interpretation that we all experience. I call it the three levels of how the Bible is a biblical view, how the Bible teaches.

I've taken that one little illustration, which virtually had no content, and over the years, I've thought a lot about it and developed it into the model that I'm sharing with you. I'm sitting here in my home study, which behind me are a variety of books. I have a very modest office in Florida.

I had a very sizable academic library that actually went to Houston, Texas when I retired to the Lanier Theological Library. You can look it up online, L-A-N-I-E-R, Lanier Theological Library. Lanier is a successful lawyer who created a Christian library, a biblical studies library in Houston, and has opened the doors for people to come and study and do research, and he's accrued tens of thousands of books in that library up to this time.

So, my books are over a thousand miles from where I am right now, which in some ways hampers me because I think, oh, I want to read this that I read once before in a volume. But I've garnered enough books for the things that I do in my office here to be able to get along. So, books are important, and I will introduce you to a half-dozen fine commentaries when we get into the formal introduction to the book of 1 Corinthians.

I've alluded to those already, and I'll say a little more about them. They can be something that can enhance your study of the scriptures, but they won't all agree. All right.

You're going to have to maneuver through the material and make your judgments about how these fit into how the Bible teaches. So, the Christian study is such a broad and complex task that it requires numerous fields of study. So, just before I talk about direct, implied, and creative constructs, on page 10, I want you to see what we call the Theological Encyclopedia.

Please turn to page 10 and look at the chart that is contained there. This pyramid intends to illustrate to you the various disciplines that are involved in the study of scripture and in the function of doing church. The pyramid is intentionally this way

because pyramids come up to a crescendo at the top, and you can see that the crescendo of our Theological Encyclopedia is ministry theology, doing theology in the context of ministry.

Everything that we do, whether we study Hebrew and Aramaic and Greek, whether we're Old Testament or whether we're New Testament, whether we deal with philosophical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, biblical theology, whatever the discipline is that an individual studies, it all, at the end of the day, is supposed to contribute to our proclamation of God and of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the world. And all of that comes, of course, from the base of this pyramid, which are the scriptures themselves. You'll notice that my base here begins with exegesis.

I could go down deeper into the foundation and talk about determining what scripture is. We talk about canon and talk about textual criticism and things of that nature, but for the present illustration, we start to assume the product of that, and we start with exegesis, which is pulling out the meaning from the text. Now, this chart has some phrases under it that are very important and very concise.

For example, exegesis is the competency to make reasoned judgments about biblical text. Even prior to exegesis is textual criticism that establishes the text to be studied. So, exegesis looks at the bits and pieces of the text.

Language becomes very important in the exegetical process. The next phase, as it were, and there's not a sanctified order of these lower aspects, but I think that I have a logical order here, is what's known as biblical theology. Biblical theology provides structural and conceptual models within which exegesis operates.

Biblical theology looks at Genesis for what Genesis is, not for what we want it to be, for example. It looks at narrative. What is the Abraham narrative? What does the Abraham narrative teach us? Later on, what is the Davidic narrative? What does the Davidic narrative teach us? It looks at the big pieces.

It looks at it in the historical and cultural context in which it happened. What did it mean to be an Old Testament person? What did it mean to be a prophet during the exile? What did it mean when John the Baptist came into the world and began preaching? What was the context after those centuries from the close of Malachi in the Old Testament canon up until the time of John the Baptist? There was no open revelation, and so consequently, what did it mean when he broke onto the scene? He was a strange person in some ways. Well, what's the point of that? He spoke to people in what the Old Testament called the land of milk and honey.

Well, what did that mean? Why was it a land of milk and honey? In other words, getting into the historical backgrounds and the conventions of how people

communicated in time and space is biblical theology. Biblical theology is not just taking the categories of systematic theology and going back and creating topical Bible studies on systematic themes and calling them biblical theology. That's not what biblical theology is.

Biblical theology tries to understand the Bible in its original context without imposing a much, much, much later Western construct of systematic theology onto the text. So, you're studying the Bible at the very beginning of its presentation to us. Historical theology is very important, and I think it comes at this stage of the Encyclopedia.

We need to understand how the Church developed, particularly in the earliest centuries, particularly in the first five centuries of the Christian Church, and how it viewed what we see in the testimony of the Scriptures. Now, let me make it very clear that as important as the Church Fathers are, they are not the last word in what the Bible means. They were dealing with the issue of interpretation just like we deal with it.

In some ways, we have a whole lot more information about the Bible, its context, and what it means than they did, even though they lived closer to the Bible. They lived in a time and space and a culture that sometimes was removed, particularly from the Old Testament. And so, we've got historical theology, then systematic theology.

It's a church or tradition that brings into reflective focus its own teachings based on its derived conceptual model. Systematic theology. I used to have an entire wall of sets of systematic theology.

I had some that were Calvinist and Reformed. I had some that were Arminian. I had renewal sets of theology by various individuals.

In other words, I had a variety of systematic theologies that I could compare, and they didn't agree with each other in terms of the overall and large macro structures of what the Scripture teaches. Now, they were all together on the issue of orthodoxy. They were all together on the issues of Christology.

But when it came to the particulars of the biblical interpretation, they don't always agree. But they brought into reflective focus, like Wesleyan theology brings into reflective focus, their understanding of Scripture. A Quaker theology brings into reflective focus their understanding of how the Christian world works.

A Reformed theologian brings his understanding into reflective focus. And there are some major differences between these. Our task is, of course, to understand them and to synthesize and to decide how to move forward.

There's philosophical theology. Now, this one could be placed in front of systematic, but I have it here. This is theology's evaluation and integration with creation's struggles.

It takes philosophical theology to deal with some very, very important issues of our own time. The question of sexuality, the question of transgender, the issues of male and female, the issues of worldview. I mentioned epistemology.

That all is very important in terms of bringing into focus the teaching of Scripture in a large macro way. Then there's apologetic theology. Apologetic theology proclaims these conclusions that we're coming to and defends them.

It's theology's defense of its conceptual framework. And I would actually add, maybe even revise this, theology's proclamation and defense of its conceptual framework. Apologetic theology is very important.

And then we have ministry theology, where we take this massive structure, and in every one of these frames is a career. We try to focus on what that means for the church and for the church's ministry to the world. Boy, that's a pretty big task, isn't it? Are we up to such a task? Well, no, we're not.

No, we're not. But as a community, we can be. And I think that this is something that the church needs to seriously reflect upon.

How can the church format itself so that it is a community of scholarship rather than just singular? Many times today, we don't have ministry theology. We have ministry performance. The church has to operate upon a theoretical model that is tied to Scripture, which becomes our marching order. This is the bottom line.

And you who would be listening to the lectures and biblically learning are the individuals who are going to carry it out into the world. Prepare yourself the best you can. Now, this encyclopedia is not to be separated.

I use the word bifurcated. That may be a new word to you, but I kind of like the word. To bifurcate something is to separate it.

Bi means to take it apart. This encyclopedia is not to be bifurcated. It's to be integrated.

If I had a fancy PowerPoint presentation for you, I would turn this pyramid into a water fountain. And the bottom would be the pool of water. It would be pumped up through the entire pyramid, and then it would flow over as a fountain, trickle back down through all of the stages, and be pumped again.

It's cyclical. The theological encyclopedia is not to be here, here, and here, but it is to be integrated so that each is informing the other and that we are looking to each other for help in our areas of weakness where someone else may be strong. In a sense, a good library for a ministry professional will have aspects of all of the encyclopedias sitting there waiting to teach you on call so that you can go and learn and integrate this same kind of information.

Yes, that's overwhelming. I'm overwhelmed. I've been doing this for many years, and yet I feel like a pygmy in relation to the task of what it means to represent God on earth, and to be a conveyor and a defender of the word that He's given us.

It's a noble task, and it's one that we need to take very seriously. So, there's this encyclopedia that we need to familiarize ourselves with. Notice the bold print at the bottom of page 10 in that little paragraph, about the third line down.

I make this comment. A reverse process, in other words, if we were to flip this thing and turn it on its top, a reverse process reads into the text of the Bible rather than from it. Let me say that again.

If we were to reverse the theological encyclopedia and make ministry theology the foundation, we would mess up the entire encyclopedia because ministry is a product of all of those other things. It is not the wellspring. You can't work from the top down.

You work from the bottom up. Each informs the next, and they all integrate so that we draw from each other. Doing ministry can help a person in exegesis or biblical or historical or systematic or philosophical theology realize the importance of what they do as others go out and proclaim the teaching of the Bible to the world.

So, we are to integrate, not to bifurcate. We're to take all of these disciplines together and try to work them as we work on major topics in our world. There may be some of you out there who are auditing these courses who are ministry leaders in another part of the world, maybe in Asia, maybe in some of the Slavic countries, in South America, in Arabic countries, in the Middle East, in the Middle East, in Asia.

So, many places where ministry takes place, and you're a ministry leader, and you may say, I feel so overwhelmed. Well, that's good, because as Job was baffled to fight better, your being overwhelmed shows you the seriousness of what you do. And so, how do you deal with being overwhelmed? You seek to bring together a community of leadership that can function and bring ministry theology to your people in a way that will not just garner numbers for your church, although numbers are good, but will give it a foundation that can be maintained through changing times, through changing culture.

Many churches and I think perhaps the United States, are at the head of this list in some ways, and in many ways, the United States church is challenged with losing its way. It's looking for gimmicks to be able to proclaim the word rather than establishing the kinds of foundations that we need out of which the word is proclaimed. So, we have challenges, to be sure, and they apply to all of us, not just a few.

Now, so we work from the bottom up in these categories. Now, we come to the next aspect of my paradigm, which is the paradigm of how the Bible teaches us. I call the three levels of biblical teaching, and they teach us in a direct way, an implied way, and in a creative construct way.

Look at page 11, and you will find the chart called Three Levels of Biblical Teaching. I have once again used the pyramid as an image of how this works. So, the direct is at the bottom of the pyramid.

Our first task is to find out what the Bible actually says in its own time and space, in its own conventions, and what it was intended to convey to its original audience. Then, we move out of that into larger segments of scripture. What's implied? I have printed out each of these categories in some detail, and I'll illustrate each of them in just a moment.

There are a lot of very, very, very important issues in the scriptures that are not directly stated. Let me put it another way. You can't go to the Bible and find a proof text.

Proof text is a concept. Here's a Bible verse that says exactly what I'm trying to tell you. There are many important issues for which there is no proof text. However, many important issues are addressed by scripture through compilation, a correlation of text, and different teachings.

For example, there is no Bible verse per se, and we'll talk about this in 1 Corinthians 7, which says, husbands, don't beat your wives, for example. There's not a verse that just says that, don't beat your wives. Well, I think we'd be very foolish if we thought that God would say, don't beat your wives, if he got us face-to-face to answer that question.

But we have a scripture that talks about love your wives. We have a scripture that talks about respect between the sexes: men to women and women to men. Even parents to children.

The Bible tells us not to frustrate our children. That's an interesting thing to pursue, isn't it? To answer, how is it that we don't frustrate our children? I might ask you who is auditing; if you're a male, do you frustrate your wife? Or do you enhance her and

help her? And I could say the same thing to women. Do you frustrate your husband? Or do you enhance and help your husband? So, there's a reciprocal piece that when we start looking at all the details of scripture, we may not have a proof text that has so many words that we're looking for, but we have plenty of places to go to discover the truth of it.

It hasn't been very long since there was a major celebration of Wilberforce. You in the Western world would know the name Wilberforce, who was very instrumental in helping to bring about the end of the slave trading. That event took place in England, and it's a very sad thing because slavery was stopped, not because the political people who could stop it recognized the morality of it.

It was stopped for economic reasons. Isn't that sad? But a very bright group of men was able to pull that off and get it stopped because it was no longer something that made money. That's sad in the history of the Western world.

It should have been stopped on moral grounds, but it wasn't. Now, unfortunately, and in some ways, there's not one verse in the Bible that says, do not have a slave. In fact, the New Testament is constantly talking about being slaves to Christ, using a metaphor because it was so much a part of the culture.

Indentured people were all over the place in the first century. In Rome, in fact, there's a story that says that at one point, someone had the bright idea in the power structures of Rome to dress the indentured servants a certain way so everybody would know who they were. I've heard this story, read it, and seen it cited.

I can't vouch for its historicity, to be frank, but it certainly makes a good illustration in one sense here. But they discovered that when they went out the next day, just to put it into story form, they looked around and saw more people dressed as indentured servants than freedmen. Well, that ended with special uniforms for servants in Rome.

They did not want to bring that much attention. Some famous people in the history of the Roman Empire were actually servants. They were owned by someone.

It wasn't the same kind of slavery often, and sometimes it was. The gladiators, for example, were a form of slavery. We're a little bit familiar with that in recent times because of certain books and so forth.

But American slavery was a completely different kind of horrible slavery than what some of the Romans, some leaders, and some educational leaders in the Roman system were actually indentured. We don't have a verse, but I would like to tell you that the Bible is against what we see in slavery, very much against it. In fact, we could take the book of Philemon and find what I would call an extremely strong implication

of teaching, not a proof text per se because Paul does not send Onesimus back to Philemon.

Onesimus was a runaway slave. But he calls for Philemon to teach, to treat Onesimus as a brother. And so there are very strong implications within Philemon, and yet not exactly a proof text.

And so, the implicational levels of the Bible are serious, but they're not as simple as finding a verse. Now, let me just say something about proof text very quickly. It's very tempting for people to use the Bible and to find a verse that says what they want to say.

You can do that. The Bible is a big book, and if you look long enough, you'll find a series of words that will justify what you want to say. It doesn't justify it.

It's just verbal agreement. But the fact is that you pull these things out of context. I remember one passage, for example, avoid all appearance of evil was the way that the King James translated that Thessalonians text.

And I remember as a young Christian that that verse was used. Don't go to a movie theater. Movies are evil.

Don't go to a restaurant that's also a bar because drinking is evil. And people used it as a pry bar, a crowbar, to pry people in the direction they wanted them to go. They used it as a proof text.

Well, that's not even what the verse is about. The verse, literally, is to avoid every kind of evil. Now, you've got to go to the Bible and define something as a kind of evil before you can pry other people in the direction you may want them to go.

So, the verse was used and abused rather than understood. There are many passages like that, and we all are in danger of taking passages and turning them into what we want them to be. I have a little bit of an illustration of that.

I use an imagery called hermeneutical ventriloquism. Now, hermeneutics is a term that has to do with the interpretation of the Bible. In fact, that word is even in the Greek New Testament.

When Jesus was on the cross, and they put that sign up on Jesus' head of being the king of the Jews and so forth, it used that word, which was interpreted as. Did I get that illustration right? You better look that up. I'm not going to stop the tape at this point and try to edit this out.

But when I go into this mode of using an illustration I didn't write down, sometimes I can have a little bit of a senior moment on that. But you know what I'm saying, which is interpreted as. So, hermeneutics has to do with interpretation.

Hermeneutical ventriloquism, the imagery is this. You know what a ventriloquist is, a person who has a little mannequin doll and has their arm in the doll and makes the doll say what they want it to say. Hermeneutical ventriloquism is when people take the Bible and treat it like a dummy and make it say what they want it to say.

There's a lot of hermeneutical ventriloquism in our world. Sure, you can go to the Bible and find some words and say what you want to say, but the question is, is that what the Bible is teaching, or have you inserted into scripture a meaning that was never there? We all need to be careful. At the implied level, that's very easy to do, but it's even easier to do at the next level, which is the creative construct level at the very top.

The creative construct level is a construct that's created from data and put into a system to teach something. For example, premillennialism is a creative construct about the end times. All millennialism is a creative construct about the end times.

Calvinism is a creative construct. Arminianism is a creative construct. It doesn't mean that they're not tied to verses.

All of them would claim to be tied to passages, obviously, but each and every one of those is a large macro explanation of the whole Bible, and then the pieces of the Bible fit into that macro explanation. That's another reason, and you can see very quickly why it is that we have all this variety of interpretation in some pretty important areas because, as human beings, we've come to scripture and created our constructs. That takes place over a long period of time.

It usually takes place within a community historically, but then eventually, somebody writes the manual on this particular construct, and then everybody else gets in line. Well, we need to test those things because there is no proof text for any of those views, but there's a compilation of texts that are brought together in a logical way to try to prove a certain large understanding of scripture as a whole. For example, you've got what we call covenant theology that looks at the Bible a certain way.

You've got dispensational theology that looks at the Bible a certain way. Both of these are like lenses that are put on scripture to bring the scriptures into a certain conformity to certain understandings. Now, be careful because they will claim, and they would be right, that the scriptures drove them to those understandings.

Everybody claims that, don't they? Does anybody not claim that their macro view of the Bible is not a product of the study of the Bible itself? Everybody claims that, and

yet look at how many differences we have. Our task is not to throw our arms up and say, what am I supposed to do? Our task is to be aware of this, and instead of being victimized by all of the variety, to deal with the variety, classify the variety, and bring it into a reflective focus. Now, in this construct of direct, implied, and creative, I want you to see something else.

On the sides of my pyramid, I have arrows going up. On the left side, we go up from teaching intent to theological analysis. What's that about? Well, at the bottom of the pyramid, when you're dealing with a certain passage, you can go a long, long way in exegetical and biblical theology to determine what that text meant.

There is a meaning in the text. We may not be perfect at that, but we can go a long, long way to determine what the writer was doing and what that communication is about. That's teaching intent.

Authorial intention is another way to say it. Now, I realize I'm very much aware and can't digress into all the debate about authorial intention. Vanhoozer's famous book, *Is There a Meaning in the Text*, comes to the conclusion that yes, there is.

It is a very structured book to read. So, there's a whole history of hermeneutics right there. Is there a meaning in the text, and how do we derive that meaning? But I'm just asserting to you, yes, there is. That's the teaching intent.

But as you go up the pyramid to the creative construct, you're coming into what's known as theological analysis, where skilled individuals trained thoroughly in the study of the Bible, and in the study, perhaps, of their own tradition to bring together scripture and meaning as they have, as a tradition, have come to know it, and to bring into reflective focus these theological analyses of a variety of interpretations, a variety of macro structures about how to go about the Bible and Christian ministry. So that's on the left side. So, as we go up the pyramid, we're doing more interpretation.

As we go down, we're getting closer to what it originally said. But once again, the pyramid is not bifurcated; it is integrated so that we can see the lines of reason from the bottom to the top, and we can test those lines of reason and say, these are strong. These are not so strong. These are compelling, but they are not so compelling.

At the end of the day, however, I can guarantee that they will fit the creative construct because that's what skilled people do when they write theologies. On the right side of the pyramid, we have what's known as a taxonomy. Taxonomy is an educational term, and it has to do with levels of understanding, from simple to complex.

And so, at the bottom of the chart, we call it a low taxonomy. That doesn't mean that it's an easy taxonomy. This means that it is a more brute-force approach to taxonomy.

You can study what John 3 means when it says that, except for man being born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. You will surface a variety of views on how to unpack that statement and its meaning in salvation history. You could go out there and find it and come up with some good ideas.

It's got brute facts that you can search. That's at the low end of the taxonomy. As you move up the pyramid, you have a high taxonomy, which means you have a lot more secondary assumptions.

This means this because I think it means this here and because I've come to see it as meaning this here, then it's got to mean this here. It's a connection of assumptions. And, of course, as we well know, assumptions must always be tested.

That's why things in the top of our pyramid, these macro systems and the creative constructs that the history of theology has produced, need to be tested. They are not the scriptures. They are not the authority.

They are a product of scriptures, and so, therefore, we must run them back through the theological encyclopedia. We must run them back through the pyramid of direct implied and creative constructs so that we can make a solid judgment about the compelling nature or the lack of compelling nature of various arguments about the interpretation of scripture. Now, I know that's a lot to take in, in a lecture where you're in another part of the world, and I'm here, and I'm doing a synthetic presentation.

We can't take a semester, so to speak, and we need to build the blocks that will help you understand this. I think that you can understand the basic points that are being made. I suppose it is the comprehension of those points that would be challenging.

How do you integrate that? How do you apply it in your own theological and ministry context? Well, that takes time, but it takes a beginning, and the beginning is now, where you read through my handout and where you think about these items. Now, I'm keeping these video lectures at least within some time frame so that you don't have to sit there a ridiculous amount of time in one setting in these videos. That means that I will interrupt certain handouts and come back to them, and that's what I'm going to do right now.

We are in video lecture number three, and we've looked at how the Bible teaches us. We've laid a foundation. I'm going to come back with video number four, and we will

continue this conversation and add to it the issue of validation, which is the next handout, the next packet of notes that you can retrieve from the site.

I'm going to try to bring together how the Bible teaches and how you research the Bible to try to move you forward in the big picture of what it means for you to really let the Bible be your guide, to not treat the Bible as a dummy, as a hermeneutical ventriloquist, but to take the Bible seriously and let the Bible drive you rather than you drive the Bible. I'll see you next time.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 3, How the Bible Teaches Us. Three Levels of Bible Teaching, Part 1.