

BFF393 Be a Berean

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning Steve, how are you today?

Steve: I'm good. How are you?

Scott: Fantastic.

Steve: Well, this is our last podcast of 2023, even though it won't be heard until 2024. I finished my Bible reading for 2023, and I still have several days left. I can read wherever I want, or I can get a head start on 2024. How about you?

Scott: I'm still plodding along. I'm not doing the whole thing in one year this year, so I'm taking my time.

Steve: I'm thinking of reading it three times this year. Then I'll have read the Bible 50 times.

Scott: All right.

Steve: This morning we're going to talk about not assuming and being a Berean. We don't want to have a negative title. It's put off assuming and put on being a Berean. Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your word. Regardless of how many times we read it or whether we're reading it every single year or whatever it's still eternal. It's wonderful. It's inspired. It's edifying. We want to wrap ourselves up in it again today. Give us ears to hear what You're saying to each person listening. Give us insight as we speak so that we'll be led by Your spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: When I was in seminary, I took a class which was for youth workers. The big assignment for the semester was for each of the students to write a one-page outline. Now, it didn't have to be completely from margin to margin, but a couple of paragraphs for every book in the Bible, 66 books in the Bible.

That was a long but edifying homework assignment. While we were working away at this task, I asked some of my fellow scholars why they were taking this class, and their response was, "I've never read the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation, but with this assignment, this would make me familiarize myself with the whole Bible," which is something that they always wanted to do. Isn't that interesting?

We weren't all youth workers taking this class, but we had to take a certain number of electives from each different discipline. For many, the motivation was not so they could be a better youth worker, it was so they could be familiar with the Scripture. I learned to not assume that everybody that you meet, or that's in ministry has read the whole Bible.

A pretty cool thing happened to me this morning. I haven't even told my wife this yet. I've been up early. I got a message on Facebook from a guy that I went to seminary with. He said, "Thank you for helping me establish the discipline of having personal devotions every morning way back our first year in seminary."

I thought, "Oh, I haven't talked to this guy for 40-some years." He and I were part of a group of about five guys. We were getting all zealous and reading "Shadow of the

Almighty," getting up early, memorizing Scripture, reading through the Sermon on the Mount, and all kinds of things, and it stuck with him. God bless him.

Scott: That's awesome.

Steve: Isn't that something? I'm going to reach out to him. We need to have a long conversation to find out what he's been doing ever since. Now I'm going to address what it means to be a Berean. You know what I mean when I say that?

Scott: Assume I don't. [laughter]

Steve: Acts 17:10–12 "The brothers immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea. When they arrived, they will enter the Jewish synagogue. These Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica. They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men."

Paul had just left Thessalonica and as was their habit, they found a local synagogue, where they explained how Jesus was the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament. It's interesting that Luke described the listeners as people who listened and then went home and read the Scriptures themselves to see if what Paul had been referencing was accurate. That's what I mean. When I say "be a Berean." They didn't assume that everything that Paul and Silas are saying was true.

I hope we will follow their example and go home, and get out our Bible, and look up the Scriptures. Now, let me give you an example of this, and I've got about five examples. We'll see how many we can cover today in our podcast.

There's a certain ministry back in the day where you would attend a conference for a week. It was every night, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and then I think it was all day Friday and all day Saturday, something like that. With your registration fee, you'd be given a big red book.

This red book had a whole bunch of open spaces for you to write down the Scripture references, while the man was speaking, and he was speaking quickly. It was all you could do to keep up with him, but you had to write down Acts 17:11 or John 3:16 so that you would have all these references.

Then if you went home and were to go back and look over the material, you could look up the reference to support his assertions, or what he was teaching. The first year that we attended this seminar series, we almost got writer's cramp because you're listening and you're watching and you're writing.

In the process, you pretty much swallow everything the guy is saying because you don't have time to look up each verse as he says it. He doesn't give you five minutes to pause and look it up in your Bible, etc.

A few years later, our congregation, which I was pastoring at the time, decided we'd all go to this seminar. This time, I didn't write anything down. Instead, when he would say John 3:16, I looked it up. When he said John 17:10, I looked it up

What I read surprised me, because when I read the exact Scripture mentioned, I didn't agree with his conclusion. Now, many of them I did. Many of them I thought, "No,

that's good, that's right." But there's a bunch of them that I thought, "Eh, I think you're twisting that one a little bit to make it fit what you're teaching."

It was a revelation to me because I assumed that this guy knew what he was talking about. We had all these Bible verses being thrown around, but until I read the Bible myself, I didn't know if what he was saying was accurate. Does that make a point to you?

Scott: Yeah, I see that all the time.

Steve: It's one of the reasons in my books I don't put down scripture references. I put the whole scripture, and I even put the reference at the end. This is my own invention. I don't know if it's an invention, but at least I think I'm the only one I've seen that it does this.

I want people to read the Bible. Not read what Steve thinks, and then have a little reference thrown in there to make it look like it's biblical. I want to put the Scripture first, then the reference, and if anything, take the reference and go look up the context because context is huge as well. I learned that I need to read the Bible myself. Let me give you a few things that I've discovered myself, and I hope that everybody listening will develop their own lists of things that they develop themselves. One of the first ones was my son, my first son, is named Isaac.

Whenever I'm at a homeschool conference, or some kind of a conference, and people come up and they want me to sign their books, which is a blessing, and they'll say their name is such and such, and if anybody comes up and says their name is Isaac, I say, "Oh, why was Isaac named Isaac?"

90-plus percent of the time, the mom, the dad, the kid, they all smile and say, "Because Sarah laughed." I said, "That's what I thought," until one year I was reading my Bible, I was in Genesis. I'm going to read it for you, the 17th Chapter of Genesis. By the way, it's the 18th chapter where Sarah laughs, but I'm going to read it all. Genesis 17, "God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her.'" There's the promise. 17:15, "'I will bless her. She shall become nations. Kings of people shall come from her.'

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'

"Abraham said to God, 'O that Ishmael might live before You.' God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.'"

The first time that it dawned on me, I thought, that was Abraham. Abraham fell on his face and laughed.

Then in the 18th Chapter, "Jehovah appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him.

"When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, 'O lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.'

"Let a little water be brought. Wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree while I bring a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves. After that, you may pass on since you have come to your servant.'

"They said, 'Do as you have said.' Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Quick, three seahs of fine flour. Knead it, and make cakes.' And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly.

"Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, 'Where is Sarah, your wife?' He said, 'She's in the tent.'

"Jehovah said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son,' and Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

"Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah, so Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I am worn out and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?'

"Jehovah said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say shall I indeed bear a child now that I am old? Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.'

"But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh,'" [laughs] which always makes me laugh because Sarah just laughed to herself, but God knows us. When she says, "I didn't laugh," he answers, "Yeah, I'm God. I know when people laugh, and you laughed." [laughs]

Because of that little interchange at the end, it's become church tradition that Sarah laughed, and so Isaac was named Isaac because it means laughter, but when you read the Bible, it's the whole chapter before. It was Abraham who fell on his face and laughed. It was then that God named him Isaac. Isn't that cool?

Scott: Pretty wild. It's amazing what happens when you read the Bible.

Steve: For most people, there's a rare instance where someone will walk up and say, "Oh, that was Abraham that laughed." I hardly ever hear that, though. 95 percent of the time, it's Sarah laughed, and it wasn't Sarah. I'll give you two more.

People say, "Well, the creation account can't be accurate because who did Cain and Abel marry?" It says in Genesis 5, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and named them man when they were created.

"When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters." Boom, that's where the girls came from. Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters.

People say, "You're not supposed to marry sisters and brothers." That started in the time of Moses because, back in these days, we were real close to creation. You did not have all the birth anomalies and different things that happen when you marry a close kin.

This next one is interesting, too, because if you're ever in a doctor's office and they happen to have those nice Bible reading books, or if you go to a Christian bookstore, they have posters of this, and they have animals that you can buy. Of course, I'm talking about the ark.

In the ark, there are animals. I think you can even get them from some of these leading manufacturers, but it's always this nice little boat, with this man with a big staff in his hand and a long beard, and everybody's going into the ark, two by two. I'm going to read four verses from Genesis 7:9 and 15, "They all went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah." 15th verse, "They went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life."

Now let me go to the beginning of that chapter, verses 2 and 3. "Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth."

If I was to ask you, which I used to do seminars on this, I would say, "How many pigs are on the ark?" The correct answer is two because they were unclean, male and female. "How many cows were on the ark?"

Scholars have debated whether it's one male and six females or whether it is seven pairs, which is seven males and seven females. A little bit of discrepancy there, but they would all agree that there's a whole bunch of clean animals and a whole bunch of birds of the heavens.

In fact, if there were only two cows and they sacrificed one when they got off the ark, we wouldn't have cows today. Scriptures teaches that there was at least seven, probably 14 cows on that ark and only two pigs.

This is interesting to me because I learned this as I started going to creation seminars and you examine the Bible yourself as a Berean, you generally discover "They are absolutely correct." There it is. Boom.

I remember somebody was telling me that they were talking to a man, and trying to show him something about the Holy Spirit, and the guy just said, "No, I know about the Holy Spirit." The he rattled off with what he thought.

They said, "Oh, interesting." They asked him "How many cows were on the Ark?" The guy says, "Two." They took him to Genesis 7, and they showed him what I just read. He responded, "Wow, I didn't know that." This little light bulb went off in his mind, and this little switch clicked, if I can put it that way. He thought, "I wonder what else they have taught me that's not true." [laughs]

In other words, I wonder what else I have swallowed because it's in the little book in the waiting room of the dentist office, or it's in the little pictures. He thought, "I need to search the Scriptures for myself."

He became open. This is what I'm trying to say. He began to search the Scriptures by himself. I think we have time if I'm doing the time properly for one that happened because we just had Christmas.

I'm going to ask a question which I know you know this one.

Scott: [laughs] Let's hope so.

Steve: [laughs] How many wise men came to see Jesus?

Scott: Wise men. Well, I think three.

Steve: That's because the song tells us that.

Scott: Right.

Steve: [sings] We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we traverse upon. OK, I'm not going to sing the whole song, but we always assume three.

OK, now let's read it. This is in Matthew 2, which another reason to read all the New Testament. This does not appear in Mark, Luke or John. This is only in Matthew.

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is He, Who has been born King of the Jews, for we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him?' When Herod the King heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, and you, Bethlehem and the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah or from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

Now I've studied this a lot already. There's so much packed into this 2nd Chapter of Matthew. The first thing is, "For it is written by the prophet." Matthew was making sure that people knew that Jesus was fulfilling this Scripture.

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them, "What time the star had appeared?" He sent them to Bethlehem saying, "Go and diligently search for the child. When you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him."

"After listening to the king, they went on their way and behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

Going into the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. Being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Now when they departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Remain there until I tell you for Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him."

He rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt, I called My Son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he'd been tricked by the wise men, became furious. He sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

"Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, 'A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation. Rachel weeping for her children. She refused to be comforted because they are no more.'

"But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who sought the child's life are dead.' And he rose and took the child and his mother to the land of Israel.

"But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Being warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee and he went and lived in a city called Nazareth so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'And he will be called a Natzarene,'" or Nazarene.

Boy, there's so much in there. [laughs] There are dreams, there are angels. What I never saw because I had my Sunday school training imprinting my brain. I just saw three guys came. But when you read it, it turns out they had three kinds of gifts. It doesn't say how many magi or wise men they were. It says they went to a house, not a stable. They saw a child, not a baby.

Herod, because what they told him about how old the child would be, he killed everybody two and under. This was probably two years after the birth of Jesus because these guys saw the star from the East. You don't get the flight the next day and get there the next morning. It took them a while to get there.

There's a whole bunch of stuff that we can read in this chapter that make us know that there was three kinds of gifts. That he was probably not a baby. He was in a house now. Those gifts then, God used to provide money because it takes money to travel. Joseph and Mary are able now to go to Egypt. They had funds.

It is wonderful how God protected them, and prepared them, and sent the men with the money. Then sent angels and dreams to guide them exactly and they fulfilled three Scriptures in the process. I love that chapter.

Scott: I have one for you.

Steve: OK. Go ahead. This is good.

Scott: What is the unforgivable sin?

Steve: The way you ask it makes me think I probably shouldn't say "against the Holy Spirit," because that's probably not it. Now it makes me want to go look in the Bible. What is it?

Scott: This is one of those things that catches my attention because I've heard numerous pastors talk about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit as the unforgivable sin.

Steve: I would say attributing to the Holy Spirit the works of the devil. That was the idea.

Scott: That's the one that's usually mentioned. There is another one, and I don't have the reference right in front of me, but Jesus says if you don't forgive others their sins, you will not be forgiven.

Steve: That's right, in the Lord's Prayer.

Scott: That's a lot more common of a problem, I would imagine. When I noticed that the first time, I was like, "I need to remember this verse because I'm a lot more likely to not forgive somebody than I am to blaspheme the Holy Spirit." Just saying.

Steve: Excellent point. That's an excellent point. I agree with you. I think when we were studying the Lord's Prayer a couple of years ago I saw that. I went, "Wow, I don't think I've ever heard that preached about before." [laughs]

Steve: The point is that we all have our assumptions. We pick up assumptions from Sunday school, from church, from certain denominations that we're part of. We have to get out the book and read it ourselves and look up the verses. As the pastor is speaking, look up the references. We can't assume. Thank you for that insight.

Scott: Sure.

Steve: Thank You, Father, for having removed the blinders from our eyes on these different topics. Help us as we read the Bible to have some chutzpah ourselves, have some confidence in the Holy Spirit to lead us and teach us.

As we read the Bible, take away any presuppositions and assumptions that we've accumulated over the years and let us read the Word of God and apply it ourselves. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen.

That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com.

Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.