



# παράκλησις *Paraklesis*

A Ministry of Encouragement from Baptist Bible Seminary

## Is Dispensationalism Hurting American Political Policies in the Middle East?<sup>1</sup>

“It’s hard to believe, but the Bush administration’s foreign policy and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are influenced by the writings of a cave-dwelling hermit who had apocalyptic visions some 2000 years ago.”<sup>2</sup>

Such a claim about a prior administration, in spite of its clear overstatement, nonetheless echoes a belief that is held by religious and political liberals and many conservative evangelicals. Another concerned writer notes that “it is somewhat alarming that swathes of the evangelical community ... naively accept a potted version of biblical eschatology in relation to the Middle East which puts them firmly on the side of injustice and post-colonial oppression, as far as most inhabitants of the region are concerned.”<sup>3</sup>

Such sentiments are critical of dispensational theology, affirming that such theology is hurting American interests in the Middle East.

### Is Dispensationalism Pro-Israel but Anti-Jew?

There are several ways in which criticisms of this kind surface. One example is David Carlson, who regrets the notion that the book of Revelation is taken in a literal fashion and that Bible prophecy is taken to support present-day Israel. Notice the strong wording: “In this view, not only are Palestinians of no value, but the sole reason for Jews to return to Israel is to hasten the slaughter that triggers the return of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This presentation is a modified excerpt of an earlier article: Mike Stallard, “Is Dispensationalism Hurting American Political Policies in the Middle East?” in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, edited by Christopher Cone (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 461-75.

<sup>2</sup> Chip Berlet & Nikhil Aziz, “Culture, Religion, Apocalypse, and Middle East Foreign Policy” *Right Web* 5 December 2003, <<http://rightweb.irc-online.org/rw/848>> (accessed 27 September 2006). Berlet and Aziz work at Political Research Associates ([www.publiceye.org](http://www.publiceye.org)) which is a self-labeled progressive Boston-based think tank. The cave-dwelling hermit is, of course, the Apostle John who gave us the book of Revelation. What is being criticized is the dispensational understanding of that New Testament book.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Wilkinson, “Eschatology and the Middle East” *Open Source Theology* 3 June 2006, <<http://www.open-source.theology.net/node/924>> (accessed 21 September 2006).

<sup>4</sup> David Carlson, “Left Behind’ and the Corruption of Biblical Interpretation,” *OrthodoxyToday.org* (2003), <<http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles/CarlsonPremillennial.php>> (accessed 11 October 2006). Carlson is Professor of Religious Studies at Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana. According to this posted article he is also Greek Orthodox.

FALL 2010

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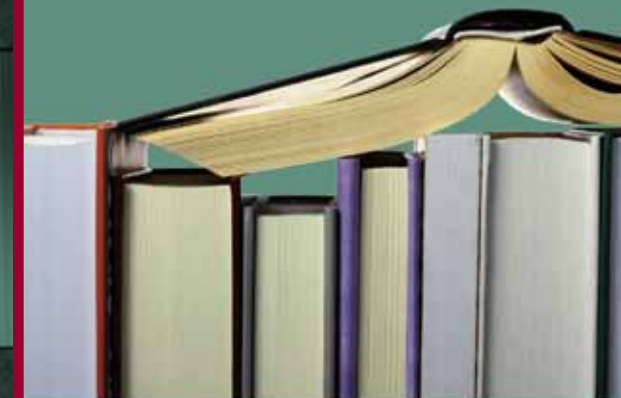
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# Dean's Notes

Mike Stallard, Ph.D.



## ministry TOOLBOX



### Are the lost really “lost”?

Unfortunately these days there appears to be a lack of evangelistic fervor on the part of many pastors and congregations. Not all men are gifted evangelists. In fact, most pastors I know (including myself) are better teachers than personal evangelists.

Yet, the mandate of the church includes outreach for the saving of souls. God does the saving, but Christians are the instruments that God uses to spread the gospel.

Jesus told us, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was *lost*” (Luke 19:10). Luke records for us the parables of the *lost* sheep, coin, and son (Luke 15). The finding of the lost so that they are saved brings great joy to heaven (v. 7, 10, 22–25).

If this is so, why is it that so many Christians are not involved in an activity that brings so much joy to the heart of God? Why is it that pastors do not lead their churches in effective outreach?

One explanation is that pastors are busy doing some other necessary things: counseling, teaching, administration,

training of staff and deacons, equipping of the saints, prayer for the people, social activities—on and on the list goes. Because all of these ministries are important, BBS trains men in leadership, administration, counseling, ministry evaluation, equipping strategies, and church planting. These are all taught within the framework of the biblical languages, Bible content, and how to do theology with valid application to life.

Because there is so much to deal with, it is easy to get sidetracked from the call to reach the lost.

However, at BBS, we do more than have a class on evangelism. We make every effort in all the things we do to keep before us the truth that human beings are lost without Christ. They are headed to a Christless eternity in a place the Bible calls the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15).

That is the most important part of our mission. We cannot go the way of those who have forgotten that the lost are really lost.

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*Paraklesis*  
FALL 2010

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*Paraklesis*

is published by  
Baptist Bible Seminary  
538 Venard Road  
Clarks Summit, PA 18411  
800.451.2287  
[www.bbc.edu/seminary](http://www.bbc.edu/seminary)  
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Baptist Bible Seminary

### The Role of an Interim Pastor:

#### *How to Help a Church Through the Process of Change in Pastoral Leadership*

When I came to BBS in 1998, after 20 years in pastoral ministry, I had no doubt God was leading me here. I was looking forward to being part of a team shaping a new generation of men to be servant-leaders for the church.

I enjoyed the ministry God gave me as a pastor, especially opportunities to get close to people, be involved in discipleship, and see a body of believers grow in their walk with and service to God. So when I approached the time for a change in ministry and focus I wondered: *Would I miss being a pastor?* The answer was “yes,” but God answered the longing in my heart with a great opportunity to combine my new role with continuing involvement in local church pastoral ministry: the role of being an interim pastor to churches going through the process of a change in pastoral leadership.

Soon after coming to BBS I learned a church I had previously served was losing their pastor. The deacons asked me to serve as interim pastor and assist them in the coming search process.

What a fantastic opportunity. I was able to go back to a church body I loved and assist them for nine months in areas that would help the church grow and prepare for their next pastor. Once this church cleared that process, which culminated in the calling of a new pastor, I found there were many churches going through similar circumstances.

Through the Church Relations Department at BBC&S and assistance from church fellowship leaders in various states, other contacts were made with churches needing similar assistance.

I studied to see how the early New Testament church developed leaders to serve during times of change. This led me to develop *Paraklesis Interim Pastoral Ministries*, a program assisting churches going through this unique period. The ministry provides Bible-believing churches without a lead pastor with an *intentional interim pastor*. The intent is to provide a temporary undershepherd for the church who can “comfort, exhort, and come alongside” in a paraklesis ministry, as Paul did in Acts 9:31.

Over the last 12 years, I have had the privilege of serving nine different churches in an interim role. It has been a joy to connect with believers in these churches, see God use this time to deepen their commitment, and learn many lessons, some of which I’ve included here.

#### Benefits of an Interim Pastor

- ❖ Regular, consistent expository preaching every Sunday, allowing consistent feeding of the flock. This also “unburdens” the church leadership of the extra time needed to secure speakers.
- ❖ Consulting services as an advisor/mentor to the deacons/search committee in the process, protocol, and resources needed for a successful search.
- ❖ Outside, impartial perspective for church health and growth through a godly, experienced pastor

#### The Role of an Interim Pastor

Each church may have differing needs and situations, so the actual functions should be discussed and agreed upon with the church leadership during an initial *Consultation Appointment*.

*Continued on page 4*

- ❖ Plan for preaching each week at the morning and/or evening services. The interim pastor can also take responsibility for securing a qualified speaker for any Sunday he is unavailable.
- ❖ Meet as an advisor/mentor with the church staff and/or deacons, on a monthly basis, or as otherwise needed.
- ❖ Serve as a consultant with the search committee, on a monthly basis or as needed, to assist in the process, protocol, and resources needed to successfully secure a new lead pastor.
- ❖ Help develop congregational trust and confidence in the church leadership team during the interim period.
- ❖ Assist in refining church mission, organization, and vision, as well as with conflict resolution and emergency counseling situations as these needs arise and as desired by leadership. This can also involve working with the church through change by helping it to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and preparing for any needed changes.
- ❖ Attend or give leadership to meetings on Sundays and/or as desired by the church.

### What Functions Does an Interim Pastor Usually Not Cover?

In some cases, the interim pastor may not be able to provide functions or leadership in the following areas:

- ❖ Leading a mid-week service. This time can be a good opportunity for other church staff and/or deacons to lead times of informal Bible study and/or prayer.
- ❖ Teaching a regular Sunday school class.
- ❖ Long term counseling relationships, including pre-marital counseling.

The interim pastor should enter into a service agreement with the church through the written

invitation/contract of the Deacons or other authorized officers. The appointment should be announced publicly to the congregation to provide consistent communication.

The beginning of the term of the interim pastor should be clearly understood and designated at the time of the initial *Consultation Appointment*, and his term will continue until such time as the church secures a new lead pastor.

### Making it Work

Even during a time when a church is without a pastor, God should be glorified through a unified, edified, and serving body of believers.

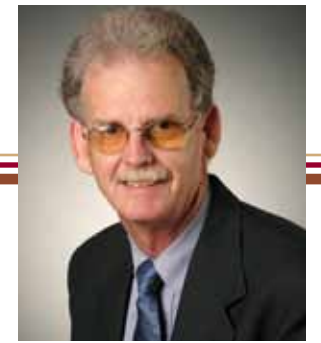
When I begin a new ministry, I often include some teaching on the subjects of priorities of a local church from Christ's perspective (Revelation 2–3); God's blueprint for a pastor and his combined role of *episkopos-bishop; presbuteros-elder; poimen-shepherd* (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1; 1 Peter 5; John 10)); one-anothering passages from the New Testament that emphasize our responsibilities in our relationships to each other in the body of Christ; pursuing lost people for Christ (personal and corporate evangelism); and a theology of biblical change for churches. I also continue to remind the church of some great promises that Jesus Christ, the head of the church, made directly to the church: *"I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16); *"... Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it..."* (Ephesians 5); *"He (Christ) is the head of the church..."* (Colossians 1); *"I am the good shepherd (pastor), and I know my sheep..."* (John 10).

Churches enter a time after their pastor has gone with uncertainty, confusion, and even fear. They need someone to model the love of the Good Shepherd and Head of the Church, reminding them He will never let them down and, in fact, He already knows who their next undershepherd will be.

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# One on One



## Dr. Mark McGinniss "Outside My Door"

Dr. Mark McGinniss' courses include Old Testament Literature, Biblical Hebrew, Hebrew Exegesis, Old Testament Theology, and Studies in the Song of Songs.

Before he came to BBS five years ago, Mark spent 27 years serving as a teacher and principal at Maranatha Christian Academy and youth pastor and then senior pastor at Maranatha Baptist Church in Hazlet, NJ.

Teaching both on-campus and online classes, he started his blogging site, "Outside My Door," in 2008 to provide his students with updates and information. In addition to blogging, Mark also enjoys fishing, reading, and scuba diving.

### What is the focus of your blog "Outside My Door?"

The focus is church ministry, Old Testament Theology, and the Song of Songs. My purpose is to share items of theological interest, or things that should be of interest, to my students and friends.

### Why did you begin the blog?

We used to have bulletin boards outside our individual offices at the Seminary where professors would post items of their own theological interests. However, in the name of aesthetics, these were taken down. In an effort to continue to share with my students items of interest, with the help of my son, I developed the blog "Outside My Door" because that's where the bulletin board used to hang.

### Who is your audience and what is their response?

Its intended audience is my students, but others, such as professors, friends, and church members, have read a number of posts. Impact is difficult

to measure. There are some posts that generate discussion and comments and others that seemingly go nowhere.

### What have you been able to accomplish through your blog?

Since there is a wealth of information available to any one of us, I am simply trying

**What I'm following ...**  
Whether you check them out through an RSS feed or by surfing the web, blogs can be a great source of information, providing unique insights and details. These blogs are read regularly by Dr. McGinniss:

<b>Ancient Biblical Poetry</b> by John F. Hobbins <a href="http://ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com/">http://ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com/</a>	<b>Denouement</b> by Jeremy McGinniss <a href="http://publicnoises.blogspot.com/">http://publicnoises.blogspot.com/</a>
<b>Biblia Hebraica et Graeca</b> by Douglas Mangum <a href="http://bibliahebraica.blogspot.com/">http://bibliahebraica.blogspot.com/</a>	<b>Our Hope</b> by Mike Stallard <a href="http://faculty.bbc.edu/mstallard/">http://faculty.bbc.edu/mstallard/</a>
<b>Boulders To Bits</b> by Karyn Traphagen <a href="http://boulders2bits.com/">http://boulders2bits.com/</a>	<b>NT Resource Blog</b> by Rod Decker <a href="http://ntresources.com/blog/">http://ntresources.com/blog/</a>

to make others aware of information they may find valuable but have not come across. For use in academics, I think of blogging as selective collateral reading.

### What are the joys and challenges of blogging?

I enjoy the conversation that a blog post may start. The greatest challenge is finding the time to blog and wondering if anyone is reading it.

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This disturbing rant against dispensationalists sees them as anti-Arab and anti-Jewish simultaneously. The goal in mind for dispensationalists is the Second Coming of Christ. They desire to see, in Carlson's view, the awful tribulation period with its wars and judgments killing millions upon millions of people.

Supporting Israel speeds this process up so we can get to the Second Coming. In this scheme dispensationalists are wrongly presented as not caring about any individuals along the way. No wonder that the same author elsewhere describes dispensationalism as the view where "Israeli displacement of Palestinian villages ... is celebrated as a necessary part of God's plan."<sup>5</sup>

On the face of things, such criticisms of dispensationalism possess the wrong starting point. They start with current affairs or human understanding and not the Scriptures. If the Bible really is God's Word, and it predicts a horrible time of judgment to come upon the world, it would not be a loving act to tell the world something else because of its harshness.

### Dispensationalism and Warmongering

Furthermore, Carlson notes, "An upside-down Christianity emerges with premillennial dispensationalism. It creates a skewed view of the Christian faith that welcomes war and disaster, while dismissing peace efforts in the Middle East and elsewhere—all in the name of Christ."<sup>6</sup>

On the face of it, such a harsh analysis comes across as mere emotionalism with nothing that is logically compelling.

First of all, is it really fair to say that dispensationalists welcome war? Even if one assumes the most die-hard dispensationalist possible, to say that one is expecting war is not the same thing as affirming that one wants war. There is no glee or emotional satisfaction that dispensationalists get out of knowing that war is on the horizon in light of the Bible's predictions.

The Bible has predicted many things, some of which have been fulfilled in the past, which were not positive experiences. To affirm the truth of the Bible in its predictions of war with past or future fulfillment does not turn the interpreter into a warmonger. Perhaps some

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

of the reluctance on the part of many dispensationalists to support various peace initiatives in the Arab-Israeli conflict is founded on the track record of the Arabs. At this point in history, the anti-Zionist actions of many Arabs speak louder than any peace treaty proposals.

The recycling of peace proposals that are then broken may be a better explanation for the dispensational reluctance, especially when the stated goal of so many Arabs is the elimination of the nation of Israel. If all of the Arab peoples would live in peaceful harmony with Israel at this present moment in history, dispensationalists would rise up and rejoice.

*Dr. Mike Stallard is Seminary Dean, Professor of Systematic Theology, and Director of Ph.D. Studies. His main areas of teaching are dispensational premillennialism, ecclesiology, Baptist distinctive, and theological methods. He is a frequent speaker, founder and director of Mission Scranton, and founding pastor at New Life Baptist Church in Scranton, PA. Reach him at mstallard@bbc.edu or 570.585.9230.*



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## MASTER OF DIVINITY

# SPOTLIGHT

BBS' M.Div. lets you to tailor a concentration to your area of ministry. A unique year-long paid internship provides valuable hands-on experience. Recent graduates Jason DeGraaff and Ronaldo Ghenov demonstrate how the program impacts lives.

### Jason DeGraaff

Jason completed his M.Div. in May, doing his internship at Northridge Church in Rochester, NY. He earned his bachelor's at Faith Baptist Bible College in Iowa.



### Why the M.Div. program at BBS?

I wanted a deeper grasp on why I believed what I believed. I wanted to be prepared to teach God's Word to others whose eternities depended on it. I wanted to be able to confidently proclaim why I believed what I believed and how to teach what I believed in a way to persuade men to turn to God, trust God, and follow God.

### How were you led to pursue pastoral ministries?

It started with God, but there were several different factors. First, the passion the Lord put in my heart as a 16-year-old as I began to comprehend who God was, read His Word, and comprehend the need for men to share the gospel. Other influences were my Dad (Curt DeGraaff), who was my pastor my whole life, and my youth pastor, Barry Bandara. Their passion and godly example were key to my growth and positive perspective on serving God.

### What did you gain at BBS?

My experience was invaluable. The influences of godly faculty and fellow students were key. Those relationships will last a lifetime and continually guide me as I serve God in the days ahead.

### Where are you headed?

I will continue to serve at Northridge for another year. I am excited about continuing to learn from a great pastoral staff as the Lord uses me here and continues to develop me for my next step.

### Ronaldo Ghenov

Ronaldo earned a bachelor's in elementary education at Penn State. Before BBS, he worked with Coalition for Christian Outreach at Kutztown University. He recently received his M.Div. and lives in Perkasio, PA, where he serves First Baptist Church of Perkasio.



### What drew you to BBS?

While I was doing college ministry I began to have a desire to teach scripture. I became enamored with teaching God's Word and that's what I decided I was built to do. I started thinking about going to seminary. I talked about it with my pastor and he said if I went to BBS he would pay for it.

### What was your experience like?

It was awesome. I grew a lot. I am a very different person. I think through things more biblically. I feel as if I am much slower to talk and listen more. I feel much more confident looking at scripture. At the same time it was demonstrated to me how much more I can still learn. The faculty has had a huge influence in my life.

### Where are you headed?

My dream is to be a teaching pastor. I don't know who would take a guy right out of seminary, but that's what I love and where I feel I am most effective, most passionate. Opening up the text and really trying to understand what the author intended to say and translating that to this time, specific audience, and what scripture is calling them to do.

### What would you tell someone considering BBS?

I would say it's intense. But I would tell them what I appreciated about BBS was my professors' view of scripture. There is a healthy balance of biblical scholarship and teaching you how to apply what you learn to do ministry and how to do ministry more effectively.

Is earning a M.Div. on your mind? Get all the details at [www.bbc.edu/seminary](http://www.bbc.edu/seminary).

# Opportunity Corner | Spring 2011

## MASTER'S | MODULES

Jan 4–7	TH820	Spotlight on Theology: Covenant Theology
	WM803	Drama in Worship
	PT833	Keeping Counseling Biblical
Jan 4–14	PT602	Principles of Church Growth
	WM801	Music Resources for Group Worship
Jan 11–14	TH814	Ethical and Theological Issues of War and Peace
	WM	Utilizing Technology in Preaching, Teaching and Worship
Feb 22–25	MI806	Urban & Inner City Church Planting Strategies
	PT858	Conflict Resolution in the Ministry

## INTERNET | COURSES

MI813	Contextualization of Theology
PT500	Training Ministries of the Church
TH501	Dispensational Premillennialism
BI604	Principles of Biblical Interpretation
BI806	Exposition of Acts
TH604	Contemporary Theological Issues

## DOCTOR OF MINISTRY | MODULES

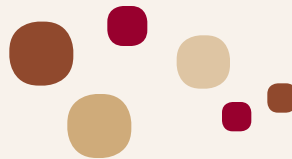
Feb 14–18	D839	Preaching the Motivates and Moves Men to Ministry
	D862	Shaping a Ministry to World Cultures
Feb 21–25	D503	The Centrality of the Scriptures in Ministry
	D832	Advanced Seminar in Biblical Counseling

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY | MODULES

Feb 14–18	BI7	Advanced Bible Exposition
	OT1	Seminar in OT Hermeneutics & Exegetical Method
	TH2	The History of Christian Doctrine
	OT9	Studies in Biblical Hebrew Poetry
Feb 21–25	NT4	New Testament Backgrounds and Intertestamental Period
	MP2	Centrality of the Scriptures in Ministry
	BI1	Advanced Bible Teaching & Communication Methods

\*PhD courses consist of 12-week external residency and one-week internal residency.

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