

# **Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Lecture 4, How Bible Teaches Us, Three Levels of Biblical Teaching, Part 2**

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This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 4, How the Bible Teaches Us Three Levels of Biblical Teaching, Part 2.

Well, welcome back to the fourth lecture in our introduction to the e-biblical learning course on 1 Corinthians.

As I mentioned to you in the orientation, my name is Gary Meadors. I'm an emeritus professor of Greek and New Testament from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary in Michigan, USA. Delighted to be back with you again.

I'm glad you're making progress. The introduction may seem to be a little bit long, but we're addressing several issues that I think are important for anyone who's going to study the Bible. Now, again, I mentioned that we're looking at this from the English language perspective, that no matter what your primary language may be, you probably can find three or four Bibles that fit the criteria that we've discussed. Remember, we started with this issue of so many Bibles, so little time.

It is just a catchy phrase to capture the fact that there are a lot of translations in any language, and Christian people have to deal with that. I gave you a paradigm where you can do that by looking at the question of the kind of translation they are. Usually, the introduction to an English or any language Bible will tell you what it's about, but the main Bibles that I used are probably internationally distributed in other languages, so you could take a King James or an RSV or an NIV or a New Living Translation, those four that I've used, and find them in almost any language.

Now, we also have been talking about how the Bible teaches us, and I use the word how. It's not so much biblical teaching as it is the way that we draw teaching from the Scripture. We've talked about the direct level of teaching, the implied level of teaching, and creative constructs.

We've put these into a paradigm of a pyramid where you move from the bottom to the top, and that's where we are, we'll start today to continue to discuss the concept of how the Bible teaches us so that you can be more aware of how you're using the text that you're using. For example, on page 11, we have the chart of direct, implied, and creative construct, the three levels of biblical teaching. I would invite your attention there again, and we'll start there and think about it and move on to finish this particular component in our introduction.

All right, so at the bottom, we have this idea of the direct teaching of the Bible. By that, we mean what one can demonstrate. Now, you'd have to do that by research and commentaries and so forth if you're working on a text, but the direct teaching is what one can demonstrate in a context where the Christian church has conceived reasonable consensus, has brought a meaning of a text to reasonable consensus, that almost across the board, everyone would agree that that's what that particular passage is addressing.

And if you study the right kind of literature, you will see that meaning brought out from the standpoint of when the Bible was written, many hundreds of years and even thousands of years ago, in the conventions of that particular time and the literary genre that's involved, whether it's narrative or poetry or an epistle, and that you are finding as you search through good literature that there's a consensus meaning. And that's pretty much as close as we can get to authorial intention. Authorial intention means what the original writer intended to convey to his audience in the time and the space in which he was operating.

As a result, we have a product. We would call that direct teaching. Now, but that's not to say that direct teaching is simple.

For example, on the left side of the chart, we talk about teaching intent, which is direct teaching. What does that text intend to teach? Well, we could read the commandments and come across the one, thou shalt not kill. But what does that mean? If we read that on the surface, we could come up with a variety of responses.

One extreme could be non-combatant, for example, that you should never kill. Is that what that command means? And so, while we have what seems to be a simple command when we put that under a microscope and study it, we will be confronted with this: does it mean thou shalt not murder? Or does it mean that thou shalt not kill ever, for example, in war? So, what might seem simple under a microscope becomes more challenging to determine the meaning of that sort of idea. What does it mean that you should believe in Jesus Christ for everlasting life? What is the nature of believing? Is it merely intellectual assent that you say, yes, I know that Jesus is the son of God and that he died for my sins? And yet, believing has something to do with the internal part of a person, whereby we engage at a more intimate level in that sense of belief.

There's a believing, there's a belief. For example, when Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus and Mary came up, he told Mary that if you believed, you would see the glory of God. Well, Mary had a belief.

She had just stated in that context in John 21 that she had the belief that Jesus could solve the problem. But Jesus pressed her on believing. Believing is something based on what you have committed yourself to in terms of a belief.

So there are all kinds of questions that can be raised on things that may seem to be consensus opinions, but it's more of a consensus statement. We make the statement, but what do those statements mean? That's all part of biblical study. But there's a direct level where we achieve some reasonable consensus, but that consensus is not off the top of our heads.

It is a product of research and reading. There's the implied level that we're going to illustrate a little more on the next page. And then there's the creative construct level at the top.

We call that theological analysis. Creative constructs are major macro-inductive studies through the entire Bible that, at the end of the day, create a system of understanding. There are covenant theology systems of understanding.

There are what they call dispensational systems of understanding. And there are many different approaches to these systems of understanding. But those systems are what people have conceived and constructed in a large way to make sense of the whole Bible.

But what happens is you go back to the Bible with your system, and you can impose that system on the text and end up making the text say what the system has decided to believe. So, biblical study has a lot of challenges. We talked about the fact that at the top of this chart, the creative construct level is a high taxonomy.

A high taxonomy means that we have to apply more critical thinking to the things that we're studying. So, you've got all kinds of levels, direct levels, things that may seem to be common denominator and relatively clear. You've got implied levels that are very important and yet may not have a proof text to support them, so I'll talk a little more about that.

And then you've got the creative constructs, which are these huge macro understandings of scripture from which people actually interpret biblical texts—brute facts to high critical thinking sorts of systems. Now, notice the paragraph at the bottom of page 11 in my notes.

Christians affirm that the Bible is their ultimate source of knowledge for faith and practice. But when they look for a biblical passage that addresses the questions of their current setting, they often discover that there is no text that directly addresses their concerns. We live in a day, for example, of a very intricate and elaborate science and even the science of life.

And there's not a lot of text in scripture that would address things such as euthanasia. That would address things such as transgender in terms of a direct teaching of the Bible. So we go, and we look for what we call proof text.

Proof text is a terminology that we use to relate to the fact that people pull a Bible verse out. By using that Bible verse, they're making claims about what should be believed. Now, we've all had Bible verses pulled on us.

I can remember one, and you've probably experienced it. Someone would pull out 1 Thessalonians 5. Avoid all appearances of evil. That's the King James translation, an old very formal translation.

Avoid all appearances of evil. And then someone would tell us you shouldn't do that because that gives the wrong impression. For example, this may not even be part of your experience.

But there was a time in the Christian church, particularly in the West, where it was said you shouldn't go to commercial movie theaters. At that time, the things that were on TV were more bland, and the theaters were pushing the envelope of morality and example. And so Christians would say you should avoid that.

Then they'd pull the verse. Avoid all appearances of evil. Or someone might say to you, you can't eat at that particular place because that's an open bar, and it's a bad example, and you have people in there that are loud and using profanity and so forth and so on.

So, avoid all appearance of evil. And they would use that proof text. Well, the problem is that proof text in that translation is conveying something that the text itself is not trying to convey.

In other words, it's not about guilt by association, which is why the word appearance is being used by some. It's not guilt by association. However, avoiding every kind of evil is a better translation.

And if you were looking at a continuum of translations, you would be stimulated to see that every kind of evil. Now, a kind of evil is something that can be biblically defined as a moral problem. Then, you have the context of that passage.

It's not just something that can be pulled off the face of the page and used as a crowbar to pry people in certain directions. We've all used the Bible, I'm afraid, in that sort of way. So, we have to understand the direct teaching of scripture in order for it to be loud and usable at other levels.

Now, turn the page to page 12, and let me continue thinking about this with you. I'm going to be a little repetitive, but the repetition should help us to work in the issues. In fact, I would like to say that there are three R's of learning.

That was a kind of a proverb and a cliché in my upbringing. The three R's of learning are reading, writing, and arithmetic. And they would pun on the R's in those words.

But frankly, the three R's of learning are reading, reading, and reading. And we could say repetition, repetition, repetition. The more we hear something, the more likely we are to begin to bring it into our conceptual focus.

So, the direct teaching on page 12 relates to discerning the authorial, textual intention of a given context. Now I say authorial, textual. Let me explain that.

It's very difficult to claim that I know what was in Paul's mind because I can't talk to Paul one-on-one and face-to-face. I have the product that Paul left me, which is the text, which is the Bible, which are the things that Paul wrote. So, I am trying to discern the textual intention from those texts of that author and, by so doing, get back as close as I can to Paul's authorial intention.

And yet, as we have discussed in other ways, and we've seen even in Bible translations, there is not always total agreement among Christians about the meaning of a given Bible verse. Each would claim, I know what Paul meant here, and yet say something that could be different. Even Bible translations do that very thing.

We saw that in the chart. And so consequently, when we talk about the direct teaching level, discerning the authorial, textual intention, we're doing our best to get as close as we can by consensus opinion and by making reasoned judgments within our own theological understandings of the meaning of a given text. And we move forward on that basis.

We have to. That's the way it is. And as I mentioned previously, doing so glorifies God.

He created us in his image to think, to feel, to choose. And he is glorified when we exercise the characteristics of being created in the image of God, those rational characteristics that he's given us. And he's even told us to study, to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed.

So, this direct teaching might be as straightforward as a simple imperative. Thou shalt do something. Thou shalt not do something.

Those are typically reasonably clear. And yet we still have to study. Thou shalt not kill is not as reasonably clear as thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

I think we would understand more quickly a moral command like Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, as thou shalt not kill. We could make assumptions about what it means not to kill. But then we look at the Bible, and God commanded killing.

Did God break his own commandment? No. Then, we need to think a little more about what that command means. So, it could be something that seems to be as simple as a direct command.

The supreme commands of the Bible to love God and love your neighbor seem to be pretty straightforward and pretty simple. But then, when we start probing them, we have to ask the questions, well, what does that entail? What does it mean that you should love your enemy? Does that mean emote over your enemy? Does it mean to plan for the greatest good for your enemy? And what would that mean? How would you control what good means? You see, as soon as we start asking real questions, we realize that we have a lot of thinking to do to address those ideas. So direct teaching is not necessarily simple teaching, but direct teaching is where we see the Christian community, particularly, if you please, within the community that you operate, coming to a consensus opinion about the meaning of a biblical text.

I would give a caveat there and say that no matter what community we're in, we need to respect other Orthodox communities because they come to a consensus on occasion differently than we do. Even the evangelical community, which is a small community within the American biblical context, is in little agreement in some pretty major ways. Yet we have to agree or disagree to be able to come together and achieve consensus goals that we might not be able to achieve on our own.

So, direct teaching. Exegesis and biblical theology tend to work on the direct level. Have you ever picked up a commentary, and you're just dying for it to tell you what a book means? And you keep reading, and you keep reading, and you keep reading, and you're getting all these details and all this seemingly isolated information, but you can't get to the big picture.

Well, commentaries are designed to look at the bits and pieces. A good commentary will put that in the frame of a large picture. But the fact is, is that if you drop in somewhere, you're getting information.

It's not like a novel. Therefore, it can tend to be a little bit more challenging. But commentaries tend to work on the direct level, and depending on the commentary and the nature of the series in which it is, it's bringing you to that larger level in different ways.

So, the direct level. The implied teaching level may be the trickiest of the bunch. The implied teaching level relates to concepts that are not directly stated by biblical

words in a context but are teachings that the biblical community recognizes as the extensions of biblical statements and context.

Let me read this to you because it'll make better sense, and you can reread it and think about it. This level, this implied teaching level, accounts for a number of crucial doctrines. For example, to be Christian, we need to hold the doctrine of trinity as essential for Christian thought.

We do not have Christianity without a doctrine of the Trinity. However, the doctrine of trinity is implied level teaching, not direct level teaching. In other words, you can't go find a proof text in the Bible that simply says there's a trinity or a context where it says there's a trinity, and then it starts unpacking that in that biblical context.

No such thing exists. Now, if that's the first time you've thought that thought, it could be very intimidating. Does that mean then that we're on shaky ground about the Trinity? No, it doesn't need to mean that.

Alistair McGrath, a major English scholar, and teacher, observed, and I quote, this is in the middle of this paragraph on page 12: The doctrine of the trinity can be regarded as the outcome of a process of sustained and critical reflection on the pattern of divine activity revealed in Scripture and continued in Christian experience. This is not to say that Scripture contains a doctrine of the Trinity. Now, what he means by that is Scripture doesn't give us direct teaching.

It's giving us implied teaching. He is not saying by that statement there is no such thing as a doctrine of the Trinity. He's saying that there is no such thing as a direct proof text for this.

Let me say that again. This is not to say that Scripture contains a doctrine of the Trinity. Rather, Scripture bears witness to a God who demands to be understood in a Trinitarian manner.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So, you see, understanding the direct, implied, and creative construct levels will help you as a reader to understand what scholars who understand these models will say without actually putting the model in front of you at that moment. You've got to be able to always read between the lines and understand the experience and background that scholars bring when they write.

And McGrath is bringing this kind of a context here. He's bringing to us the nature of an implied teaching, the trinity, as absolutely important as it is. It's an implied teaching of the Bible.

It's not something for which we have a proof text. So, we can see here that much of the work of the early church fathers in the creedal development of the Trinity, in the

creedal development of the two natures of Christ, and the fact that Christ is God. This creedal development evidences the category of implication.

Many of the core concepts of the systematic theology disciplines reflect the implied category of teaching. That's the big picture, the macro picture. And many Christians and I think this would be a common experience, start by hearing these macro things before they have addressed and looked at the micro level of teaching.

Now, that can be kind of intimidating if you're a new Christian or perhaps a Christian who has not had the opportunity to adequately probe the scriptures and be taught these things, to hear that for the first time. But it's extremely crucial.

Otherwise, you will be what I have called a hermeneutical ventriloquist. Instead of letting the Bible teach you as it does in these direct, implied, and creative construct ways, in terms of your community, you will make the Bible say what you want it to say. And if you look long enough and hard enough, you can find words in the Bible that will meet your expectations, that those words may not have anything to do with the context that you're actually using in terms of that Bible.

Let me use another illustration to try to bring this home. Every Sunday morning, we go, and we listen to preachers, or other days of the week, or in other sorts of situations, we listen to people who get up and talk to us. And if you live within a conservative Christian domain, they're talking to us usually from the Bible.

They're telling us what the Bible means. One of the hardest things I do, as one who's been trained in the Bible and has taught the Bible for decades, is to listen to somebody claim they're telling me what the Bible means. When I listen, it appears to me they don't have a clue what that context means.

That's very difficult to do because here's the thing. They are speaking biblical truth. They're just using the wrong place in the Bible.

And sometimes, if you listen to certain preachers over and over and over and over and over again, they say almost the same thing all the time, from different places in the Bible. Is the Bible that bland? Or have we failed to probe the Scriptures to find out what these texts mean so that we receive the great wealth of teaching that the Bible has to offer to us? So, what happens is that people get up and pontificate about the meaning of Scripture almost off the tops of their heads. And those heads are kind of small.

And so, what happens is they tend to say the same thing over and over and over again, from different places in the Bible, as if they're teaching the Bible. They're not getting into those contexts. What they're saying may well be biblically true.



And oftentimes, it is. They're good-hearted folks who believe in Jesus and love Jesus. But they're not saying what that context means.

And in that sense, they have undermined the very Bible itself. I'm afraid that many of our cultures have lost respect for Scripture because, as Christian workers, we have undermined that respect with our flippant ways of studying the Bible, our emotional devotionals, rather than reasoned explanations of what the Scripture means. My hope for you, as you study the book of Corinthians, is that you will learn to probe the text of the Bible so that it teaches you rather than you teaching it.

That's a challenge that we all must rise to. So, direct teaching, implied teaching. As you can see, implied teaching is very important because something as crucial and absolutely important as the Trinity falls into that domain.

Then, we come to creative constructs at the very top of the pyramid. Notice the statement again on page 12. The creative construct level is the product of selecting one's view of macro, which is a big understanding of how the Bible has framed certain subjects.

For example, this gets into a partisan type interpretation. I'm going to use some words here. Maybe they're something that you've experienced.

Maybe they're not. You can probably add other illustrations. For example, are you pre-millennial or all-millennial in your understanding of Earth history and the future? Those are two major constructs that have meaning in terms of how you read the Bible and what you read from the Bible.

Are you a covenant theologian, a dispensationalist, or some other construct that provides a synthesis of the whole Bible? Are you an Arminian or a Calvinist as you read the scriptures? Or maybe, as I've said, just confused. I think that many are confused. I hope that you have thought through each of these extreme categories that are not contradictory but that are in conflict actually with each other in the interpretation of specific texts and in the macro understandings of a Christian worldview.

Pre-millennialists and all-millennialists have a different view. Now, they have a lot of common denominators. A lot of common denominators.

And you don't even know the fact that you're using literature that comes from one or the other. And sometimes you don't even know it because they're not trying to beat that drum in the particular book or commentary that they're working on. Calvinists and Arminians and covenants and dispensationalists and people get really hot and bothered many times about all of these different approaches.

But the very facts of those approaches prove the paradigm that I'm trying to get you to understand. Those are creative constructs. There is no proof text for any of them.

Now, they will use lots of text, but they use them within the system. And this is not always easy to discern and figure out. In my opinion, novices of each of these kinds of views would become very upset because they commit themselves to certain creative constructs as if they were divine.

And they deify their own understanding. All of these views cannot be correct at the end of the day. They will have lots of common denominators between them that are correct.

But there are still significant differences between these, not antithetical, but between these two vying options for how you should understand life. Now, why is it a fact of life? Why didn't God make it easier for us? Why didn't he just wipe away all these distinctions and these differences? There may be a lot of answers to that, but my answer is this: When He created us in his image, he didn't create us to be robots. He didn't give us all of the answers in the Bible.

He gave us a constitution. In fact, the analogy to the U.S. Constitution and how amazingly it can cover different times and space and different cultures and still guide a country, even though the problem is it's being challenged, of course. And you notice it has to be challenged.

I've got to get rid of it if they want to change how we're being guided. That's political, which I don't get into very much. But the fact is, we have these macro understandings that guide us.

And sometimes we get so committed to them, we can't hear what the Bible has to say. So, I think we should start with the Bible and work toward the others. And everybody does that, but at the end of the day, you've got to be aware of the paradigms, both the theological encyclopedia and how the Bible teaches us.

You've got to be aware of these paradigms and constantly watch where you are at any given moment in terms of your understanding and in terms of what you're trying to cause other people to understand. When we get into the book of 1 Corinthians, we're going to be immersed in varying views about certain serious theological issues. Even within traditions like evangelicalism, there are massive disagreements about certain texts in 1 Corinthians.

So, as we see, these are large frames. These views of the whole Bible are large frames. God created us in his image to deal with this.

He hasn't made life simple for us because he wants to see us deal with the risk and the struggle and with the diversity that confronts us every day. We're joined by common denominators, and we really need to focus on those, but we shouldn't ignore the fact that in spite of the common denominators, we have a lot of diversity. And that separates us sometimes into different communities.

And communities shouldn't fight with each other. We should try to proceed and to advance the common denominators. At the same time, there are serious differences of convictions about various ideas.

So, let's move out of confusion and move into understanding the fact that these diversities exist, and they exist from the same Bible, and we need to be a person who is well enough versed that we can work through that and see how the direct, the implied, and the creative construct levels are operating as people develop theological understandings. Continuing in the paragraph after the idea of confusion, these views, all the variety of views, and you can add your own to it, these views of the whole Bible are large frames that interpreters help interpreters exposit the sense of the whole from its parts. Now, that does lead each view down a certain path.

It also leaves each individual with a certain commitment to understanding certain texts. And yet, they're all using the same text and having different understandings. By now, you should start to not just realize that.

You already realized it. Maybe you were afraid to own it. But we have to own that that is what's happening in our world and move out from that and start to understand and see the whole building rather than just fight what's going on down in the foundations of a view.

But see where they go, see where they came from, and understand. We're trying to strive toward understanding because it's out of the understanding that we can come to our own conclusions and convictions with a sense of conviction. And understanding.

Now, notice the italicized speech here. Constructs, that is, creative constructs, are the product of our sustained reflection upon the text. But they are seldom proven from any specific direct context.

Now, each of those antithetical views of millennialism or theological systems is going to get very adamant that they have their proof text in a line. And that's exactly what it means. But then along comes someone else just as smart, just as trained with an antithetical view.

And we can't call one a heretic and the other one not a heretic. Nor can we make the subjective claim that the Spirit told this one but didn't tell that one. The Spirit of God works with all of these interpreters.

So, is the Spirit confused? No. You see, you've got to move to understanding how this works so that you don't end up blaming God for the problem. It's the problem of the fact that God has given us inspired scripture but not inspired interpreters.

Because we glorify God as we engage in the interpretation of scripture and live according to our understandings and convictions, even in the diversity that the Christian Church evidences, so, these constructs are now the product of an inductive process. I don't care whether it's millennialism or theological constructs like Arminianism and Calvinism.

They are an inductive study of the Bible that brings those views into reflective focus. Now, we have to go back to our school days, perhaps, and think about the philosophy of logic. In logic, you learn that deduction leads to certainty.

Induction leads to probability. Those are two domains: deductive and inductive. Let me use that analogy to say this.

We have a deductive Bible just to use the analogy. The Bible is certain. But we have an inductive process of drawing truth from that Bible and drawing understanding and the meaning of context from that Bible.

We're involved in an inductive process as human beings studying a book that's been given to us by divine control, and we can assume is accurate and worthy of our study, our belief, and our obedience. But we're doing that and coming to our conclusions through an inductive process. So, even being the best that we can be, we're on a continuum of probability.

Our view is probably more correct than the other view for these reasons. And therein we rest our convictions. We have humility because we, as human beings, live in a world of some level of probability, no matter how strong our convictions may be.

Now, there are some things I'll die for as a Christian. And we all need to engage in this, and I think even more so in the kind of world in which we live today. I believe that a Christian should die for the Trinity and the idea of Trinity, the belief of Trinity.

And if we can't do that, then we cannot consistently be Christian. I think that a Christian needs to die for the fact that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who was incarnate by the miraculous operation of God in planting a divine seed, as it were, into Mary's womb. And Jesus now is the God-Man.

Just as much God as if he was never a man. Just as much man as if he was never God. Not to be confused or to be merged, but he is the God-Man.

If we don't believe that, we're not Christian. Now, we could add a few other things to that. There are some things that we would die for that are actually implied and creative construct theologies.

Both of those are. We don't have a proof text per se. We have implicational text that we have moved into that system.

But they're there by induction, by probability. And yet we've had a long, long time to test that probability, and so, therefore, the church rests very adamantly upon certain beliefs about God and Christ. We can't do anything else.

If we're going to commit ourselves to God, that's our belief system. Those are basic beliefs that we must own and be willing, as it were, to die for. Otherwise, we do not have a belief system.

Something that is important and serious doesn't have a proof text, but it has an implicational process of teaching. So, the implication is important. Even creative constructs are important.

As the church fathers who were very, very well equipped to do this, oddly enough, some people say, well, they didn't have formal education. They came out of persecution. Well, they were a whole lot smarter than most of the people I met every day, and I live in a university setting.

Consequently, they were able to deliver this to us, and we're committed to it. We have a Bible, as I say at the bottom of this page. We have a Bible that is the product of revelation.

That's a deductive thing. But we use inductive Bible study methods to unpack it. In formal logic, deductively sound arguments can lead to certainty.

But induction leads to degrees of probability. Top of page 13. Consequently, no matter how tightly argued and how convinced we are about our creative construct systems, they are still only in the realm of probability non-certainty.

Now, you'll say, wait a minute, are you contradicting yourself? You said you'd die for Trinity, and you'd die for the hypostatic union of Christ and things of that nature. Yes, I would. And to me, they're certain because I believe in them.

But I could no more prove any of that to an atheist, because an atheist, for example, is not committed to believing the implication of teaching of the Bible. Therefore,

they're not going to move on with that. Then, I would revert to more theology, such as the conviction of the Spirit.

That's the very work of the Holy Spirit in the world and in the church, is to convict people about what the scriptures teach. Not to give them that content but to convict them about that content. And so that is a very deep level worldview about being Christian, or about being any view.

Every view has this sort of thing. Every view has this non-negotiables, or it wouldn't be a view. I'm talking about worldviews, world religions, and so forth and so on.

We live in an age, I'm doing this lecture in June and July of 2017. And we're right now in the midst of a world that is dealing with the deep levels of what we call terrorism. Now terrorism can come in many shapes and forms.

But the fact is, is that we're living in this deep angst of terrorism. People are dying daily. Christians are more persecuted now than they've ever been in any time in history.

More Christians are being martyred now than at any time in history. In the Western world, we're often insulated from that, even though England and France are no longer insulated. The USA has had its moments and will have bigger moments in the future.

But what is it that drives a terrorist? Worldview drives a terrorist. Why would a person strap a vest of ball bearings and explosives and not only kill others but kill themselves? Why? It's not for political reasons; it's a religious principle. And until you understand that, you won't really realize that this will never go away.

Because as long as someone is committed to a religious principle, be it right or wrong, even according to its own community, be it right or wrong, there's no stopping that kind of motivation. And so, yes, whether we're Christian or whether we're some other religion, there are certain things that we'll die for because we're committed so intensely to those ideas. I could talk a lot about why we are so committed, and we could go to the issue of conversion and understand our conversion.

1 John, as a book, is committed to helping us to understand the nature of our conversion and be convinced that we really do know Christ. That's the whole purpose of that epistle. But that's not what we're talking about in this lesson.

But I wanted to bring that to you to see how serious even a creative construct level is. And yet it is real. Probability.

Consequently, no matter how tightly argued and how convinced we are about our creative construct systems, they are still only in the realm of probability, not certainty. Heated theological debates are the result of conflicting views and constructs about the text. I think this is most important internal to the Christian church and particularly internal to smaller segments of the Christian church.

We use the word evangelicalism, which is almost a nondescript word anymore. What does that mean? And I wouldn't even intend right now to try to define it, but I could in some ways, like the Evangelical Theological Society has a definition about scripture and trinity, and trying to push for more. But the fact is that right now, that's the very definition of it within that academic society.

Heated theological debates, but internal to a smaller group of the Christian church on the globe, this thing that's broadly called evangelicalism, that has a high regard for the Bible, and a belief in the Trinity, and a belief in the deity of Christ, and has lots more common denominators than just orthodoxy. In this focused community, there are some extremely serious differences. How do we go about that? Well, because of the probability of interpretation, we need to be humble in our understanding of our brothers and sisters.

That doesn't mean we have to say it doesn't matter. That doesn't mean that we give up on interpretation. That doesn't even mean that we have to necessarily cooperate with certain things in these diverse communities.

But it does mean that if they're under the same umbrella and hold to many of the same common core beliefs that we do, there are brothers and sisters in Christ. And we need to learn how to get along. We need to be able to agree to disagree.

We need to be able to have unity in the midst of diversity. A major theme in scripture is unity in diversity. In fact, we will see this theme plied out in a major way in the book of 1 Corinthians.

All right, the last paragraph is there on the page, not the top paragraph on page 13. While creative constructs often emerge as large paradigms, they're not limited to that. There are many legitimate creative constructs, and there are many bad creative constructs.

I talked to you about abstain from all appearance of evil, and how that verse can be used to manipulate people and ply people into certain understandings. You see, unless you're a good student of the Bible, you're going to be the victim of manipulation for the rest of your life. People are going to manipulate you all over the place, use the Bible to do it, and you won't know what to do about that.

If you would just grasp what we're talking about in these introductory lectures, you can move yourself out of being manipulated by others. They claim that this text equals guilt by association, but that is a bad creative construct from a surface reading of the words out of that old translation forced on the text. When studied, this text means to avoid every form or kind of evil.

That is much more concrete in definition than the appearance of evil. To force guilt by association on this text is neither direct nor implied, but it is the bad imagination of somebody who wants to use the Bible to conform other people to their understandings, and that's just one illustration out of thousands. Don't be the kind of person who allows yourself into that setting.

As you move from the bottom of the triangle, direct implied creative construct upwards, you move from simple direct readings to more sophisticated theological structures. The more sophisticated the theological structure becomes, the more challenging it is to be able to understand it and deal with it. In the next paragraph, every subject put an asterisk right here in your notes; every subject we teach, or excuse me, every subject or text we study, must be evaluated against these three levels of teaching.

Let's read that one more time after I get my drink of water. Every subject or text that we study must be evaluated against these three levels of teaching. Where does our claimed biblical text for our view rest on the pyramid? Is it direct? Is it implied? Is it a creative construct? And you don't have to answer that off the top of your head.

You answer that by researching to find out where it rests in terms of the literature of scholars in relation to your biblical book, and you've got a wealth of information there. One's confidence and humility of conviction should also be scaled in concord with the appropriate level. We will die for direct and the right to that direction.

We will die for certain implications but not for all. Few of us would die for creative constructs. I won't die over millennialism.

I won't even die over Arminian and Calvinist issues. I have my convictions and my reasons for any of these views, but those aren't death views. Those are things under the umbrella that we can argue about, but there are certain things about which we should be willing to die.

One's willingness to compromise for the sake of the community is also related to the scale. Are you going to split a church over things that are creative constructs? Well, I wouldn't say you should split a church over creative constructs. Now, sometimes, as a group, if you come to a consensus of understanding why you differ, you will automatically divide and conquer.



I think that is a good way to go because some things cannot coexist as easily as other things, and theology is important. and each of these constructs will lead in certain directions, but they're not something to shoot each other over, or as I saw in the North Carolina paper one time, where the deacons got in a fistfight. Well, that's out of bounds. One's willingness to compromise for the sake of the community may also be related to this scale.

Compromise comes by understanding, not by manipulation. I mean, did you hear that? Compromise comes by understanding and the willingness to agree to disagree, not by manipulation. We might die for the Trinity, but not for a certain eschatological position.

If someone claims a view that is only their construct, you have no obligation to conform to their view of things. The motto also gives you a baseline for discussion of your different views on the text. All of us have a propensity to deify our own understandings.

American Christianity is drunk with individualism derived from our culture. With this individualism comes the assumption of self-authenticating authority. Theology, however, requires a community.

We should perceive that as we go up the pyramid, we are in the process of relating an ancient text written in ancient settings to modern questions, and we have to be able to negotiate that and do that. We'll talk about that in some specifics as we move through the book of 1 Corinthians. I want to go to the next paragraph.

There are some important things in the paragraph. Actually, I guess I better not. For example, is slavery an acceptable practice as God's will? Most would say no, and I think rightly so, but how do you argue your view when there's no proof text? You see, being against slavery is an implicational teaching.

I think it's a good one, but it's still at that level. Furthermore, how do you avoid the embarrassment of biblical silence in relation to certain modern issues? In essence, how the Bible is relevant in the progress of history when culture moves beyond outdated mores is a major challenge to hermeneutics. I actually edited a book with Zondervan called *Four Views on Moving from the Bible to Theology*.

So, if you want to follow up on that, it's available from Zondervan. It's available in the Lagos System. I have some other publications in the Lagos System as well.

Put my name in, but always put the middle initial, Gary T., and my stuff will come up. In addition to this discussion of the interpretation of scripture, there is also the next question. How is scripture applied in our modern setting? How do we bridge from

the meant to the means? Well, that's something that's going to take some more discussion.

It's not part of our introductory material. Contextualization is what's known in the study of this question. How do you take that context, come to your context, and make a legitimate connection? Do not assume a connection.

You must make a legitimate connection. If you violate what scripture is meant, you have no right to say what it means. You've got to come up with a reasoned process of moving from meant to means so that you can have a legitimate use of scripture.

All right, as we move through our study of 1 Corinthians, we will encounter a numerous text that the literature presents a variety of views to understand, and we will work out many of the things that we've been talking about in this introductory material. So that's what I have to say about how the Bible teaches us in these three levels of teaching. I have one more segment in our introduction that I call validation.

It's not a long segment. It'll be much shorter than the ones we've had so far. After that lecture, which will be our fifth lecture, we will move immediately into the text of the book of 1 Corinthians and begin to bring to bear what we've learned in the introduction.

Actually, I should say we will move to the formal introduction to 1 Corinthians about its history, culture, the text, and so forth, and then we will begin unpacking those texts. But what we've been talking about so far is introductory and lays a foundation so that we can think about what we're doing when we study the Bible.

This is Dr. Gary Meadors in his teaching on the book of 1 Corinthians. This is lecture 4, How the Bible Teaches Us Three Levels of Biblical Teaching, Part 2.