

# “The Essentials Of Our Faith”

Session IV  
October 3, 2010

## What Is “Dispensational” Theology? Does It Really Matter?

Riverwood Bible Church has a “calling” before God. That calling is defined by the Word of God and is the basis of our “unity” as a Body of Believers. We must “stand together” in the understanding of our calling – our Biblical purpose – before God!

Even though we are a small Church, we have a significant purpose – one of eternal design and destiny! Our “size” cannot be measured by earthly standards of success, but by the Biblical measure of “faithfulness” to the plan and purposes of God! Our motivation is “love” for our Savior and our desire is to be pleasing to Him when life on earth is over!

In our previous study we established that the foundation of our “calling” is described by the Apostle Paul in his letters to the young pastor, Timothy.

*“ . . . I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, the Church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”*

I Timothy 3:15

--The “Church” (local “Assembly” of Believers) is the “upholder” of God’s revealed truth!

--Application: It is impossible to “uphold” that which we do not “hold” in unity!

*“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”*

II Timothy 2:15

--We want to be “approved” workmen!

--We want to “accurately handle” the Word of God!

--Application: It is impossible to be “approved” when we have “mishandled” the Word!  
“Approval” requires faithfulness in “diligent” study of the Word!  
A basic qualification for leadership is being a “life-long student” of the Word!

## **Further Admonition Regarding Our “CALLING”:**

### **A. I Timothy 6:20-21.**

*“O Timothy, **guard** what has been **entrusted** to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’ – which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.”*

--“**guard**” = phulasso = “to keep or preserve from danger of harm”;

--Note: This is an imperative, a command!

--“**entrusted**” = parakatatheke = “something put down alongside”;  
= “a deposit or sacred trust”.

--Note: “It is a legal term connoting something which is placed on trust in another man’s keeping.” --Cleon Rogers

--KJV = “that which is committed to thy trust”

--**Application**: There is a major distinction between “**theology**” defined as the study of God based upon man’s search for and definition of “a god or gods”, and “**Biblical theology**” defined as the study of God based upon His revelation of Himself!

### **B. II Timothy 1:13-15.**

*“**Retain the standard** of **sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. **Guard** through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, **the treasure** which has been **entrusted** to you.”*

--“the **standard**” = hupotuposis = “to draw a sketch or first draft as painters when they begin a picture”

= “a delineation, sketch, concise representation or form”

= “a pattern, example”

--“**guard**” = phulasso = “to keep or preserve from danger of harm”;

--Note: This is an imperative, a command!

--“**entrusted**” = parakatatheke = “something put down alongside”;  
= “a deposit or sacred trust”.

--Note: “It is a legal term connoting something which is placed on trust in another man’s keeping.” --Cleon Rogers

### C. II Timothy 2:2.

*"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

- "entrust" = paratithemi = "to place alongside, to present";  
= by implication "to deposit (as a trust for protection)"
- "faithful men" = **pistoi anthrois**!
- "teach" = didasko = "to teach or instruct by word of mouth";
  - Note: " 'Didasko' has inherent in it the calculation of the increase in understanding of the pupil. Contrast with 'kerusso', to 'preach', or 'proclaim', which does not inherently have the same expectation of learning and assimilation as 'didasko'."  
--Spiros Zodhiates
- Application: "This verse does **not** support the notion of apostolic succession. Neither does it refer to the present day practice of ordination of ministers. Rather, it is simply **the Lord's instruction to the Church to ensure a succession of competent teachers.**"  
--William MacDonald

### An Observation: The Background of Riverwood Bible Church in the History of the Church.

#### The "Church Fathers" and "Church Councils":

- Defended against doctrinal "heresies";
- Determined the "canon" of Scripture.

#### The Roman "Catholic" Church:

- The Eastern Orthodox and Russian Orthodox;
- The Anglican Church in England and Episcopal Church in America.

#### The "Protestant" Church:

- The Reformed and Lutheran;
- The Anabaptists;
- The Puritans;
- The Methodists;
- The "**Plymouth Brethren**";
- The Presbyterian Church;
- The Pentecostals;
- American "Evangelicalism";
- "Denominational" Churches;
- "Independent" and "**Bible**";
- "Non-denominational" and "Independent" Movement;
- The "Emerging" Church;
- "Home" Church Movement.

**Note**: Historically, Churches tended to emphasize their doctrinal beliefs.

The trend today is to de-emphasize doctrinal beliefs and distinctions!

**Key**: It is eternally important to know the doctrinal beliefs of a Church!

# Riverwood Bible Church Holds To A “DISPENSATIONAL” Interpretation Of The Word Of God.

## I. What Does The Bible Say?

### 1. We Interpret the Bible “Literally”.

**Literal Interpretation:** “This means interpretation that gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking, or thinking. It is sometimes called the principle of ‘grammatical-historical’ interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called ‘normal’ interpretation since the literal meaning of words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated ‘plain’ interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. Symbols, figures of speech, and types are all interpreted plainly in this method, and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation.”

--Charles Ryrie

**A Warning:** “If one does not use the ‘plain, normal, or literal’ method of interpretation, all objectivity is lost. What check would there be on the variety of interpretations that man’s imagination could produce if there were not an objective standard, which the literal principle provides? To try to see meaning other than the normal one would result in as many interpretations as there are people interpreting.”

--Charles Ryrie

### 2. “Literal” Interpretation of the Bible Leads to an “Understanding” of the Overall Plans and Purposes of God in Human History.

#### a. The Greek word: “oikonomia”.

“The word which is translated dispensation in the New Testament is ‘oikonomia’ . . . a combination of two words – ‘oikos’, which means ‘house’, and ‘nemo’, which means ‘to dispense, manage, or hold sway.’ Thus, the word literally means ‘house dispensing or house managing’.”

--Renald Showers

#### b. The Biblical use of the word “oikonomia”.

“The word ‘oikonomia’ appears nine times in the New Testament. In six of these appearances (Lk. 16:2-4; I Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25) it is translated ‘stewardship’ or ‘dispensation’ and refers to a responsible office or ministry entrusted to one’s care be a higher authority. In the other three appearances (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; I Tim. 1:4) it is translated . . . ‘administration’ in the New American Standard Bible . . . it refers to a particular way of God’s administering His rule over the world.”

--Renald Showers

### c. The practical meaning or interpretation of the word 'oikonomia'.

*"Dispensationalism views the world as a household run by God. In this divine household God gives man certain responsibilities as administrator. If man obeys God within that economy (dispensation), God promises blessing; if man disobeys God, He promises judgment. Thus there are three aspects normally seen in a dispensation: 1) testing; 2) failure; 3) judgment. In each dispensation God has put man under a test, man fails, and there is judgment.*

*--The basic concept of a dispensation is a stewardship. This is particularly seen in Luke 16:1-2. The parable illustrates the distinctives of a dispensation.*

- 1) There are two parties. One has authority to delegate duties; the other has the responsibility to carry them out. In this parable, the wealthy man and the steward are the two parties.*
- 2) There are specific responsibilities. In the parable, the steward fails in his duties, wasting his master's goods.*
- 3) There is accountability. The steward is called upon to give an account of his faithfulness as a steward.*
- 4) There is change. The master has a right to remove the steward from his place of privilege and responsibility (Luke 16:2)"*

--Paul Enns

## 3. Helpful Definitions of a "DISPENSATION".

### a. Dr. C. I. Scofield:

*"A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."*

--Note: This popular definition has been criticized because it says nothing about a stewardship, but emphasizes the period of "time" involved in the dispensation.

### b. Dr. Charles Ryrie:

*"A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose . . . a stewardship arrangement and not a period of time (though obviously the arrangement will exist during a period of time)."*

### c. Dr. Renald Showers:

*"A dispensation . . . refers to the system by which things are administered . . . the divine administration or conduct of the world. Theologically it is a religious order or system, conceived as divinely instituted, or as a stage in a progressive revelation, expressly adapted to the needs of a particular nation or period of time."*

### d. Dr. Graham Scroggie:

*" . . . the administration of the human race or any part of it, at any given time. Just as a parent would govern his household in different ways, according to varying necessity, yet ever for one good end, so God has at different times dealt with men in different ways, according to the necessity of the case, but throughout for one great, grand end."*

## **II. Why Does “Dispensational” Theology Matter?**

**A. Its “\_\_\_\_\_” interpretation allows God to \_\_\_\_\_  
for \_\_\_\_\_!**

--Modern man likes to “\_\_\_\_\_” for \_\_\_\_\_!

**B. It allows the Christian to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
for the future!**

--While God \_\_\_\_\_ the specific “times” of the \_\_\_\_\_,  
He wants to share His anticipation of the major “\_\_\_\_\_”!

**C. It allows the Christian to \_\_\_\_\_ at the \_\_\_\_\_  
of God!**

--Illustration: The “\_\_\_\_\_” on the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_!

**D. It allows the Christian to \_\_\_\_\_ interpret the “\_\_\_\_\_”  
and “\_\_\_\_\_” of the Bible!**

--Without a “dispensational” \_\_\_\_\_ for interpretation, a student of  
the Bible \_\_\_\_\_ know to \_\_\_\_\_ Scripture is addressed!