



The Beacon

The Newsletter of First Baptist Church of Salt Lake City—
May 2016 Vol 10 Issue 4

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**throughout 2016 Pastor Curtis is writing articles on Progressive Theology*

Progressive Theology 101 – The Bible

The Bibles place in Christianity cannot be overstated. It is the foundation on which we build our faith and practice. Yet the Bible also has also been used to deny people rights, to start wars, to reject the truths of science, to discriminate and exclude and to make claims of superiority. Few things in the world have caused more division than that Bible. Yet within its covers, the bible calls us to compassion and love for our fellow humans, it commands peace and lifts up inclusion; and it paints a picture of a loving God and a Savior who longs to transform the world into a place where everyone is valued and cared for. So why is it so divisive? It all comes down to *hermeneutics*.

Hermeneutics is a big word for how one approaches understanding Scripture and how it is seen and interpreted. There are a couple of approaches to the Bible that are significant for Christianity today. There are many in Christianity who approach the bible as the plenary-verbal inspired words given to us by God and is to be taken literally. In other words, the words in the Bible were given by God to the writers and it is to be taken at literal face value. There are varying degrees of this. For example, a hard literal understanding of Genesis would read the story of the six-day creation and insist that the universe was literally created in six days by God. A softer version of this would not feel that the timeline was meant to be taken literally, but God pretty much created the universe in the way it was described in the Bible. Both are still a literal approach.

Another approach, which is, for the most part, the way the progressive mainline churches approach it, is to see the Bible as a human product written not *by* God but *about* God. The Bible was written by two ancient communities, ancient Israel and the early Christian movement. These two communities were writing in response to who God is in their midst and while it is fair to say that they were inspired and spirit lead, the writings are still a human product.

So why hold the bible in such high regard if it is not the “inerrant, plenary verbal inspired word of God?” Because of what it says. It is not the idea that God wrote that makes the Bible sacred, it is what it says that makes it worth studying. These are the words that have stood the test of time. They have been the center of faith and practice by two communities for over 3000 years. It is because the Bible calls us to a life in compassionate communion with fellow humans and in deep and meaningful relationship with God through Christ. The Old Testament brings ancient wisdom to bare and demonstrates God’s love in liberation, providence, and faithfulness. The New Testament calls us to center on the life and teachings of Jesus who ushered in a new way of redemption and reconciliation and community.

So how do we read the Bible if we are not reading it literally? I would suggest there are two important ways of getting the most out of the ancient texts of the Bible. The first element is to understand it in its context. Each book was written at a particular time and to a particular audience with a particular message for that time and place. Understanding those elements as best we can shed a lot of light on what the bible is saying and can help us bridge its meaning to our time. The other element is to apply what Borg calls a “more than literal” reading of the text. This is understanding the text as metaphor then wondering what it is about. Take the story of Jesus walking on the water and Peter joining him (Matthew 14:22-33). The truth of the story is not grounded in the historical accuracy of the story, but in the metaphorical understanding of the story (i.e. the waves and wind as the cares of this world, keeping our eyes on Jesus, calling to him for help when we sink). In other words, believe what you like about whether it really happened or not, but now let’s talk about what it means.

While for some this may diminish the impact of the Bible, for me this understanding has opened up the scriptures in a way I could never have imagined when I merely read it and took it literally. Because we apply the best scholarship to our understanding of the Bible we can draw out of it depth of meaning that our modern lens can never see.

I pray you also are inspired by this approach to these ancient and wonderful words of life.

If you wish to know more, here are some books on the Bible.

Reading the Bible Again for the First Time – Marcus Borg

How to Read the Bible and Still Be a Christian – John Dominic Crossan

Reclaiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World – John Shelby Spong

Who Wrote the Bible – Richard Friedman

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Curtis

May at FBC:

- May 3: Beers and Bros at Fiddler’s Elbow at 6:30
- May 12: ABWomen Luncheon at noon
- May 15: Pentecost Sunday—Wear RED to church day
- May 17: Beers and Bros at Fiddler’s Elbow at 6:30 pm
- May 18: Council of Ministries at 5:45 pm
- May 20: Third Friday Bingo at 7 pm
- May 21: Church Hike
- May 22: Congregational Meeting regarding our parking lot.
- May 29: Dr Marcia Patton’s 40th ordination celebration and dinner
- May 30: Office and Child Development Center closed.

Happy Birthday To: May 2: Hattie Layton, Billie Tripp. May 4: Joyce Urry. May 6: Julia Watson. May 7: Valerie Winn. May 9: Jeff Norris, Pat Schoenwolf. May 10: Bishop Brown. May 14: Brian Cooper, Cassie Cooper. May 15: Ken Burnett. May 17: Betty Burnett. May 19; Meghan Fellows. May 20: Ethan Alstrom. May 21: Steven Ireland. May 23: Al Heitman. May 24: McKenzie Nelson, Al Deware. May 25: Megan Roth, Augustine Tutonda. May 26: Bob Brown. May 31: Stephanie Gosdis, Guy Tutonda.

May 15—Pentecost Sunday. This is the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church. Red is the traditional color for the day so we encourage everyone to wear red to church!

May 22nd—Congregational Meeting following worship in Keck Hall. The plans for a renovation of our parking lot and how we propose to raise the funds needed for the project will be discussed, A vote will be taken. Please make every effort to join us for this important meeting.

May 22nd—Happy 135th Birthday to First Baptist Church in Ogden! You are invited to their celebration. Church tours begin at 2:30 and a Worship Service begins at 3 pm followed by a tea social.

May 29th—Happy 40th Ordination Anniversary Dr. Marcia Patton. Dr Patton was ordained here at First Baptist Church in 1976. She is returning to us to celebrate her anniversary. There will be a special worship service followed by dinner in Keck Hall. We ask that you bring side dishes and salads we will furnish the meat and dessert. Join us for this special commemoration.

Baseball with the Bees and the Baptists! We will be cheering the hometown team on Saturday, June 18th. The cost is \$13 a person and that will secure a seat, a pre-game chicken dinner and a fireworks display after the game. Please see Ann Burnett about details. Call her or email her at [801-558-8076](tel:801-558-8076) or annburnett@rowlandhall.org Thanks and PLAY BALL! We have a block of 40 tickets so get yours today!

A huge thank you to Ken and Ann Burnett, Pat and Paul Ditton, Julia Watson, Lynn Christensen, Carlyn Chester, Jasmin Charles, Stephanie Gosdis, the AB GIRLS, their friends and everyone else who helped with the AB GIRLS Spaghetti Dinner. Thanks to the church family who supported our silent auction. It looks we made about \$2,400.00. There will be a fire sale the next few Sundays for items left over from the auction. One special item still available is the embroidered guest towels made and donated by Esther Chelsea-McCarty. Another is the awesome mermaid and shark sleeping bags made and donated by Robyne Roth.

The girls are still selling car wash passes. They still have a lot to sell. See Karen Carter.

Last AB GIRLS meeting (until September) is Wednesday, June 1.

ABW will meet on Thursday May 12 in the Library at noon for lunch and meeting. All women are welcome.

Parking Lot Reconstruction Project

The council is proposing a plan for reconstruction on the parking lot. The congregation will be voting on the proposal at a **congregational meeting on May 22, 2016** immediately following the worship service.

For many years the congregation has identified the parking lot as a safety concern and an accessibility issue. It has consistently been at the top of the priority list. In response to this concern, the council commissioned a task force and is proposing a solution that includes:

- the design of the parking lot that address accessibility and has an eye on the future plans of the church
- An estimate of the cost of such a project
- A framework for how we might pay for it.

These are the elements of the proposal and what we will be voting on at the congregational meeting of May 22nd. The council feels they have come up with a doable solution and are excited to bring this proposal to the congregation. Please plan to attend. The written proposal will be made available before the meeting.

“I Love to Tell the Story”: Intergenerational Sunday School

Starting in June, we will be experiencing intergeneration faith formation together in Sunday School. We as a church value people of different ages being together. This is a change to carry that value over into our learning as well as our worship and fellowship. In this 4-week event we will learn afresh some of the stories from the bible, we will make connections across the ages, and we will learn from one another; young and old and everyone in between.

Who is this class for? Everyone. Are you a grandma? This is for you. Are you a mom with children? This is for you and your children. Are you a teenager? This is for you. Are you a couple in your 30s? This is for you. Are you single and in your 50s? This is for you. Are you in college? Are you 10? Are you retired? This class is for all of us.

Please plan to attend and participate as we learn together, play together and develop relationships with each other.

It soon will be camping time again! And while the camp leaders are busy getting ready and making sure all of our kids are signed up for camp, we once again make a plea for our Angel Fund. No child should have to miss camp because they cannot afford to go. We ask all those grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousin to help by donating to our Angel Fund. This fund insures that all our kids get a great camping experience. **And if you know kids who are camp age, please encourage them to get their registrations in NOW!**

MAKE SUMMER COUNT!

Come to Camp Utaba for a week of friends, fun and faith. Connect with old friends and make some new ones, having fun and getting closer to God. There will be campfire, games and water fun. Of course, we will have all those traditional activities one expects at camp such as crafts, music, food, hikes and much more. This year we are running Teen camp and Elementary Camp simultaneously. The two camps will do some things together but will also be apart for some things but we will also have separate times in our age groups. Our camps are open to young people of all faiths. So don't let summer go to waste, make it count at Camp Utaba!

July 10-15

Grades 4-12

Teen Camp Directed by Curtis Price: Pastorcurtis@firstbaptist-slc.org

Elementary Camp Directed by Wendy Winzenreid and Lisa Hekking

wendywinzenried@aol.com ; lhekking@msn.com

Registration Form

Campers Name _____ Age _____ Grade going into _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Parent /Guardian _____ Parent/Guardian Phone _____

Home Church (if any) _____ T-Shirt Size _____

Any Food Allergies or needs? _____

Cost: \$210

This registration form along with a deposit of \$50 is **due on July 3, 2016** to insure your space at camp. Full payment is due at check-in. You will receive a follow-up letter after sending in registration with more details. Please make checks payable to Utah Association of ABC and mail to:
First Baptist Church Attn: Camp, 777 S 1300 E, Salt Lake City, Ut. 84102