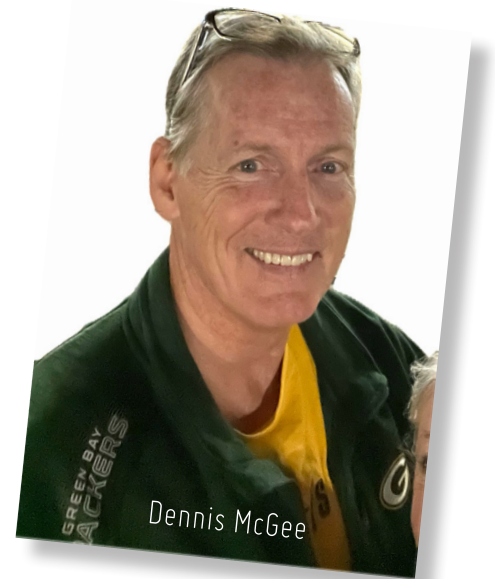


Teacher Feature

Interview with Dennis McGee. Dennis teaches in the Salt & Light ABF class on Sunday morning.

Tell us a bit about your early years, where you grew up, homelife, etc. and about your family today.

I had somewhat of a sheltered upbringing being raised by my grandparents on a small farm in Wisconsin. I was the second of 4 kids, and attended a Catholic school from the 1st through the 8th grade. Although we never discussed “religious stuff” at home, every school day started with a mass, a gospel reading, and epistle reading, etc. I became an altar boy in the 2nd grade, had communion, was confirmed, and went to confession periodically. Although I didn’t attend church much in high school, I thought of myself as “fairly religious.” My wife Lisa, and I celebrated our 40th anniversary this past year. We have two wonderful “kids,” Jess and Kellie, and a delightful and active granddaughter Emma, who loves the Lord.



Would you snapshot the circumstances surrounding your trusting Jesus as your Savior?

Unfortunately, I didn’t have my first exposure to the actual gospel message until I was a freshman in college. A couple guys came to my dorm room and walked through a gospel tract with me. I believed that I was a sinner, that Christ died for my sin, and I prayed the “sinner’s prayer” at that time. But while I was sincere in my prayer, I had no intention of changing how I was living. God continued to work in me over the next couple years, and I began to see that there was a difference between “what I had” (religion), and what my future wife who was a true believer had (a relationship). It was at that time that I surrendered to Christ, and experienced true repentance.

What is one thing God has taught you about Himself from the testing/trials that you have been through?

I remind myself “God knows, and God cares.” I frequently think of Job’s response to far worse trials, and ask God for the grace I need to trust Him when things look bleak. *continued*



The McGees

What are your primary “go to tools” as you work on Bible Study?

For my quiet time, I rely almost solely on my Ryrie Study Bible. After 45 years of being in the Word, it’s amazing how the Holy Spirit continues to open my eyes to things I’ve not seen before (hopefully it’s not just a poor memory). As I’m reading or studying, it is not unusual to ask my wife “did you ever notice...,” or “why do you think Paul said...” I’ve found that I’m a fairly pokey reader, partially because I regularly try to “pray in” the Scripture, “Lord help me to...” or “help me not to be...”

How would you describe the process you go through in preparing to teach?

When starting to prepare a message (and throughout the preparation process), I ask God to open our eyes to what He is wanting to tell us, and to help us apply the Word, providing the wisdom and self-discipline to put it into practice.

Since I was a young believer, I’ve been concerned about the risk of taking Scripture out of context, so I make a concerted effort to provide multiple cross-references that reinforce the principles in a passage, or “balance” those principles.

In the mentoring of other teachers, what two things would you emphasize most?

I’ve always thought people retain more when they are actively engaged, when I teach less, and facilitate more. So the first key would be learning to effectively ask questions that invite discussion. Second, learning how to identify and highlight the potential applications God has for us.

Who would you say has been the most profound teacher/professor/mentor in equipping you to teach?

Some of my favorite Bible scholars are Voddie Baucham, John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul and Alistair Begg. But right after I became a believer, a guy by the name of Ted Boyls asked me if I would like to get together once a week, and I would pepper him with questions: Why this? What about that? That relationship has probably had the most impact on my spiritual growth, and Ted continued to be a source of counsel and encouragement for years until the Lord took him home.

What is one thing that this person passed on to you?

Scripture has the answers.

What small or large thing about your class is bringing you joy these days?

There is a wonderful sense of warmth and family in our ABF class. It feels very much like home.

Interview: Children's Good, Lord's Glory

Our ministry to children at Heritage is an extension of that of their parents - we exist to "Develop people who Delight in God and Declare His glory." While they may not be ready to preach in a village in the African bush, the reality is, our children are the next generation of God worshippers and Gospel carriers. The following is shared by Shawn McGill, our Children's Director:

What is it about children's ministry that others should know?

We are investing in the next generation - to go and spread the Gospel. They first have to know Him, who He is! What better way to share than your own love for the Lord - an outflow of our own personal walk with the Lord. (Psalm 78:4)

What are some of the attitudes essential to minister to the children?

We have to be patient, willing hearts, flexible!

Is working in children's ministry a lifetime appointment or are there ways to be involved intermittently?

We have various levels of commitment - from weekly, monthly, every 6 weeks or sub occasionally.

Outline for us some of the specific tasks that need done week after week?

Preparing lesson and crafts weekly

Are there gifts and skills of people that come to mind as most needed?

Teachers are needed most and Nursery helpers - you can help even if you can't get on the floor with them.

What is a misconception about children's ministry that you would like to address?

You're never too old to serve. It's not babysitting! It's an investment in the children and their parents. You're not missing out when you serve in children's. You GET to be a part of the Lord's work in the children's lives.

What areas of growth in children's ministry are you excited to see?

Taegan Myatt, Sophie Rabon, Mathias Ball - all are pouring into the next generation - even at their young ages.

What are some specific things that have been unexpected blessings of this ministry?

Getting to watch them learn and grow. See and hear them worship the Lord. Getting to know their parents and family. So encouraged to see them light up when they know answers to lesson questions, etc.

Who would a person contact? What is the process for someone to serve in the children's ministry at Heritage?

Contact is Shawn McGill. You would fill out the Policy & Procedures form. You'll be asked to watch a Ministry Safe video (Sexual Abuse Awareness), and then have a background check. Then, we place you where you are a fit.



Shawn McGill

The Last King of the Northern Kingdom by Andrew Norman

2 Kings 17 describes the reign of Hoshea, king of the Northern Kingdom. He would be their last king and he is responsible for the dissolution of the kingdom.

The circumstances of his ascension to the throne are historically noteworthy, though the unknown author of 2 Kings does not describe it in much detail. One may notice that Hoshea is not the son of the previous king, Pekah. An extra-biblical source called the Chronicles of Tiglath-Pileser III tells the history of Hoshea's rise before the Bible tells the story of his fall. Tiglath-Pileser III was the king of Assyria, as mentioned in 2 Kings 16, and his personal chronicles were found in an archaeological site in present-day Iraq. These say that Tiglath-Pileser backed a coup against Pekah and installed Hoshea as vassal king in his place.^{1, 2}



At some point, when Assyria was under a new king called Shalmaneser, Hoshea switched his loyalties to the king of Egypt. This turned out to be a tactical mistake. Shalmaneser captured the entire Northern Kingdom and deported the Israelites living there, replacing them with foreigners. This was described in both 2 Kings 17 and cuneiform tablets called “The Babylonian Chronicles.” These foreigners eventually became the Samaritans^{2, 3}

Although what historians would call “the immediate cause” for the invasion leading to the fall of the Northern Kingdom is clearly Hoshea's betrayal of Shalmaneser, the Bible does not describe it in those terms. It is abundantly clear that the ultimate reason of the invasion is the unrepentant sin of Israel. A number of sins are listed in 2 Kings 17:7-23, including idolatry, divination, and child sacrifice. They had been warned by prophets, saying “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.”

In the face of the gracious warning, they did not repent. That is the reason for their destruction, and their destroyer was God. Shalmaneser was only a tool, and is responsible for Israel's destruction as a hammer is responsible for the construction of a house.

As Daniel 2:21 says, God is the one who “removes kings and sets up kings.” God owns history; not us. Washington D.C., The United Nations, China, Russia, NATO, and any other institution of man that you may think of, are all nothing more than tools in God's hands from the perspective of eternity. It would do well for us to remember that today in our attitudes towards politics.

1: “Menahem and Pekah of Israel, Jothan of Judah and Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria”, *Archaeological Study Bible*, 553.

2: “Hoshea, King of Israel, and Shalmaneser V, King of Assyria”, *Archaeological Study Bible*, 556.

3: *Notes on 2 Kings 17:24, FaithLife Study Bible*

And Now You Know the Rest of the Story

Eric Bancroft

The late radio broadcaster Paul Harvey was famous for telling stories of little-known facts about a range of topics that were fascinating to learn about. (Did you know that Fidel Castro, as a twelve-year-old boy, wrote to newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt, congratulating him on his presidency and asking for a ten-dollar bill?) After dazzling his audience with engaging tales, he would inevitably sign off by saying, “And now you know the rest of the story.”

This leads me to think about many Christians and their knowledge of the Bible. Too often, entire sections of the Bible are virtually unknown and truths still lay unearthened to many of us. Rather than read and understand passages in context, we are tempted to seize upon a verse, perhaps overheard in conversation or read on a pillow somewhere, and it becomes “a word from the Lord” that we grab hold of for the day. Yet, while the verse is a part of the story, it is far from the rest of the story.

Compounded on top of this tragedy is the exponential increase of this mistake when we do it in small groups with other Christians. Surely you’ve seen it, if not participated in it. I have. People sitting in a circle, Bibles open, verses read, and then the fatal question, “What does this passage mean to you?” So much for learning the rest of the story. This question conveniently segues into the long narrative of our life events, which we seem to believe are more interesting.

You see, the problem is not with the Bible or the absence of any interest in it. It is with our abbreviated treatment of it. I applaud and champion people’s discussing and thinking about the Scripture. The problem comes when that exercise becomes an appetizer to the entrée of our thoughts, feelings, and subjective interpretations. I am sure people mean to apply what they have learned, but at that rate, it would be comparable to someone’s saying they are successfully swimming—in their bathtub.

So what are the alternatives? The next time we get together to open God’s Word to study it, we should hold our gaze in the text longer to learn more than what a quick reading will offer us. When we do come up to breathe, ask, “What does this text mean to you?” Second Peter 1:20–21 teaches us that the Bible claims dual authorship. The Holy Spirit wrote the Bible. He did that through the use of men. They used words written in history in a context within a specific genre. In order to begin to mine the truths that God has given us, we would do well to study more carefully what has been written to better understand what God’s Word is teaching.

With that in mind, here are five steps to guide your group Bible studies:

1. Preparation

Pray before you study. Ask God to guide the minds of the group members and to give you a sensitive heart to what you learn in order to understand and obey (Ps. 119:26–27, 29). *continued*

2. Observation

One of the most neglected disciplines of studying the Bible is staring at the text long enough to ask important questions and find the answers. Who is the author and who is the audience? How does the context in which the author writes inform the understanding of the lessons that God's Word teaches? Is there an imperative to obey, a principle to learn, or a sin to flee? What does this text teach you about the character of God?

3. Interpretation

This is when you move from considering what the text says to what it means. At times, it will be obvious. Other times, it will take more investigation. Are there similar themes addressed in other places of Scripture that cast light on this text? Consider the genre of writing (poetry, prophecy, narrative, etc.) and how that informs your interpretation.

4. Application

Questions might have been answered at this point, but lives have not changed (James 1:22). Ask what you intend to do or what needs to change in your thinking in light of the text you are studying.

5. Demonstration

A group studying the Bible together is well served by a leader who has experience in accurately handling the Word. The leader should be capable of helping point out what might be missed while affirming others who have contributed. Groups need someone to say, "That is a good point from the Bible but that is not found in this text."



The Rest of the Story

If you follow these steps, I promise you will get closer to learning the rest of the story. What will it tell you? It will tell you of a God who is powerful in creation and wise in all of His purposes. It will teach you that man is unimaginably sinful in all his ways but, amazingly, offered redemption in Christ. It will tell you of a people whom God has redeemed for His divine purposes to serve as a billboard of His grace and mercy. You will learn of a future when justice is final, redemption is complete, and the righteous triumphant. And woven through all of this are destroyed kings and empowered prisoners, sarcastic prophets and repenting tax collectors, all telling the story that Jesus saves. So keep studying, and you will know the rest of the story.

Rev. Eric Bancroft is pastor of Grace Church in Miami, Fla.

Printed with special permission of Ligonier Ministries. Not available for resale.

Our online newsletter: Used by permission of Ligonier Ministries. All rights reserved. Source: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/and-now-you-know-rest-story>

A Unique Application for Bible Study Interview of Jan Brown

God has opened a unique application for your Bible study. How would you describe this?

I have been involved with a particular community Bible study since its inception in 1986 in various capacities. It was through this Bible study I fell in love with the Word, and with the Old Testament in particular. When the Bible study began, we used materials that were available from an external source for the small group portion of the study, but God planted the seed among the leaders to produce our own materials to compliment the main session teaching.



How did you get started writing Bible studies and how long have you been doing this?

I was first approached to pray about writing close to fifteen years ago. I was asked to write twelve lessons on the book of Hosea. Many false starts and a full ten years later, I wrote Hosea.

What are some of the books of the Bible for which you have written studies?

Hosea was first, followed by the Psalms of Ascent, and most recently, Jeremiah. I am currently working on the books of Galatians for the fall and Thessalonians for the spring.

What have been some of the challenges that you have faced in this ministry?

I would have to say I have had two major challenges—time and getting out of my own way! I can get in my head and let doubts assail me. I don't know enough. It could be better. It could be longer, shorter, or more cohesive. All the things Satan loves to throw at me. Until I came to the place where I surrendered the effort, the ending, and the effect to God, it was never going to happen.

What are some resources that have been helpful in your personal study?

I usually begin by printing out the text using a website like Bible Gateway. I will then go to Blue Letter Bible and use some of the tools available. For the Jeremiah study I also used Logos, but that is a service I don't feel like I have scratched the surface of yet. If anyone out there knows how to best utilize this great resource, let me know! I also love books, so I usually gather several commentaries that someone without a doctorate in theology can read and understand. I love Weirsbe, Swindoll, Kidner, Leithart, and Stott among others.

In completing your study and beginning to write, what specific things are you praying for?

Above all I pray my words will always point to Jesus as LORD and Savior. I pray I will write clearly, concisely, and in a manner that edifies the reading and study of God's Word. I believe God's Word changes lives, and I want my work to help people understand, apply, and stay in the Word. I pray that any and all mistakes I make will be attributed to me alone and I will not mislead, lead anyone astray, or cause anyone to stumble. And I pray the Holy Spirit would lead and direct and then attend His Word as it goes out.

What are some disciplines that you have discovered or strengthened in carrying out this work?

I am a painfully slow writer, so I must be disciplined to put in the time to get it down on paper. I make notes as I see, hear, or read something that may apply now or in the future. I constantly step back and try to see the forest while I am deep in the trees. For me there really is no short cut, and some days are more productive than others, but I do covet prayer when I am working on a study.

What has been one of the highlights as you have invested in your personal study of God's Word?

The biggest highlight has been seeing the Bible as a unified story that exalts Jesus in every book! Wisdom of the Word seeks to point to Christ in every book we study so that we might know Him better and live lives that glorify God.

What have you learned about writing that has surprised you? It's hard!! I have wanted to write for years,

and of course, as an attorney, writing is an integral part of practicing law. This is different. I write, re-write, and then re-write again. I never feel satisfied, just out of time. But despite all that, I love it! It is an incredible privilege to be a part of seeing God's Word reach men and women from many denominations across the country.

What necessary preparation would you counsel someone wanting to do what you are doing?

If God calls, He equips! I think the best prep is to grab a cup of hot coffee (or tea), wrap yourself in a blanket of prayer, and daily study God's Word. I think it is important to study ALL the Bible so you can see how He weaves the story of redemption through the Old and New Testament. Context is crucial. Begin to ask questions, jot down notes, insights, and applications. There is no substitute for putting words on paper.

What are some of the things that have been unexpected blessings of this ministry?

God used the kindness of strangers to encourage me. The books of Hosea and Jeremiah both contain a good deal of bad news (alongside precious promises). I was shocked when people came back for a second semester! I have heard from ladies who have related to a particular lesson, and I am encouraged they reached out to say so. One lady from South Carolina sent me a piece of her artwork inspired by a common experience.

What are you excited about in the future of this service to others?

I am most excited to continue to receive assignments! I love studying the Word in this way. I love seeing how God's Word is as relevant today as the day it was inspired, and with the twenty-first century lens, we see history confirming the truth of Scripture and pointing us with confidence to the future promised to all who believe. I think that puts us firmly on shouting ground, and I am humbled and excited to have been given an opportunity to add my voice to the chorus.

MISSION & MINISTRY PROJECTS:

“We must eat a bag of salt together.”

This was said to Mike Johnson by a man in a Muslim country. He was indicating what it can require in order for the communication of the Gospel to find a hearing. It was a statement of how long trust-building can take. Seed-sowing and watering take time.

Additionally, Mike shared with us a few weeks ago, the observation had been made that missionaries from Latin American countries were often more effective than Americans in reaching Muslims, at least in part because they had grown up in a culture that was not tied so closely to the clock. They grew up in a culture who valued time spent in developing relationships. He shared that most of the rest of the world is more apt to sit over a cup of tea, simply valuing the time together. Sometimes it can seem to us that developing relationships can take such an inordinate amount of time.

Years ago in Turkey, the ministry we were visiting, received inquiries from all over the country concerning Jesus Christ. I was surprised to see that in the response to the inquiries they did not send a tract or short message outlining the Gospel. Rather, they sent the New Testament, encouraging the inquirer to read and consider. They found this allowed time to plant the seed of the Gospel. This allowed time for Holy Spirit to move on the heart of the inquirer. Sometimes it can seem that urging “reading and considering” can take such an inordinate amount of time.

Rather than being discouraged by how much time it's taking to gain the opportunity to share with our loved ones, coworkers, neighbors and others, let's pray for the Lord to train and remind us of the value of lingering over a cup of tea. The lasting fruit from these investments of time can be inestimable.



Salt Bag *last quarter 19th century*

Nomads used small narrow-necked bags to carry salt, which they would add to their food and feed to their grazing animals.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art