INERRANCY & HERMENEUTICS

What every Evangelical pastor should know about biblical truth and interpretation
True or false?

• “EFCA pastors believe that every word of the Bible is literally true”
Is *loincloth* true?
And that's the way it is..... This is Walter Cronkite, CBS News; good night.

(Walter Cronkite)
## Biblical Literalism

% of Hispanics in each group who say the Bible is ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Word of God</th>
<th>Should be taken literally</th>
<th>Should not be taken literally</th>
<th>Book written by men</th>
<th>Other (vol.)/Don’t know</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Hispanics</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7=100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8=100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3=100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Mainline</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9=100</td>
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### Attend worship services

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<td>At least weekly</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4=100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly/Yearly</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7=100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seldom/Never</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10=100</td>
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<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7=100</td>
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<td>U.S. born</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6=100</td>
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PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Literally the most misused word

THE ADVERB CLUTTERS OUR SPEECH TO THE POINT WHERE IT IS IN DANGER OF LOSING ITS LITERAL MEANING

BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER / GLOBE STAFF

When "Parks and Recreation" co-creator Mitch Hurwitz began crafting Rob Lowe's character for his NBC sitcom, he wanted him to be a man of extremes.

"It was referenced in an episode last year that he does 10,000 push-ups a day," Schur says of the character Chris Traeger. "He lives every moment of his life to the fullest, so overusing the word 'literally' seemed like a good character fit. He's the kind of guy who is always claiming that something was literally the greatest thing he's ever seen or something is literally the most fun you could ever have. In real life, it's something that drives me crazy, because it's so often misused."

Schur isn't the only one peeved by "literally" gaining popularity as both a throwaway intensifier and a replacement for "figuratively." It's a word that has been misused by everyone from fashion stylist Rachel Zoe to President Obama, and linguists predict that it will continue to be a red flag for its meaning. There is a good chance the incorrect use of the word eventually will eclipse its original definition.

What the word means is "in a literal or strict sense." Such as: "The novel was translated literally from the Russian."

"It should not be used as a synonym for actually or really," writes Paul Brians in "Common Errors in English Usage." "Don't say of someone that he 'liter-
figuratively
“Well versed”

• Literal interpretation

• Hurrah!

“Poorly versed”

• Literalistic interpretation

• Boo!
1. “Absolute” inerrancy (too hard)

2. “Limited” inerrancy (too soft)

3. “Critical” inerrancy (just right!)
THE CHICAGO STATEMENT ON
BIBLICAL INERRANCY
II. THE NATURE OF SCRIPTURE

Inspired Discourse
LISTEN
Because they could already be on their way.
Discourse Analysis:
It’s not about what people say.
It’s about what they mean.
THE HOLY BIBLE is inspired discourse that presents Christ in order to form Christ in us – and does so in many ways...
III. THESES ON INERRANCY

What every pastor should know
Deceptions to avoid

• Do not confuse inerrancy with “perfect book” theology.
Deceptions to avoid

• Do not confuse literal with literalistic interpretation
Cron•ki•tis

- *noun*
  - acute or chronic inflation of literality
  - *also*: a hermeneutical disease marked by this
"Your beautiful you are, my darling, how beautiful you are!

Your eyes are like doves behind your veil...
Your hair is like a flock of goats...
Your teeth are like a flock of newly shorn ewes...
Your lips are like a scarlet thread...
Your temples are like a slice of pomegranate...
Your neck is like the tower of David, built with rows of stones on which are hung a thousand shields...
Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle which feed among the lilies...
Your lips, my bride, drip honey; honey and milk are under your tongue.
And the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon...
Your navet is a round goblet; your belly is like a heap of wheat..."
Deceptions to avoid

• Do not use inerrancy as a device for de-coding holy enigmas or for dismissing interpretive disagreement
Definitions to ponder

• “Infallible”: not liable to fail (cf. “impeccable”)

• “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout ... so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isa. 55:10-11)
“Inerrancy means that when all facts are known, the Scriptures properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything that they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical, or life sciences.”
Definitions to ponder

• “When all the facts are known, the Bible (in its original writings) properly interpreted in light of which culture and communication means had developed by the time of its composition will be shown to be completely true (and therefore not false) in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the author, in all matters relating to God and his creation”

- from David Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation*
Following the way the words go…

“insofar as they make affirmations…”

- Literal truth requires literal interpretation, which in turn requires literary (i.e., discourse) sensitivity: *literacy*. 
Verses a well-versed inerrancy will ponder

• “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true” (Rev. 21:5)

• “Let God be proved true” (Rom. 3:4)

• “Your word is truth” (John 17:17)

• “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Matt. 24:35)
Definitions to ponder

• “True words communicate what is”

• “Truth is a covenantal correspondence, a faithful fit, between what is said and what is, between God’s words and God’s deeds, between what God says and what God is”

• “Jesus is the truth because he fulfills what God promised (truth as fidelity) and because he corresponds to what God is (truth as reliability)”
“Authority belongs to truth and truth only. . . . I can make no sense – no reverent sense, anyway – of the idea, sometimes met, that God speaks his truth to us in and through false statements by biblical writers”

- J. I. Packer, Truth & Power: The Place of Scripture in the Christian Life
Definitions to ponder

“Error”

2 + 2 = 5
“Mistakes in Literature and Whether They Matter”

Sir Christopher Ricks
Professor of Poetry (Oxford University), Professor of the Humanities (Boston University)
“Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved” (Ps. 93:1c)
• Inerrancy means that Scripture is true, not that it is maximally precise

• An error is a failure to make good on one’s claim

• Statements, especially in ordinary language, often claim different kinds and degrees of precision
Morals for interpretation:

- Inerrancy is not a quick fix to pervasive interpretive pluralism, or to determine in advance what kind of truths we will discover in Scripture.

- Inerrancy is rather a call to a long hermeneutical obedience in the same direction the words go.
Morals for interpretation:

- Inerrancy applies to the authorial discourse of Scripture, not to the reader’s interpretation.

- The best interpreter is therefore a humble interpreter who is open to correction by the text and is willing to listen to others, especially the “great cloud of witness-interpreters” who have gone before us.
Morals for interpretation

• Inerrancy does not entail a literalistic hermeneutic, but we may HOPE for true interpretations.

• HOPE = “Historically Omniscient Perfect Exegete”
The Spirit’s illumination makes readers not historically omniscient, but right-minded and right-hearted

- Inerrancy of Scripture gives us boldness
- Fallibility of interpreter gives us pause

- Interpretive virtue = praying & paying (attention to) the text

- Humble interpreters will have most boldness when they preach the gospel, the main story-line of Scripture, and the main doctrines affirmed throughout church history
Morals for interpretation

• The Bible’s truth claims should never be determined without first discerning what the biblical authors are saying.

• Meaning is prior to truth, and literary form (i.e., form of discourse) is prior to meaning content.
Morals for interpretation

• The forms of biblical literature are like maps in a canonical atlas: we will only be able to follow them if we know how to read them (i.e., what kind of maps they are)
OLD STONE BRIDGE ESTATES
A part of the NW 1/4 of the NE 1/4, and the NE 1/4 of the NE 1/4, and the SW 1/4 of the NE 1/4, all being in Section 14, Town 10 North, Range 17 East, Dodge County, Wisconsin.

There are no objections to this plat with respect to:
- Base: 220 N 1/4, 221 N 1/4, 222 N 1/4 and 223 N 1/4
- W. St. 240th, as provided by a 225.12' W. St. 240th.

Certified:

[Signature]
Department of Administration

[Signature]

[Date]

[Name]

[Title]

[Signature]

[Date]

[Name]

[Title]
Total potential biomass availability across the continental United States

Though biomass production is generally widespread, it is most concentrated in the southern plains, California, the Corn Belt, and along the Mississippi River. Counties that are not shaded may have biomass available, but in comparatively small amounts.

© Union of Concerned Scientists 2012; www.ucsusa.org/biomassresources
Morals for interpretation

- Inerrancy does not mean that all biblical narratives must pass the Cronkite test
Genesis 1-3
Distinguished Professor of Biblical Literature and Northwest Semitic Languages and Literature (American Jewish University, Los Angeles)

ZIONY ZEVIT

What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden?
The literal sense = the literary sense = what the author is doing with his words
CONCLUSION

Cheap vs. costly inerrancy
Cheap inerrancy

1. the profession of biblical truth without the interpretive practice

2. the profession of biblical truth with an illiterate interpretative practice
Costly inerrancy

1. We must strive to become biblically literate.

2. We must strive to become virtuous interpreters (right-hearted and right-minded readers who desire above all to hear and do God’s word)

3. We must be willing to endure ongoing difficulties rather than reach for facile answers.
Journalistic truth: take two

1. The truth of Scripture *is* journalistic (i.e., *like* journalism) inasmuch as it is testimony (often eye-witness testimony) to good news: things that God has done in history.

   Thin description (modern journalistic reporting) vs. thick description (theological reportage that attests the event and its true interpretation)
Journalistic truth: take two

2. Even to read newspapers today requires sensitivity and competence (i.e., literacy) to literary genres.
GREAT EARTHQUAKE KILLS 1000 PEOPLE IN SAN FRANCISCO

NEW YORK, April 18. — A fearful earthquake killed 1000 people in San Francisco between 5 and 6 this morning.
DEAR ABBY:

My Dad Objects To a Pet Monkey

DEAR ABBY: I am 10 years old and my Daddy said that when I saved enough money I could buy anything I wanted with it.

All my life, I have wanted a monkey. I have saved $14. I asked Daddy if I could buy a pet monkey and he said no, because I wouldn't know how to take care of it. My Mom is the fussy type. You know, everything has to be just so. Do you know anyone who has a pet monkey, and can give me some advice?

DEAR WANTS: I have had two pet monkeys (David and Bathsheba) and, although I love monkeys, your father is right. To quote my son (he was 4 at the time), "Monkeys should live with monkeys, and people should live with people."

ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
Don't lose me

I read your Feb. 26 article regarding the ski industry losing women’s participation in the sport with interest. I was one of those women until I purchased an innovation that significantly extended my physical ability to enjoy the sport.

The apparatus, called CADS, is the invention of Walter Dandy, a resident of Vail. I’m sure you, being an integral part of Vail, are aware of this unusual yet extremely functional invention that allows both men and women to ski with far less stress on their muscles, joints and skeletal structure.

If not, I urge you to visit the Web site at www.cads.com. I’m not involved with the company other than being grateful for CADS extending my skiing career. Without the use of CADS, I would be unable to handle the stress and associated pain on my knees.

If you have not already done so, you might want to contact Walter to learn more about his invention. It certainly would provide an article of interest to your readers, and, most likely, would help negate the loss of participants of our great sport.

Anita Sanctuary

New lease

I just wanted to mention that I, too, approached my late 40s with much less skiing enthusiasm than my husband. We have always skied Vail, since our 20s, but as the years progressed, my knees began to tolerate skiing less and less.

As a physical therapist for over 20 years with bad knees (chondromalacia, onset of osteoarthritis and what we call “joint mice”), I was hesitant to join my husband’s all-day skiing glee only to be in misery at night with swollen, painful knees. When my skiing during the day was interfering with my ability to walk to dinner at night down to Sweet Basil or La Tour, I knew I was in deep trouble. Not even severe knee pain was going to stop me eating!

But it would make me take a second thought about donning my skis the next morning. The only thing that saved me, and gave me back my ability to get back on the slopes with my enthusiastic husband, was finding Walter Dandy from Avon and his CADS system. (I think this stands for Constant Force Articulated Dynamic Struts, which is a mouthful.)

CADS are well described at www.cads.org and are available right there in Vail. In fact, this skiing apparatus biomechanically reduces the pressure on the knee joints and transfers the forces down through your boot, simply by skiing. Walter even fit the CADS system to me at Mid-Vail the first day I met him and skied with me to train me how to use the system to my best advantage.

It is my opinion that with a clever and functional system like CADS, many aging or previously injured skiers would be back on the slopes much sooner and more often, whether they are male or female. It was pain and swelling that was keeping me in the village. I have heard of others having great results being able to ski without their hip or back pain thanks to CADS. They are one of those little-known secrets around town that keep us up there skiing while actually reducing harmful forces and pressure to our aging parts.

Sandy Raskin
Colorado Springs

Keeps me going

I am a 61-year-old woman, and I have been skiing for 30 years. Because of many years of tennis and running as well as skiing, I have osteoarthritis and a loss of cartilage in my knees.

For many years, I considered trying CADS but put it off because of the hassle (not my ego). Three years ago, the pain became excruciating when I would hit bumps of any kind, so I bit the bullet and became an instant CADS enthusiast. The hassle is minimal, and the benefits are huge.

I can ski anywhere on the mountain again without pain. I still do have swelling and don’t ski every day, but when it’s a GREAT day, powder or sun, I am out there and able to enjoy the beauty of the mountains. My grandchildren are now skiing, and it is wonderful to be on the mountain with them. For us, skiing has always been a great family sport.

Ann Frein
Why we need a public option on health care

By Holland Finley

People die needlessly. It takes too long to get what you need from the system. And it costs too much.

I sometimes think about the health care system as a kind of government. It's a place where people go to get what they need. But sometimes it's not done right. I think about the time when I went to see my doctor and they told me I needed a surgery. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. But I knew I needed to get it done. So I went to the hospital and they told me it was going to cost $10,000. I was shocked. I didn't have that kind of money.

I know many of my neighbors are suspicious of Big Government, but I am not. I think it's important to have a public option on health care. It's the only way to get the kind of care that we need.

I know that some people think that a public option will make health care worse. But I think that's not true. It's the only way to get the kind of care that we need. I think it's important to have a public option on health care. It's the only way to get the kind of care that we need.
Doing biblical truth: interpretation as discipleship (and discipleship as interpretation)