

BULLETIN

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Meet the Professor

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Dr. Segler was born in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He was converted at the age of 11 in one of Oklahoma's rural churches. He received his A.B. from Oklahoma Baptist University and Th.M. and Th.D. degrees from Southwestern Seminary. He is doing graduate work this summer in Columbia University, New York.

He has held pastorates in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. Dr. Segler has traveled in Europe. He has served the denomination on state boards, committees, and as a member of the Sunday School Board.

Since 1951 he has been Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He teaches courses in Church Administration, Pastoral Care, Worship, and The Devotional Life. He is author of our course, Pastoral Ministry which uses as its text, The Ministry by Spann.

How to Read and Understand the Bible

Any systematic plan of reading the Bible will prove beneficial. The message it presents will capture the interest of any seeker of truth. This subject does not intend to imply that there is any secret approach to its message. Any such claim would be false.

But there are certain factors which one could take into account with profit, and there are some passages which are not understandable without additional information. The most important change which many will need to make in order to understand the Bible is negative. Refuse to be guided by short, easily understood, simple schemes of Bible study. Per-

haps the greatest factor which is contributing to a misunderstanding of God's word is the popular "know-it-all" Bible with notes. You cannot understand the meaning of a great doctrine by a marginal note that reads simply "called out" or "unmerited favor". This frame of mind stops short of an understanding of vital issues and messages. It aligns ideas and doctrines into categories or pigeon holes. Refuse to let your message be so hindered. It is a man-made scheme.

In order to understand the Bible one needs a broad dictionary which specializes on facts about Bible times, customs, meanings of words, etc. There are a few so called dictionaries which are really collections of doctrinal discussions. Get the broader type.

Basically three elements must be understood relative to the background: the Jewish people with their divisions, customs, and scripture; the moral conditions of the rest of the world with its religions and thought; and the situation of the writers as they wrote to various groups. This is an over simplification of the matter but it is basic.

We cannot take passages written in the interest of a people steeped in the "tradition of the elders" (see Matthew 15:1ff) and apply them to people of our day without some study and adjustment. But if we understand the situation we can see its meaning for our day, and there is a message. Study this background carefully (a good book is Dana, New Testament World). See also various subjects in Bible dictionaries.

The moral conditions of the Greek-Roman world (usually called Graeco-Roman) in the time of Jesus and Paul was such that books like the Corinthian, Colossian, and Thessalonian Epistles were written to meet their problems. One could not take the book of Hebrews and read it as he would Colossians. The moral conditions and the religious backgrounds differ greatly. The term "pre-eminence" in Colossians is related to its background. The discussion on "virgin" in 1 Corinthians 7 is vitally related to its background. Whereas the covenant discussion in Hebrews 8 is a Jewish factor. When one comes to the book of Revelation the Jewish and Gentile backgrounds are both present for Christianity had already fused the two into one mold. For this reason the emphasis on Jesus Christ as identified with God in creation, redemption, and judgment is both Jewish and Greek in language. To know the historical background of the Bible is the greatest present need of preachers.

The personality of the writer cannot be overlooked. When one reads Paul's use of a word and notes that John uses the same word in a different sense and perhaps Luke in a still different sense, he can see that each writer had his own style. For example, John does not use "repent"; but when he speaks of "believe" he includes repentance. Peter's sermon calls for repentance and Paul's discussion of Israel's position in Romans 2 takes into account repentance. It is not easy to find the varying meanings here and there, but who said it was easy? The suggestions below are merely matters of principles and are not intended to offer a short-cut to understanding the scriptures.

1. Read constantly. Become so familiar with your Bible that reference is easy.

2. Keep a dictionary nearby and look up all words which you do not understand.

3. Be patient. Do not expect to understand everything. Keep reading and studying.

4. Refer to Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias and general works for background material.

5. Keep notes on matters which help you understand. I make notes in my Bible.

6. Buy a few books that deal with various subjects connected with your study.

7. Let the Bible speak its own

message. Don't hunt for hidden meanings. Make a habit of preaching the actual meaning of the passage in hand.

Next month: Commentaries

Increased Interest

There seems to be a widespread interest in the establishment of Seminary Extension Centers. Correspondence has been developed in North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Oklahoma, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. We believe that by the end of fall we will have Extension Centers in at least half dozen more states. Recently we went to Northeast Mississippi to help establish centers there. We have found that it is a simple procedure to establish a center. In the first place it should be decided by some group that a center is to be promoted. This could be a pastors' conference in some association or a called group of pastors from several associations. The body should simply vote to proceed, and then select an administrative committee. This committee would be charged with the responsibility of selecting a location, deciding upon an opening date, the curriculum, the class schedule, and should select teachers and administrative officers. You need only a director and registrar, which may take the place of as many as four other administrative officers. That is to say that the registrar could be both treasurer and registrar, and the dean could be both dean and director. In addition you will need the number of teachers to satisfy the demand for classes. We suggest that no more than three class sessions be held on each night. Requirements for teachers are that each should have a B.D. or Th.M. degree from the seminary. The Extension Department requires that the local associational leadership approve of the teachers. We want no one to represent us who is not in thorough accord with promotional work in the state. Those interested in promoting a center write to the Seminary Extension Department, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, Miss. for information. Please confer with us on any matter relative to the opening of a center.

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