

The 1GC2019 Delegate

December, 2018
Issue 2

Biblical Authority

The 2016 United Methodist Book of Discipline has an important section about Scripture in Paragraph 105 (pgs. 83-85). It says in part:

While we acknowledge the primacy of Scripture in theological reflection, our attempts to grasp its meaning always involve tradition, experience, and reason. Like Scripture, these may become creative vehicles of the Holy Spirit as they function within the Church. They quicken our faith, open our eyes to the wonder of God's love, and clarify our understanding.

The current debate around homosexuality is not about Biblical authority; it is about Biblical interpretation. There is no debate about what words are in the Bible; the debate is about what these words mean for us today. Much of the truth of the Bible is

“Descriptive Truth” that was true for people in a different time and place. Much of the truth of the Bible is “Prescriptive Truth” that is still true for how we should live today. The key question is how do people of faith decide?

Inside this edition of The Delegate are examples of scriptures that United Methodists agree are “Descriptive Truth” that are no longer “Prescriptive” for us today. The Bible still says hurtful things about slavery, the role of women, and divorce. The church, through tradition, experience, and reason, has grown in its interpretation of these texts and what they mean for the church.

The church is not of one mind about passages in the Bible regarding

homosexuality. Many believe these passages are “Descriptive Truth” like those of slavery, women, and divorce. Many in our church believe the passages about homosexuality are still “Prescriptive Truth” for how we should live today.

The One Church Plan lays out a vision for the church where people who disagree can still serve together faithfully. The One Church Plan does not call one group or another “unfaithful” or even “unchristian.” The One Church Plan honors the beliefs of every Bishop, every annual conference, every local church, every pastor, every lay person. The One Church Plan creates a church for everyone to “Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.”

“We read scripture not to win a legal argument—but to become disciples of Jesus who practice mercy toward one another.”

*Bishop Ken Carter, Florida
President of the Council of Bishops*



Please support the One Church Plan



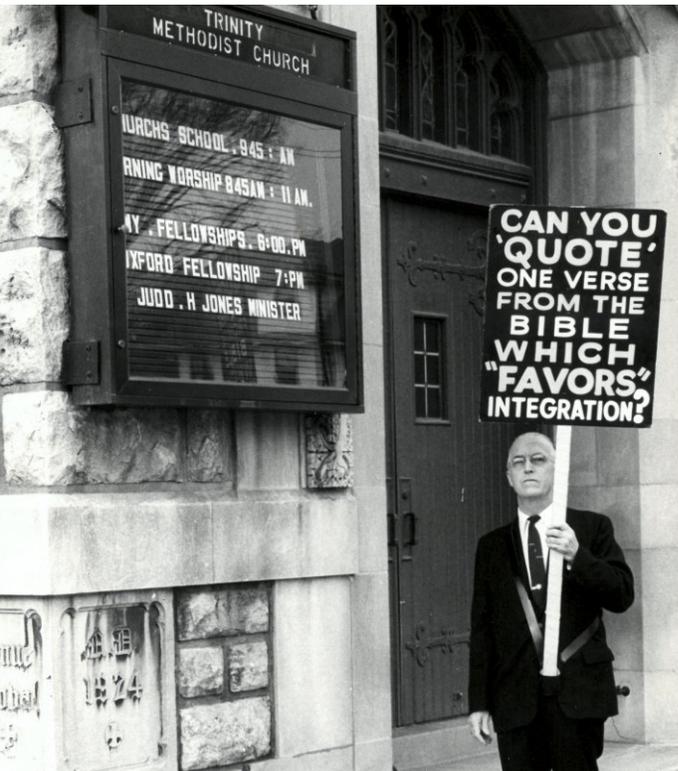
Find out more at MainstreamUMC.com

Contact Mainstream UMC: info@MainstreamUMC.com | 913-859-0111
To donate, go to MainstreamUMC.com or make checks payable to
Grace United Methodist Church | Memo: Mainstream UMC
11485 South Ridgeview Road, Olathe, Kansas 66061

mainstream
UMC



Examples of Biblical Texts that the United Methodist Church believes are “Descriptive Truth” and no longer binding for us today.



Trustee, Trinity Methodist Church, Kansas City, Kansas on Easter Sunday, 1959. When the Devil quotes scripture in Matthew 4:1-11, he had the words right, but not the interpretation.

Prescriptive Truth

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Matthew 22:37-40

Slavery

United Methodists believe all of what is said about slavery in the Bible is descriptive truth that is no longer prescriptive for us today. Slaves or slavery are mentioned in the Bible 353 times. These passages affirm slavery as a normal and acceptable practice for people of faith. Even Paul’s famous passage in Galatians 3:27-28 “In Christ...there is no longer slave nor free” does not condemn slavery, only asserts that slaves and their masters are under the same God. It was nearly 2,000 years after Paul wrote Galatians that the United States of America finally outlawed slavery.

- Genesis 9:18-27 The Curse of Ham. “Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.” Therefore, God chose some people to be slaves and others to be slave masters.
- Exodus 21:20-21 “If a slaveowner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and...the slave survives a day or two [before dying], there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner’s property.” Therefore, cruelty to slaves is within God’s law.
- Ephesians 6:5 “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ.” Therefore, slavery is acceptable to God.

Methodists stood on the floor of the 1844 General Conference and quoted the Bible to defend slavery and then voted to split the church.

The Role of Women

United Methodists believe that much of what is written about the role of women in the Bible is descriptive truth that is no longer prescriptive for us today. Most Christians in the world use the Bible to exclude women from leadership in the church. Many world religions use their sacred texts to subjugate women in all areas of their society.

- Ruth 4:5 Boaz said, “The day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth.” Therefore, women are property passed down like a mule with the land.
- 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 “...women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” How can a woman preach if she cannot speak?

- 1 Timothy 2:9-12 “...the women should dress themselves modestly...not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes...let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.” How can a woman serve as a pastor, much less a district superintendent or a bishop?

Methodists stood on the floor of the General Conference of 1956 and quoted the Bible to justify not ordaining women. Many left the church over it.

Divorce

United Methodists believe much of what is written in the Bible concerning divorce is descriptive truth that is no longer prescriptive for us today. It used to be true in the United Methodist Church that a pastor who divorced and re-married had to leave the ministry. This is still true in other denominations.

- Exodus 20:14 The Ten Commandments, “You shall not commit adultery.” We still believe this is Prescriptive truth for us today.
- Leviticus 20:10 “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both...shall be put to death.” We believe this is Descriptive truth.
- Matthew 19:3-9 Jesus says in red letters, “whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.” John Wesley in his notes on the NT says Jesus condemns divorce, and yet, we are not of one mind on this passage.

- 2016 UM Book of Discipline ¶ 161.D allows divorce: “when a married couple is estranged beyond reconciliation.” And further states “Divorce does not preclude a new marriage.”

There are pastors all over the United Methodist Church, who by Jesus’ own words are adulterers, are violating the Ten Commandments, and should be put to death. In fact, there are adulterous weddings being performed in our church buildings every weekend for people who are re-marrying for reasons other than unchastity. Yet, there is no outcry to split the church, or leave the church, because of this clear violation of the Word of God.

Closing

The current dialogue about homosexuality is not about “heresy” or a “false Gospel” or “unchristian” people who do not believe the Bible. The current dialogue is about a people called Methodist trying to be faithful from very different perspectives. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Mainstream UMC joins with nearly 2/3 of our Bishops and a unanimous Judicial Council that believes our church polity and constitution allow for differences in beliefs and practices around human sexuality. The One Church Plan is the only plan that embraces the diversity of our church to Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World. Please support the One Church Plan.

The Greatest Commandment, A Hermeneutic of Love

“These two commandments [Matthew 22:37-40], in other words, are not merely the greatest or the most important, the ones at the top of the list; rather, they have a systemic, structural and hermeneutical role. All the other commandments in the Torah are suspended from these two pillars. It is a matter not just of priority but of weight-bearing. This claim is fully consistent with Matthew's insistence that in Jesus' teaching the law remains in force. Yet, at the same time, the passage inescapably proposes a particular hermeneutical reconfiguration of Torah, one in which love becomes the most determinative requirement. As the history of interpretation amply demonstrates, where such a hermeneutical reconfiguration takes place, the other commandments tend over time to recede in importance.”

The GC2019 Delegate

Mainstream UMC
c/o Grace United Methodist Church
11485 South Ridgeview Road
Olathe, Kansas 66061

MainstreamUMC.com

Published by **mainstream UMC**

The GC2019 Delegate

Advisory Board Members

Mark Holland Co-Founder & Executive Director Clergy, Great Plains	Nanette Roberts Co-Founder & Host Pastor Clergy, Great Plains
Jay Brim Lay, Rio Texas	Lee Johnson Clergy, Great Plains
Lonnie Brooks Lay, Alaska	David Livingston Clergy, Great Plains
Emanuel Cleaver III Clergy, Missouri	Molly McEntire Lay, Florida
Tim Crouch Lay, North Texas	Werner Philipp Clergy, East Germany
Barry Dundas Clergy, Great Plains	Mathew Pinson Lay, North Georgia
Rob Fuquay Clergy, Indiana	Gayla Rapp Clergy, Great Plains
Neal Gately Clergy, Great Plains	Cynthia Weems Clergy, Florida
Tom Harkrider Lay, Central Texas	Don Wiley Lay, North Texas
Juan Huertas Clergy, Louisiana	

Contact Mainstream UMC: info@MainstreamUMC.com | 913-859-0111
To donate, go to MainstreamUMC.com or make checks payable to
Grace United Methodist Church | Memo: Mainstream UMC
11485 South Ridgeview Road, Olathe, Kansas 66061



Find out more at MainstreamUMC.com

mainstream UMC

