

TEACHING THE BIBLE  
WITH UNDERGRADUATES

# RESOURCES FOR BIBLICAL STUDY

*Editor*

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# TEACHING THE BIBLE WITH UNDERGRADUATES

*Edited by*

Jocelyn McWhirter and Sylvie Raquel



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For those in every generation who have instructed us



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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAHEB	<i>American Association for Higher Education Bulletin</i>
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AE	<i>American Educator</i>
AEL	<i>The Australian Educational Leader</i>
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AJPC	<i>Australasian Journal of Popular Culture</i>
AmSchol	<i>The American Scholar</i>
AP	<i>Aslib Proceedings</i>
APS	<i>The Asia-Pacific Scholar</i>
AsianSocSci	<i>Asian Social Science</i>
ASV	American Standard Version
BC	<i>Brain Connectivity</i>
BHS	<i>Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BJET	<i>British Journal of Educational Technology</i>
BJPS	<i>The British Journal of Political Science</i>
CE	<i>Cogent Education</i>
Change	<i>Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning</i>
CHB	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>
CLR	<i>Clinical Law Review</i>
Compass	<i>Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching</i>
CompEd	<i>Computers and Education</i>
CRAAP	Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose
CSTS	The Critical Social Thought Series
CT	<i>College Teaching</i>
Didaktikos	<i>Didaktikos: Journal of Theological Education</i>
DK	<i>Digital Kompetanse</i>
EJ	<i>The English Journal</i>
ELTHE	<i>ELTHE: A Journal for Engaged Educators</i>
EPR	<i>Educational Psychology Review</i>
ER	<i>Educational Researcher</i>
ESV	English Standard Version
FE	<i>Frontiers in Education</i>

FM	<i>First Monday</i>
GBS	<i>Guides to Biblical Scholarship</i>
HE	<i>Higher Education</i>
HERD	<i>Higher Education Research and Development</i>
IHE	<i>Internet and Higher Education</i>
IISIT	<i>Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology</i>
IJESE	<i>International Journal of Environmental and Science Education</i>
IJHAC	<i>International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing</i>
IJSHE	<i>International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education</i>
IJSSS	<i>International Journal of Social Science Studies</i>
IL	<i>Informal Logic</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAAL	<i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCSD	<i>Journal of College Student Development</i>
JEE	<i>The Journal of Economic Education</i>
JG	<i>Journal of Geography</i>
JGHE	<i>Journal of Geography in Higher Education</i>
JHHE	<i>Journal of Hispanic Higher Education</i>
JHLSTE	<i>Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education</i>
JHLT	<i>Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology</i>
JILS	<i>Journal of Information and Learning Sciences</i>
JIME	<i>Journal of Interactive Media in Education</i>
JIOL	<i>Journal of Interactive Online Learning</i>
JLE	<i>The Journal of Law and Economics</i>
JM	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>
JPD	<i>Journal of Psychoactive Drugs</i>
JPSE	<i>Journal of Political Science Education</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JTD	<i>Journal of Trauma &amp; Dissociation</i>
JTSW	<i>Journal of Teaching in Social Work</i>
JWA	<i>The Journal of Writing Assessment</i>
KDPLS	<i>The Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series</i>
KIEJ	<i>Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal</i>
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
KULA	<i>KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies</i>
LAI	<i>Library of Ancient Israel</i>

LE	<i>Liberal Education</i>
LEAP	Liberal Education and America's Promise
LEB	Lexham English Bible
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
LXX	Septuagint
MEACTS	Merrill Education ASCD College Textbook Series
MERLOT	<i>MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching</i>
MBPS	Mellen Biblical Press Series
MP	<i>Monitor on Psychology</i>
MS	<i>Motivation Science</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NA <sup>26</sup>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 26th ed.
NA <sup>28</sup>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
NACTAJ	<i>NACTA Journal</i>
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIDB	Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, ed. <i>New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006–2009.
NIV	New International Version
NJDL	<i>Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy</i>
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTTSD	New Testament Tools, Studies, and Documents
OH	<i>On the Horizon</i>
OralHist	<i>Oral History</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
Phaedr.	Plato, <i>The Phaedrus</i>
PN	<i>Philosophy Now</i>
PSA	<i>Psychological Science Agenda</i>
PSE	<i>Postdigital Science and Education</i>
PSP	<i>Political Science and Politics</i>
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
ReadRep	Reading Report
REE	<i>Race, Ethnicity, and Education</i>
RelEd	<i>Religious Education</i>
RHE	<i>Review of Higher Education</i>
RPA	<i>Rhetoric and Public Affairs</i>

RR	Research Report
RRE	<i>Review of Educational Research</i>
RT	<i>The Reading Teacher</i>
SC	<i>Sociology Compass</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SG	<i>Simulation and Gaming</i>
SIJE	<i>Shanlax International Journal of Education</i>
SLULJ	<i>St. Louis University Law Journal</i>
SRBS	<i>Systems Research and Behavioral Science</i>
SSJ	<i>The Social Science Journal</i>
StABH	Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics
SWC	<i>Social Work and Christianity</i>
T@C	Texts@Contexts
THE	<i>Teaching in Higher Education</i>
THL	Theory and History of Literature
ThTo	<i>Theology Today</i>
TLH	Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
TPE	<i>Technology, Pedagogy, and Education</i>
TS	<i>Teaching Sociology</i>
TTR	<i>Teaching Theology and Religion</i>
USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VCTEFP	<i>Visual Communication and Technology Education Faculty Publications</i>
WabJT	<i>Wabash Journal on Teaching</i>
WP	<i>World Psychiatry</i>
W&P	<i>Writing and Pedagogy</i>
WPEL	<i>Working Papers in Educational Linguistics</i>
WW	<i>Word and World</i>



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## INTRODUCTION

JOCELYN MCWHIRTER AND SYLVIE T. RAQUEL

The generation now coming of age has been variously labeled Post-Millennials, iGeneration, and Generation Z. Commonly known as Gen Z, it includes those born after 1996.<sup>1</sup> The first Gen Z undergraduates matriculated in or around 2015, so that since 2019 they have made up the majority of college students. Their youngest instructors belong to the ranks of Millennials, who, together with their Gen X and Baby Boomer colleagues, were recently teaching the youngest of their generation. Most professors may therefore know little about the distinct characteristics of their current students.

Gen Z differs from previous generations in demographics, sensibilities, aspirations, expectations, preferred ways of learning, and overall emotional health. For many professors, pedagogical techniques that worked well with Gen Xers and Millennials tend to fall flat with Gen Z. This situation has driven undergraduate education to a crossroads. Unless instructors learn more about this new generation of students, the topics that inspire them, and the pedagogies that engage them, they stand to lose Gen Z's attention. Programs that wish to survive in a market with fewer college-age students and higher tuition rates would do well to give their attention to Gen Z.<sup>2</sup>

More than any previous generation, Gen Z is ethnically diverse. About half (50.9 percent) identify as white. A quarter are Latinx, and 13.8 percent

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1. Kim Parker and Ruth Igielnik, "On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know about Gen Z So Far," Pew Research Center, 14 May 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL03108a>. Parker and Igielnick did not set an end date. Other Gen Z researchers work with slightly different dates.

2. Jeffrey J. Selingo, "The New Generation of Students: How Colleges Can Recruit, Teach, and Serve Gen Z," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL03108b>.

are black.<sup>3</sup> Nearly one-third (29 percent) are first- or second-generation immigrants. The vast majority graduate from high school, and nearly half enroll in four-year baccalaureate programs. More than half of those aim to be the first in their family to earn a bachelor's degree.<sup>4</sup> Although Gen Zers agree on the importance of a college education, many come from families that know little about the values and systems of higher education.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, most Gen Zers care little for one of higher education's traditional vehicles: books. They are more accustomed to videos and brief snippets of text. The oldest were born into a world of handheld devices. According to a 2018 survey, about 95 percent of high school students had access to smartphones, laptops, desktops, and tablets. If they were not watching videos or following social media, they might have been playing video games. Forty-five percent reported that they were "constantly" or "almost constantly" online.<sup>6</sup>

The online habits of Gen Zers may have affected their mental health. Another 2018 survey shows that nearly one-third of young adults described their mental health as "fair" or "poor."<sup>7</sup> As Terry Doyle and Todd Zakrajsek have noted, "The brain was not built for constant sensory stimulation."<sup>8</sup> Continuous exposure to rapidly shifting auditory and visual input, along with social media platforms that allow for cyberbullying and tally "friends" and "likes," seems to be one of the causes.<sup>9</sup>

So does social and political unrest. Gen Zers have been growing up in the shadow of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. As of the time of this writing, none can recall a year when the United States did not have troops stationed in the countries deemed responsible. Many Gen Zers also lived through the Great

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3. William Frey, "Now, More than Half of Americans Are Millennials or Younger," *The Avenue*, 30 July 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL03108c>.

4. Parker and Igielnik, "On the Cusp."

5. "Fourth Installment of the Innovation Imperative: Portrait of Generation Z," Northeastern University, 18 November 2014, 9.

6. Monica Anderson and Jingjing Jiang, "Teens, Social Media, and Technology: 2018," Pew Research Center, 13 May 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL03108d>.

7. Sophie Bethune, "Gen Z More Likely to Report Mental Health Concerns," *MP* 50 (2019): 20.

8. Terry Doyle and Todd Zakrajsek, *The New Science of Learning: How to Learn in Harmony with Your Brain* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2013), 26.

9. In 2018, 27 percent of high school students agreed that cyberbullying causes stress (Anderson and Jiang, "Teens, Social Media").

Recession of 2008–2009 or were born into families still suffering from its aftereffects.<sup>10</sup> More recently, they have witnessed and perhaps participated in large-scale protests. They have suffered from the disappointments, displacements, restrictions, illness, and loss brought on by a global pandemic.

A 2014 survey suggests a related cause for the relatively poor mental health of Gen Z: the tug-of-war between their ambitions for and anxieties about the future. While 67 percent affirmed that a college degree would open the door to their desired careers, 67 percent also worried about paying for their education, and 64 percent were concerned about their ability to land a job.<sup>11</sup> It would seem that many Gen Zers cherish goals of employment and prosperity while harboring fears that those goals lie out of reach.

The new generation of college students is diverse, tech-savvy, and somewhat anxious. They are also interested in spirituality. According to a 2014 survey, 78 percent of Americans in their late teens believed in God, while 21 percent did not. Results of a study conducted in 2015 indicate that 47 percent of undergraduates attended religious services on a weekly basis.<sup>12</sup> It is safe to say, however, that most Gen Zers have never considered the academic study of religion or the Bible.

What is a biblical studies professor to do? In this book, we have compiled research-based and classroom-tested strategies for undergraduate instruction. Contributions are categorized into four parts. First, we turn to the Association of American Colleges and Universities. In 2015, just as Gen Z undergraduates began to matriculate, the Association of American Colleges and Universities published a set of learning outcomes for “Liberal Education and America’s Promise.” These outcomes, they say, prove “essential for success in life, civil society, and work in the twenty-first century.” In part 1 of this volume, therefore, we share some ideas for applying them in the undergraduate biblical studies classroom. Susan E. Haddox describes biblical studies courses that develop critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, inquiry and analysis, information literacy, and teamwork as part of an integrated core curriculum. Jocelyn McWhirter outlines four ways to get students thinking critically about controversial and sensitive topics concerning gender and

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10. Corey Seemiller and Meghan Grace, *Generation Z Goes to College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 6–7, 11.

11. “Fourth Installment,” 1.

12. “Fourth Installment,” 8–9.

biblical interpretation. Christopher M. Jones explains how he involves students in inquiry and analysis of the biblical canon with an approach that differentiates a liberal education from authoritarian indoctrination. We end part 1 with two quick tips. George Branch-Trevathan guides students in answering basic historical and literary questions about biblical writings, and Sylvie T. Raquel puts the active learning in the book of Acts.

We devote part 2 to reading and information literacy. Since many Gen Z students lack the advanced reading skills necessary for success in biblical studies and most white-collar careers, Raquel suggests some strategies for strengthening interest, confidence, and comprehension among student readers. Kimberly Bauser McBrien shows how online social annotation promotes out-of-class conversation while fostering exegetical skills. Steve Jung shares eight assignments that improve students' information literacy. In the quick tips segment, Kara J. Lyons-Pardue lays out a strategy for brief student presentations based on Bible dictionary articles, and Timothy A. Gabrielson describes how he helped his class to hear Romans from the perspective of a first-century house church.

In part 3, we focus on addressing Gen Z experiences and learning preferences. Melanie Howard explains how she relates biblical studies to her Latinx students' experiences of translation, identity formation, and family solidarity. Kathleen Gallagher Elkins addresses student mental health, recommending trauma-informed teaching for biblical studies. Lesley DiFrancisco narrates the development of a relevant, activity-based course called Food, Hunger, and the Bible. John Van Maaren and Hanna Tervanotko present a small-scale study about the effects of course-based experiential learning on student learning, well-being, and retention. The quick tips include Robby Waddell's strategic use of a familiar tale for introducing students to the Synoptic problem, Callie Callon's exercises for helping students realize why each evangelist portrays a different Jesus, and Katherine Low's insights on how a bingo game exposes students to ancient ideas about life, death, and political crisis through the lens of twenty-first-century zombie culture.

Finally, part 4 concerns instruction using online resources and interfaces. Eric A. Seibert explains how brief video clips can command students' interest and prepare them to discuss challenging topics. Seth Heringer demonstrates the power of using digital images of ancient manuscripts to introduce textual criticism. Carl N. Toney evaluates the accessibility and features of nine free e-Bible tools. Timothy Luckritz Marquis promotes the construction of online environments that support the interactive interpre-

tation that takes place in a physical classroom. We end with three quick tips for online instruction: Nicholas A. Elder's ideas for adapting three in-class activities for online use, John Hilton III's advice for aligning teaching and assessments with learning outcomes for each lesson, and McWhirter's plan for creative, collaborative analysis of Luke's parables.

We hope that this volume will help biblical studies professors—whether born in the Baby Boom, Gen X, or Millennial years—hone their instruction for Gen Z students. We are pleased to offer these strategies for teaching them to read, interpret, and learn from the Bible. We value our discipline for the many ways that it forms its practitioners, and we dedicate this book to those in every generation who have instructed us.

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