

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


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Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 7



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

In this section we will explore how we should actually read the Bible.

When was the last time you've had trouble reading any document? The way you read doctor's report, sales and purchase agreement, contracts, are all completely different. They all have their particular styles.

Some of the problems that prevent us from understanding when reading these documents is, there are intrinsic natural linguistic and cultural barriers. These barriers also occur within the Bible because it is literature like any written text and must be read using the same rules as we use in reading other literature. As God inspires someone like Apostle Paul to write, he will write using his own language, from his own background, his own style, his own culture, his own context and even inject his own emotions and they are still no less 100% inspired by God, but yet it is transmitted in the medium of Apostle Paul's own personality and his culture. These would be a barrier to us in understanding because we are so far removed from Paul's time and culture. We need to overcome these barriers if we are to understand the Bible in its original meaning.

How then we are to read the Bible?

We are all interpreters of the Bible. As we embark upon the journey we first of all need to know a bit about the author and whatever he writes there has to be an original intent. This is the meaning that the author had originally intended for the audience he was writing to back in the day. Once we've established that, then the question is, how do we translate that or take message and apply its meaning for today's 20th century audience. So the differences to be traversed include culture, language, the time span, the particular situation and even whether the part of the bible was in the Old Testament or Old Covenant or the New Covenant in the New testament as how God deals with His people is governed differently under each covenant. Hence there is a huge difference between the biblical audience and us which needs to be crossed.

The way we get across these barriers is to form a principlizing bridge. The bridge that spans across the different culture, language, time, situation and covenant. This bridge is the commonality between the two eras that would overcome these barriers.

So, the message from the principlizing bridge that we have distilled would be applicable both to the ancient audience and us today. For it to be the correct message it must be first be reflected in the original text. It must be in the text, it cannot be taken elsewhere. It must be timeless that is, it must not be culturally bound and the same principle can be applied to the ancient audience as well as today's audience. It must also be consistent with the rest of scriptural teaching and at the same time being relevant to both sides, both audiences. Let's take an example.

Joshua 1:5-7 (ESV) No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go

Now this promise was given to Joshua who was the successor leader of Moses and in Joshua chapter 1. It is God giving him the promise that if you were to go into promised land, God would be with him and Joshua would only have to be strong and courageous and to be mindful to carry out God's laws, to follow God's laws and the success would be the conquest of the entire land of Canaan, the Promised Land. It is a historical promise and Joshua entered the Promised Land with this promise in mind.

Suppose there is somebody who reads the same text now 3000 of years later, who lives in Petaling Jaya and not in Palestine. He wants to start a restaurant selling French Cuisine and on the day that he decided to start restaurant he turns to the bible and Joshua chapter 1 is his designated reading of the day and he reads this promise. Without forming a common bridge he applies this passage directly to himself. He opened the restaurant believing that this promise God gave Joshua that he will have success entering the promised land can now be applied directly to him in his restaurant business. He would be roaring financial success because he has actually believed in God's word and taken this particular passage and applied it to himself.

Now is this proper? Is this the way in which we should interpret scripture?

Let's look at the proper application of this Bible verse. Here we have the original author Joshua, who records God's promise to him. The original intent to Joshua was that this was the promise of God specifically to Joshua that if he would stay faithful to God's instructions in the Bible, he would be able to conquer the promised land of Canaan, Joshua was the chosen leader. He only had to be strong and courageous and to be obedient to God's word. The promise to Joshua was also consistent with God's prior promise to the nation of Israel that He would bring them in to Caanan the promised land and in this context Joshua was God's chosen instrument in the fulfilment of that particular promise.

Now the next question is, how should we apply this principle in our lives today?

The difference is between Joshua and this modern day restauranter is that he is not capturing the promised land. There is a big difference between conquering a huge chunk of real estate in Palestine and opening a restaurant in Petaling Jaya. He is not Joshua chosen to lead Israel and there was no prior promise of God to give him a successful restaurant.

What then is the theological principle in this particular text that we could then apply to ourselves and can we test our interpretation?

We need to form a bridge that would span across the differences of thousands of years. In order to apply this, let's look at the principle. Let's see if the gentleman has read it correctly

The principle he has assumed is that just as Joshua was obedient and trusted God in his fulfilment of his mandate from God to conquer the promised land. We too must trust God and follow His Word in the opening the restaurant and gain similar success.

Is it reflected in the text?

The text didn't say anything about us opening restaurants.

Is it timeless?

No, because for Joshua he was capturing some military promise, it is about capturing the promised land. For us it is opening a restaurant.

Is it nonculturally bound?

No, it is culturally bound. A restaurant and an open warfare are two different things.

Is this consistent with the rest of the scriptural teaching?

No, there is no scriptural teaching that will tell us that if we open restaurants then we will have success or financial success at least.

Is it relevant to both audiences?

No, it is not relevant to both audiences, because the promise was relevant to the people of Israel to capture the promised land but there was no mention of and you cannot apply it to the opening of restaurant. It is not relevant, there are two different audiences.

So how should we do this exercise? Let's go back and look at the original intent. It was to conquer the Promised Land for Joshua who was the chosen leader and for us the difference over the thousands of years is that we are not capturing the promised land, we are not Joshua.

What is the consequence of wrongly applying God's promises?

We have established that our budding restaurant owner has wrongly applied the Word and this has serious consequences. If the restaurant did well it would have justified his reading of the promise and solidified his faith somewhat. If the restaurant failed, there are two possible outcomes. Firstly, he blames God as God did not live up to His promises and the Bible has worthless promises. Secondly, he can blame himself as he was not very faithful in trusting God or running his restaurant in a godly fashion and continues wracked with guilt carrying the burden on himself. Either way it does not end well for him. If indeed the restaurant turned out well it solidifies his erroneous way of reading the bible and he will be emboldened to apply this to other ventures, perhaps open another restaurant or a chain of them and teach others to do the same thing. The business world being as unforgiving as it is, in the end this all may end in tears and he will wind up losing faith in the Word and God based on his wrong application of it not on any of God's lack of faithfulness to him.

What then is the theological principle? the common bridge?

In forming the bridge, I would suggest that we take the principle that we have to trust God and follow his word and all that he leads us in life particularly in ministry. The success we have would be the spiritual fruit to please God. If this is the bridge that spans the two audiences, I might suggest you that this is a better application of God's word.

So let's test this principle.

Is this principle reflected in the text?

Yes it is, because for the ancient people around Joshua's time, the issue is that they need to trust God and follow his word in their particular ministry, which is capturing the Promised Land, which is for their context what God had wanted them to do. In our context, there is no mention about opening restaurants, but it can be reasonably applied to whatever ministry that we are involved in we can be claiming God's promises in our ministry. God would want us to be successful in the sense that we will be able to glorify him and fulfill our mission in life in the same way Joshua fulfilled his mission in life which was to conquer the Promised land. The way he did it and we need to do it is to trust God and follow his Word. There is no mention of financial success. So it this meaning is reflected and you can take the meaning from both audiences from the text. It is in the text.

Is it timeless?

Yes, it is timeless because on both sides we are talking about pleasing God, obeying God and that brings spiritual success for Joshua capturing promised land, for us bringing glory to him in whatever endeavors and ministry that we do which might involve the restaurant as part of our ministry because we are serving others and contributing to society in our work.

Is it nonculturally bound?

Yes, it is nonculturally bound because it is based on ministry.

Is it consistent with the rest of the scripture teaching?

Yes it is.

Is it relevant to both audiences?

Yes it is because for the people at Joshua's time it was relevant to them because they faced the issue of conquering promised land, which is their ministry. For us it could be evangelization of particular suburb, planting of church or any other endeavor that would bring glory to God. This still is the path which God has chosen for us to live our lives, to honor and glorify him. So the principle applies consistently answering all those questions, so therefore this is a legitimate way of reading the Bible.

So now we that have learned how to form a common bridge,

CASE 1

Take for example, the issue of head veils in 1-Cor 11 where Paul writes to Corinthian church. The woman at the time, some of them had been speaking in public, prophesizing without wearing any head veils and causing quite a bit of stir among the conservative society at that time. Paul advised that the ladies continue to wear veils whenever they speak in public.

What is the timeless principle? Do we ask our woman to wear veils in our time today even though it is out of fashion?

The issue of the veils, the veils were a sign of woman submission to her husband. It was a sign of dignity for the woman. So, wearing a veil would convey those values. So therefore when we come to the timeless principle today, it is basically with the wife's submission to her husband and that does not necessarily have to be reflected by hearing head veils because head veils are not common in our society. A woman can behave in a submissive or respectful and dignified nature without having to wear the veils. There are plenty of women who wear veils and berate their husbands in public paying lip service to the form but not the essence of the meaning. This is legalism. The timeless principle that will apply to both the first century audiences as well as us today is woman's submission to their husbands not the actual wearing of the veil which is culturally bound relevant to the first century audience and not us. We will need to find our own cultural forms to reflect this similar principle today.

We need to cross barriers in order to understand scripture. There is both historical and cultural barriers that separate the author and the audience. The audience of yesterday is different from audience today, because of a lot of historical and cultural issues and we need to understand them to understand the original intent.

CASE 2

Take for example the book of Jonah. Jonah was asked to preach the gospel and warn by the Assyrians in the north in the city of Nineveh by the impending judgment of God.

Why did he run away?

We would never know why he ran away unless we understood their historical context. The historical context was that the Jews really hated the Assyrians. So Assyrians came and invaded the modern kingdom and caused a lot of suffering and torture and devastation to the country. Hence there was a natural hatred of Jews towards the Assyrians, so Jonah would not go up to warn the Assyrians of the impending punishment from God. He would rather want God to punish them anyway.

CASE 3

In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus was at that time teaching the inquirer about what it meant to be a neighbor and he choose to tell a story of the good Samaritan helping the injured man on the roadside. The injured man was a Jew and the person helping him was the Samaritan. Unless one understood, there were huge cultural barriers between Samaritans and Jews one would not catch the deeper significance. Jews looked down on Samaritans, they hated them, they despised them and here was a situation where the Jew had been attacked on the roadside and lay injured within an inch of his life but was ignored by fellow Jews but ironically the only person who helped him was actually a Samaritan.

CASE 4

Jesus said, *Matthew 19:24 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*”

He used the metaphor of a camel, why, because camel was the largest animal in the Middle East at the time and for that camel to go through the eye of needle was an impossibility, which tells us that for rich person to enter of kingdom of God, it is almost an impossibility because the rich person would naturally want to depend on his riches rather than to depend on God.

So when we come to the particular word Bible, we are asked questions like

- Who was that author
- What was the background
- When did he write
- Nature of ministry
- Relationship with audience
- Why was he writing
- What was their circumstances
- What happened at the time book was written?

These would be important questions to raise, so that we could better understand this particular book of the Bible which we are reading.

To understand there have been many resources available. There is Bible Atlas, Bible Handbook, Bible dictionary, lots of commentaries and all of them would give us some idea of how to answer those questions which are actually historical data.

The Role of Genre

The other issue that people don't understand is the literary context and for this we need to understand the literary genre, what kind of literature it is. Genre is French for "form or kind". There are many different kinds of genre in the Bible. There are parables, narratives, letters, gospels, poetry, law, prophecy and wisdom. All these are different kinds or forms of literature.

Genre are like, for example sports games. Some sports utilize the ball but there are different games. In the American football, you could actually grab the ball and you can run with it. In football, you couldn't touch the ball, you have to kick it. In basketball, you grab the ball all the time. Different games, different rules but the same ball.

The same thing with reading different kinds of literature that we have today. The way we read poetry and the way we read science or a kitchen French cookbook or a newspaper is completely different.

If someone reads Genesis like a science book, they will point out apparent contradictions.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day

However, it might be noted in the Book of Genesis that the sun and moon were created on the fourth day and how did we get day and night on the first day. The casual reader will then dismiss the bible as a book full of scientific errors without realizing that Genesis chapter 1 is written like a poem and poems are not supposed to read like science books. The mention of days are used to frame the scheme of creation in to 7 days the working week of a normal Jew in Moses time. The use of days are for poetic effect not scientific.

Here is another example of different kind of genre in the same book. Judges chapter 4 is basically a narrative, which basically tells of the occasion when Jael actually killed Sisera.

Judges 4:21 But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died

So Jael, wife of Heber, killed the gentleman while he slept and hammered the peg through his temple until into the ground while he was sleep. That's very clear, this is a narrative. Reading narratives are like reading a newspaper report it is factual and in chronological order.

Here we have in Judges 5:26-27, the same event but described as a poem.

*She sent her hand to the tent peg
and her right hand to the workmen's mallet;
she struck Sisera;
she crushed his head;
she shattered and pierced his temple.
Between her feet
he sank, he fell, he lay still;
between her feet
he sank, he fell;*

*where he sank,
there he fell—dead*

So here again it is a little bit different from chapter 4. In this chapter 5 rendition of the same event he was standing and then apparently fell to the ground from the blow of the tent peg delivered by the woman to his skull. In the chapter 4 narrative he was killed whilst he slept on the ground. Which is the true event? The apparent contradiction is because the chapter 5 version is cast as a poem or song. The rendition of the same event is to emphasize his fall from power in hands of a woman to drive home the point of humiliation. Its casting as a poem more powerfully and emotively delivers that point.

The Role of Context

When we are reading the Bible, the important thing is also not only to notice the kind of genre that we are reading, the historical context and cultural context, but also to realize that we need to read the Bible particular passage in the light of its surrounding context. When we look at the passage, we must look at it in the light of the immediate context and the context of the largest section of the Bible, the rest of the book and the rest of the Bible.

Each statement must be understood according to its natural meaning in the literary context in which it occurs. It is well said that a text without a context is a pretext.

Let's take an example of reading the bible out of his context. If I were to take Matthew 27:5
Matthew 27:5 ..he (Judas)departed, and he went and hanged himself.

Then if I would read the next passage the following day in my daily quiet time
Luke 10:37 And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Then I read another passage the following day
John 13:27 "What you are going to do, do quickly."

So apparently when you combine the three verses together, "you better go and kill yourself", as if it is biblical mandate for suicide, which is not true because each verse is taken out of its context. Context gives flow of thought which determines meaning of sentence. The smaller the passage being studied the greater the chance of error. Context gives us accurate meanings of words because words have different meanings.

Here is another example of a verse which is always been taken out of context.
Phil 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me

Some people will go to business and say they will always succeed because they claim the promise of God, which Paul writes, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. I could do miracles; I could do impossible things. It would be point of a promise that would actually guarantee that I will be successful in all my endeavors. That's what most people use to take this verse as. However, we need to look at the context. The context in which that particular verse is taken is a little bit different

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger,

abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me

So the promise, I can do all things through him who strengthens me is said in the context of Paul suffering. Whether, it is in time for plenty, having plenty to eat or times of need when he is hungry, he has learned to put up in the ministry of the gospel or in all sorts of situations, so that we can't really take that particular verse and say we would be successful in our business venture or I can do all things through him who strengthens me. That's not a promise, for that particular occasion. It is a promise actually that in whatever situation that we suffer for the gospel, the Lord will provide us the endurance.

The Role of Words

Words have different range of meanings. Words can be univocal, equivocal or analogical. Univocal words are words which have one meaning all the time. For example, I could have a tasty breakfast or a tasty desert. The word 'tasty' would mean the same in every sentence. It has only got one meaning. Equivocal words have two or more meanings. You could have a bark of a tree or bark of a dog. They are both different, although they are same words. They are equivocal. The third way of looking at words that they could be analogical. They could be partly the same and partly different. For example, when we say God is good. It is a little bit different from what we mean when we say, grapes are good. There is an analogical difference.

Examples of univocal words:

1. Phillips head screwdriver
2. The Ptolemaic Model of the Cosmos
3. President George Washington of the United States
4. Decaffeinated coffee
5. Astronaut

They all have one word, one meaning.

Examples of equivocal words:

1. Pitcher (baseball thrower or liquid container)
2. Bit (piece of food or metal in horse's mouth)
3. Top (upper part or spinning toy)
4. mail (chain armour or postal letters)
5. ring (jewellery or a phone noise)

Here is another use of a word which is equivocal, a nut. It could be a mad person or a piece of seed. The context of the sentence will allow us to determine which meaning of the word nut is to be applied and this is the same in Scripture

Examples of analogous words:

1. Chair (furniture or university department head who "chairs" his section)
2. Bread (baked grain and yeast or the money we need to buy it)
3. Lift (action of picking up or the elevator that lifts us)
4. Wheels (the round tires or the whole car)
5. Computer (the machine or a person who works figures)

Take the statement, “aeroplanes are dangerous”.

When a pilot says, aeroplanes are dangerous he means it is a little bit differently from King Kong, sitting on top of the empire state building, being attacked by fighter jets, he will say aeroplanes are dangerous. They have different meanings, even though it is the same word. The context of the sentence will help us determine which meaning of the word is to be applied

Analogous use of words are very important when we apply the same word we use for humans to describe God. We are finite creatures and God is the infinite Creator hence every time we use human terms to describe God’s actions we run the risk of diminishing Him.

When the bible writes that if we sin we grieve God it is not the same as human beings when we are grieved. If our loved one is naughty and lands in jail for shop lifting, we as parents can be described as “grieved” . Our grief revolves around regret of not being a better parent, of being too lenient or not strict enough or not providing enough supervision. It is always tinged with a bit of guilt and regret of our lack of parenting skills and our grief also diminishes us. However when we say God is grieved by our sin we cannot mean it in the same way we are grieved when our loved one is jailed. He is not diminished by our sin, He has never failed as our God. The word grieved is used in an analogous manner and must be interpreted as such.

Role of Grammar

So when we are reading the bible, we must understand historical, cultural, social context as well as the grammar. Reading scripture is like reading a letter from a normal person. Here is an example. A letter from a woman

Dear John

I was just spring cleaning today and noticed that you had left your jacket in my apartment. Strange how it got there? You left it when you were over here with the gang for dinner a month ago. Remember it was Sam’s birthday? Party and you were so funny with your Frank Sinatra rendition of “I did it my way”. I loved how you wriggled your bottom right at the end...Ha Ha

Where on earth did you learn how to move like that? Pricilla says you are quite a good singer as she was in the glee club with you. Patty says you are a great dancer too. I am wondering if you could show me some of those moves the next time we meet. Any way I would be looking forward to you coming over to pick up your coat...anytime just give me a call at 0125557684

Halley

Now look at this particular letter. You can read between the lines and look at all the underlined parts.

- You were so funny
- I loved how you wriggled your bottom
- you are quite a good singer
- you are a great dancer.
- If you could show me some of those moves
- Come over at anytime

So it is obvious that this lady actually likes John. So we need to read in between the lines and what are we looking for.

We are looking for things like repetition, contrast, comparisons, lists, causes and effect, figures of speech, conjunctions, verbs and pronouns. All these actually help us to understand the emphasis of scripture.

Look at these verses

1 John 2:15-17 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world- the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions- is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever

Which words are repeated and what are there significances?

There is obvious the word 'love' and the word 'world' has been repeated again and again. So the whole passage is about loving the world and loving God. They are mutually exclusive.

Let's look at another passage,

2 Corinthians 1:3-7 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

The word comfort is repeated 10 times. The word suffering four times. The significance is that this passage is about our suffering and how God gives us comfort. That's the emphasis, the repetition gives it a way.

Here is a passage about the use of the figure of speech

Matthew 23:27-28 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

So here is figures of speech. There are Pharisees and scribes, they are hypocrites, they are whitewashed tombs, beautiful from the outside but actually corrupt inside.

Here is another use of Figures of Speech

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

The word here is the bible, it is like a lamp. It opens up the way, it illuminates our path, it gives us revelation so that we know how to live.

Psalms 18:2 2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Here are many words which are basically figures of speech. It describes the perfect safety and power God provides and God is a rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, refuge, horn of my salvation and my stronghold. They are all figures

of speech that tell us who God is to us.

but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night..Psalm 1:2

The word of God will bring much blessing to us. It will transform our lives and draw us into the heart of God. Let us learn to delight in God's law and meditate on it day and night as we learn to actually how to read and be transformed by it.

Questions

1. This is what is written in 1 Corinthians 16:20 (ESV) 20 All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The holy kiss is also mentioned in 4 Pauline letters. Henry Wong started kissing only the girls in church whenever he greeted them in church and when they complained he mentioned this as the Lords command in church. What do you think about this? Has he read the bible correctly? How should we apply this verse?

This is obviously a cultural issue as in the first century they kissed as a sign of affection and warmth. In this case Henry has ulterior motives because he is using the verse out of context to kiss only the young girls not the men not the old ladies. We have other forms of showing affection in our culture which we should use like shaking hands.

2. Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the gospel and in Mark it is written Mark 6:8-13 (ESV) He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts— 9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. Shouldn't this be the standard operating procedure at all mission organisations or churches. We should only send them out with just a stick and no money? What principle do we learn to apply in our modern missions and why?

This was a specific historical moment in the ministry of Jesus where he sent his disciples out to the villages dependant only upon the generosity of the recipients of the gospel. The same conditions were never again applied to the disciples and were never applied in the great commission in Matt 28. Hence we cannot ask modern evangelists or missionaries to do the same thing. However the teaching here is for those to minister the gospel to be always depend on the provision of God by faith and not rely on their own resources and this principle must apply today because the gospel ministry is a spiritual endeavor requiring always the power of God not the sufficiency of men.

3. The Barcelona Evangelical Church was having a controversy with one of their elders who was alleged to have committed adultery as a digital video recording had captured the two of them in the act in a hotel. The Council of elders were going to discipline him as he denied all charges and quoted “ 1 Timothy 5:19-20 (ESV) Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. 20 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear”. He reasoned that there were no witnesses so the charge was unsubstantiated. What do you think?

The modern digital media more than makes up for the presence of witnesses which was an ancient requirement of

the time for a sufficient level of evidence that a court of law at the time would accept for a witness. The elder is just refusing to take the principle of the injunction and his misapplication has a vested interest.

4. Elvis was a young Christian who attended a church in his home town and after 5 months they told him that he had to sell his house and give the money to the church leaders to run the ministry and this was based on Acts 4:33-35 (ESV) And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. The church was in need for funds for the building fund so all of them had to sell their houses. What do you think about this? (For assistance read 2 Cor 9:6-8)

Acts is the book written by Luke the physician who chronicles the spread of the gospel and the start of the early church. It is a narrative and tells us what happened. In any narrative the events are not necessarily normative to us today but the principle is. The principle is radical generosity and love amongst the brethren. This must apply to day and the church must act in such a way collectively that it would be applied to us today "There was not a needy person among them" There is no compulsion in the giving and 2 Cor 9:6-8 tells us to give willingly and cheerfully. The Acts passage did not specify if the disciples sold the house they were already living in ie their primary residence and the selling of real estate might have been for most of them limited to the other properties. Additionally the Acts passage was a narrative which related what happened then and the passage was not a command just an example. Further more if the leaders were to be consistent to the passage and used it literally they would have been obliged to used the funds for the poor not for the church building fund.

5. Thomas was sick with a gastric ulcer and he refused to see his doctor any more and take any medications for his ulcer because he read 1 Timothy 5:23 (ESV) (No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.) This passage clearly said to take wine for stomach ailments and he had a stomach ailment. He started taking wine even though his doctor told him that alcohol makes his ulcer worse. He argued who is right the Bible or the Doctor?

In this part of the Word Paul is advising his young protégé Timothy to take wine which was the usual medication or remedy for a stomach ailment. We are not told which disease this was. Was it an ulcer ? we don't know. The Bible never prohibits the use of physicians as Luke himself was a physician. He is misreading or reading too much into a piece of personal advice Paul is giving Timothy as an aside in this letter.