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*Pastor David Gardner*

Paul says in Romans 1:16 (NRSV):

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Emphasis is mine) When the Bible comes alive in our lives, we come alive. When we place ourselves and all we know about the world into the salvation history, we are empowered. I became empowered when I realized that I had literature analysis tools to help me walk around in some of the narratives.

Jeremy Steele writes about Christian Education for [www.resourceumc.org](http://www.resourceumc.org) (condensed):

Let's be honest. We believe the Bible is the word of God and the source of spiritual life. Sometimes, it can be hard to understand. When that happens, we might disengage from this powerful source of light. In those moments, it helps to have tools to help unlock the meaning or simply keep us engaged.

Here are some creative ways to help you do that.

### 1. DECODE THE STORY

Remember how you learned the parts of a story in high school English class? This same structure is present in many biblical stories. Read through a passage and then list some basic plot elements: setting, main characters, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. Identifying these elements can help you clarify the overall message of a story and see the application for your life.

### 2. DECIPHER THE ARGUMENT

Not every passage in the Bible is a narrative with conflict, climax and resolution. Much of the Bible is in the form of a classical argument, including the elements of background (the context relevant to the specific issue), thesis (the evidence for the claim being made), antithesis (refutation of the opposing viewpoint) and conclusion (the final wrap-up restating the thesis in light of the antithesis). This can be particularly helpful for Scripture that argues

for a specific point of view with little attention to the opposing view. Once you can identify them both, the main point becomes clearer.

### 3. DESIGN A COMIC STRIP

This method can be great when used with the first two ideas. Break the passage into eight or fewer discrete scenes and draw the key action of each scene paired with dialogue or important narration. This is all about exploring the passage by imagining what else is happening in the surroundings. What are the reactions of the other people? Do any props come into play? How are they held/used? How does the setting shape the scene?

Don't be afraid to use stick figures! If the passage inspires you to create something brilliant, you can always hire an artist to develop the concept.

#### 4. CREATE A MEME

The current trend of placing a catchy word or phrase on top of an image is not only fun but can also help you explore the Bible. Imagine that you are encouraging people to read a specific passage of the Bible. What phrase would hook people to read more? What image both matches the theme of the verse, and inspires curiosity? Once you have an idea, you can use Photoshop, GIMP or one of many free online meme generators to superimpose the text onto the image. You can also download an app such as Meme Factory, that's easy to use.

#### 5. BECOME A BIBLE TRANSLATOR

Don't worry; you don't need several years of biblical languages to understand the Bible. However, translating the Bible into your context and vocabulary can make any passage come to life. The goal here is to translate every piece of the text into your current vocabulary. This extends beyond the words to the metaphors. If you don't know anyone who is a shepherd, think of an image from your life that conveys the same ideas and emotions and use that instead.

#### 6. EXPLORE THE TEXT, CO-TEXT AND INTERTEXT

Lifting a verse or two from the surrounding material can cause very erroneous interpretations and applications. This method helps you place any text firmly in its place in Scripture. Step 1 is determining the logical boundaries of a text. Often, chapters and verses are not placed at the most logical break points. (Emphasis is mine, again) Take a moment to determine a section's appropriate boundary. Next, take a look at the "co-text" of those passages that come immediately before and after. How does this passage logically flow from the preceding material and connect clearly with what follows?

Finally, place it in its "intertext" in the larger canon of Scripture. This is where you try to find parallel passages in other books of the Bible. The goal is to ask how this passage is clarified by its place in relation to the rest of Scripture.

#### 7. GET IT DOWN TO A SENTENCE (OR TWO)

When asked for the greatest commandments, Jesus gives two sentences that he says summarize all of the law and the prophets. Two sentences. Sometimes the best thing we can do is get super simple. For this method, you boil down an entire passage to a single sentence. The entire Noah story might boil down simply to "Noah obeyed God." The 23rd Psalm begins with its own summary, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

#### 8. EXPERIENCE IT WITH ALL FIVE SENSES

Next time you open the Bible, try to experience the passage before you with all five senses. Are there birds or waves or the crackle of a fire close enough to hear? Is it cold or hot? Is there sand between your toes or wind blowing through your hair? Are you close enough to the sea to taste the air, or are you getting ready to taste a meal? Do you smell livestock or flowers? Once you build the scene through your senses, new pieces of the narrative come to life or are given deeper meaning.

#### 9. PRACTICE LECTIO DIVINA (DIVINE READING)

One of the most ancient ways to experience the Bible comes through a practice called lectio divina (Latin for "divine reading"). The practice moves through four phases with an underlying confidence that God speaks to us whenever we read the Bible. The first step is to read the passage over and over, savoring each word and waiting for one to rise above the rest. Once a single word or phrase sticks in your mind, you begin to explore the word. What feelings, emotions or memories does it evoke? After a time of experiencing the word, it's time to ask and listen to God for the answer to what this word is meant to say to you. Why this word? What is God saying? Finally, use the word as a focus point to let go of every distracting thought so that you can rest in the presence of God.

#### 10. SCRAPBOOK IT

For the crafty people, it's time to pull out your curvy scissors and glue sticks. Take a passage or verse and use all the tools at your disposal to illustrate it. You might decide to make the key word the center of your page or use

pictures from your own life to convey the emotions behind the passage. The goal is to create a visual expression of the truth.

Whether you use scissors or the classical story structure, exploring the Bible can bring new life.

Let's pray with the Psalmist: (Psalm 119:105-112 - Voice)

Your word is a lamp for my steps;  
it lights the path before me.

I have taken an oath and confirmed it:  
I pledge to do what You say is right and just.

I have suffered terribly, O Eternal One;  
give me the life You promised.

Please accept the words I offer willingly, O Eternal One,  
and instruct me in the ways of Your justice.

My soul is continually in danger,  
but I do not forget Your teachings.

The wicked have laid a trap for me,  
but I have not drifted away from Your instructions.

Your decrees are forever mine,  
for they bring joy to my life.

I have committed myself to do what You require  
forever and ever, to the very end.

(AMEN)



Dear God,

I am so afraid to open my clenched fists! Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to? Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me. And what you want to give me is love—unconditional, everlasting love.

Amen.

# CHURCH NEWS

The Leadership Table will meet this Tuesday May 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 pm.

Volunteers are needed to ride in the van on Sunday Mornings to pick up the kids.

If you would like to volunteer to pass out bottled water on Memorial Day Weekend, please contact the office as soon as possible. We will be doing this on Sunday afternoon from 2 pm - 4 pm and Monday morning from 10 am - Noon.

St. Paul's Memorial Day **Bottled Water**  
Schedule & Sign Up Sheet

\*Team Captain Bring an ice chest, bag of ice. Bottled water is in back storage in Fellowship Hall. Entire team passes out water to those cleaning and decorating grave sites.

North Cemetery Sunday, May 26 2:00-4:00 PM	
1.*	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.
South Cemetery Sunday, May 26 2:00-4:00 PM	
1.*	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

North Cemetery Monday, May 27 10:00AM-12:00 Noon	
1.*	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.
South Cemetery Monday, May 27 10:00AM-12:00 Noon	
1.* Joe Pierce	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.





*Celebration for  
Reverend Randy Mitchell*

First United Methodist Church Enid  
announces the retirement of  
Reverend Randy Mitchell,  
after nearly 40 years of ministry.

**On Sunday, June 23**  
you are invited to join us for  
Traditional Worship at 9:00 or  
Modern Worship at 11:10.  
A reception will be held to honor Randy & Helen  
at 10:00 a.m.

*Cards would also be much appreciated:  
Randy & Helen Mitchell  
c/o First UMC Enid  
401 W. Randolph, Enid, OK 73703*



The Kairos Prison Ministry programs are lay-led, interdenominational Christian Ministries. Kairos Prison Ministry has three programs, Kairos Inside, Kairos Outside and Kairos Torch. Kairos Inside serves men and women who are incarcerated. Kairos Outside serves women who have friend or relatives who are or have been incarcerated and Kairos Torch serves youth that are incarcerated. As a ministry, Kairos embraces a diverse group of volunteers working together to fulfill Christ's call to action in Matthew 25:36. Kairos Outside feels that many times women "serve time" right along with their loved ones. Kairos Outside provides a special weekend retreat designed to support the female relatives of men and women who are or have been incarcerated or women who were incarcerated who were unable to attend Kairos Inside while in prison. The weekend is followed by a continuing ministry of small group communities. Contact Gerry if you are interested in helping or know someone who is interested in attending a Kairos weekend.



- 1 - Paula Freese
- 6 - Landon Berscheidt
- 7 - Ron Martin
- 10 - Don Henricks
- 10 - Michelle Martin
- 16 - Nikki Pierce
- 17 - Kevin Berscheidt
- 23 - Megan Caveny



Carter Wilson born on Wednesday

Tarah Frye is going to Italy

Police Officer Mark shot in line of duty doing well.

Mallory Bowles made OU Cheer Squad and graduated from HS.

Paula McConnell was on TV



2 - Billy and Mary Branch



Parker Bowles – New Starts  
Lisa Berscheidt's Friend's Son in a serious motorcycle accident  
Lisa Berscheidt's Cousin had a premature baby  
Addie McMurrin  
Tarah Frye – Travel Mercies as she goes to Italy to study for a Month  
Tanner Tanaka – still in NICU  
Addie's brother after Heart Surgery  
Family of Marian Chessmore  
Beth Horn  
Allred's Granddaughters Kirsten and Courtney  
Ann Starrett – Dementia and broken Hip. In Memory Care.  
Trish Lister  
James Crow – Cancer  
Kay Martin – Dementia and Fell and Broke a Bone  
Sara Riggs – Divorce final in two weeks  
Thomas Bradburry – Healing from Cancer  
Carla Johnson – Fracture in her Shoulder  
Jo Ann Pierce – Continued prayers for recovering from Knee Surgery  
Pat Weber – Continued prayers for recovery from foot surgery  
Della Henry – Heart Surgery  
Kathy Allred – Continued prayers for healing and to be healthy  
Marcia Haskins – On going foot sores  
Drew Cole - Cancer  
Junior Brown - Cancer  
Connie Green – Cancer  
Stacy Mettler – Cancer  
Ann Johnson – Continued prayers for healing on her hip  
Jason Poorman – (Edith Suiters nephew) Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma  
Karen Gibson – Cancer  
Gary Gibson – Cancer  
Jan Smith – Cancer  
Kathy Bridges – Cancer  
Joe Perry – Kidney cancer  
Margaret Averre – Throat cancer  
Daniel Whittney – Cancer  
Jennifer Allred – Spinal pain and fibromyalgia  
Melinda Douglas – Lung Cancer