

Ralph Winter Talks about the Bible and Its Central Role in His Life and Thinking

WINTER: “There really are only two subjects in the last four thousand years: the biblical revelation, and then the impact of that revelation” (WCF Lecture, “The Christian and Old Testament Theology”).

WINTER: “The Bible consists of a single drama: the entrance of the Kingdom, the power and the glory of the living God in this enemy-occupied territory. (The Kingdom Strikes Back, in the Perspectives Reader)

- **Growing Up with the Bible** (IJFM, 2005)

“The Bible’s influence is probably the most important single strand in the tapestry of my life—that is, my increasing appreciation for and understanding of the Bible.”

https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/22_2_PDFs/69-74Winter.pdf

- **The Unfolding Story of Scripture** (Foundations Lecture, 2008)

“This idea of a distinct plan unfolding from Genesis 12 on is fairly easy to establish. In more recent years I have gained an even larger picture, more difficult to see, and it has to do with events prior to Genesis 12. When you stop to think about it, it does not seem very impelling to suppose that at Genesis 12, with Abraham, God launched an entirely new plan. What kind of a plan would it be that would unify the Bible not just from Genesis 12 on but unify the Bible from Genesis 1:1 on?”

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/intros/4_lecture.pdf

- **Letting Genesis Speak for Itself** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“We are going to be spending some time in the area of the inductive approach to the Bible. In an inductive study you need to be willing to surrender yourself to the reality that is there.”

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- **The “First Chapter” of the Bible: Genesis 12–50** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“In our study of Genesis, it is important to recognize that Genesis is always broken into two parts, Genesis 1–11 and 12–50. In my estimation, Genesis 1–11 is the introduction to the whole Bible, not just to the book of Genesis. The reason this section of scripture is an “Introduction,” not just to Genesis but to the whole Bible, is that it portrays a problem so serious that the whole Bible is centered around it. In some ways Genesis 1-11 introduces all of subsequent history. These passages start out by presenting the beauty of God’s creation. The entrance of evil is introduced. It talks about the hopeless result. And what better back-drop for the whole Bible could you present?”

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/6_first_chapter.pdf

- **The Christian and Old Testament Theology** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“Here is a key point: Twenty centuries have gone by since the Great Commission was clearly given. During most of that period Christians did not understand about the Commission. If a whole massive global Christian tradition can get along for century after century with virtually no reference whatsoever to the Great Commission, why couldn’t it also have been true that the Jewish people

received the Great Commission at the time of Abraham but also did very little about it? ... God was in the Mission Business, whether they were or not.”

“Seeing the Bible from this new perspective was the greatest intellectual revolution of my life! I know that in the last six or seven years I have spent more time, energy and interest studying the Bible than I had in my entire previous life, and I have been close to the Bible all my life.”

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• **The Theology of the Law of God** (WCF Lecutre, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“The multicultural nature of the Bible has great significance for the missionary movement because missionaries are crossing from one culture to another all the time.”

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• **The Biblical Plan, Announcement of the Great Commission** (Foundations Lecture, 2008)

“The Bible—What Kind of a Book? It is important to remind ourselves that there is a big difference between believing in an inerrant Bible and in believing in inerrant interpretations of the Bible.”

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• **The Word of God** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“How does the ancient role of the LXX in a multi-cultural world give clues for modern missionary strategy?”

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• **Exegesis and Hermeneutics of Isaiah 49:1-6** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

There are two reasons for reading the Bible in an inductive manner. You are doing it partly because you want to be able to arrive at the conclusions yourself. In addition you want to be able to measure your opinions against someone else’s, without having the other person’s opinions before you look at the text. We have an emphasis upon this approach because it pays rich dividends in how long you retain as well as how much you understand and get out of a passage.

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• **Introduction** (Foundations Course Lecture, 2008)

“While the Jewish people were in captivity in Babylon, Isaiah 49:6 was written to tell them, ‘It is a light thing that I shall raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel, I want my salvation to go to the ends of the earth.’

“Would it be fair to the Bible if we forced it to our current concept of global mission if in fact in these verses it meant something very different? The Bible was really saying to these captives in Babylon (who were then literally at ‘the ends of the earth’) ‘I want my salvation to go to your captors.’ Wow,

that's a bitter pill—a commission a lot more difficult than going as missionaries to the ends of the planet.”

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- **The Gospels from a Global Perspective** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“It is amazing the extent to which the Bible has been grandly misunderstood by practically everybody. We have to go very cautiously because of the many, many misunderstandings in past history and in our own lives. The point is that very few people understand what the Bible is really all about; therefore, they misunderstand it when they open it. Unfortunately, the fact is that some people treat the Bible as a medicine chest. They rush to the Bible to find the answer to their problem. ... How electrifying to try to see the Bible for what it really is.”

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/15_gospels_from_global.pdf

- **The Growth of the Church in Judea and Samaria: Acts 3–12** (Adapted from a WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“We often remark that the whole Bible could be called “The Re-conquest,” or “The Story of the Kingdom.” It is the story of God’s recovering a darkened world, like C. S. Lewis put in his book *Out of the Silent Planet*. A planet was out of contact with the Living God. All across the centuries, if you look closely in the Old Testament, you see God’s insistent, relentless love for all peoples. The rather spectacular occurrence of Gentiles in the genealogies is one example—a very discordant phenomenon for those who would be pure pedigreed types. But the Bible relentlessly portrays that universal concern of the Living God.”

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/17_growth_of_church.pdf

- **Paul’s Middle Missionary Letters** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“Paul’s letter to the Romans is the pinnacle of all his writing, and one of the most influential documents of all human history.”

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/19_pauls_middle_letters.pdf

- **Paul’s Letter to the Romans** (WCF Reader, 1993)

“This is not so much a new translation of Paul’s letter to the Roman congregations as it is an attempt to employ the format of a translation as a means of commentary. While it could be called a free translation, I would prefer to call it a sparse, “transparent” commentary, meaning that it reads like a translation, even though an interpretive commentary is woven into the text wherever that seems both possible and beneficial.”

http://www.foundationscourse.org/uploads/documents/reader/18_pauls_letter.pdf

- **Excerpt from “Historification of the Big Picture”** (WCF Lecture, around 1995, as World Christian Foundations curriculum was being developed)

“The Bible was not let down from heaven in the form it is now in. It was an accumulating document and was created in the context of a culture in the midst of history. ... Our knowledge of God’s Son is given to us only because of written Scripture. And so, through God’s Son, as presented in Holy Scripture, God has reached out across the world.

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- **Gutenberg and the Eclipse of Islam** (Friday Seminar, 2003, in *Frontiers in Mission*)

“It is the rejection of the Bible today that has resulted in fragmented families, emotionally handicapped children, morally corrupt business and political leaders. It would seem clear that the only way to prevent the West from slipping into a new dark age is to re-introduce it to the Bible. Meanwhile, we do well to realize that there is something very profound that has changed in our own cultural stream as the result of the Bible.”

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- **The Bible, Reformation, and Modern Missions** (*Mission Frontiers*, 1996)

“What Paul did was to release the Gospel from its Jewish clothes. What Luther did was to release the Gospel from its Latin clothing. What is about to happen on a global level is the release of the Gospel from its distinctively Western clothing. This is an incredible, world-level "reformation" which apparently must happen, is mainly yet to occur and will radically change our understanding of the Hindu and the Muslim challenge. But to be absolutely sure of what we are looking for in a "reformation" in missions today, let's revisit the New Testament. First of all, the Bible emphasizes all the way through that the only Jews who were pleasing to God were those who were Jews inwardly, not just outwardly. ...”

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/the-bible-reformation-and-modern-missions>

- **Getting to Know the Bible** (Friday Seminar, 2004, in *Frontiers in Mission*)

“To me there is nothing more spectacular or significant than getting to know the Bible better and better, and in a real sense it is that process which has been for me the most exciting thing in my entire lifetime. I am getting to the place where I realize the importance of knowing that the Bible is not a dictated book like the Qu’ran or the Book of Mormon, but is a book written by “holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. It is a book written through human beings for human beings.”

“We must constantly remember that there is a huge difference between believing in an inerrant Bible and believing in an inerrant interpretation.”

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- **Winter Quotes and Excerpts re the Bible** (various dates from 1996 to 2008)

“The best way to explain Ralph Winter’s life is his increasing understanding of the Bible.”

“I can’t think of anything more important than understanding what the Bible is really saying.”

“Give the Bible in language a people can understand: let them dig out what it means in their culture.”

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- **Let’s Be Fair to the Bible** (One of the last 2 articles Winter dictated before he died in 2009)

“In actual fact, most of the Bible describes accurately what it sees. You could hardly expect the Bible to be both inerrant and also an enduring description of exclusively righteous behavior. Surely if anyone did anything wrong the Bible tells it like it is. There is no possibility that it tells it like it is and at the same time always gives examples to be followed. We find in the Old Testament many examples of

people who do evil, even David, so that once we agree that the Bible is one of progressive revelation we accept the fact that it will show change across the centuries. That fact makes the Bible true without teaching the wrong thing or things that are unacceptable.”

<https://www.rdwresearchcenter.org/single-post/2018/08/21/Let%E2%80%99s-Be-Fair-to-the-Bible>