

**“DEVOTE YOURSELF TO THE READING”
(1 TIMOTHY 4:13)**

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Within the context of its unique historic circumstances, Deuteronomy underscores Torah reading as an instruction process. This study identifies and treats that sequence of instruction activity. The pattern resurfaces in Ezra's personal study, practice, and teaching of the Torah (Ezr 7:10). Ezra illustrates the pattern when he reads the Torah publicly to God's people (Neh 8:1-8).

Introduction

Scripture manifests its authority and sufficiency when God's people hear it read and their hearts are changed.¹ Because instruction ministry is spiritual in nature, it aims at the heart (*l'vaf*), man's thinking, feeling, and willing functions.² Biblical teaching and preaching based on reading Scripture likewise mature believers by summoning them to this heart-centered spiritual process. Deuteronomy reveals an instruction imprint that matures believers, even prepares them to teach.³ This study sets forth an instruction framework based on Deuteronomy by answering three questions: (1) What is the instruction pattern found in Deuteronomy? (2) What are some ways Scripture expands on and reapplies the Deuteronomy pattern? and (3) What can we do to realign our training with the Deuteronomy pattern?

What Is the Pattern of Instruction Found in Deuteronomy?

Deuteronomy focuses on distinct but related activities that make up a spiritual growth process.⁴ The Deuteronomy pattern of sequential activity pattern is gather, read, hear, learn, fear, worship, obey, and teach. For this study's purpose, the pattern is premised on the three-fold notion that God is our Teacher, His Torah or Scripture is our instruction, and reading is our method.

God is Our Teacher

The first mention of teaching comes in Exodus where we read that God teaches Moses (Ex 4:12).⁵ Exodus, although not revealing the entire pattern found in Deuteronomy, tells us that

God will instruct. Deuteronomy expands on this theme when God says, “Assemble the people to Me” (Dt 4:10) in preparation for the reading of the Torah, His instruction.⁶ David says, “Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart” (Ps 51:6). In response, the instructed king facilitates God’s instruction:⁷ “Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will return to you” (Ps 51:13). Heavenly instruction calls God’s child back to a deeply spiritual standard: “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and contrite heart (*Iÿf*), O God, you will not despise” (Ps 51:17).⁸ Warning about the imperfections of earthly instructors, Jesus says, “One [God] is your Teacher” (Mt 23:8).⁹ In the context of loving one another, Paul says, “You yourselves are taught by God” (1 Thes 4:9).¹⁰

Scripture Is Our Instruction, and Reading Is Our Method

In Deuteronomy, Moses addresses a problem: “after a new beginning in 5:1, Moses relates the events on Sinai, especially how Israel was unable to listen to the voice of Yahweh and how Moses received the revelation of Yahweh’s will instead.”¹¹ God’s response to this problem is to prescribe an instruction pattern, a recurring thematic argument rooted in sequential activities.¹² It is an implicit training theology, a template based on Scripture reading as instruction.¹³ What is more, it is a sacred sequence of activities, a list¹⁴ that is oriented toward spiritual growth.¹⁵ In short, it is a framework for training God’s people, a reapplication of the Exodus instruction.¹⁶ We turn to these activities for a brief overview of each.

Assemble to God. Gathering to hear the Word of God reflects spiritual commitment, a desire to hear the voice of God and to worship Him only.¹⁷ But crucially, people gather to God Himself: “gather the people to me” (4:10) is a theme echoed near the book’s end: “When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord” (31:11).¹⁸ The group included “men women and children.”¹⁹ Years later, God’s people come to Ezra and ask him to read the Torah to them (Neh 8:1-2).²⁰ Those who gather do so because they desire to hear the voice of God through the Torah.²¹

Read. Reading Scripture, as did Moses, is interpretation.²² In fact, “The Law had no more been given than it was read to Israel, by Moses,”²³ for it applied to their circumstances. We learn from this event that reading Scripture publicly leads to worship.²⁴ It calls for a response.²⁵ The people said, “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Ex 24:7).²⁶ The reading guides Israel in new situations as they occupy the land God had given them.²⁷ As leaders of the people, king and priest read the Torah for their personal growth and worship.²⁸ They must have a copy of the Law with them and read it all the days of their lives.²⁹ Although public reading and private study are both expositional in nature,³⁰ public reading is a different but related spiritual exercise, as we will witness in Ezra’s priestly service.³¹

Hear. As was stated, hearing is not just opening the ear-gate but desiring to receive God’s message.³² Hearing begins in response to the voice of God.³³ In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks to the masses expecting that they will retain what they had heard read earlier. Jesus says, “You have *heard* it said” (Mt 5: 21, 27, 33, 38 43). The people could respond to Jesus, “We have *heard* from the Law” (Jn 12:34).³⁴ This familiarity came from gathering, hearing, and learning.³⁵ Due to the close relationship between hearing and doing throughout Scripture, this study will discuss other aspects of hearing under *obey*.³⁶

Learn. Learning for growth is a spiritual process. When we forget that principle and rely on strictly educational models of instruction we can expect educational outcomes.³⁷ The Deuteronomy pattern admonishes us to learn to fear God.³⁸ This does not dismiss the role of content for it is in learning about God, for example, the accounts of His mighty acts, that we learn to fear God.³⁹ Although exposition aids understanding, the content of learning is Scripture read aloud in public.⁴⁰ The Deuteronomy pattern of spiritual growth in which learning is at the center follows:

**The Deuteronomy
Sequential Pattern**

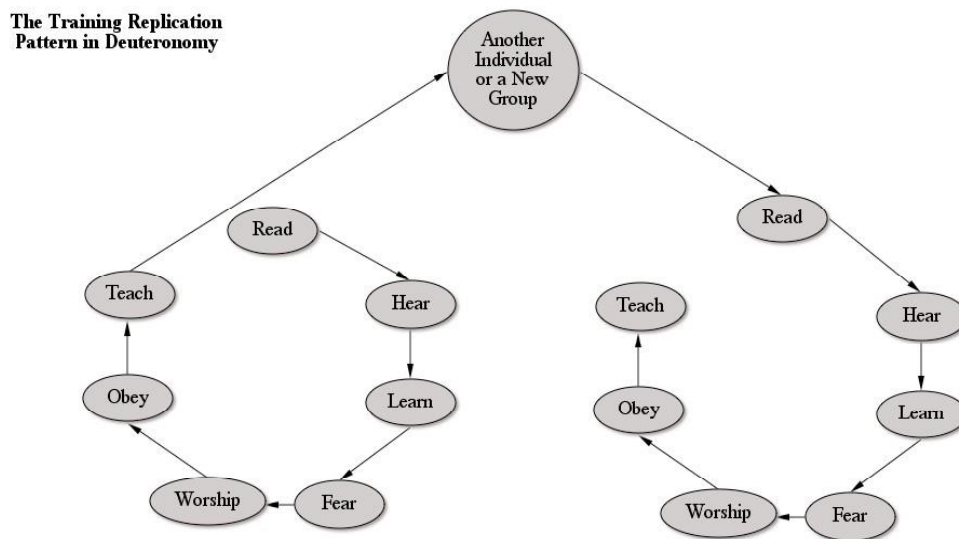


Fear. The theme of fearing God reoccurs throughout Deuteronomy.⁴¹ Although the word “fear” in Scripture has a range of meanings, two form a crucial spiritual distinction. When Jonah tells the sailors, “A Hebrew am I and YHWH, God of the Heavens I fear” (Jon 1:9), he identifies who his god is, perhaps as compared to other Canaanite deities. This is little more than “religious affiliation.”⁴² By contrast, Moses speaks of the fear that the Canaanite sailors manifest in the same account. The sailors fear for their lives should they throw God’s prophet overboard to drown. They live out their fear when they pray, sacrifice, and make vows. Jonah, the self-proclaimed God-fearer, does none of these things while running from God. Jonah eventually does all of these things as expressions of repentance with gratitude.

Worship. Although the theme of worship is prominent in Deuteronomy, the term is used only five times. Three out of five refer to avoiding false gods.⁴³ We might think of worship as taking God and what He says seriously.⁴⁴ A brief and clear definition of worship, easier to remember than many long and detailed ones is “engaging with God.”⁴⁵ Although worship has a corporate expression, individuals should live in continuous worship through all circumstances of life.

Obey. To obey is to do the will of another. In Deuteronomy the object is specific; to obey the commandments is to obey God’s voice. This takes us to the heart of the matter. In order to obey the very voice of God, we must respond to reading and hearing His revealed commands.⁴⁶ This is what the imagery of Christ’s slave means. Although being a slave teaches us that we should be humble, the greater focus is submitting our wills to His because we belong to Him.⁴⁷ Obey is often a generic term for more specific instructions. For example, God’s people should obey in swearing by His name, not another god’s name.⁴⁸ Crucially, the Deuteronomy sequence separates the command to obey from the command to hear by the activities of learn, fear, and worship. Although hearing and doing are directly connected in other Bible passages, we might be well to consider the Deuteronomy pattern, which calls for engaging with God after hearing and before attempting to obey.⁴⁹

Teach. Teaching is a prominent theme in Deuteronomy.⁵⁰ In some OT passages, instruction is described as a ‘mission’ (*mēlā’kâh*).⁵¹ From an early period, priests were sent out on teaching missions to remote areas in order to instruct the people in God’s Law (Dt 24:8).⁵² The following diagram illustrates how each new generation of teachers entrusts the heavenly treasure to the next from the crucial perspective of personal growth.⁵³ Training is self-replicating.



We learn by hearing Scripture and we teach as an outworking of God’s instruction in our lives. But we teach having matured through this sacred process; to be precise, God teaches through us.

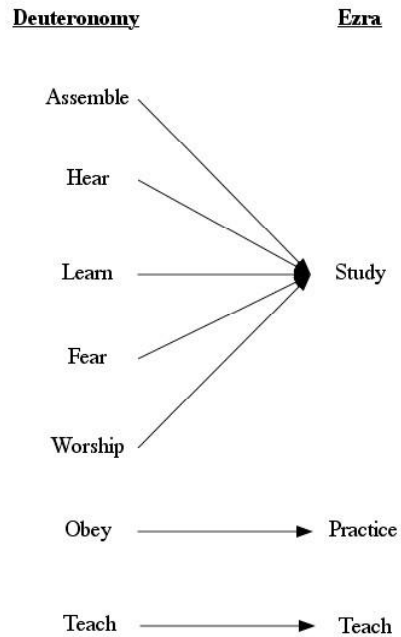
What Are Some Ways Scripture Expands on and Reapplies the Deuteronomy Pattern?

Solomon. Solomon views instruction as a path to wisdom, essentially skill for living.⁵⁴ In so doing, he applies the Torah in Exodus and Deuteronomy to new circumstances.⁵⁵ One study tracks a deliberate movement in instruction from passive to active learning.⁵⁶ This feature of instruction in Proverbs may be rooted in the Deuteronomy pattern, also passive to active, but from another perspective, learner to teacher. The recipient-learner starts out in a passive role--reading, hearing, fearing, which turns to a more active role--worshipping, doing, even teaching.

Ezra. Ezra illustrates priestly personal study.⁵⁷ In preparation, he reads not for himself as directed in Deuteronomy.⁵⁸ The Ezra pattern of study, practice, and teach (Ezr 7:10), complements the Deuteronomy pattern.⁵⁹ With amazing consistency, the Ezra pattern of personal study implicitly simulates the first five components under “search,” and then focuses on obey and teach.⁶⁰ We might expect that he heard the Torah by reading, learned, feared, and worshipped before he taught the people statute and ordinance.⁶¹

Nehemiah 8 illustrates the Deuteronomy and Ezra patterns by displaying the entire sequence.⁶² Ezra’s example in Nehemiah 8 calls us to *read Scripture publicly*. God’s people are commanded to hear. Reading requires that Ezra and priestly assistants *explain Scripture carefully*.⁶³ Although not a conspicuous part of the Deuteronomy pattern, Ezra made clear the reading through translation as well as application.⁶⁴ One author has argued that reading Scripture is exposition.⁶⁵ We would be well to remind ourselves that spending a week preparing a sermon but not even looking over a passage before we read it publicly sorely miscommunicates the significance of Scripture. Would that we could recapture the Deuteronomy pattern that makes reading Scripture tantamount to Scripture-deficient preaching.⁶⁶ Finally, we must *disciple with Scripture continually* as Ezra did with the leaders on the second day.⁶⁷ Deuteronomy focuses on what the people must do; Ezra illustrates the priest’s side of the process focusing on personal study and growth as preparation for teaching. The following illustration correlates the two sides:

Deuteronomy and Ezra Correlating Patterns



Nehemiah 8 illustrates the Deuteronomy pattern of reading Scripture, both personal and public.⁶⁸ The actions commanded in the pattern are evident in term or concept.⁶⁹

Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Jesus practices the Deuteronomy pattern when He enters the synagogue and reads Scripture publicly (Lk 4). After He as God, fully capable of speaking revelation, reads Isaiah 60, He sits down. There was no sermon as we know it, only a statement regarding its application to Himself and His earthly mission.⁷⁰ Jesus and Paul make it their practice to travel from one synagogue to another where Scripture is read publicly. Jesus explained that His teaching was based on Scripture and rooted in the Spirit's ministry of maturing them spiritually, the design of the Deuteronomy instruction pattern.⁷¹ He also made it clear that all would be taught by God.⁷²

Paul. When Paul says, "Devote yourself to the *public reading of Scripture*," (1 Ti 4:13) he reaffirms his commitment to the Deuteronomy pattern.⁷³ To render Paul's import clearly, most translations provide the elliptical qualifiers, *public* and *of Scripture*.⁷⁴ Paul's simple description,

“the reading” suggests that the familiar term required no qualification. Paul follows sequentially with “to exhortation and teaching” demonstrating that these activities are based on the reading and that Paul orders them following the Deuteronomy and Ezra patterns respectively.⁷⁵ It is fair to assume that Paul follows the reading with exhortation and teaching, for that is what Ezra did.⁷⁶ In the pastoral epistles, Paul instructs leaders-in-training as did Ezra who met with a smaller group of leaders on the second day after the reading.⁷⁷ A rabbinical text beautifully captures the heart of this practice: “Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things: ‘Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples [*talmidim*]; and make a fence around the Law (1:1).’”⁷⁸ With apostolic authority, Paul admonishes one trainee, “Entrust these things to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Ti 2:2).⁷⁹

What Can We Do to Realign Our Training with the Deuteronomy Pattern? God is our Teacher, Scripture is our instruction, and reading is our method.⁸⁰ Consider a few ways that Deuteronomy invites us to reconsider training: give priority to expositional reading of Scripture at all times and in all ministry forms; study every phase of the spiritual growth-oriented sequence thoughtfully understanding it as it relates to other phases; give special consideration to the phases in the middle of the sequence which are the repeated focus in Deuteronomy; identify phases of this sequence in other passages of Scripture as they contribute to the complete process and its implications; live out the reality that obedience and teaching follow fearing God and worship.⁸¹ After listening for the voice of God in Scripture, the people respond to Ezra’s reading, “Amen, Amen,” (it is true, it is true)” (Neh 8:6), and bow low in adoration. This is doxology in fitting expression.

ENDNOTES

1 Calvin boldly asserted that the “simple and external demonstration of the divine word, ought, indeed, to be fully sufficient for the production of faith.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

2 Wolff describes the heart in functional terms. H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testam*

(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974): 40-55. Kraus adds, that the term ‘heart’ is best understood in a general sense as "the site of all thought, planning, reflection, explanation and ambition." H.-J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (trans. Keith Crim; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986): 145 see esp. 145-6. Shupak underscores the role of the heart in learning. N. Shupak, "Learning Methods in Ancient Israel," *VT* 53 (2003): 418. Most critically, the Scriptures tell us, "Apply your mind (lit. heart) to instruction" (Prv 2:2).

3 Regarding the Deuteronomy teaching focus, Thompson says, "The work as a whole was evidently intended to give Israel instruction and education in her faith and to press home to her the demands of her faith." J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; TOTC (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974): 12. The Deuteronomy pattern, within its broader context, may contribute to the expanding discussion regarding "promise to the patriarchs" and fulfillment. See D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSS 10; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Press, 1978): 26. Clines says, "My proposal is: *The theme of the Pentateuch is the partial fulfillment—which implies also the partial non-fulfillment—of the promise to or blessing of the patriarchs. The promise or blessing is both the divine initiative in a world where human initiatives always lead to disaster and a reaffirmation of the primal divine intentions for man.* The promise has three elements: posterity, divine-human relationship, and land. The posterity element of the promise is dominant in Genesis 12-50, the relationship-element in Exodus and Leviticus, and the land-element in Numbers and Deuteronomy." *Ibid*, 29.

4 Fee says, "The ultimate aim of exegesis is the Spiritual one—to produce in our lives and the lives of others true spirituality, in which God’s people live in faithful fellowship both with one another and with the living God, and thus in keeping with God’s purposes in the world." G. D. Fee, *To What End Exegesis: Essays Textual, Exegetical, and Theological* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001): 276.

5 Although this study will focus on terms in the biblical text, it is recognized that concepts may exist where terms are not explicitly stated.

6 God is Teacher, but God cannot be instructed (Jb 21:22; Is 40:14).

7 Here we recognize a form of double agency in which God is the teacher and human teachers are facilitators of His instruction. The role of a facilitator in distance education crudely illustrates this sacred reality. God reveals; David facilitates God’s lessons to God’s students. Successful teaching recognizes the role of the teacher as facilitator: "Increasingly, teaching is understood, not as a matter of control and direction, but of help and facilitation. Teachers are asked to be facilitators rather than controllers, helpers rather than directors." A. W. Combs, *A Personal Approach to Teaching* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982): 166. Augustine said, "Free curiosity has greater power to stimulate learning than coercion." *Confessions* 1xiv.23.

8 Learning and sacrifice invite comparison. Shupak says, "The importance ascribed to listening in ancient Israel is shown by the common saying that compares it to offering a sacrifice: 'To draw near to listen is better than to offer sacrifices like the fools . . .' (Eccles. iv 17); 'Behold, to listen (*lijmōa*) is better than to sacrifice, and to hearken (*jēmoa*) than the fat of rams,' says the prophet (1 Sam. xv 22)." Shupak, "Learning Methods," 417.⁹ Witmer’s study, based on the author’s doctoral dissertation, demonstrates convincingly that this theme is pervasive in Scripture and has clear eschatological implications heralded in Is 54:13 and Jer 31:34. Jesus is the teacher from above [cf. John 3:1-15]; Jesus is the teacher par excellence; Jesus’ teaching (properly understood) is Revelation; Jesus teaching is direct communication from God; and in the fourth Gospel, Revelation is distinctively described with didactic terminology. S. E. Witmer, *Divine Instruction in Early Christianity* (WUNT 2/246; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 65. See also a Review of S. E. Witmer, *Divine Instruction in Early Christianity* by P. Ferrara in *JETS* 52/3 (2009): 373-74.

10 Note the passive voice brings out the agency distinction. It is as if Paul says, "You may have thought that I taught you. It was God! I was privileged to transmit God’s instruction to you as His agent." Although beyond the scope of this study, the Father, Jesus (Jn 3:1-15; 13:3-14), and the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26) all teach. A study exploring

agency is J. M. G. Barclay, S. Gathercole (eds) *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment* (LNTS 335; London: T&T Clark, 2007).

11 G. von Rad, “Deuteronomy” in *IDB*: 831. “Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?” (Dt 4:33); “Out of the heavens he let you hear his voice to discipline you” (Dt 4:36); “But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it” (Dt 5:31).

12 The distinguishable pattern--assemble the people, hear, learn, fear, worship, obey, and teach--is found in, but not limited to, the following Deuteronomy passages: 4:10 assemble, hear, learn to fear Me, teach their children; 5:1 hear, learn, observe; 5:29 and 6:13 fear, worship, swear by His name; 13:11 hear, be afraid, never again do; 14:23 learn to fear; 17:13 hear, be afraid, not act presumptuously; 17:19 read, learn to fear, do; 18:9 not learn to do; 19:20 hear, be afraid, never again do; 21:21 hear, fear; 30:17 not hear, be drawn away, worship other gods, serve; 31:12 assemble the people, hear, learn, fear, be careful to observe; 31:13 hear, learn to fear. One variation in Dt 12:28 is observe and hear. Over 48 passages in Deuteronomy contain two or more of these activities. The frequency and sequence pattern are unusual for a biblical book.

13 The verbs appear as a complete list at first (4:10) and then again near the book’s end (31:12-13) in order of performance, and are repeated in a number of contexts in which they are consistently ordered logically. They are often connected (e.g., hear and fear) and are not broken in sequence.

14 A list is a logical discourse pattern, the constituent parts of which are sometimes linked by asyndeton, subordinate clausal constructions, or simple conjunctions. It follows contextual logic, operating from reasoning of the author presented as a working sequential pattern in Deuteronomy.

15 Although beyond the scope of this study, the Deuteronomy pattern of growth process is performative in nature, that is, God commands it and it must be conducted as stated, particularly in relation to treaty oath ceremony. Procedural lists often have performative character, particularly when speech is involved. The list anticipates a sequential response in practice. It is, in effect, a ritual or sacred ceremony. For a discussion of performative function in Semitic literature, see S. L. Sanders, “Performative Utterances and Divine Language in Ugaritic,” *JNES* 63:3 (July 2004): 161-81.

16 The title, Deuteronomy reminds us that it is a *deuteros nomos*, loosely, a second application or copy of the law” (Dt. 17:18). As an example, the law of the Hebrew slave in Exodus suited to the first application after the Exodus (Ex 21:2-6) is elaborated and reapplied to life in the promised land (Dt 15:12-18). The Book of Proverbs is a further application within a wisdom framework. For example, the Exodus command “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex 20:14) is reapplied as counsel to stay away from the strange woman (Prv 5:13).

17 True also in the church: “A man cannot become a believer in solitude. He can become one only through fellowship with those who speak the word of faith to him . . . For the word is the message of the Christ who calls him into the church.” cited by R. P. Martin, *The Family and the Fellowship: New Testament Images of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997 reprint of 1979): 126, n.4.

18 “Assemble the people to Me” (Dt 4:10). The nominal form of the verb ‘gather’ is ‘congregation.’ It also is attested in Deuteronomy (Dt 5:22; 9:10; 10:4; 18:16; 23:1, 2, 3, 8; 31:30).

19 “Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law” (Dt 31:12).

20 Stated recipients included “the assembly of men, women, and all those who could listen with understanding” (Neh 8:2, 3). Peterson says, “The word *ekklýsia*, which means ‘congregation’, ‘gathering’ or ‘assembly’, was sometimes used in the Greek version of the Old Testament to denote the Israelites, assembled to

meet the Lord (e.g. Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 31:30; Jdg. 20:2).” D. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: Apollos, 1992): 259, n. 46.

21 Also hearing from the perspective of the prophetic word. “Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word” (Is 66:5). Also, “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord God, “when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for *hearing* the words of the Lord” (Am 8:11). Jesus made reference to this passage when he said, “it is written, ‘man shall not live by bread alone’” (Lk 4:4). Subsequently, “the people pressed upon him to *hear* the word of God” (Lk 5:1). Similar ways of expressing this same concept include receiving the word of God (Acts 8:14; 11:1).

22 T. E. McComiskey, *Reading Scripture in Public: A Guide for Preachers and Lay Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991): 9. Old says, “The worshipping assembly is called together at the foot of Mount Sinai to hear the Word of God. It is the ministry of Moses to bring this Word to the people. The Word is simply read to the people. . . . it is the reading of Scripture with which we have to do. Moses reads the book of the covenant before the assembly of the people of Israel as an act of solemn worship.” H. O. Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church Vol I, The Biblical Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 23-4.

23 Ibid., 22. The author says, “How could one make more clear that the reading of God’s Word was an essential constituent of the worship of Israel from its very beginning?” Ibid., 23. Of R. C. Chapman it was said, “To hear Mr. Chapman only read a Psalm is as good as a sermon.” R. L. Peterson and A. Strauch, *Agape Leadership: Lessons in Spiritual Leadership for the Life of R. C. Chapman* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1991): 15.

24 Passages in which reading Scripture is emphasized include: Ex 24:7; Dt 31:11; Jo 8:34-5; Neh 8:1-8; 9:3; 13:1; 1 Ti 4:13. The public reading of written documents was standard practice in Israel’s world. “Oral proclamation and written recording frequently went hand in hand in the ancient Near East and, even if the biblical texts don’t spell out the process on every occasion, or the epigraphic sources supply extensive examples, we should accept the same correlation as part of the everyday life in ancient Israel.” Alan Millard, “Oral Proclamation and Written Record: Spreading and Preserving Information in Ancient Israel,” in (eds) Y. Avishur and R. Deutsch, *Michael: Historical, Epigraphical and Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer* (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999): 241. The author also makes the argument that, as the Greek language supported the spread of the Gospel and the printing press, the personal use of Scripture, the alphabet providentially entered Israel’s world as a way to facilitate the reading of Scripture: “Many signs of divine overruling accompanied the entry of Israel into Canaan; the development of the alphabet was not the least of them.” Alan Millard, “Mass Communication and Scriptural Proclamation: The First Step,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 50 (Apr.-June 1978): 70.

25 In effect, an oath ceremony: “Then he took the book of the covenant, and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient’” (Ex 24:7).

26 This affirmation was more than tacit approval. It was contractual and anticipated ongoing examination for faithfulness. “In order that there should be no dispute about the stipulations the people had accepted, Moses recorded them on a scroll, but it was only after the people had accepted them that he did so, and then read the words to the people, ensuring that he had recorded them correctly. That book should later play a decisive role as a witness in determining whether or not Israel has remained faithful to the agreement. The book could travel with the people.” Alan Millard, “The Tablets in the Ark,” in (eds) J. G. McConville and K. Möller, *Reading the Law: Studies in Honour of Gordon J. Wenham* (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2007): 256. The author adds, “The written text of a treaty was the indisputable record of the agreement and a witness that could be consulted in the case of disloyalty, real or alleged.” Ibid., 263. And then finally, “The deposit of the stone tablets in the Ark, which was then placed in the holiest part of the Tabernacle, is exactly like the deposit of ancient treaty texts in the presence of the gods.” Ibid., 265.

27 “When all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing” (Dt 31:11).

28 Regarding priest and king: ““It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes” (Dt 17:19).

²⁹ Although a variety was in use as early as Exodus, we cannot always determine what writing material was used. “The practice of writing itself is taken for granted in these Hebrew texts, from the order to Moses to keep an account of the victory over Amelek in a *seper* ‘written document, book’ (Exodus 17: 14), to the book in which God listed the names of the righteous (Exodus 32: 32 etc.). The nature of these books is not explained, they could be envisaged as rolls or waxed tablets. The Law was given in a different manner, ‘in the writing of God’ engraved (‘rt) on *lû’ôt ‘eben* ‘stone tablets’ (Exodus 32: 16 etc.)” Alan Millard, “Books in the Late Bronze Age in the Levant,” in (eds) S. Isre’el, I. Singer, and R. Zadok, *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East* (Israel Oriental Studies XVIII; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998): 177. Regarding the tablets, “Stone flakes with the commandments scratched on them in archaic Hebrew or some Canaanite language, in an early alphabetic script, appear to be what we should imagine Moses carrying. At whatever date the narratives of Exodus and Deuteronomy came into existence, their contents may well reflect actual circumstances and activities of the Late Bronze Age.” Alan Millard, “Re-Creating the Tablets of the Law.” *Bible Review* 10 (February 1994): 53.

³⁰ Ezra taught God’s people, but only after he responded first by studying and living God’s law (Ezr 7:10). This raises a question about who could read. Although the scope and nature of literacy during Israel’s Iron age is beyond the scope of this study, the complexity of literacy training in the ancient world remains open for question. Alan Millard argues for widespread literacy. Alan Millard, “The Knowledge of Writing in Iron Age Palestine,” *TB* 46 (1995): 207-17. C. A. Rollston restricts literacy to a highly educated and elite class. C. A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (ABS 11; Atlanta: SBL, 2010): xxvvi.

31 Martin explains, “This task of the public reading of the Scriptures is then quite distinct from the private study counseled in 2 Timothy iii, 15-17. But what is said in the latter place about the nature and purpose of the Scripture makes the matter of the public reading of it one of supreme importance. Because the Scripture is ‘given by inspiration of God’ and consequently ‘profitable for instruction, for reproof, for correction, and for training in uprightness, and above all, ‘able to make’ the hearer ‘wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus’, the place which it holds in the ordering of divine service must always be central and determinative.” R. P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964): 68-9.

32 Regarding the desire to hear see also T. L. Donaldson, “Guiding Readers—Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew’s Narrative Strategy,” in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed) R. N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): 30-49.

33 See discussion above.

34 For a detailed discussion, see Alan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus* (The Biblical Seminar 69; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 157-8.

35 Prior to the synagogue practice of regular reading, it is difficult to determine just how often the Law was read to God’s people. Alan Millard says, “According to the biblical texts, public reading of the law took place at Sinai (Exod. 24: 3, 4, 7; 34: 32), was expected every seven years once Israel was settled in the Promised Land (Deut.

31: 9-13), was envisaged in the prescription for the monument on Mount Ebal, fulfilled after the conquest (Deut. 27: 1-8; Josh. 8: 32-5) and was reported on various occasions (2 Kgs. 23: 2; 2 Chr. 17: 9; Neh. 8).” Alan Millard, “Authors, Books, and Readers in (eds) J. W. Rogerson and J. M. Lieu, *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: University Press, 2006): 557.

- 36 The role of hearing Scripture is underscored in Jesus instruction about the rich man and Lazarus. “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them *hear* them.’ But he said, ‘No father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not *listen to* Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead’” (Lk 16:29-31).
- 37 In this regard, Putnam raises concerns for Estes’ reliance on the educational doctrines of J. Dewey to understand instruction in Proverbs 1-9: “Estes approaches these chapters via 20th-century pedagogical theory. The categories are therefore etic (imposed from without) rather than emit (arising from the text), and lead to a search for “embedded” values when discussing, for example, the roles of the teacher and learner. (This etic approach is probably also the reason for the repetition in the book—e.g. chaps. 2 [“values”] and 4 [“curriculum”] should be combined.)” A review of D. J. Estes, *Hear, My Son. Teaching & Learning in Proverbs 1-9* (NSBT 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). By F. Putnam, *JETS* (2000). Striving for a practical pedagogy, J. M. Gregory emphasized *actions* associated with instruction when he said, “The test and proof of teaching done—the finishing and fastening process—must be reviewing, rethinking, reknowing, reproducing, and applying of the material that has been taught.” J. M. Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1884 [19th reprint, 1976]): 19. But these are restricted to instruction and stop short of spiritual growth. The French rendering of the term *formation* ‘training’ captures the focus of the Deuteronomy pattern of actions and distinguishes it from more academic models.
- 38 Dt 4:10; 14:23; 17:19; 31:13. “Learn, and fear” may have similar force (Dt 31:12).
- 39 Referred to as God’s statutes and ordinances (Dt 5:1). This could be a doublet that may have the force of hendiadys, that is to say, “all of the law.”
- 40 Old elaborates: “Nothing is expressly said in Exodus 24:1-11 about preaching. It is the reading of the Law that figures in this story. We can perhaps draw from this that the reading of Scripture is primary in worship and that the place of the sermon is therefore to make that reading meaningful. . . . It is not for magical reasons, it is not even for legalistic reasons, that the Scriptures must be read in worship; it is rather because they must be understood and must guide the lives of the covenant people.” Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures*, 24. ⁴¹ Passages mentioning fear include, Dt 4:10; 5:29; 6:2; 6:13; 6:24; 8:6; 10:12; 10:20; 13:4, 11; 14:23; 17:13, 19; 19:20; 21:21; 28:58; 31:12. 13.
- 42 H. W. Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah* (trans. M. Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986): 114.
- 43 Passages mentioning worship include Dt 4:19; 8:19; 11:6; 26:10; 30:17. Two out of five occurrences speak of worshipping God, the others, false gods.
- 44 A perspective on worship. Peter says, “Honor all people, love the brotherhood, *fear God*, honor the king” (1 Pt 2:17). Peterson explains the breadth of meaning: “To fear God is to keep his commandments (*e.g.* Dt. 5:29; 6:2, 24; Ec. 12:13), to obey his voice (*e.g.* 1 Sa. 12:14; Hg. 1:12), to walk in his ways (*e.g.* Dt. 8:6; 10:12; 2 Ch. 6:31), to turn away from evil (*e.g.* Jb. 1:1, 8; 2:3 28:28; Pr. 3:7), and to serve him (*e.g.* Dt. 6:13 10:20; Jos. 24:14).” Peterson, *Engaging with God*, 71.
- 45 See D. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: Apollos, 1992).
- 46 Passages which require obeying commandments (Dt 11:27, 28) focus on following God or the gods. Other passages require obeying God’s voice (Dt 13:4; 27:8; 28:62; 30:2, 8, 20). Several passages demonstrate that to obey God’s voice is to do his commandments (Dt 27:10; 30:8).
- 47 For a full treatment of this concept applied to sanctification, see D. Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).
- 48 Dt 6:13; 10:4.

- 49 Of Jesus' teaching (Mt 7:24-7; Lk 6:46-9; and Jn 13:17); the Law (Rom 2:13); and receiving the implanted word (Jas 1:22-27; 2:14-20).
- 50 Passages with the word to teach include Dt 4:1, 9, 10, 14; 5:31; 6:1, 7; 11:9; 17:11; 20:18; 24:8; 31:19; 33:10. Shupak points out that Deuteronomy contains the highest frequency of the term *lmd* "teach" in the Old Testament: "Out of a total of 94 citations in the Bible, *lmd* appears only 4 times in Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes; 11 times in Ben Sira; 26 times in Psalms (14 times in the wisdom Psalms); 17 times in Deuteronomy; 14 times in Jeremiah; and 13 times in Isaiah; etc." Shupak, "Learning Methods," 420, n. 9.
- 51 In 2 Chr. 17:7ff. king Jehoshaphat of Judah is said to have placed chief officials and Levites in the cities of his kingdom in order to "teach them the law of Yahweh." See also 1 Chr 26:30ff; 2 Chr. 19:7ff; and 2 Kings 17:6ff.
- 52 Ahlström says, "It is probable that a priest was sent out from Jerusalem to 'teach' the people the religion of the new nation." G. W. Ahlström, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine* (Leiden: Brill, 1982): 38. The author adds "Solomon dispatched officials (some probably called Levites) to let the people of the district know how to 'revere god and king.'" Ibid., 46.
- 53 The replication pattern is seen in Moses' words, "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." (Dt 31:12-13).
- 54 Deuteronomy also addresses the negative results or outcomes of not reading, fearing, etc.
- 55 Although space will not allow a detailed treatment, Wisdom literature expands the roles of the teacher, content, and instructional methods. Although wisdom corpus in Scripture advocates an experiential approach to knowledge, this does not entail a pursuit of creation structure apart from Scripture as some have suggested. Waltke rejects Estes' conclusions on the same; wisdom's sources, personal observation and tradition are not on a par with Revelation. A review of D. J. Estes, *Hear, My Son. Teaching & Learning in Proverbs 1-9* (NSBT 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. By B. K. Waltke, *RBL* (03/31/2000).
- 56 See N. Shupak, "Learning Methods in Ancient Israel," *VT* 53 (2003): 416-26. Shupak's sequential taxonomy fits with Moses and Ezra sequences. In fact, Shupak's study argues that learning moves from passive to active, even creative. This premise refines the Moses paradigm. Shupak says the key is passive to active, listen to search. Ezra then starts with "maturity" for he searched the law. This is important. Shupak's argument for Proverbs applies to the Deuteronomy pattern as well. "The present study attempts to reconstruct the learning methods and stages in light of the terminology applied to study and its accompanying images in the Bible (focused on wisdom literature). The analysis of these terminology and images indicates different teaching methods: listening, obedience, understanding, practice, learning lessons, and searching. These methods are complementary and reflect various stages in the process of acquiring knowledge, from the first passive stage to the last more active and creative stage." Shupak, "Learning Methods," 426.
- 57 "For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezr 7:10). Compare the commissioned role of Levi; "They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your law to Israel" (Dt 33:10).
- 58 Speaking of the Torah, "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes" (Dt 17:19). Even at the personal level reading Scripture leads to learning to fear and do.

- 59 Ezra, the priest-scribe desires to “learn and interpret.” D. J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984): 101. Fishbane identifies this “as an entirely rational mode of explanation or exposition.” Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 245.
- 60 D. Deuel, “An Old Testament Pattern for Expository Preaching,” *TMSJ* 2:2 (Fall 1991): 125-38. Ezra was “expositor of the word of God for the community of the faithful.” H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987): 70. Batten says, “All emphasis was laid upon Ezra's mission and upon his fitness for its accomplishment.” L. W. Batten, *The Books of Ezra-Nehemiah* ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913): 306. Fishbane argues for an early practice of text study: “Since Ezra the scribe not only returned from Babylon with a knowledge of the ancient law, but also as head of an established retinue of levitical interpreters (Neh. 8:1-8), there is little support . . . that Ezra's work as a ‘Shriftegelehrter’ was a new activity. . . . Ezra inherited a venerable Israelite tradition of scribal and textual scholarship.” M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985): 37. While it is easy to force correspondences between Moses and Ezra, “what is at least clear is that the mission represented . . . a new beginning, a replica of the first Exodus to be followed, then as now, by the giving of the law.” J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988): 139.
- 61 A hendiadys for all of Torah. Clines views the two terms as a hendiadys for “the totality of the law.” Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 101.
- 62 McConville explains, “The effect was to show that those who wielded authority in the community were themselves under the authority of God, and that therefore it was the word of God that regulated the whole life of the community.” J. G. McConville, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985): 116.
- 63 Crenshaw interprets the role of the Levites in explaining the reading as hearkening back to Deuteronomy 31. “To be sure, some sort of mass education is envisioned in the time of Ezra (fifth century B.C.E.), when the oral reading of the Torah was followed by learned interpretation (Neh. 8:7-8). Similar attempts to familiarize the populace with the demands of the Mosaic legislation are referred to in Deut. 31:12-13.” J. L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 1998): 5-6.
- 64 Torrey explains, “And they read in the book of the law distinctly and gave the sense *so that the reading was understood*.” C. C. Torrey, “The Ezra Story in Its Original Sequence,” in *Ezra Studies* (New York: KTAV, 1970 [rpt. of 1910 ed.]): 268. Rowland says, “It is evident from Eccclus. 39:3 that detailed exegesis was part of the scribal expertise.” C. Rowland, *Christian Origins: From Messianic Movement to Christian Religion* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985): 48.
- 65 “Effective public reading is interpretation, and the effective use of vocal emphasis is exposition.” McComiskey, *Reading Scripture in Public*, 9. For a practical guide to the oral interpretation of Scripture, see C. J. Schmit, *Public Reading of Scripture: A Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon, Press, 2002): 83-100.
- 66 On balance, this study does not oppose preaching or other forms of explication; it does underscore the role of reading as primary. For practical suggestions on reading Scripture, see D. A. Dombek, “Reading the Word of God Aloud,” in *The Preacher and Preaching* (ed) S. T. Logan, Jr. (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986): 419-44; B. Chapell, “The Incarnate Voice: An Exhortation for Excellence in the Oral Reading of Scripture,” *Presbyterion* 15:1 (Spring 1989): 42-57; and T. E. McComiskey, *Reading Scripture in Public* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).
- 67 For works treating discipleship from different perspectives, see M. J. Wilkins: His published dissertation *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995 [second ed.]). A version based on the same study for pastors is *idem*, *Follow the Master: Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). A third treatment for the lay person interested in exploring discipleship is *idem*, *In His Image: Reflecting Christ in Everyday Life* (Colorado Springs; NavePress, 1997).

68 Kidner describes the impact of Ezra's practice: "Study is saved from unreality, conduct from uncertainty, and teaching from insincerity and shallowness." D. Kidner, *Ezra and Nehemiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979): 62. So crucial is Ezra's threefold resolve that one author has said, "Ezra's actions in the rest of the book must be interpreted in light of this verse [i.e., Ezra 7:10]." F. C., Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982): 101.

69 For example, Deuteronomy uses the expression "make them known" (Dt 4:9) as a surrogate for 'teach.'

⁷⁰ The reading was sufficiently independent of the exhortation. Two different individual(s) could read and exhort. "After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak" (Acts 13:15).

71 The fruit of the Spirit is a result of teaching. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk with God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984 [second edition 2005]): 90-91. "Paul describes the process of character formation by this means as one of being changed into Christ's likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18) and calls the character itself the fruit of the Spirit—which on inspection proves to be neither more nor less than the profile of Jesus Christ himself in his disciples (Gal. 5:22-24)." Ibid. 90. Hymn writer, John Newton said, "The *Scripture* itself, and the *Spirit* of God—are the best and the only sufficient expositors of Scripture." (Newton, Letters).

72 Köstenberger says, "Against the backdrop of an entire set of OT Messianic images and expectations, Jesus' mission is presented as part of an eschatological framework that shows him as inaugurating the messianic age in which 'all' will be 'taught by God' (Jn 6:45 cf. Isa 54:13). A. J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009): 541.

73 Referring to the Theodotus inscription which describes the first century synagogue, Clarke says, "The inscription clearly cites reading the Torah and studying the commandments as the principal *raison d'être* of the synagogue." A. D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000): 124. Philo refers to early meetings as opportunities for study and discussion. Ibid., 110. Paul could reference the reading in worship as familiar practice to his readers: "at the reading of the Old Covenant . . . whenever Moses is read" (2 Co 3:14-15).

74 Some question the widespread use of Scripture in the OT and the early church due to the few extant manuscripts. But we must remember that reverence for Scripture would limit its careless circulation. In general, "the majority of the documents written in antiquity were thrown away or reused and so are beyond recovery; we should never forget that those remaining, numerous as they are, are a tiny percentage of all that were written." Alan Millard, "Only Fragments from the Past: The Role of Accident in Our Knowledge of the Ancient Near East," in (eds) P. Bienkowski, C. Mee, and E. Slater, *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* (LHB/OTS 426; London: T&T Clark, 2005): 305.

75 Paul's practice entailed exhortation based on the reading: "After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it" (Acts 13:15).

76 The reading was sufficiently independent of the exhortation, so much so that one person could read and a different individual(s) could exhort. "After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak" (Acts 13:15).

⁷⁷ In balance, Meeks warns that there is insufficient clear evidence of universal practice in the second century Church. Philo, Josephus and a few others are the exception. But he also offers reasonable certainty based on Paul and other NT writers' use of Scripture in their own writings. W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: YUP, 1983 [Second edition, 2003]): 146. The Church with its commitment to reading of Scripture found its place among other groups alongside the Synagogue in the early

centuries. “Associations gathered together regularly to socialize, share communal meals, and honor both their earthly and their divine benefactors.” P. A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003): 2.

78 *Mishnah Pirke Aboth* 1:1 [The Sayings of the fathers] cited by R. N. Longenecker, “Introduction” in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed) Richard Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): 3.

79 What is more, Paul’s confidence in Scripture’s clarity leads him to conclude that “a faithful reading of the Scriptures equips the believer ‘for every good work.’” M. D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture* (NSBT 21: Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006): 93.

80 Although beyond the scope of this study, there is renewed emphasis on student needs. For a proposal of student-centered instruction that carries through a student’s career into research and publication, see D. J. A. Clines, “Learning, Teaching, and Researching Biblical Studies Today and Tomorrow,” *JBL* 129 (2010): 5-29. ⁸¹

Doxology is the outworking of a thankful heart meditating on Scripture. Of Paul, Tidball says, “His teaching regularly drives him to express praise. It is never about cold abstractions. His educational method is doxological.” D. Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008): 140.