



ACTION!

MAGAZINE | SPRING 2026

PRINCIPLES

OF PRODUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

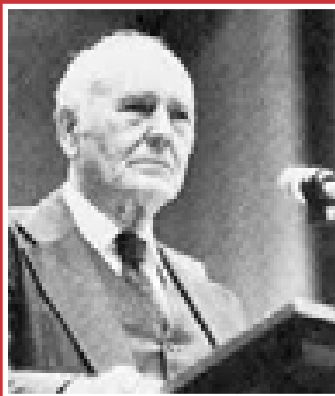
THE WORD IN ACTION

BY BRIAN REX DAVIS | ACTION! EDITOR & WBS PRESIDENT

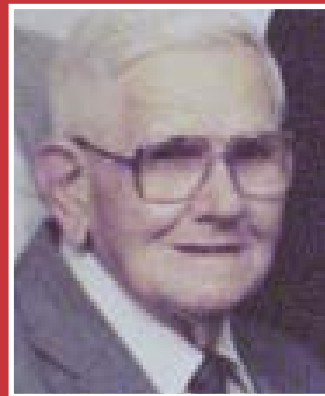


It is always a joy to see the principles of Bible study transforming people's lives! Similar to the woman on the front of this issue, many may not have academic training or the benefits of higher education. But the transforming power of Bible study is just as powerful for the village lady in India as it is for the professor in a western university.

One such story that impacted my life is when the second president of World Bible School, Reuel Lemmons, preached a Gospel meeting in Pocahontas, Arkansas and baptized my grandfather, Henry Davis. My grandfather had a third grade education. But through Bible study, his life changed, and he led his family into the productive lifestyle of New Testament Christianity for generations. By the end of his life, he had served on the mission field and had served as an elder of the church. At family reunions, he was often found beating the younger crowd in a game of Bible trivia. His four sons went on to excel in education, business, and Christian ministry.



Reuel Lemmons

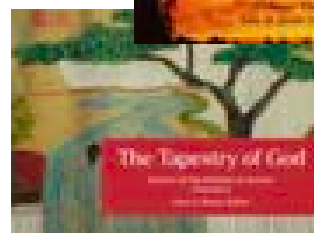


Henry Davis

More importantly, we hope this issue of ACTION! will inspire you in the life-transformative principles of Bible study and in the life joy of

You Sharing Jesus.

The trajectory of multiple generations was changed because a man who knew the Word took the time to share Jesus with a man who did not know the Word. A life and family were transformed because a farmer - with little formal education - took the time to take Bible study seriously. When my father helped me as a youth adopt some **World Bible School** Students in 1973 - a new program that offered Bible correspondence courses to Students around the world, he passed on Reuel and Henry's value of Bible study. This and other stories of the Word in ACTION! can be read in our two coffee table books.



ORDER NOW!

Bible Study is life changing no matter the circumstances of life.



Top left: Paul Renganathan invites Brian Davis to participate in the laying of the foundations for a new church plant in Tamil Nadu, India. Paul was one of the first Indian evangelists to translate and put to use the tools of WBS in India.

WBS STRATEGIC Planning



BY WILLIAM BUSH

SPRINGFIELD, TENNESSEE - WBS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

For over a year, the World Bible School team has been dreaming BIG. What can WBS accomplish for God and His kingdom within the next five years? Our staff and board of directors meditated deeply on our purpose statement, “to share Jesus with the world by motivating and equipping a global network of Christians to use interactive Bible studies effectively.”

First, we recognized - we are NOT the church. While we are made up of people who are members of the church of Christ, WBS as an organization is not a church of Christ. We were created to be a support for Christ’s church. But our organization has no right to replace what Christ established for His church to be and do.

This is why it is important for us to remain true to our role and purpose: To motivate and equip churches of Christ to do what He has called them to do, to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

WBS wants more souls to be taught the Gospel. But that is not this organization’s job, It is **YOURS** as the body of Christ! So what can WBS do to help motivate and equip you?

Here’s our vision:

Equip the church of Christ to reconcile the lost

As WBS constantly pursues the restoration of New Testament Christianity, we seek to be an effective source within the church of Christ for evangelism tools and discipleship opportunities which connect His church with millions of souls wanting to study the Bible each year.

Motivate the church of Christ by renewing the brotherhood to ACTION!

For ACTION! Media to provoke Christians worldwide to pursue evangelistic action and practice the pattern Jesus and the apostles established for His kingdom in the New Testament.

So, how do we plan to do this?

WBS Postal

Starting this year, WBS will be conducting a thorough evaluation of congregation’s Postal programs. If congregations are struggling to find or reach their Postal Students after international postal shutdowns, we can share some alternative solutions such as WBS Online and Ocean Bridge. We also want to find ways to promote, strengthen and encourage congregation’s programs who are having success with their postal programs. If you or your congregation need help, we would love to talk with you. Please reach out to us at help@worldbibleschool.net or call our office at 512-345-8190.

WBS Online

In 2025, nearly 300,000 souls registered on WBS Online - the most in WBS history. By 2030, we are striving for 750,000 Students to register Online annually. This is going to take YOUR help.

We want to challenge Study Helpers and congregations to partner with us in Online Student recruitment. Our goal is by 2030, for congregations to help recruit 150,000 of the 750,000 annual Students. Here’s how you can help!

Within the WBS Online platform, we offer a feature called “Connect.” From here, individual Study Helpers and congregations can generate “Connect Campaigns” which creates a custom URL (web address). If someone registers through your Connect Campaign, you get an immediate notification and can adopt them as your Student. You can also elect to pass them to the general Student Board for anyone to adopt. Learn more at worldbibleschool.net/connect.

Many Study Helpers and congregations are already using this feature in a number of ways. Here’s some ideas: offer free WBS Bible studies on your congregations website or live-stream; print and share fliers and handouts (available within Connect) offering free Bible studies within your benevolence ministry, back-to-school programs, truck-or-treat, and similar community outreach events; partner with your congregation’s missionaries to recruit Students overseas; encourage members to offer a free bible study to their friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, waitress/waiters and anyone else they meet.

Yes, we also hope our generous donors can help us expand our \$484,000 digital advertisement budget, which offers free Bible studies through online ads around the globe, but we also believe when we partner with the Lord’s church to directly recruit Students in their local and mission communities, God will bring an even greater harvest.

This year, our developers are reengineering the backend system of WBS Online to support the increasing number of Students and Study Helpers. These changes will not directly impact how Students and Study Helpers navigate our apps and website. However, once completed, will notice improved page load speeds and several bugs fixed. This new system will also serve as a foundation for future upgrades and improvements which have originated from your feedback. Once completed, Study Helpers will have the processing power and capacity to grade Students’ lessons collectively by the MILLIONS!

Ocean Bridge

This year, we plan to release the Ocean Bridge Portal. The portal will make it much easier for congregations to upload and download the Student’s scanned answer sheets. No more complex naming and file systems. The portal will be able to automatically

read each Students’ answer sheets and make sure they are sent to the proper congregation or service center. It is our prayer that the portal will help us reach our goal to connect Study Helpers with over 250,000 Students by 2030.

Mathetis

We have many exciting plans for Mathetis:

- In 2026, we will be launching our the latest Mathetis Originals course and Bible class curriculum “Questioning Jesus.” The course has been especially crafted to help reach out to those who have fallen away.
- By 2030, it is our goal to offer 100 interactive Biblical study courses which will include new Mathetis Original courses, all of the WBS Bible Curriculum courses and new author partnership courses.
- In 2026, we are evaluating how Mathetis can be helpful to congregations internationally. This includes researching the cost and opportunities to create Mathetis for other languages, such as Spanish.
- We have several new web and app development plans for Mathetis, which include new features to encourage deeper study and interaction within your groups, improved navigation and usability and new features driven by AI technology.

Check out our latest features on Mathetis by downloading the app in the App Store or Google Play, or by visiting mathetis.org.

Continued on next page

Student Retention & Follow-up

We are not only focused on partnering with you to increase Student recruitment. To truly make disciples, God calls the church to baptize them into Christ and live a life of faithfulness to Him. Here are some ways we hope to equip the church to do so

- By 2030, we want **50%** of Students who complete the first course in WBS Online or Ocean Bridge to reach our fifth course in the Master Series, “Born of Water and Spirit”.
- To increase retention, we will be improving the Online Students user interface and study experience, making it simple and intuitive to start and continue studying our courses.
- We will be developing multiple study options for WBS Students such as reading, listening or watching a video across our platforms.
- Improving the Study Helper, Coordinator and user interfaces, we will make it simpler and more intuitive to respond and connect with your Students.
- We are seeking to expand our network of Follow-up volunteers who can connect with Students locally who are seeking to become a Christian and join a local congregation.

WBS Study Edition Bible and Bible Curriculum

New exciting projects and resources to be shared soon:

- Releasing the new WBS Spanish Study Edition Bible in 2026
- Updating the Master Series by adding a new course “The churches of Christ Greet You” in January 2027 and transitioning “Live a Life of Love” and “Family of God” as advanced courses. Postal and Online WBS Students will still have access to study these courses with their Study Helpers.
- Publishing a new advanced course “Building a Christian Marriage and Family”
- Adding all available translations of the Master Series courses to the WBS Library (wbslibrary.org). This includes: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Mandarin Chinese, Telegu, Swahili, Russian and more!

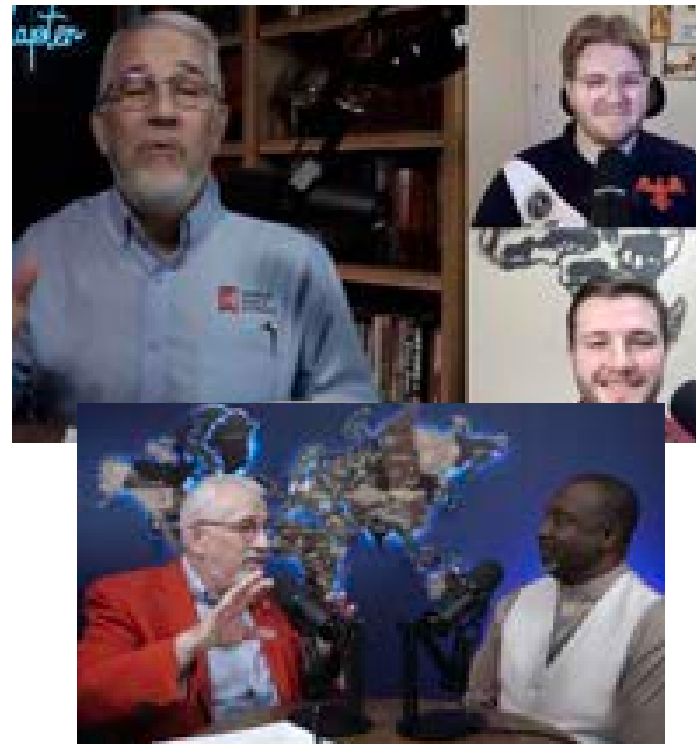
- Creating audio/visual versions of our WBS Bible curriculum to be consumed as Mathetic courses, podcasts, videos and audiobooks.

ACTION! Media This past year, ACTION! has grown to include:

- **ACTION! Magazine** – a quarterly magazine with numerous articles on relevant topics to aid our evangelistic efforts written by a variety of brotherhood authors and WBS staff. It also includes encouraging stories, helpful tips and WBS updates to help motivate and equip you for evangelism.
- **ACTION! Digital** – email magazine sent twice a month with specialized digital content highlighting WBS updates, success stories, biblical articles, evangelistic tips and more.
- **ACTION! Podcasts** – multiple podcast series such as **One More Chapter**, a theologically rich podcast for deep Bible study, and **Together In Mission**, a podcast hosted by our President, Brian Rex Davis, sharing news, success stories and updates from around the globe.

We will be continuing to establish these new and renewed media outlets to edify and encourage the brotherhood to **take ACTION!** in evangelism.

To subscribe or learn more, visit worldbibleschool.net/action.

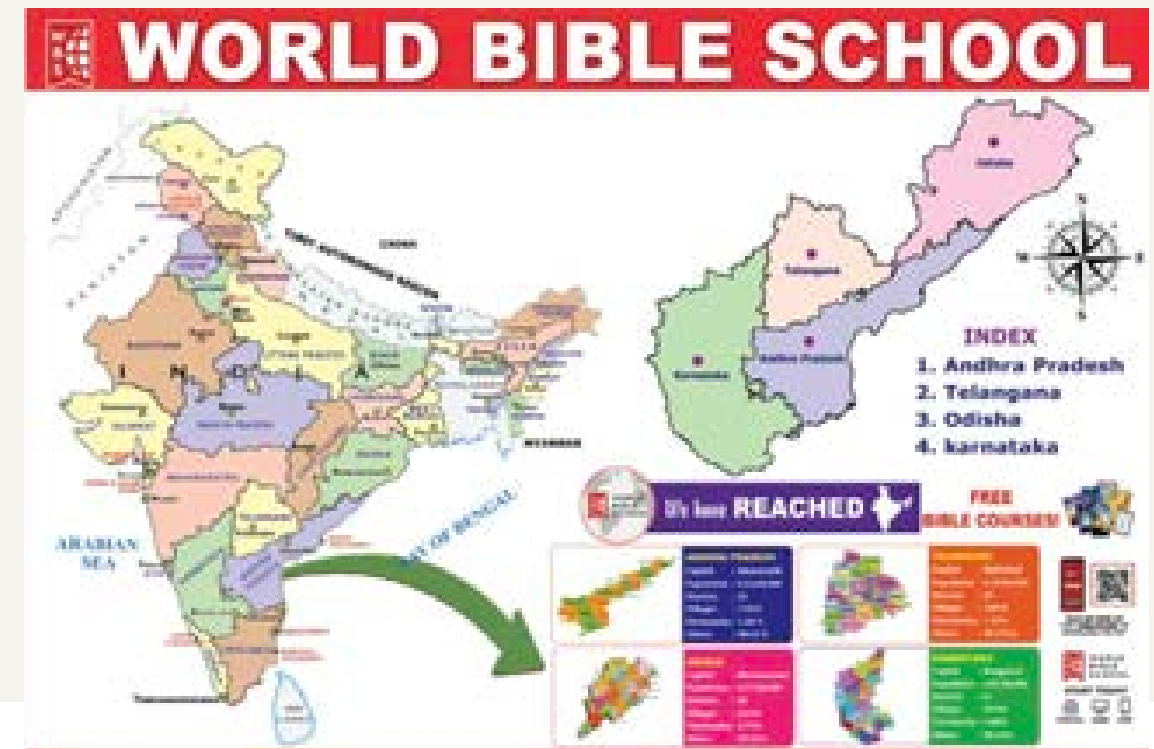


EXPANSION INDIA

Anil Kumar (in green) once again hosted Brian and Sondra to an area-wide meeting where leaders in various states of India came to discuss the possibilities of reaching more souls for Christ through World Bible School. With great creativity and vision, ideas were shared and relationships for cooperative work were formed. This gentleman (top right) said that he had begun the translation of WBS lessons into his language because he longed for his people to know the Gospel of Jesus!

These church leaders are working on a plan (below) to expand their Student recruitment and network of Follow-up volunteers. WBS helps the church live out the good works for which Jesus called us! It is an honor to serve alongside our Indian brethren.

THE MASSES AND THE VIBRANCY OF INDIA RAISE OUR AWARENESS OF THE URGENCY OF THE GREAT COMMISSION!



Your giving last year has made it possible to say “yes” to many of these plans as we coordinate the printing of courses, the recruitment of Students, and the inspiring of Study Helpers both in the United States and in India.

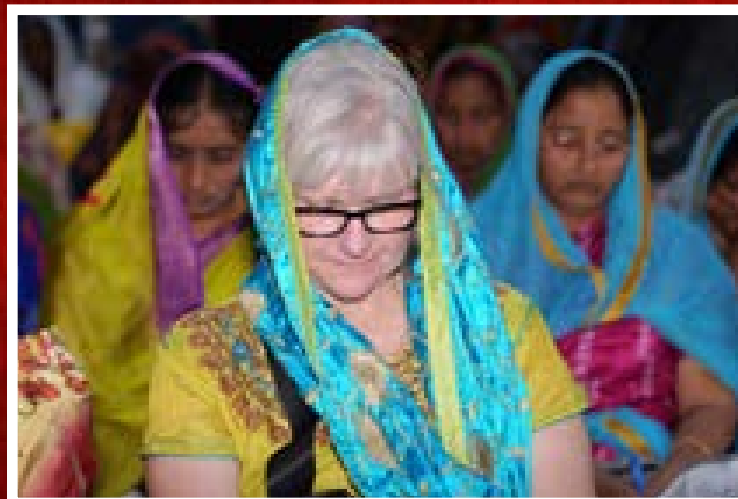


(Above) Brother Sahadevudu and his son Sahan work alongside of Brian Davis and Anil Kumar in Andra Pradesh State to finalize the WBS Master Series in the Telegu language for our digital publication and local printing. Furthermore, advanced studies that have already been translated are being updated and prepared for digital publication. We hope these tools will lead many to Christ!

(Above) This gentleman learned about Jesus through World Bible School in the 1980's. He came to one of our leadership meetings and told his story. There was no church in his town. He used the WBS "Guide to New Testament Christianity" advance course to start the church, and it is still thriving today! Now he is adding his voice to the call for more preachers to collaborate and cooperate using WBS tools for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ!



Sondra Davis was able to speak to hundreds of ladies at various gatherings. Many had enrolled and graduated from the WBS Master Series Courses.



SO MANY MORE TO TEACH!



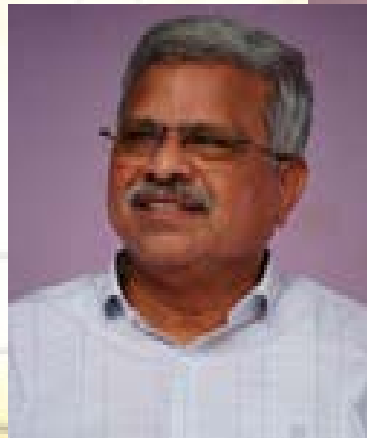
Brother Dyakar coordinates Gospel Share Ministries in many areas of India. He especially has a passion for reaching the youth of India with the Gospel of Jesus. While speaking to a large group of church leaders about the importance of WBS tools, he said: **"WBS is like a well in a dry land people may not see the water immediately but when the bucket goes down life comes up."**

GOD'S BIG PICTURE WHY IT *matters*

BY BRIAN REX DAVIS

WBS PRESIDENT

Having a **"Big Picture"** in mind before you begin teaching specific lessons can be a huge help for teachers preparing lessons. The same is true for principles of Bible study. World Bible School is publishing an advanced course called **"God's Big Picture."** Overarching the Bible and the over-arching themes of Scripture, this course is very helpful for those needing a Biblical framework in which individual lessons can fit and find context and balance.



This lesson is also being prepared in the language of Telegu in India. My long-time friend Saha Vanga (left) is updating the text while his son Sahan (above) is helping to mount them on the WBS Library (wbslibrary.org)

GOD'S BIG PICTURE

The Bible reveals the big picture of God's eternal kingdom in relation to His plan to add a new dimension, a dimension made up of people with the status of children of God.

WBS "God's Big Picture" includes the following information.

Part 1-5:

1. God, Man and Life
2. The World Realm
3. God's Kingdom from the Inception of Mankind until Christ
4. The Kingdom in Prophecy Becomes a Reality
5. The Man Dimensions of God's Kingdom with a Divine King



Check it out now at wbslibrary.org

STRATEGIC VISION MEETS FAITHFUL GIVING

BY GEORGE A. BARLOW, JR. | WBS CHIEF ADVANCEMENT & CHURCH RELATIONS OFFICER



At World Bible School, we believe that hope is not a passive virtue, but when combined with thoughtful planning and faithful giving, it becomes a powerful expression of stewardship and mission. Our five-year plan went

into effect the first day of January 2026 and goes through December 31, 2030. Our strategic plan is more than a roadmap, it is a prayerful commitment to share Jesus with the world in intentional, measurable and sustainable ways.

This plan outlines bold goals to engage over one million Bible students annually, expanding global tools like WBS Online, Ocean Bridge, and Mathetis; and strengthening partnerships with congregations worldwide. It reflects careful thought, collaboration, and a desire to be effective in His mission while remaining rooted in God's Word and dependent on Him through prayer. But a plan alone does not change lives, God's people do, by His working through us and in us. And behind every Bible study, every Follow-up, and every new disciple, is the generosity of God's people. Giving fuels strategy. It enables innovation, supports outreach, and equips the Church to act. As WBS seeks to grow its impact, the need for faithful partners grows as well. From expanding

digital platforms to increasing church involvement and training Study Helpers, each initiative relies on resources entrusted by donors who believe in His mission.

At the same time, strategic planning honors those gifts. It ensures that every dollar is used wisely, every effort is aligned with purpose, and every opportunity is maximized for kingdom impact. Planning helps us practice good stewardship by setting clear goals, measuring progress and adapting to reach more souls effectively.

One of the most exciting aspects of this plan is the shared role of the global church. Congregations are not just supporters, they are partners in recruitment, teaching and Follow-up. Likewise, donors are not just contributors, they are co-laborers in the harvest. Together, strategic planning and giving create momentum. They allow WBS to dream boldly while acting faithfully. They connect vision with provision, ensuring that when seekers are ready to study God's Word, the church is ready to respond.

As we move forward, we invite you to see your giving as part of God's greater strategy. Every gift, every prayer, and every effort joins a unified mission to equip the church, reach the lost, and bring the Good News to a waiting world.

Please accept my **GIFT** of:

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Name: _____

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If selected "Credit Card," please fill out the following:

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SCAN QR CODE OR VISIT WORLDBIBLESCHOOL.NET/GIVE TO GIVE ONLINE

Please make my **GIFT** a tribute:

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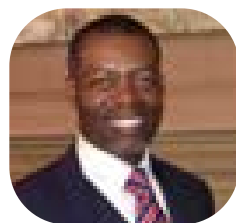
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Approaching GOD ON HIS TERMS



BY ERIC OWENS

PULPIT MINISTER, WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

We approach God because we want to commune with Him. Our approval or rejection depends on our approach. The only way to find His approval is to approach God on His terms.

GOD DESIRES US TO APPROACH HIM

God's desire to commune with us can be seen by our creation (Genesis 1:26-31). God made us in His image and communicated with us. When Adam and Eve sinned God came to them, confronted them and sought to restore the communion with them (Genesis 3:7-24). Ultimately, God provided Himself a lamb so that he could forgive sin and commune with us (Isaiah 53, John 1:29, 3:16).

He didn't make our approach so difficult we couldn't do it. Neither did He decide that only a special few could approach Him. God's desire is expressed in phrases like **"The Spirit and the Bride**

say, 'Come'" (Revelation 22:17) and **"God so loved the world"** (John 3:16). God's creation of us, His coming to us and sending Christ for us teaches that God desires us to approach Him so He can commune with us.

GOD DECIDES HOW WE APPROACH HIM

Because no one can read God's mind, He always reveals His mind to man. His revelation provides man the clear detailed information he needs to know for how to approach Him.

How would Adam and Eve know which tree was forbidden and which ones were acceptable if God didn't tell them? Noah couldn't have known God had a specific type of wood in mind and specific dimensions for the ark if God didn't tell him.

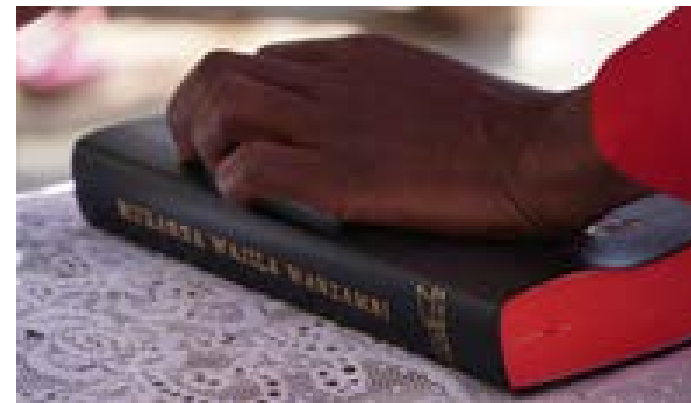
Paul made the point of the necessity of revelation when he wrote:

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

Without God's revelation we would have no way of knowing how to approach Him on his terms, because we wouldn't know the terms. Paul knew by the Spirit's revelation; he then wrote it so we could read it (Eph. 4:3-6).

GOD DEMANDS WE APPROACH HIM ON HIS TERMS

God doesn't take our approaching Him lightly precisely because He tells us how to approach. Failure on our part to approach God as He revealed leads God to reject and condemn us. God provides examples for us to learn (Romans 15:4). God rejected Cain and his offering (Genesis 4:5).



Moses was met with this sober warning: *And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Don not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."* (Exodus 3:3-5).

After Aaron's son's disobedience, God had Moses tell Aaron a profound truth: *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.' And Aaron held his peace (Leviticus 10:1-3).*

To approach God on His terms is the only acceptable way to approach God. Joshua



told Israel they needed "sincerity and truth" Jesus told the Samaritan woman that God was looking for a certain kind of person to approach Him.

"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

The sincerity and spirit spoken of by Joshua and Jesus is the human spirit. An insincere approach is unacceptable. Both also said "and in truth": This demands God's Word, the very revelation He gives to tell us how to approach Him (John 8:31-32; 17:17). When we reject, ignore or alter God's Word, we are no longer approaching Him on His terms. We may claim to be sincere, but we can't be sincere while rejecting God's Word. Samuel and Saul's conversation discussed approaching God on his terms.

And Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal." And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:20-23).

To approach God on His terms means to obey the God who *gave the terms.*



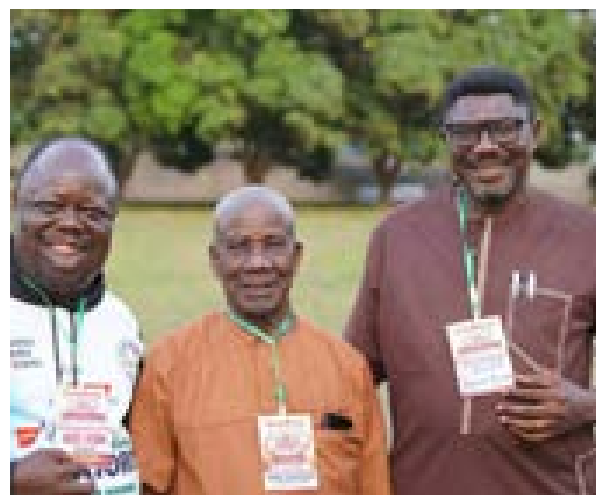
Nigeria WBS Teams Continue to Lead in Student Recruitment



**BY BRIAN
REX DAVIS**

WBS PRESIDENT

Sondra and I are amazed at the energy and creativity demonstrated by our Nigerian Ocean Bridge Team! Here they are participating in this year's WBS Great Workshop. (Right) Daniel Gaines gets acquainted with Godwin Isaac who coordinates the WBS Ocean Bridge program for Nigeria.



Mike Udam organized this year's WBS Great Workshop which was hosted by West Nigeria Christian College and School of Biblical Studies in Abeokuta. Mike (left) greets Monday Akpakpan (center) who volunteered for WBS Follow-up in 1973 when Jimmie Lovell started WBS! Beside him, Emmanuel Essien (right) - the grandson of C.A.O. Essien who was one of the first members of the church in Nigeria and who helped establish hundreds of congregations after having learned the Gospel through a Bible correspondence course - continues to teach preacher-training students at the C.F.O. Essien Bible College.

Nigerian Christians helped to write the history of WBS from our very beginning. But more importantly, our brothers and sisters in Nigeria continue to plan for the future growth of the church in their great country. Many of them are on the cutting edge of innovation for WBS. This impacts not only Nigeria, but the entire world as we all benefit from the success of each country's evangelistic efforts!



(Left) Bro. Mojima Etokudo and (right) Bro. Tim Iwe along with their friend, represent the next generation of leaders seeking to make use of the digital tools of WBS.

Hiram Kemp (bottom red), who was one of the workshop speakers, listens intently as Bro. Richard (bottom blue) relates how he is using WBS tools - both paper and digital - productively in his community. A brother who came all the way from Sierra Leone (right) gets excited about how WBS tools can be used in his country. This year, WBS plans to expand our Ocean Bridge program to his country and to Liberia.



Other brothers from Chad, Cameroon, and Ghana were also present as we learned and prayed together for reaching all nations for Christ!

WBS in Nigeria is a testimony of how the first 50 years of WBS harvest can pass on to the next generation the value and the expertise for fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission.





Happiness (Above Left) and **Godswill** (Above Right) represent the newest generation of Nigerian Christians who are using the cutting-edge tools of Ocean Bridge and making it possible for congregations in the U.S. to have the opportunity for the Ocean Bridge-teaching experience.

Missionaries like **Chad Wagner**, the president of African Christian Schools Foundation, continue to express the brotherhood's deep appreciation for all generations who share Jesus and His Gospel with great courage around the globe. Chad continues the foundational missionary work of Doug Wheeler and other older missionaries who have always found WBS tools helpful in casting the net of the Gospel far and wide! Sondra and I want to give Chad a special note of thanks for his coordination of our participation this year. May God bless the faithful sharers of Jesus in Nigeria!



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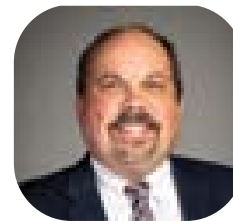
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THE BIBLE STILL MEANS NOW WHAT IT MEANT THEN

BY DOUG BERLESON ASSISTANT DEAN OF BIBLICAL STUDIES AT FREED-HARDEMAN UNIVERSITY



Just because a Bible-reading practice is popular does not mean it is proper. In uncertain times, it is understandable that people open their Bibles in search of answers to current events. While looking for

contemporary meaning in the text is an honorable pursuit, it is possible to find applications that the writers did not intend. Readers who allow their preunderstanding of God or the world to shape how they read Scripture can easily be misled. Our goal should be to discover what the writer intended and to understand the text.

There is a long history of people assigning meanings today that could not have worked in the original setting. Here are a few examples: In the mid-twentieth century, Louis T. Talbot, a religious leader claimed in an article entitled “Christ in the Tabernacle” that the brass tent pegs God revealed to Moses for use in the tabernacle (Exodus 27:19) represented the unrusting nails that kept Christ on the cross. Likewise, a Facebook post in 2025 by Endtime Ministries concluded that the reference in Daniel 7:4 to the ‘lion with wings as an eagle’ refers to the United States (the eagle) defeating Great Britain (the lion) in the Revolutionary War.

Augustine (354-430 A.D.) once suggested

that the innkeeper in the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:34 was the apostle Paul, while the inn itself was the church. A YouTube video entitled “How AI May Be Part of the End Times” suggests that 2 Thessalonians 2:4, where the man of lawlessness takes his seat in the temple, may refer to Artificial Intelligence.

These examples may seem extreme, but they highlight a serious issue. Readers of Scripture must be careful to rightly divide the Word of God by understanding what it meant to its first readers and how that meaning applies today. **When we approach a biblical text, we are not seeking to confirm our presuppositions but to discover the writer’s intended meaning through the historical, literary and theological contexts.**

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

First, we must consider the historical context of the passage. This raises several important questions: Who did God use to write this text, and to whom was it written? What were those first readers experiencing? Was it a time of conflict or peace? What covenant were they living under? As noted above, the Israelites would not have been thinking about the nails of the cross while building the tabernacle during the Exodus.

While the writer of Hebrews provides an inspired interpretation of the tabernacle and its furnishings (Hebrews 9:1-5), he does not connect the bronze tent pegs to the cross of Christ. More likely, the tent pegs were part of God’s design because they provided a practical and stable way to secure the structure, along with the sockets (Exodus 27:9-21), and could be easily transported. It does not seem that those who first heard Moses’ words would have thought about the nails used in Jesus’ crucifixion. If an application does not fit the historical context, we should be cautious about adopting it. While God certainly knows the future, His inspired communication was meaningful to its original audience.

Second, we must consider the literary context of the passage. This includes questions such as: Which testament is the passage in? What genre are we reading—law, prophecy, poetry, narrative, parable, apocalypse or epistle? Are figures of speech being used? Jesus told the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 in response to a lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29). Parables were a common teaching method Jesus used to connect familiar situations to spiritual truths. In this story, the focus is not on the innkeeper but on the Samaritan who compassionately helps the wounded man, unlike the priest or Levite (vv. 33-34). While we can appreciate the work God did through the apostle Paul, it is unlikely that Jesus intended

the innkeeper to represent Paul—especially since Paul’s conversion would occur years later. If the literary context does not highlight certain details, we should be cautious about assigning them symbolic meaning. Different genres communicate truth in different ways and recognizing those differences helps prevent misinterpretation.

A WAY FORWARD

The Bible was not first written to us. Every passage has a historical, literary, and theological context that must be respected if we are to understand what the inspired writer intended. Our assumptions about God or our own lives can cloud our judgment if we are not careful.

We must learn to rightly divide the Word of God by seeking applications that align with the meaning understood by its first readers. We should resist the temptation to impose modern ideas onto ancient texts, especially when those interpretations could not have been recognized by the original audience. Let us approach Scripture with humility, allowing it to speak within its context rather than forcing it to address every contemporary concern in ways it was never intended to do. In doing so, we honor both the text’s message and the God who revealed it.

For a deeper study on this topic, check out the WBS course:

Understanding the Bible



(Left) **Udorn Inthong**, an evangelist in Thailand, sharing the joy of Bible Study with a Student from Laos.

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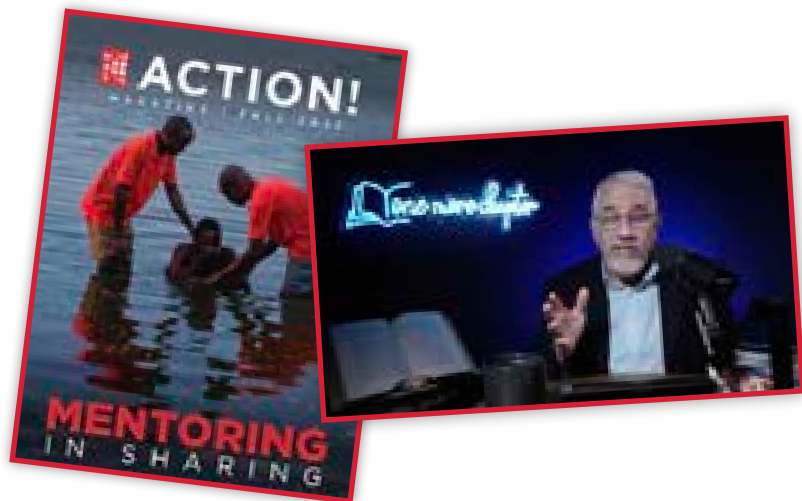
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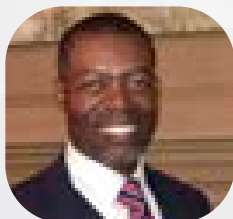
WHAT'S IN ACTION!?



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APPROACHING GOD ON HIS TERMS

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