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Q&A:

A BOOK, THE BIBLE, AND GOD'S PLAN: AN INTERVIEW

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Introduction

The Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for Christians in Higher Education (The Journal) seeks to support Christian educators by providing a forum for an exchange of research, educational resources, and ideas in order to encourage excellent teaching for the benefit of the students. *The Journal's* mission for Christian educators is—in part—the following statement:

Called by God, Christian educators allow their faith to influence (either directly or indirectly) all that they do in and out of the classroom. They transform their students by inspiring love for God and others and by stimulating intellectual curiosity and creativity. The ability to teach is a gift from God, and those who are truly called to teach have a desire to see learning take place (https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/sotl_ched/aimsandscope.html).

One such teacher answered the call and dedicated himself to a career in educating students in behavioral studies, the Bible, and guiding them to live a mature Christian life. Much has changed in U.S. culture and education, requiring teachers to adjust their methods of reaching

students who are markedly diverse and less biblically knowledgeable than their parents' generation. But through the decades, Christian educators still strive to demonstrate God's love through caring, patience, knowledge, and commitment, and in a Christian institution, they also seek to bring a Christian worldview to their students.

The Interview

Dr. Randall Feller has taught psychology at Oral Roberts University since 1999 and served as chair of the Behavioral Sciences Department at Oral Roberts University for 17 years. Dr. Feller was awarded tenure in 2004 and holds the rank of senior professor. His dedication to teaching and to his students has been recognized through *Who's Who among American Teachers* for 2002-2006 as well as five outstanding faculty member awards, including the Harold and Edna Paul Award for Outstanding Faculty Member for the entire University in 2013-2014. He has served on and/or chaired numerous faculty committees, received three outstanding service awards, and is also a lifetime member of Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society. He earned a B.A. from Oral Roberts University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Counseling from Oklahoma State University.

Question: Dr. Feller, briefly give us an overview/summary of your new book *Puzzles, Parables, and Paradox: Understanding the Mysteries of God's Kingdom*.

Dr. Feller: The focus of this book is to understand God's plan, his purpose, and his process through the mysteries of God, which are now being revealed to the saints. It specifically focuses on the "Mystery of Godliness," the "Mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven," and the "Mystery of Christ in You, the Hope of Glory." It is designed to help the reader in a more clear, concise, and compelling way see how the entire Bible fits together and to have that knowledge help with more effective Christian living.

Question: I understand that you had been teaching a while when you came to realize that you wanted to write this book. What prompted you to decide to write the book?

Dr. Feller: The desire to write this book stems from having students from 145 different nations and so many diverse Christian backgrounds (Pentecostal, Charismatic, Non-Denominational, Ecumenical, Catholic, etc.), all with varying degrees of Biblical literacy. In order to facilitate integration of their faith with their studied disciplines, students need to know about God's Word and what they believe as a result. This is because you cannot integrate what you do not know. In effect, the motivation for this book was to give students a more solid foundation in Biblical knowledge and understanding. In other words, can they see how the whole Bible fits together and what that means for their own Christian walk of faith?

Question: The table of contents indicates that the book is divided into three segments: puzzles, parables, and paradox. What is the focus or theme of each of these?

Dr. Feller: Section 1, Puzzles, is about the mystery of Godliness and how God the Father brings everything in heaven and on earth, from the beginning of time to the end of time, to conform to his PLAN of having it all point to redemption—the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and what that means for all mankind.

So what is this book all about? It is about a tremendously creative God disguising his plan for the ages in a mystery and then doing everything in his power to help you understand the mystery of his kingdom. It is about the God of clarity, speaking through puzzles, parables, and paradox. It's about an omnipotent God purposely hiding the secrets of the universe in plain sight. It is about a loving God going to incredible lengths to show you the obvious. It is about relationship, about trust, and about love. Most of all, it is

about choice. It is about choosing to become actively involved and understand more of the mystery of his kingdom and what he wants for your life. (excerpt from section 1: Puzzles, God's Plans)

Section 2, Parables, is about the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. It shows how Jesus, the Son of God, always speaks through parables to focus on the PURPOSE for his Father's plan, which is to establish a living, unshakable kingdom—a kingdom where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven, a kingdom that will never end and that is not far off but is immediately at hand.

God the Father's plan was to have everything in heaven and on earth point to the Messiah: the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, when Jesus finally arrived here on this small planet, he pointed everything to the kingdom of heaven. If you want to know the purpose of God's amazing plan for the ages, all you need to do is look at the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus boldly proclaimed that it is all about establishing a kingdom—a living, unshakable kingdom that will never end—a kingdom where God's will is done on earth just as it is in heaven. If you are able to hear this without stumbling over it, Jesus himself says, "Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me" (Matthew 11:6). (excerpt from section 2: Parables, God's Purpose)

Section 3, Paradoxes, is about the mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables you to live out kingdom paradoxes so that you might become the PROCESS by which the kingdom is established and so that you might become faithful stewards of the mysteries of God.

What is the key to everyday practical Christian living? Just like the early disciples did, we learn that we have become servants "by the commission God gave [us] to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious

riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:25-27). We do so through the power of the Holy Spirit with which we are supposed to live out the paradoxes as well. “Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, “here it is” or “there it is” because the kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17:20-21). These paradoxes are supposed to be firmly embedded within each of us such that they overwhelm our old nature and flow out into our everyday behavior. (excerpt from Section 3 Paradox, God’s Process)

Question: Who is your intended audience, teachers or students?

Dr. Feller: The intended audience is for all Christians seeking a deeper relationship with God. Even so, it is particularly targeted for the next generation to show how the entire Bible fits together in order to empower them to live effective Christian lives.

Question: What is the purpose of your book and/or what would you like readers to take away from it?

Dr. Feller: Not only would I like them to understand the mysteries and see not only how all of God’s Word is uniquely fitted together, but also (towards the later portion of the book) the focus is on a roadmap for Christian living and a developmental model for Christian maturity. This is so that we can build up mature Christians in the faith.

Question: You mentioned that you have two other books in the works. Can you give us a brief introduction to each of them?

Dr. Feller: In chapter 19 of this book, I lay out a development model for Christian maturity, which is introduced in the first chapter of second Peter. The next book I am working on is designed to focus more specifically on that model with how to implement those

qualities in one's personal life. The third book that I have in mind will show how this eight-step developmental model aligns with the primary psychological models of therapy that clinical research shows actually work.

Dr. Linda Gray is Professor Emerita of English at Oral Roberts University where she has taught composition, linguistics, technical writing, and education courses for more than 35 years. She has served as president of the Arts and Sciences Faculty Senate and of the Education Faculty Senate as well as the chair of the English and Modern Languages Department. She has a B.A. in Linguistics from California State University-Fullerton, an M.A. in Theology from Fuller Theological Seminary, and an Ed.D. in English Education from Vanderbilt University. Dr. Gray can be reached at lgray@oru.edu.