

Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry (9Marks)

By Michael Lawrence

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Capitol Hill Baptist Church associate pastor Michael Lawrence contributes to the IXMarks series as he centers on the practical importance of biblical theology to ministry. He begins with an examination of a pastor's tools of the trade: exegesis and biblical and systematic theology. The book distinguishes between the power of narrative in biblical theology and the power of application in systematic theology, but also emphasizes the importance of their collaboration in ministry.

Having laid the foundation for pastoral ministry, Lawrence uses the three tools to build a biblical theology, telling the entire story of the Bible from five different angles. He puts biblical theology to work in four areas: counseling, missions, caring for the poor, and church/state relations. Rich in application and practical insight, this book will equip pastors and church leaders to think, preach, and do ministry through the framework of biblical theology.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Every thoughtful preacher or teacher of the Bible sooner or later faces questions of the nature of biblical theology, its relationship to doctrine (systematic theology), and the practical application of both to the ministry that edifies the church. Following in the footsteps of Geerhardus Vos and Edmund Clowney, Michael Lawrence has provided us with a masterly study that relates biblical theology to systematics, and then applies both to the ministry of the church. This skillfully executed integrative approach breaks new ground in the practical application of biblical theology. Its thoroughness without being over-technical makes it accessible to anyone who wants to be a better preacher or teacher of the Bible.”

—**Graeme Goldsworthy**, Former Lecturer in Old Testament, Biblical Theology, and Hermeneutics, Moore Theological College

“I thoroughly appreciated Lawrence’s fresh approach to ecclesiology. While there are many treasures in this book, its primary richness comes from following the flow of redemptive history five times over—each time from a different perspective, built around a different theme. Looking at biblical theology like one stone with many facets was an exceptionally enlightening approach. This is a book to be read and re-read.”

—**John MacArthur**, Pastor, Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California; President, The Master's College and Seminary

“If the kind of biblical theology described and commended by Michael Lawrence in this superb book were to take root in the preaching and teaching ministry of pastors, and get into the bloodstream of lay people in the churches, things would bode well indeed for the improvement of our collective grasp of and obedience to the whole counsel of God. Lawrence not only does a brilliant job of introducing a sound biblical theology, but also relates it to the ministry of the church. He offers one of the finest and most accessible discussions of the relation between biblical and systematic theology that I’ve ever read. This is a pastoral must-read for our times. I cannot recommend this book too highly.”

—**J. Ligon Duncan III**, Chancellor and CEO, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi

“Studies on the relationship of theology to ministry seem to be quite rare. In fact, some books designed as ‘guides for ministry’ often portray suspicion of and hostility toward the theological enterprise. On the other hand, some theologians think that such guides are not worthy of serious attention. What is desperately needed is a work that recognizes the significance of the work of theology for ministry, while simultaneously recognizing the importance of doing theology for the church. Michael Lawrence has brilliantly met this need in this clearly written and compelling volume, which envisions afresh the work of pastor-theologians. I believe that *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* will certainly be one of the most important books for pastors and theologians to read this year.”

—**David S. Dockery**, President, Trinity International University

“I commend both Lawrence’s book and the wonderful ministry at Capital Hill Baptist Church, where they are putting this book into practice.”

—**James MacDonald**, Pastor, Harvest Bible Chapel, Rolling Meadows, Illinois; author, *Vertical Church*

“Usually, you have to go to different sections of the bookstore to find good books on biblical theology, systematic theology, ministry, the church, and the Christian life. At the very least, the relationship between

theory and practice seems strained. However, this book brings these concerns together. Michael Lawrence believes that good shepherds are theologians and good theologians are shepherds. For anyone who believes that theology needs the church and the church needs theology, this will be a welcome resource. For anyone playing with the idea, it will be a compelling one.”

—**Michael Horton**, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California; author, *Core Christianity: Finding Yourself in God's Story*

“According to the Apostle Paul, one of the central works of pastoral ministry is rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), and it takes diligent study to be able to do it. According to Michael Lawrence, it is also vital to rightly apply the word of truth to the life of a congregation, and to be certain that the application is faithful to the united story of the entire Scripture. In his book *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*, Lawrence skillfully guides his readers in constructing a biblical theology, “the whole story of the whole Bible,” and teaches them how to derive lessons from that story. But Lawrence’s heartbeat is the right application of the story and those lessons to the daily life scenarios every minister faces. This work is a succinct, readable manual on the right application of the storyline of the whole Bible to the common issues of daily life which pastors will inevitably face as they minister in the 21st century. It is a valuable addition to the library of any pastor who yearns to see God’s word bear fruit for eternity.”

—**Andrew Davis**, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Durham, North Carolina

“I am grateful that this book has been written. It’s an ambitious book—broad in scope and simultaneously rich in insight. Its biblical, systematic and pastoral theology are presented in a lucid and accessible way, its case studies are pastorally helpful, and its polemics are thought-provoking and penetrating. Michael has done us a great favor by grounding his subject material in the cut and thrust of ordinary pastoral ministry while at the same time stimulating us intellectually. His unshakable commitment to propositional revelation, the centrality of the Bible in church ministry, and his unflinching belief that God works by his Word are a great foil to much theology in vogue in the church today. This book is a bell ringing in the fog of American Christianity—with its extremes of prosperity, market-driven, and emergent theology—that we at the ends of the earth in South Africa have sadly not escaped. It calls us back to the old fashioned, tried and tested practices of exegesis, hermeneutics, and preaching that have fed the Christian church for centuries. May God use it to nourish his church, which often seems undernourished both in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.”

—**Grant J. Retief**, Rector, Christ Church, Umhlanga, Durban, South Africa

“With biblical illiteracy in the church at an all-time high, faithless and banal preaching the seeming norm, and Christian leaders impressed more by stories of success in the marketplace than the biblical story of redemption, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* comes as a much needed correction. Michael Lawrence is surely right: One must understand the grand story of Scripture to rightly interpret its constituent parts. When the story is misunderstood or ignored, then Christian preaching and ministry will inevitably suffer. Through definition, explanation, and example, Lawrence has produced a thorough and practical guide to correct biblical interpretation, Spirit-empowered exposition, and faithful ministry.”

—**Todd L. Miles**, Assistant Professor of Theology, Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon

“Biblical theology is the missing tool for so many pastors— and yet is such an essential tool for rightly handling the Word of God. Michael Lawrence leads us step by step from theological foundations all the way through to real life applications of biblical theology. In other words he shows us how to read and use the Bible rightly on its own terms. He skillfully blends scholarly insight with down-to-earth pastoral awareness and covers a huge amount of ground in the process. This is a great example of theological thinking for the work of ministry. You may not agree with every conclusion he draws but you cannot fail to benefit from interacting with his thinking.”

—**Graham Beynon**, Minister, Avenue Community Church, Leicester, UK

“I am deeply thankful for this important book and pray it will be widely read and greatly influential! There is no greater need in the church than biblically grounded theological discernment that informs everyday life. The perspective and methods of ‘doing theology’ that Michael Lawrence provides are crucial for developing this distinctively Christian view of life. Ministry methods and foci today are so often determined by pragmatism, consumerism, trends, and the latest opinion polls rather than a holistic understanding of the Bible. *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church* points the way out of this man-centered approach and helps equip leaders for God-honoring, gospel-advancing ministry. Lawrence writes with the depth of a careful theologian and the heart and experience of a loving pastor. Here he models what he is wanting to produce with this book—pastor/theologians who understand the whole counsel of God’s word, and are able to translate it into the lives of God’s people for the glory of God.”

—**Erik Thoennes**, Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, Chair, Biblical and Theological Studies Theology Department, Talbot School of Theology, Biola University; Pastor, Grace Evangelical Free Church, La Mirada, California

About the Author

Michael Lawrence serves as the lead pastor of Hinson Baptist Church in Portland, Oregon. He earned a PhD in church history from Cambridge University and an MDiv from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Lawrence is the author of *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*.

Thomas R. Schreiner (MDiv and ThM, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary; PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation and associate dean of the school of theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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