Integrating Exegesis and Exposition:
Preaching and Teaching for Spiritual Independence

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INTRODUCTION

To assess the implications of literal grammatical-historical hermeneutics (LGH) for the handling of the Bible it is helpful to consider three related stages of application. The first stage establishes warrant for preferring LGH over other historical and contemporary interpretive methods. This stage considers the epistemological basis for such a preference, and arrives at a prescriptive if/then conclusion from descriptive premises. The second stage explicates a particular method for applying the principles of LGH in the exegetical process. This stage quantifies LGH, parsing exegetical steps to insure LGH adherence. This second stage is, simply put, the exegetical method as governed and required by LGH.

Whereas the first stage justifies LGH, and the second stage applies LGH in exegesis, the third stage provides certain important ground rules for *praxis* and an *expositional approach* that are equally as governed by LGH as are the stages of justification and exegesis. In other words, if we understand LGH to be preferred and even prescribed, then we do well to consider the implications of that preference and prescription for *all textual considerations*, not just interpretive ones. If LGH is to govern our exegesis, then we are inconsistent if we do not allow the same to govern our praxis and exposition. This present discussion considers the first two stages (epistemological justification and exegetical method) with a view to understanding their implications for the third stage (praxis[1] and exposition), and for arriving at a model to integrate the second and third stages.

FIRST-STAGE LOGIC OF LGH: JUSTIFICATION

Preference of LGH over other historical and contemporary interpretive methods rests on a simple, logical flow of ideas that can be formalized as follows:

P1: There exists an uncreated God who created.[2]

P2: Both language[3] and humanity[4] originated from God.

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1 The term is used here to describe *theory of practice,* meaning the grounding or basis of practice.

2 Gen 1:1, Jn 1:3, Rom 1:20, Col 1:16.

3 Gen 1:3.

4 Gen 1:26-27.

P3: God communicated[5] with humanity using language.[6]

P4: God's use of language confirms language to be a suitable vehicle for God's revelation.[7]

P5: The earliest recipients of God's communication understood it to have meaning, and ascertained that meaning based on a normative use of language.[8]

P6: The earliest and definitive model of interpretation was one in which God's words were taken at face value, were understood to follow basic rules of grammar, and were understood within a historical and contextual frame of reference.[9]

P7: Of historical and contemporary hermeneutic methods, LGH uniquely represents this early and definitive model.[10]

C: If Biblical interpreters are to understand the intended meaning of God's communication in the manner of the earliest recipients, then LGH must be employed.[11]

This argument, with its Biblical underpinnings, shows our LGH preference to be multidisciplinary in its implications. For example, from a Biblical perspective epistemology is neither rationalist nor empiricist. Instead, certainty is grounded in a specific perspective of God through revelation.[12] Despite the efficacy of natural revelation for rendering all without excuse,[13] necessary knowledge of the Divine is exclusively ascertainable through special revelation.[14] Likewise, historical linguistics is not merely a study of the evolution of language as having no traceable beginning point. Rather from a Biblical perspective there is a beginning point[15] followed soon after by a transitional event[16] that together serve as explanatory devices governing linguistic disciplines. Anthropology, if discerned Biblically,

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5 Gen 2:16-17.

6 By language is meant *the method of spoken communication involving the structured use of words*.

7 Ex 3:14, 17:14, 34:1.

8 Gen 3:1-5, 9-13.

9 Ex 19:8, 24:3, 7.

10 Gen 6:13-22.

11 Prov 30:5, Deut 8:3, Mt 4:4.

12 Job 28:28, Prov 1:7, 9:10.

13 Rom 1:20.

14 Ps 34:11, cf. Prov 1:2 and 1:7.

15 Gen 1:3, 2:16.

16 Gen 11:1, 7-9.

considers humanity to be broken with no intrinsic ability for repair.[17] By contrast, non-Biblical anthropology generally views humanity to be on an upward trajectory, independent of divine aid. A Biblical psychology regards there to be a non-corporeal aspect of humanity, and emphasizes human responsibility for one's thoughts and actions.[18] This is not so in secular psychology, which considers the soul to be no more than mind, and human thought and action to be no more than a series of physiological causes and effects.

These are just a few examples of the broad influence of Biblical hermeneutics. Further, these examples show LGH a device effecting much more than just a few strategic prophetic passages. Rather, it is a comprehensive tool for understanding humanity, history, the world, and God Himself. If we take the Biblical data seriously as the product of a creative God who communicated with His creation through the use of language, then we have no alternative to LGH as *the* interpretive device, lest we sacrifice meaning itself in favor of the meaningless and arbitrary.

SECOND-STAGE LOGIC OF LGH: EXEGESIS

An exegetical method that is governed by LGH includes a series of steps, all of which are necessary for ascertaining the meaning of any given passage. These steps represent a sort of *sine qua non* for doing exegesis.

Step 1: Verify the text and translation.
Step 2: Understand background and context.
Step 3: Identify structure.
Step 4: Identify grammatical and syntactical keys.
Step 5: Identify lexical keys.
Step 6: Identify Biblical context.
Step 7: Identify theological context.

Step 1: Verify the text and translation
If we recognize that God communicated at specific times using particular languages, then we must realize (1) the implications of our being generations removed from the original manuscripts, and (2) how much is lost when we translate from those languages. This first exegetical step considers especially lower criticism, examining the text in the original language to determine the scope and limits of the passage, and to verify the text itself.

For example, P66 records John 3:13 as ending with the phrase, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου,[19] while the same passage in Stephen's TR, ends with ο υιος του ανθρωπου ο ων

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17 Gen 6:5, 8:21, Rom 3:10-20, Eph 2:1-10.

18 Gen 2:15-17, 3:17, Ps 139:23-24, Rom 1:20.

19 Consistent with Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, neither of which include the phrase *who is in heaven*.

εν τω ουρανω,[20] Though this variant is seemingly not doctrinally significant, the latter reading would constitute at least a confusing representation of Christ (as being concurrently in heaven and on earth). Absent this step of verifying the text itself along with the veracity of the translation, we *can't even begin* the exegetical process, being unable to determine something so basic as *what the text actually says*. Biblical exegesis demands at least a basic understanding of lower criticism and the Biblical languages.

Step 2: Understand background and context

The normative use of language requires a consideration of the text *in context*, and in light of key background information. Considerations in this step include higher criticism, authorship, timing, audience and culture, literary genre, and occasion, to name a few aspects. For example, it is increasingly popular to recognize the Gospels as *Graeco-Roman bios*, a literary form that allows for non-literal meanings of otherwise literal language. Michael Licona illustrates this in his explanation of Matthew 27:52-53:

> Given the presence of phenomenological language used in a symbolic manner in both Jewish and Roman literature related to a major event such as the death of an emperor or the end of a reigning king or even a kingdom, the presence of ambiguity in the relevant text of Ignatius, and that so very little can be known about Thallus's comment on the darkness...it seems to me that an understanding of the language of Matthew 27:52-53 as 'special effects' with eschatological Jewish texts and thought in mind is most plausible.[21]

If we conclude that the resurrections described in Matthew 27:52-53 are special effects, then on what textual authority can we argue that the resurrection of Christ was not also special effects? Were the Gospels divinely inspired historical accounts, or were the writers simply skilled in the historical fiction paradigm of the day? What is understood of background and context profoundly influences the remaining exegetical steps.

Step 3: Identify structure.

Internal clues to the structure of Biblical books are both readily available and necessarily discerned for understanding the theses and supporting material of each book. Genesis uses the word תּוֹלְדֹת (*toledoth,* meaning *generations*) to divide the book.[22] John 20:30-31 describes σημεῖα as the building blocks of his Gospel. Acts 1:8 provides the geographical and chronological outline of the book. Revelation 1:19

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20 Consistent with Jerome's Vulgate, which includes the phrase, *qui est in caelo.*

21 Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2010), 552.

22 Gen 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 25:19, 36:1, 36:9, 37:1.

introduces the three sections of that prophecy. As is evident in these examples, the normative use of language places tremendous weight on rhetorical structure for ascertaining meaning.

Step 4: Identify grammatical and syntactical keys.

Grammar and syntax consider normative principles for relationships of words to each other. Grammar is the framework of rules, while syntax is descriptive of usage. Both are important, in historical context, for discerning meaning. Acts 2:38 provides an important example of the importance of understanding word-relationships: "Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Peter's imperative seems, in English, to require water baptism in order to receive forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, the imperative μετανοήσατε, the second pronoun ὑμῶν (the sins *of you*), and the verb λήμψεσθε are all second person plural, while the imperative βαπτισθήτω is in the third person singular. In light of the syntactical relationships of these words and phrases, the passage could be read, "Repent for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Relationships of words, and rules governing those relationships are often dispositive for understanding the meaning of phrases and passages.

Step 5: Identify lexical keys.

Words are the fundamental building blocks of language. Consequently, for ascertaining meaning the normative use of language demands that words be understood. Before examining a word in its Biblical or theological context, the interpreter should first understand the lexical meaning and etymology of the word. The importance of this principle is evident in Daniel 9:24, as the KJV, NASB, and ESV all translate the first phrase of the verse as *seventy weeks*. If the Hebrew שָׁבֻעִים (*shabe'yim*) has a lexical meaning best translated as *weeks*, then to conclude that the word *weeks* is referencing a period of seven years requires non-literal interpretation and an abandonment of LGH. To conclude thus requires a departure from the normative use of language. However, שָׁבֻעִים is literally translated *sevens*,[23] as is the corresponding ἑβδομάδες (*hebdomades*) in the LXX. In this case the translations are misleading in regards to the simple definition and earliest Biblical usage of this word.

Step 6: Identify Biblical context.

Recognizing Biblical context is one of the most critical steps in the exegetical process, and is rightly understood to be an elementary aspect of the normative use

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23 E.g., Gen 5:7.

of language. Whether the applicable context is immediate (adjacent to the passage), near (within the book), or broad (related context but from a different Biblical book), the meaning of a given passage is not discernible with certainty until related contexts are acknowledged and understood. For example, 2 Chronicles 7:14 records a promise for God's healing of His people's land. If considered separate from its immediate context, this appears a universal principle. However, 7:15 qualifies that promise as response to prayers offered *from Solomon's temple.* In Job 34:35-37, it appears that Elihu indicts Job of sin, which would be an error. However, 34:34 clarifies that Elihu is representing the views of Job's other friends. Context is the difference between Elihu being completely wrong, and being completely accurate.

Step 7: Identify theological context.

Though Biblical context is more central to discerning meaning, theological context is also important. For example, in John 14:1-3, the doctrine of the rapture seems lexically and perhaps even syntactically absent. However, when read in conjunction with other passages,[24] it is evident that the rapture is theologically in view. Further, understanding the theological relationship of works, faith, and justification in Romans 4 helps to resolve a potentially sticky discussion of that same relationship in James 2.

Understanding theological context is important for discerning meaning. However, reading theological conclusions into the text as a hermeneutic device is incompatible with LGH. If an interpretation is derived from a theological conclusion, rather than a textual analysis that considers theological context, that interpretation is invalid in the sense of being improperly earned.

Verification and Implications

After the seventh step, secondary verification is a helpful exercise for confirming adherence to LGH throughout the exegetical process, and involves considering secondary, extra-Biblical data (commentaries, teachers, and other resources). Consulting secondary sources cannot be considered part of the exegetical process, *per se*, but their utilization can help the interpreter ensure that no steps have been missed. Such interpretive humility is important. Still the interpreter must be courageous enough to allow the Biblical text to speak for itself, even if the secondary sources disagree with the exegetical results. In short, secondary verification is not an exercise in extra-Biblical proof-texting, instead, it is a process for checking adherence to the hermeneutic and to the process itself.

Each of these seven steps together (along with secondary verification) and in succession represent a reasonable application of LGH that is consistent with the seven aforementioned premises for justifying the preference of LGH. If the trajectory of the argument has successfully guided us from Point A (justification) to

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24 Especially, 1 Thes 4 , 2 Thes 2, and 1 Cor 15.

Point B (application in exegesis), then we must be open to the implications of that trajectory for arriving at Point C (praxis and exposition).

THIRD-STAGE LOGIC OF LGH: PRAXIS AND EXPOSITION

Beyond justifying LGH and applying it in the exegetical process, LGH also governs praxis and exposition. In respect to believers *doing* the word, the Bible has much to say. Scripture is univocal in asserting its sufficiency not just for learning and/or teaching, but also for personal appropriation in thought, speech, and action. A truly Biblical praxis demands proper application of LGH in the exegetical process and, in fact, cannot stand without it. Likewise, the proper application of LGH in the exegetical process leaves the interpreter unable to escape the many Biblical prescriptions – for the unbeliever, to respond in faith, and for the believer, to walk in faith.

How can one fulfill James's prescription for believers to Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου (become workers of the word) if *the word* has not been correctly understood?[25] Paul exhorts believers to engage in correct thinking and action on the basis of the mercies of God.[26] Such conduct is the logical (λογικὴν) service of believers. Paul's comments here are significant, as he encourages believers to employ *logic* or *reason* in understanding the basis for their motivation. For Paul to exhort in that manner absent the expectation that his readers would actually understand what was revealed about the mercies of God in Romans 1-11 would be strange, to say the least. It is evident that the same principles required to understand God's mercy are required for walking in it. In order to walk in a manner worthy of the believer's calling, the believer must ascertain the correct meaning of that calling.[27]

Correct exegesis is prerequisite to correct praxis. Further, correct praxis without correct exposition is oxymoronic. LGH is necessary for exegesis, for praxis, and consequently for exposition. While praxis is inextricably dependent on LGH, it is evident that exposition is simply one of many facets of practice. Believers are universally exhorted to teach others,[28] even if not all believers are said to have the gift of teaching,[29] and not all believers will serve as pastor-teachers.[30] Regardless of one's role in the body of Christ, all share the same responsibility for knowing all of God's word.[31] With respect to accountability for Biblical knowledge and duty in sharing it with others, the Scripture draws no clergy/laity distinction. All believers

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25 Jam 1:22.

26 Rom 12:1.

27 Eph 4:1.

28 Col 3:16.

29 Rom 12:7.

30 Eph 4: 11-12, 1 Tim 3:1-7, Jam 3:1.

31 Heb 5:12.

are to let the word of Christ dwell richly in them.[32] All believers are to be equipped for every good work.[33] Arguably, all believers are to follow the apostles in their responsibility to make disciples – a process which includes *teaching*.[34]

Purpose, Content, and Mechanics of Biblical Teaching

The purpose of Biblical teaching is described succinctly in two particular contexts. Ephesians 4:11-12 describes pastoral teaching as being purposed for or unto (πρὸς) the equipping or adequacy (τὸν καταρτισμὸν) of the saints. Importantly we must realize that *pastoral teaching does not equip saints*. Nor does any other human ministry. Rather, these ministries are purposed *for* the equipping of saints. Second Timothy 3:16-17 describes the content of Biblical teaching as *all Scripture* (πᾶσα γραφὴ), and characterizes it as that which is beneficial (ὠφέλιμος) for the qualification (ἄρτιος) and adequacy or equipping (ἐξηρτισμένος, same root used in Eph 4:12) of the man of God. Consequently, if the purpose of Biblical teaching is for saints to be equipped *by the word of God* (rather than by the teacher), then it is incumbent upon Biblical teachers to ensure that they are handling God's word in the most responsible manner possible, with the ultimate goal always in view.

The mechanics of Biblical teaching is not a matter of preference. That too, like exegesis and all other aspects of praxis, is subject to LGH. Paul illustrates the mechanics of Biblical teaching in 2 Timothy 2:2, when he says, "entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." The process is one of *entrusting these things (ταῦτα παράθου) – the word of God*. The goal of teaching is elsewhere defined as adequacy or equipping of saints, but in this passage, Paul offers a tangible method for measuring the effectiveness of Bible teaching. Are those learners who are entrusted to our care developing a capability to teach others? Are we giving them the tools to do so, or are we simply telling them what actions to avoid and which ones to prefer? Are we trying to simplify things because they couldn't possibly understand if we just taught *the Text*? Are we teaching them that when they need answers they should open their Bibles...and call on us? These scenarios have no place in Paul's model of Biblical teaching.

God revealed Himself using language. That he revealed Himself in such a way has tremendous implications for teaching. God expected that His audience would be sufficiently skilled in the principles of the languages He used so that they could understand His meaning. We all need to understand *how to understand God's word*. We all need to know how to handle variants, translations, background, rhetorical structure, grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and context. If we as pastors or other Bible teachers are simply spouting Biblical data without showing learners *how to discover and understand that data for themselves*, then we are failing in our stewardship. We

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32 Col 3:16.

33 2 Tim 3:17.

34 Mt 28:19-20.

are making dependents rather than disciples, hearers rather than doers, and warriors who have no idea how to wield a sword.

Conclusion

Biblical learners, whether during Ezra's time[35] or Paul's, understood the basics of LGH and the exegetical process, even if not always intentionally, because those principles involved the simple, natural, everyday use of the languages God employed. Even those that were too young to understand, were taught at home by their fathers so that they could understand.[36] Because in our time most of those we teach are unfamiliar with those languages, we face a unique dilemma that, seemingly, neither Ezra nor Paul faced. But how we respond to that challenge will go a long way in determining the quality of our teaching ministries. We can keep the exegetical process to ourselves. In so doing, we are inconsistent insofar as we argue that LGH is warranted, that we must use it to derive our Biblical interpretations, and that it governs our praxis, but that it has no place in exposition.

If we would be consistent, we must recognize that our exposition is also governed by LGH. In so doing, we ought to integrate our exegesis with our exposition – meaning that *we ought simply to teach the Text as it is written and show our work.* We ought to be forthright about how we derive conclusions. We ought to be transparent about why we interpret passages as we do. We ought to immerse learners in the principles of the Biblical languages, teaching them grammar, syntax, and vocabulary wherever possible. We ought to handle the Text word by word, phrase by phrase, line by line, book by book – all the while modeling the exegetical process. *Doing, while being observed* is a critical component of the teaching process. That principle was modeled by God when he prescribed to Israel that fathers should behave in such a way that thei1-2r sons and grandsons would fear the Lord and be obedient.[37] Can our children and grandchildren in the faith observe how we handle His word, follow our example, grow to maturity, and so teach others? If so, we will have successfully integrated exegesis and exposition and taken LGH to its logical conclusion.

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35 See Ezra 8.

36 Deut 6:6-9.

37 Deut 6:1-2.

Addendum:

Brothers, We Are Not Chefs: On the Role of Biblical Languages In Understanding, Applying, and Teaching the Bible
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I recently presented a paper ([Integrating Exegesis and Exposition: Preaching and Teaching for Spiritual Independence](#)) in which I asserted that if the literal grammatical historical hermeneutic is warranted, then we must apply it not only in the exegetical process (the process of interpreting and understanding the Bible), but also in praxis and exposition (the process of applying and teaching the Bible). One important implication of this assertion is that if the Biblical languages are necessary for exegesis, then they are also necessary for application and teaching.

The paper and the following discussion raised some excellent questions and observations worthy of response. In this context I take opportunity to address some of these so that we can consider the role of Biblical languages in application and teaching, and so that we can also consider some the inherent challenges of such a role.

"Does the assertion of the necessity of Biblical languages imply that the only folks truly qualified to interpret the Bible are those skilled in Greek and Hebrew exegesis?"

Yes and no. On the one hand, we can't really do exegesis of the Bible without being aware of the actual text in the original language. On the other hand, I don't argue for *technical proficiency*, but rather for *technical awareness*. One doesn't need to be an expert to have the basic skills needed for interpreting the Bible. One does need to be aware that behind the English text are Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts that are often more precise than their English translations. Being aware of that, and considering that throughout the exegetical process is very important. With the many tools available today (electronic and otherwise) the languages are not inaccessible.

"Isn't this arguing for elitism – that only those with elite skill can handle the word well?"

No. In fact, I am arguing against elitism. Those with awareness of the languages and of how to find the information needed can indeed handle the word well. I am arguing that Bible teachers should make a concerted effort, as an intrinsic and necessary part of their teaching, to provide those tools to learners.

"The problem with this is that not every teacher or pastor has the time, funds, or aptitude for Greek and Hebrew, at the level to be truly proficient."

Proficiency can sometimes be the enemy of awareness, just as great can sometimes be the enemy of good. As Biblical educators, we make a key mistake when we tell people that if they can't fully commit to the languages, they shouldn't engage them at all. A wise man once told me, "if it is worth doing, it is worth doing...poorly." Better to attempt at a basic level than not to attempt at all. Even someone with very basic skills in the languages has a huge advantage in understanding the Bible over someone who doesn't (as long as they don't handle the language irresponsibly). And after all, to establish proficiency in any particular area requires a lifetime of study.

"Can one be a good teacher or pastor and not be proficient in Greek or Hebrew?"

Not be proficient? Yes. Not be aware? No. As long as the interpreter is aware of the languages and has the ability to find the information (whether by one's own use of basic tools or consulting the research of others), that interpreter has an opportunity to handle the Bible well.

"Can one be proficient in Greek or Hebrew and not be a good teacher or pastor?"

Absolutely. Skill in languages is no guarantee of good Biblical interpretation. One can abuse the languages and can also have an inconsistent hermeneutic method. Just as a very good reader will not always be a very good student or teacher, there are many factors that play into quality learning and teaching.

"Only 25% of people will have any aptitude for languages. So how can we place such a burden on the other 75%?"

I think the premise here is destructive: '*most people can't learn languages.*' That premise is simply and completely untrue. Everyone has a capacity for languages – almost everyone knows at least the basics of at least one language. If we are willing to be diligent and patient, and help people understand components of Biblical language in the same ways they learned their native tongues, then there is very good opportunity for them to grasp the basics they need for interpreting the Bible. Again, proficiency is not necessarily the aim, but rather simply awareness and the ability for a person to find the needed data themselves. For example, when our children ask us questions, do we always give them a direct answer, or do we sometimes send them to a web search, dictionary, concordance, or other tool? Why do we do that? Because we want them to guide them into developing the skills on their own. Spiritual parenting is no different.

"Doesn't this put at a disadvantage people in other cultures where illiteracy is higher, since the Biblical languages are not accessible to them?"

Not at all, because, again, the premise isn't accurate. Even among the most illiterate in any culture, there is still the ability to grasp the basics of language. Just about everybody has enough capacity for language to speak and understand at least their native tongue. As for me, I didn't really learn the nuts and bolts of English until I began to study Greek. At that point I began to value the structure and components of language, because I realized that God had chosen to communicate through language. If I wanted to understand what He had said, I needed to appreciate and grasp some basic elements of language. This is the same in any culture. As Bible teachers our goal is to equip believers for maturity – for spiritual independence, so that they can understand, obey, and teach the Scriptures for themselves. Sometimes that means that along the way we will have to teach people to read, to listen, to question, to analyze, etc.

"Isn't this assertion of the necessity of the Biblical languages idealistic and impossible to implement?"

First of all, it doesn't matter. We are not responsible for results, but rather for obedience and effort. Just because something is difficult doesn't diminish our responsibility. Pragmatism is often the enemy of obedience. Second, no, the necessity of Biblical languages is neither purely idealistic nor impossible to implement. If we approach things as a parent teaching a child, we understand there is a progression from immaturity to maturity, and dependence to independence. As parents we don't look at how far our infant has to go to become a mature adult, shrug our shoulders and neglect the process because the road seems too long and arduous. No, instead, we take it one day at a time. One moment at a time, diligently laboring, and we thank the Lord along the way for such a precious opportunity.

"A chef doesn't bring people into his dirty kitchens and make them eat amongst the greasy pots and pans, instead, he prepares an excellent meal that is both wholesome and aesthetically pleasing."

Once again, the premise is problematic. So problematic, in fact, that this is the core issue: *we are not chefs*! Ours is not to spoon-feed people beyond infancy (yes, there is a time for spoon-feeding), rather ours is to help them develop the skills to be mature adults in Christ – to be able to feed themselves and others. *Our job is to bring people into the kitchen and show them how to use those pots and pans to prepare their own meals*. Notice the progression in believers growth, from infancy to the expectation of maturity:

Infancy: "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it (1 Cor 3:2)." "Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Pet 2:2)."

Expectation of maturity: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant (Heb 5:12-13)." "Therefore leaving the elementary teachings about the Christ, let us press on to maturity...(Heb 6:1)."

Believers are not to remain in infancy, but are expected to grow to maturity. As Bible teachers we cannot teach in such a way that our students are not developing spiritually. And they cannot develop spiritually without an increasing ability to feed themselves. Just as an infant begins its life with total dependence on its parents, and is gradually weaned and taught to care for itself, so it is with spiritual children as well.

Brothers, we are not chefs. We are parents.

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