
Title: The Biblical Theology Study Center

Text: Luke 6:40

Speaker: Pastor Chad Bresson

Introduction

It feels as though this evening represents some sort of convergence. Paul Washer (missions conference). BILD and the Antioch School (3 days of certification training). Church Discipline. Exodus 23 (Pastor Russ's return to Christ in Exodus). Pastor Greg Cook (another seizure Friday night). The Peters and the Jonsons (leaving for church plant). And now, this evening, Mark Schindler (singing again with healthy voice). This has been a full week. What is God up to with Clearcreek Chapel? What does the Overshepherd see and want us to see in His orchestration of all these challenging, stretching, even heart-wrenching events? There is a part of me that says we should dispense with the formalities, hop right to some bullet points and be done with Sunday, as if this sermon tonight, even the sermon this morning occur in a vacuum. Indeed, they do not. So, I don't believe it would be doing justice to the Christ who loves us, gave himself for us, and now is reigning and making all things new for us, to merely go on as if His divine hand is relegated to a footnote on the pages of the life of our church.

I had planned to do a "frequently asked questions" presentation of what church-based theological education may look like here at the Chapel. And I had a text from which to speak. And I still plan to get to the FAQ in a few moments. But I would be remiss, I think, if we did not go back to the chapter where we left off and begin there, because I think it is appropriate for this occasion. And that's at the foot of Jesus, taking our place with Mary.

Luke chapter 10. Verse 25: And behold a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Now, verse 38: "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." 41 But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, 42 but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

I want to highlight again, the contrast between Martha and Mary. Martha is distracted. Martha is anxious. Martha is troubled. Mary is none of these things. Mary knows the "one thing necessary", for eternal life. Mary has chosen the "good portion". Mary is sitting "at the Lord's feet listening to his teaching." Mary is at the feet of the Lord of the Sabbath. Unlike Martha, Mary has found rest in "sitting and listening". Even as we consider our vision for education this evening, may we not forget the import of Exodus 23... let us sit at the feet of The One and Only Angel who offers us Sabbath rest. Let us listen to the Voice of the One and Only Angel who sets before us a banquet on which to feast. The convergence of all these things this week have surely been divinely orchestrated. But it is also true that there's the possibility of being anxious and troubled and distracted. Let us sit at the feet of the Lord of the Sabbath, the one who blesses us with True Bread and Living Water.

We have already noted that mankind has always been in need of an education. He was created as a learner by the Creator-Teacher and was expected to duplicate the Teacher in his image-bearing

throughout the whole earth. The student received an education that was outside of himself, but the student revolted. Education became self-serving, subversive, and a rebellion against the Creator-Teacher. Both education and student were in need of redemption and transformation from above. And Christ came teaching. Christ, the Incarnate Educator, is our teacher, a Teacher who again gives us an education that comes from outside of ourselves. And the church is a community of redeemed learners sitting at Christ's feet, the only place where we can and will find eternal life. Before we can be teachers, incarnating the education we have received from above, we must be learners at Christ's feet. This is where we have come to in our series on the Incarnation of Education.

Tonight we answer another of the obvious questions that arises from what we have proposed so far: What does sitting at the feet of Jesus look like here at Clearcreek Chapel? And how is it that we are incarnating education as teachers and learners here at the Chapel?

Tonight's presentation is going to be a little more informal as we look at some of the things we have been thinking about as it relates to leadership development here at the Chapel. We will answer some questions and probably prompt more questions. I would encourage you to write down your questions as we go through the presentation this evening... then in two weeks (next week is Resurrection Sunday) we will have a Q & A with the elders over what has been presented this month. So, if we don't answer your questions this evening hang on to those or hand them in, and we will get to them in a couple of weeks. Tonight's presentation is not meant to answer all of the questions about our plans for education here at the Chapel. This is a project in process.

Before we look at what we are doing and what we would like to do here at the chapel, I would like to revisit Luke's gospel in order to shape how we think about incarnating education.

What does it mean to incarnate education?

We talk much about the Incarnation here at the Chapel. We *must* talk much about the Incarnation here at the Chapel. The Incarnation changed the course of history forever, heaven invading earth, the eternal intruding into time and space for our redemption. The Incarnation, of course, is the Second Person of the eternal Godhead taking on human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. In the Incarnation we affirm that the very Creator of the universe was born at a specific time and in a specific place in what we call history. God has a body. Jesus is fully God and fully man. And indeed Christ still has a physical body, reigning from his throne in that place we cannot see called "heaven". The Incarnation, God in human flesh, has forever united heaven and earth.

To incarnate then, is to embody something. Christ embodied God and in doing so, forever embodied all that God is for us. This is how we can speak of Truth as a Person. This is how we can speak of "principles" as a Person. Christ gives flesh and bones to many things we tend to think of as transcendent and immaterial. Wisdom. Life. Torah. Law. Covenant. Grace. Light. Salvation. Even a concept so simple as a "door" (John 10:9). Christ embodies all of these things, and in doing so, becomes their highest and ultimate definition and standard. This then is how we can speak of Education as a Person. Christ embodies the Education come from above. We don't merely learn about Christ. We learn Christ. So that Paul says, "that I may know *Him* and the power of his resurrection." This education is first and foremost a Person who not only has created the student, but gives of himself to the student. So when we talk about Christian theological education, we are not merely speaking about a set of facts to be known and learned about

theology or about Christ, we are speaking of that activity in which we come to learn and know Christ himself.

But not only can we speak of Christ incarnating education, we ourselves are to incarnate education. We are to embody, live out, put flesh to that knowledge of Christ to each other and to the world. Even as there has come to us an Education from heaven bringing with it eternal life, we are to, in turn, take that education to others. This kind of education is not merely rote knowledge. It is not merely a set of facts. It is a lifestyle. It must not only be internalized but externalized.

Some of you probably recognize by now, what I am saying about education here we most often speak of in association with the proclamation of the gospel in the preaching of the Word. We preach Christ crucified here at the Chapel. But for our purposes in how we think about what we do in our education, I want us to recognize the educational component of that proclamation. We not only preach Christ crucified, we *educate* Christ crucified.

Let us turn to Luke 6. We will begin with verse 37. I do not have the time to fully unpack this passage this evening, so this may have the feel of proof-texting a point. And again, it would be nice to have the time to do justice to the entirety of this text. But I want to notice a comment from Christ that highlights what it means for us to incarnate education and the purposes for which we engage in the educational project. In this passage, Christ is giving what we typically call the Sermon on the Mount. More often than not, when we think of the Sermon on the Mount we think of Matthew chapters 5 through 7. This passage in Luke is what we call a parallel passage. And it emphasizes some different things from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ, here, has just called and set apart his 12 disciples. But he launches into the Sermon or discourse with what Luke describes as a “great crowd of his disciples”. Obviously, then, Luke is speaking of two groups that seem very similar. Yet, over time, these two groups are going to manifest themselves to be quite different. And Christ, in this sermon, is highlighting who it is who is a true disciple. While the “great crowd” has every appearance of being and acting like disciples, along the way there will be some who will prove to be nothing of the sort.

Which brings us to verse 37: “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” ³⁹ He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye. ⁴³ “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵ The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. ⁴⁶ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose,

the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.
⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Notice the parallels: Forgive, forgiven. Good measure, good measure back to you. Log out, speck out. Good tree, good fruit. Good person, good treasure of the heart, good produce. All of these things amount to “the one who hears my words and does them”, or in other words, “the one who is educated and puts that education into practice”. Who is it that is a disciple or a follower of Christ? It is the one who “hears Christ’s words and does them”. Conversely, who is it that is not a disciple of Christ? Those who hear Christ’s words and do not do them. This passage is a series of parallels and contrasts, painting a picture of who it is that is a true disciple and who it is who isn’t one.

In the midst of this passage we have a striking statement. Verse 40: **A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.** Or to paraphrase, the student is not above his teacher, but everyone when the student is fully educated will be like his teacher. The idea behind the words “fully trained” has to do with a sense of completion. To be made complete. To be furnished completely. To be set in order. To be brought into line. To be perfectly restored.

The student who is fully trained will be made complete in the form of his teacher. He will look like, act like, think like, and desire like his teacher. And notice Christ doesn’t identify who the teacher is. For our purposes this evening, we are going to follow the track in this passage that follows the implications of Christ being this teacher in verse 40. But we do note that the alternative education is alive and well in this text. This passage also serves as a warning for those who would follow an alternative teacher that sets itself above and against Christ. There is an education that leads to damnation, the kind of education resulting in students who hear Christ, but do not do what he says; no matter how solid the foundation may seem, make no mistake, when that *final storm* comes an education that is not “from above” will end in the utter ruin of the house and student.

But like Mary, a true disciple is one who does not see himself above the Teacher come from God. Rather, the true disciple places him or herself at the feet of the Teacher and in so doing, will be conformed to the image of the Teacher. Here in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, as Christ educates his disciples, Christ injects the ultimate trajectory of an education sent from God. Here we find the precursor to the words of Paul, “those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Those true disciples who place themselves at the feet of Jesus as the one thing necessary for inheriting eternal life are in the process of being made complete as Christ’s image bearers. Thus, as the church engages in the educational process, Christ is fulfilling in the church the original creational purpose of man as image bearer. Christ, the last Adam who perfectly imaged God for our salvation, now stamps the church with his image so that we might bear his image to the ends of the earth. As we involve ourselves with church-based theological education we must remind ourselves that the education is not an end in itself. This education is the means by which the student, the church, is being made complete in the image of Christ our Teacher.

As we keep this in mind, the natural question arises, what does that look like here at Clearcreek Chapel, and what will it look like as we continue our efforts to improve what it means for us to

be sitting at the feet of Jesus even as we are being conformed to his image. We've had a lot of discussion in just the past 3 days about what a theological education might look like. The Adult Bible Education Team and the elders have had a lot of discussion about what that might look like. And all of this discussion has raised a lot of questions. I've arranged some of these questions in the form of an F.A.Q.: frequently asked questions. And we'll start with the basics.

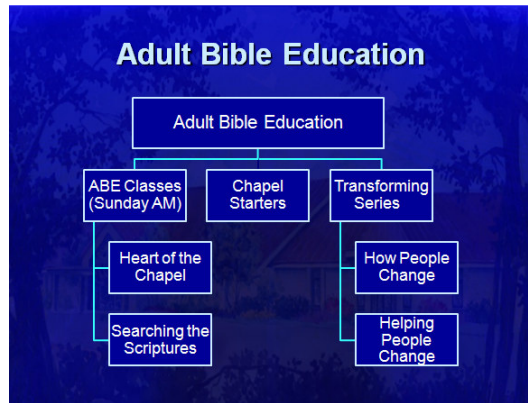
What is Adult Bible Education?

The primary vehicle for this kind of education to date is something we call Adult Bible Education. But what is that? What is Adult Bible Education? Adult Bible Education is the primary discipleship education ministry of Clearcreek Chapel. Here are the forms it has taken, and now we are adding one:

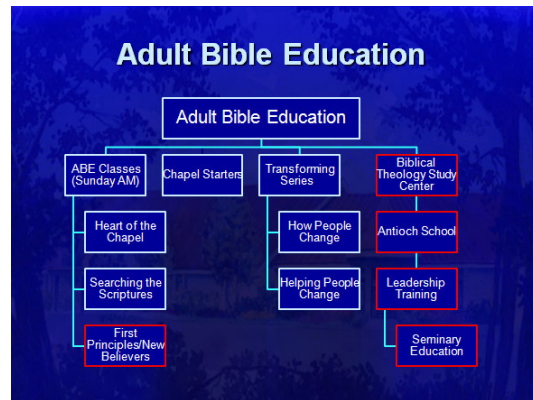
- ABE Classes (Sunday AM)
- Searching the Scriptures
- Heart of the Chapel
- Chapel Starters (Pastor of Community)
- Transforming Series (Pastor of Counseling)
- Biblical Theology Study Center

What does Adult Bible Education look like here at the Chapel?

Here is a simple flow chart that shows all of the areas of responsibility for Adult Bible Education.



In the past few months, and for Pastor Greg Cook – at least a year or more, we have been thinking about an additional track for Adult Bible Education, which makes the flow chart look like this:



What is Biblical Theology?

This new track we have decided to call, the “Biblical Theology Study Center”. Before we go any further, some ask me from time to time just what is Biblical Theology? Here are some definitions (and for those who are studious, you can go to the church website and get these off of the manuscript):

- Understanding, tracing, and describing the organic and progressively unfolding revelation of God's words and deeds throughout history, giving priority to the eschatological, culminating in the Incarnation's intervention in and interpretation of the history of redemption (Vos)
- The study of God's self-revelation to human beings for the purposes of redemption through the interpretation of the events and experiences written down in the Scriptures (House/Hafemann)
- Interpreting the Bible as a whole, from Genesis to Revelation, as Scripture interprets Scripture (Bresson)

So, “biblical theology” doesn't just mean that our theology is biblical. It has a scientific definition... it is a field of discipline in the academy. But it simply means to study each part of the Bible in light of the whole of the Bible.

What is the Biblical Theology Study Center?

- The BTSC is a ministry of Clearcreek Chapel's Adult Bible Education that provides:
 - Church leadership training
 - Theological education
 - Seminary degree through BILD International's Antioch School
- The BTSC will provide theological education and church leadership training in the context of Clearcreek Chapel's ministry of the Word and community.

Why is the Biblical Theology Study Center needed?

- Our church must be good stewards with rich proclamation resources.
- We need a tool for Christian growth and spiritual formation.

- We must be entrusting faithful men with the proclamation.
- We need intentional leadership development for:
 - Elders
 - Deacons
 - ABE teachers
 - Olders (Titus 2)
 - Youngers (Titus 2)
- There must be a seminary alternative we can provide for young men who want to go into ministry.
- We must be planning for the eventual duplication of proclamation/leadership in church planting.

For whom is the Biblical Theology Study Center?

- Anyone who is a disciple of Jesus Christ
- Men and women
- Primarily for members of Clearcreek Chapel

What form will the BTSC take?

- Training leaders
- “Completing” disciples (John 6:40)
- The church, its ministry and its body life provides the context for theological and leadership education.
- The pastors and other church leaders are mentors.
- Theological and leadership training is viewed as an entrustment of the gospel proclamation and its ministry to faithful men by faithful men already involved in the gospel proclamation and work of the ministry.
- The orientation of theological study is toward laying a foundation for lifelong learning.
- Conformity to the image of Christ (the essence of discipleship).
- Pursuit of Christ’s wisdom.
- The standard of measuring preparedness for ministry is determined by learner’s participation in the life of the church and education that is contextualized by the local church.
- Theological and leadership training is not an end in itself or separate from the local church, but is a matter of the entire church conforming to Christ’s image
- Leaders in church-based theological and leadership education are involved in the training process as learners among learners.

- Church-based learning is stimulated through discussion and debate.
- Assessment of those being trained is made primarily through the articulation of issues and implementation of church-based ministry strategies.
- Leaders will train, model, entrust, and mentor faithful men who have demonstrated leadership ability and desire.

What primary tool will the BTSC use in order to accomplish its purpose of training leaders and educating disciples?

- BILD International
- Antioch School

What is BILD International?

- BILD was begun in 1986 at the Oakwood Road Church in Ames, Iowa.
- BILD has established a Resource Center in Ames that houses the ministry of BILD and its resident leaders.
- BILD is known as a leader in church-based theological education.
- BILD's church-based resources have grown to include equipping for new believers through doctoral-level training.
- BILD works formally with groups of churches or associations of churches in fourteen countries.
- BILD helps churches develop church-based theological education paths and resources to meet their needs for church leadership.

BILD Components that will be used by ABE:

- First Principles (ABE, Outreach)
- Antioch school (through the Biblical Theology Study Center)

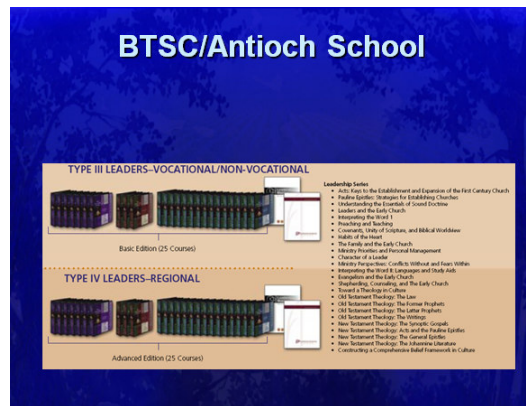
What is the Antioch School?

- The Antioch School is a church-based, competency-based school for assisting church leaders in training future leaders in the context of their churches.
- The school also provides opportunity for church leaders and future church leaders to get degrees right in the context of their church ministries.
- Church-Based
 - Foundational biblical concept
 - Applicants commended by church leaders
 - Churches and church networks provide the context for learning
 - Church leaders as mentors

- Multiple levels of participation allow for maximum participation
- Competency-based
- Equivalent to 90-hour M. Div.
- Grounding leadership in the proclamation (gospel/sound doctrine)
- Passing the entrustment of the proclamation along to faithful men as well as educating women in that proclamation
- Developing maturity in the community
- Assimilating training and education within the life of the community so that all become participants
- Church expansion and possibly church planting through leadership duplication and development

What could be offered by the Biblical Theology Study Center through the Antioch School?

An entire leadership course, with the possibility of degrees:



- C.Min. Certificate of Ministry
- C.Th. Certificate of Theology
- B.Min. Bachelor of Ministry
- B.Th. Bachelor of Theology
- M.Min. Master of Ministry
- M.Th. Master of Theology
- D.Min. Doctor of Ministry
- D.Th. Doctor of Theology

What is the difference between Antioch School and BILD?

- BILD is the umbrella organization-ministry that provides a variety of church-based education resources.
- The Antioch School is merely one of those resources.

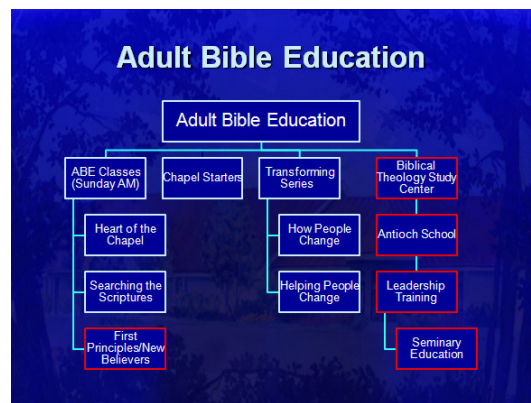
When will the BTSC begin?

To date, there is no formal starting date. We have yet to begin serious discussion between ourselves and other churches that may be interested in participating in the Antioch School. Remember, the Antioch School is just a tool being utilized by the BTSC. It's quite possible that other courses may be offered through the BTSC.

What is the relationship between the Biblical Theology Study Center and Adult Bible Education?

The BTSC is a new area of responsibility within the umbrella of Adult Bible Education.

And again, here is what it looks like:



What is the relationship between the Biblical Theology Study Center and the Antioch School?

- The Antioch School is a tool, a resource, a curriculum, or an activity for the Biblical Theology Study Center.
- The Center will exist independently or regardless of the Antioch School.
- The purpose of the BTSC primarily will be to train leaders and educate disciples. *Some* who participate in BTSC may wish to earn a degree through the Antioch School. Most who participate may have no desire to earn a degree and do not have to do so.

Why does the Biblical Theology Study Center plan on using BILD International and the Antioch School?

This is a very good question. We have been thinking about the idea of a BTSC for quite some time. When we were told about BILD International, studied their online material, and eventually visited their headquarters in Ames, Iowa last November, we realized there was no need to at-

tempt to reinvent the wheel. Much of what BILD is trying to accomplish with its Antioch School in the area of leadership training we want to accomplish with the BTSC. We have had a long time need for more of a formal and intentional leadership development program here at Clearcreek. Because the aim of the Antioch School seems to be quite compatible with our goals and desires, we felt that using BILD's resources, especially their Antioch School would potentially be a good fit for us here at Clearcreek Chapel. They have already invested a lot of time and money into developing a solid curriculum. If BILD's resources are as customizable as is claimed (and we believe they are), then why not take advantage of their time and expertise in using a curriculum that is already developed and can provide a stable "infrastructure" to our BTSC? We are confident, having talked to many BILD leaders and others who have already been using the curriculum, that the Antioch School as a resource can be customized to Clearcreek Chapel's Reformed doctrinal context.

Who is responsible for the Biblical Theology Study Center?

- The Pastor for Spiritual Development will oversee the Biblical Theology Study Center.
- The Adult Bible Education Team will provide vision, leadership, and guidance for the Biblical Theology Study Center.

Antioch School: an effective resource for the Biblical Theology Study Center

- Church-based education
- Community oriented
- Compatible with our emphasis on biblical theology
- Customizable with our reformed theology and the redemptive-historical hermeneutic
- Capable of addressing leadership training needs
- Customizable to fit church structure/situation
- Cost-effective (vs. seminary)
- Church planting

Conclusion Pray for the elders and the Adult Bible Education team as we consider and plan for the Biblical Theology Study Center.

Consider how you might be involved as a participant, whether with the simple first principles series in a home, or leadership training, and for some of you, study for a seminary degree.

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