

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 169

Surviving and Thriving in Seminary

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Ever thought about taking a seminary class? Getting a degree in biblical studies? Even if you haven't and just want good advice on how to do biblical research on your own, you'll want to listen in on this conversation. This episode of the podcast focuses on the book by Drs. Zacharias and Forrest, *How to Survive and Thrive in Seminary*. You'll learn a lot about expert resources (some of them free) and some strategy hints for the serious study of Scripture.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 169: Surviving and Thriving in Seminary with Danny Zacharias and Ben Forrest. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing this week?

MH: Very good. Been looking forward to this episode.

TS: I have been looking forward to this episode, as well, and that's because we've actually got our first sponsor of the show and it's none other than your employer with Logos 7 Basic Software!

MH: Yeah! Can you believe it? I'm excited about it.

TS: It's about time!

MH: Really. We've been talking sort of inside baseball behind the scenes about sponsors and what-not, and this is like the perfect one because this is a tool I use every day. We care about Bible study here, and the audience cares about Bible study and having good tools. This is like the perfect match. Yeah, I'm excited about it.

TS: Absolutely! Logos 7 Basic is a great introduction to what Logos 7 can do for you during seminary school. It's useful during seminary, and actually there are

some benefits of Logos 7 Basic, which is resources that includes commentaries, sermons, dictionaries, encyclopedias, lexicons, and more. And there's a note-taking benefit, a search benefit, and a portability benefit. Can you tell us about the resources benefit that includes over dozen books that are valued at over \$157?

MH: Yeah, they gave us a nice deal, really. People can go up to www.logos.com/nakedbible and you can get Logos 7 Basic for free. If the resources were the only thing in the package, it would be worth it because, like you said, it's over \$150 worth of books. You get the Lexham English Bible. I participated in producing that. I did the Genesis portion of that translation. You get a Bible commentary, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias, some devotionals, a little bit of church history stuff, Greek and Hebrew lexicons. Again, you get all these books for free—for nothing—just by visiting www.logos.com/nakedbible.

TS: What about the note-taking ability with Logos 7 Basic?

MH: We should talk about that because I work there, I use the software. This is one of the neatest things about it. There's a lot that separates Logos from doing something online or working in PDF, and this is one of the neat resources. You can take notes for the podcast, for instance. I might be doing that at Starbucks or some other location (waiting for the kids, and what-not), but if I do it in the software, it will sync across devices no matter where I'm at. So I'd close my laptop and go home and open up the software at home, and there are my notes! I don't have to put anything on a flash drive. It's just there. It syncs in the cloud. So note-taking is just awesome. There are lots of notes within the software that you can benefit from. You can put different kinds of information into a note. You can make a note like a document. You can put notes in your resources with a right-click (a little tab will open up and you write a note in there). It's all saved. You can highlight things and underline. You can put other highlighting symbols in there. But everything you do in the software—whether creating a document like a word-processor (that's built-in) or appending notes to resources and books—it just all saves like magic in the cloud. It's wonderful.

TS: Tell us about the Search feature.

MH: Searching in the software is a much bigger deal, not in terms of use but just sort of what goes on under the hood.

TS: It's probably the most powerful feature of Logos 7.

MH: It is. You get the whole Bible—English translations, obviously, Greek and Hebrew... they have morphological tags in that information. That's sort of fancy software-talk for if I'm in an English Bible, for instance, and I right-click on a word, you can actually search the Greek or Hebrew word that is underneath the English (that you never actually see because you're looking at an English Bible). You can actually run a search on the primary text language starting with English using this

software. It's crazy because you would think you'd have to be looking at an interlinear—you'd have to be looking at Greek or Hebrew text—but you actually don't need to do that with Logos 7. It's because of the magic of the reverse interlinear. You could run Hebrew and Greek searches and generate all kind of reports on those searches using nothing but English. You don't even have to know the alphabet.

TS: Awesome. What I love about it is that you can use it on anything—Windows, Mac, and mobile. It doesn't matter.

MH: Yep. We are platform agnostic. It doesn't matter what you have. Again, if you have a hand-held device, you're going to be able to look at notes that you've left. No matter where you are, it's mobile, so you're not stuck with just one machine at home or one type of machine. We've encountered all this over the years and determined this is what users want. It's what people doing research now (or, frankly, doing anything now) expect. They expect mobility and cross-platform, and you get it right here.

TS: Absolutely. Please go support our show by going to www.logos.com/nakedbible and get Logos 7 Basic free. We really want to thank Faithlife for sponsoring this episode. It could not come at a better time with the subject matter.

MH: That's true!

TS: I'm excited about talking to Danny and Ben because they're doing great stuff.

MH: Yep, absolutely.

MH: Well, it's great to have Danny and Ben on our show to talk about their book, *Surviving and Thriving in Seminary*. For our listeners, it might seem like a little bit of a different turn. I know most of the audience is not going to be destined for seminary or even really be thinking about seminary, but there's a reason why I wanted to have Danny and Ben on to talk about their book. There are parts of it that I think are going to be really useful for the audience. But I want to begin by asking you both to introduce yourselves. So, Danny, why don't we just start with you. Tell the audience a little bit about who you are.

DZ: Thanks very much! My name is Danny Zacharias. I'm the assistant professor of New Testament at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. I've been here for... I think this is my tenth year teaching. I did two degrees here first and then started working part-time and now I'm full-time and into the assistant professor role. I have four kids and a cat.

MH: What do you teach?

DZ: I teach all of the New Testament electives, as well as the upper elective Greek courses.

MH: Okay, good. Ben, your turn.

BF: I am in Lynchburg, Virginia. I grew up in Idaho and came out here for seminary. I didn't really know why I came to seminary. I just knew the Lord had called me here, so I got a degree and asked him what next and he said, "Get another one." And I said okay. I got another and then I said, "Okay, I got another one. What next?" And he said, "Get a doctorate." (laughter) So did the doctorate in education and right as I was finishing up the degree, the seminary hired me on as faculty (kind of like Danny). So it was a huge blessing. I came on and taught there for about five years. Then in the past few months I've changed roles here at the university at Liberty and now I'm Associate Dean in a different department, but really my heart is in seminary and biblical training and education. It's been a great journey. The Lord's been very good.

MH: There's a lot going on up there. Some of the audience knows I'm an online adjunct for Liberty. It seems like every week there's a new update of something else going on! You landed somewhere that... I imagine they gave you an office, but they're tearing buildings down. (laughing)

BF: I did get an office! Not everybody was so lucky these days.

10:00

MH: With that little bit of a self-introduction, I guess I should say something about why this caught my attention. People ask me about seminary a lot. I'll get emails from a lot of people who listen to the podcast and they'll say, "Hey, I'm thinking about taking a class," or "I'm thinking about going into the ministry," or "I'm wondering about a degree program." So I actually get this question more often than you would think. That was one of the reasons. But most of the audience, of course, isn't in that camp. I think your book, *Surviving and Thriving in Seminary* (Lexham Press), really provides some good advice on doing research. I want to focus on having a discussion about how to really just do good research in terms of tools, maybe some methods, some advice. We'll add a little bit at the end toward those who are thinking about formal education. But for the most part, I think to get the most value out of this book for our audience, I want to focus on just good techniques and good resources to help guide the audience into just thinking better about what most of this audience want to do—and that is to learn scripture and really get beyond the surface level content that you might get in church or some other neutral setting.

I think to start off, the first thing I'd like to ask is just generally, what can a formal education do for a person who really wants to study? That might mean taking an actual class—enrolling and tuition and what-not—but even if someone sits in on

a class and audits it, why is that a good thing versus sort of working on your own? Let's just start with a real general kind of question like that. Why do we need instruction from professors?

DZ: I'll start with that, Ben, if you don't mind. Then you can jump in after. I would say the first thing for people to recognize is that there really is no such thing as studying on your own, in the sense that you're always going to be learning at least from one person. Even if you take a video class or you read a book and that becomes your teacher, you are in conversation with someone already. There really is no such thing, as it were, as "solo learning." When it comes to coming into a class, either college or seminary level or an online class if you're doing one with Mike or someone else, it's really about engaging more voices in the conversation. So it increases the communal aspect of the learning process. That's one of the things that I like and continue to like about being a seminary prof—that you get these great voices coming from different aspects. And that includes the students. I just think about my last semester where it was an online course and I had a student from Thailand. He's a missionary there and he was bringing to light questions and thoughts that I would have never thought of, and I was the professor. The fact that we had someone like that in class just really increased the richness of our conversation as we were discussing the New Testament.

BF: I think that's good. I would add that it brings accountability. We've all started and stopped something—set our mind or our heart on some new plan or schedule in our lives, and at some point, something happens. Life happens. I think having a formalized education (paying for tuition or even committing yourself to a schedule of auditing a class) really gives you that accountability and makes you show up and then makes you listen. It makes you engage. And I think that's a benefit.

MH: I don't think it was this past February but the one before, I taught an inner-term course at Knox Seminary. I went to Florida and was there for a week and taught this course. There were two auditors in the class that actually turned out to be the best students! (laughter) They weren't even doing assignments for credit, necessarily. I think the one might have switched over for credit... I can't remember what the circumstance was. I think the accountability thing is important because you've gotta show up. If you're in a little community like that, people know you and know when you show up and when you don't. Even that small thing—just showing up for class and really kind of engaging it... Honestly, if the pressure is off you to try to write down every word because there might be an exam or I might have to use this for a paper or something like that, in many cases just sitting in the class and going with it actually frees up your mind to really think about the material in different ways. You're not trying to just capture it. You're actually sitting there thinking about letting your mind drift a little bit. So I think the auditing experience can be really fruitful and beneficial. I've actually seen that happen. Again, for anybody out in the audience, auditing is just when you register for a course and you probably get a reduced tuition rate. You don't

have to do any of the work, you just go in and take advantage of the course. I would certainly recommend that.

I'm going to throw out a few somewhat random questions. There's no particular order to these. I just want to get your impressions on them. Beyond just being there... and I agree with Danny that there really is no such thing as totally independent learning because you might be reading a scholar and he's instructing you, even though it's a non-embodied presence, if you will. It's not total isolation. I get that. That's what most of this audience is going to be engaged in. They might be part of a small group, they might be in a Bible study or whatever, but I have found in the Naked Bible audience that people really try to do a lot of study. They try to get into resources. So I want to spend a good bit of time talking about sources.

15:00

Can you explain for the audience what the difference between a primary and a secondary source is and why it matters?

DZ: Again, I can grab on, and then, Ben, you can say something after if you want to. Really, the primary source is the one that has the material I'm really trying to learn more about. In the case of your audience and for many of us—for me as a New Testament scholar—it's the New Testament or its the scripture or perhaps it's one of the Second Temple literature works like Enoch or the Dead Sea Scrolls or something like that. Anything else that you bring into conversation, then, is a secondary source. As you're reading *Reversing Hermon* or something, that's a secondary source that's supposed to be shedding light (hopefully) on the primary source. The reason that is important is because sometimes I find as a seminary professor that there are times when students unfortunately start to get so nervous about interacting with the primary text that they focus too much on the secondary sources. Really, we want the primary source to be the one that we're really trying to understand. Insofar as a secondary source is helping you understand the primary source, that's when you come into conversation with that. But if you're not ever engaging with that primary source, then really what you're doing is just a literature review of other people. For the most part, that's not what we're trying to do.

MH: You know, I would compare that to... I hate to say it this way, but we've all heard enough sermons to know the difference (I hope) between someone who really explains the text... in other words, after it's all over you can retrace your thinking (and his thinking) to the primary source. You can go back to the primary source and see where that point of thought generated from. We've all had the experience of hearing that (someone, again, who gives us the text) as opposed to someone who just spends a lot of time talking *about* the text. There's a big difference between talking about a subject and really taking a student—or even someone listening in a conversation—into the subject.

DZ: I agree.

MH: We try not to caricature preaching too much here, but I think it is a good analogy. On any given Sunday morning, it's all too common an experience to have someone talk *about* the Bible, rather than really teach the text. It's a significant difference. When it comes to what we're trying to do for our audience (Naked Bible), we want to make scholarship accessible, but the goal is not to learn the scholarship. The goal is to be taken into the text and see what the text has to say and what it can sustain.

Next question. I pulled all of these from a reading of your book just to get us into the subject matter. You do discuss primary and secondary sources in the book in a helpful way. What is "peer review?" You get into this, as well, in the book. What is it, how does it work, and if you can, give us a little bit of an example from your own academic career on how this worked (trying to get something published).

BF: When we've taught students (all three of us have taught students at different times), we've all had a student who is young in their academic career and they have cited their best friend or their favorite...

MH: Church bulletin here, buddy! (laughing)

BF: I'll tell you what—I did that! I took my first year of seminary... I finished college and I was an elementary education major in college. I got done and I realized, "Lord, I don't want to teach little kids. What can I do?" And so that's how the start of seminary began in my life. But in that final year of college I was mentored by a guy who was just *brilliant*. He had a PhD in chemistry and he really encouraged me and poured into my life. I went to seminary and I had a paper and I had to choose the topic of the paper, and I'm thinking back on my life and this guy who had such an impact on me. A lot of what he was teaching on was life in the Spirit. And so I spent all of my bibliography on this chemistry professor. (laughter) He was a great guy! He loved the Lord. I just remember getting the paper back and on page 1 my professor just said, "Who is this?" And I'm like, "He's my *mentor*!" And I was just realizing that there was a conversation that was going on about life in the Spirit that I hadn't engaged in. That was kind of my first realization that there's something bigger going on than just individual ideas on a topic. There's a bigger conversation that's happened throughout history.

20:00

Going back to primary sources, I don't think I spent a lot of time in Galatians on that paper, which is problematic! So you need to spend time in that primary source, but then you also need to spend time in sources that have been vetted by those who know. Danny, do you have any other thoughts?

DZ: I can give an example, too. Peer review is the field (whatever field you're writing in)... it's people in that field who are seasoned scholars saying, "What you just presented in written form is worthy to enter into the wider dialogue and be subject to what others think from that point." For example, my first article that I published... I submitted it. I went for the cream of the crop, Mike, and got

rejected by the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. I came back feeling dejected, of course. Working through it some more on some of what they said... It's also a back-and-forth process. The editors came and said, "There's this part, this part, and this part..." I went and looked at it, I re-worded it and then submitted it to another journal, and they put it out to their editors and this time it came back and they said, "Yes, this is good." Actually I shouldn't say that. One still said no, but the other one said yes and the editor said yes. So the editor was the tie-breaker and so it got published. So you just think of how much better that article was because I went through that process, as opposed to just throwing it out there in some sort of different form. I had the benefit of bouncing it off scholars who know the field as well as I do, and better.

MH: It's important for those members of the audience to know that when you're trying to do research on a topic, it actually does matter if you're using peer-reviewed sources. The point is not that a resource that's not peer-reviewed *never* has anything good to say. That isn't the point. It may have a really important insight in there. Rather, the point is that the stuff that does get peer-reviewed has passed through, not a filter to winnow out material that the editors just don't like or agree with, or the academy is not going to agree with this so they're not going to publish it. Journals publish things that their editorial team (the people they ask to read) disagrees with frequently. The issue is, "does this contribute something meaningful to the discussion?" Because the people who are doing this know if it's a controversial subject. Some are going to like this, some of them are not going to like it. But it's an important thing to think about for both sides—agree or disagree. Having gone through that process, the field experts know that this is something that is really important for anyone interested in the topic to read, and we're saying that the research is good, the thinking here (again, agree or disagree) is worth taking note of. And so, yes, this deserves a hearing.

DZ: It almost comes down a little bit to a time-management thing, too.

BF: Yes.

DZ: Reading or listening to your podcast, Michael, I know in the past you've said essentially, "Don't send me something if it's not peer-reviewed." Because you want to know that it's gone through that process so that I'm not going to waste my time on it.

MH: I'll grant that I might be missing something good in something that somebody in the audience has been working on. I'll grant that, because I've had questions over the course of my teaching career from people in class, interacting on email, even on the podcast, where I'll get asked something and that will change the way I think about something. I'll think to myself, "Yeah, I need to give that some time or reevaluate this or that." Over the course of years, I've actually changed positions on a handful of things because those interactions were part of that process. But the problem is just what you said: my time is so limited that I will take the risk and weed out the stuff that isn't peer-reviewed just because I

only have time to read the stuff that is. I'm hedging my bets there to think that if it's peer-reviewed, chances are I may come across something important. The chances are greater of that than something else.

For the people in the audience, when you go to do research, I think that's a good way to think about it. I would never say "don't read something that isn't peer-reviewed because it's just junk." That is an overstatement. But do focus on the things that you know that experts in the field have looked at and have considered thoughtfully. Their reputations are, in part, on the line, too. They don't want their readership to turn around and say, "How in the world did this thing make it in there? This is embarrassing. This is ridiculous." Or whatever. It's not a perfect process, but it's a good process for winnowing material and really having field experts say, "Yes, this is worth your time to read and to think about." I've had the same experience, too, where sometimes something in a journal gets rejected and you submit it somewhere else. There's all sorts of factors. It might not be something they're really interested in. It might be "boy you missed the boat on this thing" and then you get it back and you have to re-work it. I've had at least one experience where I was convinced that the reviewers just didn't understand what I was trying to say, so was the problem them or me? (laughs) But you have to put that thought into it, at least. By doing such a poor job of explaining this that they're just not getting it... often you can tell by comments, too.

DZ: Just think how much better Twitter would be with peer review, too! (laughter)

MH: I almost want to say just how much better Twitter would be if it wasn't there, but... (more laughter) I'll confess. I use it and kind of like it, for the most part. It would be nice to winnow some of that stuff.

But that's all with journals. Again, an academic journal is a publication where scholars are essentially writing for scholars. But that's not always the case. Let's talk a little bit about the different kinds of journals, and what's the difference between a journal and a periodical and a magazine. How do you explain that to your students? I know you do it in the book, but do it for us here.

DZ: The example I usually give to my students is to take a big-name person who you really like. Take N.T. Wright. We all respect him, he's very prolific, and imagine that you come across an article that he wrote in *Christianity Today*. And then imagine coming across a periodical or a journal article in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* from a guy that you've never heard of. And they're on the same topic. Which one is weightier in my eyes as your marker? I tell them that the journal article is the weightier one if they're using it in a paper. That's because that person is trying to put forth a sustained argument—trying to make a sustained point (a thesis)—and it's been peer-reviewed, as opposed to N.T. Wright, who I deeply respect but in *Christianity Today* it's being edited pretty much for grammar and spelling and he's giving his opinion on the matter. I may fully agree with that opinion, but he is not engaging with the wider academic discussion in that piece. He will elsewhere in a book or journal article, but those

are the differences. You're talking about an opinion piece versus an academic argument that is trying to make a sustained point.

BF: In that example, I would challenge students who are thinking about that example to look at the bibliography. In the *Christianity Today* piece, he might cite one or two other scholars to support his thesis, whereas the peer-reviewed journal will have something much more substantive. That just shows the interaction with ideas. It's going to give the students a bigger picture of the conversation on that specific topic.

30:00 **MH:** I want to get into Bible dictionaries, too, because this is a tool that a lot of people in our audience are going to have access to, and the importance of using them. Those are different, too, but as good as that resource would be (a Bible dictionary), you might have four or five pages (maybe even two columns per page) to discuss something, whereas a journal article could be two or three times as long and is designed to interact with the previous work on that subject. A dictionary is going to try to just give you the lay of the land in as much detail as the space permits. They're two different kinds of things and they're going to serve you in different ways. Journal articles, again, are often more in-depth for this reason. They get more space to develop an argument. They have to, by definition, interact with what people have said before in a substantive way. And then what they say about prior work and then some corrective they advance or some way to contribute to the discussion—that has to be coherent. So those kinds of sources that go through peer review are really the most valuable, I believe. Unfortunately, they're also the hardest to access in certain situations. It's not just put out on the internet for free. But for people trying to do serious research that have access to that material, say, through a library or through software or something like that, this is how you want to be thinking about your sources. What kind of space do they devote to it? Who do they interact with (what scholars)? Are they just putting forth their opinion, or are they taking part in a bigger discussion and really analytically going through the parts of that discussion—interacting with people that might disagree with them, as opposed to being on their side? That's the best kind of stuff because it makes you think about more things—makes you think more deeply about what it is you're doing.

But that's all journals. What about books? Here's a question I get all the time, and you go into it a little bit in the research section of the book. How do we evaluate publishers? Are all publishers created equally? This is sort of like inside baseball kind of stuff, because as scholars we get a feel for who publishes what and why. But the wider community, like this podcast audience, they might have no inkling of that. It's like, "Hey, it's on paper between two covers and it's on a shelf in a store! That must mean it's okay." Well, not all publishers are created equally. So let's give our audience some advice on how they can understand the different publishers.

BF: I would start by just challenging them to recognize that there's a continuum of publishers, and each publisher has a different purpose and intent. Some are to

present the latest and the greatest of scholarship and some are really focused on the lay individual in the church. Some try to do a little bit of both, so they kind of find themselves somewhere in the middle. They're not going to be on the high academic side, but they're going to be more academic than the everyday church member is looking for. So I guess I'd start by helping them think through the continuum and see their bookshelf on that continuum. As they begin to think that way, they'll be able to identify where certain publishers fall on that. So that's my start to the answer. Danny, I'd like your thoughts on finishing it.

DZ: In Canada, there are Christian bookstores like Blessings and Miracles and they're probably similar to the States, and maybe there some other ones like that. Generally, I tell my students that if you find it there, it's usually not going to be an academic publisher. That's not to denigrate those, either. Just like Mike was trying to say that we're not denigrating those that aren't peer-reviewed, it's just that it's at a different level and it's a different conversation. In my area, anyway, if it's at one of those more pop-level bookstores, it's usually not going to be an academic discussion type of book. Those are what you usually find at either strictly academic bookstores (perhaps on your university campus) or if you find it actually in the library. It tends to be that university academic libraries don't so much carry the trade-type books. They focus on the academic books.

MH: That's a good illustration. The difference between the religion section of a public library as opposed to a university library... Those two libraries are going to be buying different things. The university library is going to have a bigger budget, for one thing, but they're going to be targeting academic publishers to put stuff on their shelves. The public library isn't really necessarily going to be doing that. They're going to be looking for more of the popular publishers, just because of who they imagine their customer to be. One is a student in a degree program and the other one is somebody in the community.

BF: Specifically with your audience, what are they gearing at when they ask you this question about publishers? Are they trying to know who to trust or are they trying to know how to categorize different publishers?

35:00

MH: There's a lot of the former. Who's trustworthy? Who do you recommend here? But part of the recommendation they want to know is who does good research. There are some publishers where you can give the same name to both of those questions. You might even sacrifice a little bit on the academic end to someone who's not in a degree program or doesn't have the academic experience to wade through and sift the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. My tendency is actually to do that—to try to recommend a publisher like... let's just take Intervarsity Press. Intervarsity Press really tries to produce academic material. They have an evangelical orientation to what they do. So that's going to be in the background when they get book proposals. They're going to be vetting potential books based on whether they fit within their evangelical orientation (doctrinally, theologically). It's going to be broad, but it's still going to be the evangelical tradition. They'll be wanting something that is academically up to

snuff. Are they interacting well with literature? Do they focus on primary texts? That sort of thing. There's still something... I don't know if I want to call it a peer-review process, but depending on how your editorial process works, there is some peer review kind of thing going on there. So you have publishers... Lexham is younger and Lexham is trying to model themselves a bit after Intervarsity. We have some people on staff who used to work there. They're going to pick their own direction and not do some things Intervarsity would just because of subject interest. But you have publishers like that, and those are the ones I really try to get people to focus on. Baker Academic... We can talk about the differences here without... There is a difference between Intervarsity and Eerdmans, and it's typically theological.

BF: One of the things I found interesting as I got into it is that there's also a difference between Baker and Baker Academic. Recognize that a lot of the publishers in the mainstream evangelical world have a trade arm and an academic arm. So when Zondervan publishes something, it's not always one of their academic lines, or sometimes it's not geared toward the lay individual and it's more geared towards an academic.

MH: That's how you would define "trade" versus "academic." A trade book is targeting the lay person in the church. Academic sort of speaks for itself—someone who is maybe in college or seminary or is a pastor. But the pastor is going to drift over to the trade books, as well. It's a different audience orientation. I'm glad you brought that up because Baker is a good example. They have their trade line and their academic line. If people go to the websites of the publishers, that's usually pretty distinguishable—where they lead someone who lands on their website.

DZ: If a person isn't entirely sure, most of the time if you flip to the back of the book and if the bibliography is pretty long, chances are you're looking at an academic book.

MH: Yep. Are there footnotes? This isn't as hard and fast as it used to be, but even footnotes versus endnotes.

DZ: Yes, or footnotes versus in-text notes.

MH: Exactly. Usually an academic book would give you the footnote material as you read because the assumption is that you're the kind of reader that wants to look at the footnote. If they're at the end, it's like, "Oh, you don't really care so much about that." The assumption there would be that this is a less academically-inclined reader. Like I said, that isn't as hard-and-fast as it used to be, but that used to be a layout decision or even a publication decision. "This is the kind of book this is, so this is the way you do this thing over here." But yeah—there are ways to tell. Does it have an index? Bibliography? Footnotes? The more of that kind of stuff you get, that will telegraph to you that this is intended as an academic work by this publisher.

Do we want to say anything about publishers? I think it's fair to say these are sort of impressions. I could share impressions about publishers. But do we want to say anything about the differences between Zondervan, Eerdmans, Intervarsity, Kregel, Baker... You have a continuum there, too, and a spectrum.

BF: They all do different things for me, I think. I look at my library and I've got a lot of Eerdmans commentaries. I think they do a really good job with the NICOT and NT and Pillar Commentary. I'm redesigning a class for spiritual formation at Liberty and I seem to be drifting towards a lot of Crossway books right now. That's not always how it is, but right now that seems to be what I'm seeing them publish a lot of and where I'm finding value in their publications. I think each publisher has areas that they try to identify with, and to me that's helpful. The more you read, obviously, the more you're going to figure out those uniquenesses for each publisher. They all have different denominational bents or maybe some of them may not have a denominational bent, they may just be broader in their evangelical commitments. I think that's healthy in a lot of ways.

DZ: I was going to say that some are going to tend to be more lightning-focused. Sometimes that's just because they're publishing dissertations or whatever it may be. Publishers like Brill, Eisenbrauns, Peeters... sometimes they're lightning-focused, whereas Eerdmans, Baker, and Baylor will tend to be a little more wide-ranging in their titles. Do you know what I mean? They have a little more impact and implication on a wider aspect of New Testament or Old Testament study. All of those are good things. We need both.

MH: Some publishers will publish, for instance, a work that will be more critically-oriented. I hate to caricature it, but I think this is a good way to say it for the sake of the audience. There will be some books where the author may not have as "high a view of scripture" as somebody else. In other words, they're more open to questioning things like a point of inerrancy or some sort of affirmation or denial that this or that person wrote this or that book. Your editorial staff at a publisher would say, "We don't really want to publish that because it's kind of to the left or outside the orbit of the evangelical mainstream" (whatever that is). They have a picture of that in their head and who their readership is predominantly, and so they'll defer on one title and pick another one because of some sort of critical thing. Maybe a superficial example is you might have a publisher that would publish a commentary on Daniel only if it didn't take a late date authorship view. Other publishers won't care what view of the authorship of Daniel that the author has. They'll publish either/or, early/late, who cares. Another publisher might reject one or the other for that reason. "We don't want to be known as the publisher who published this thing over here." They'll do things like that. Some publishers will publish a charismatic book and a non-charismatic book. You'll see both of those in the same catalog. Other ones won't. "We're in this tradition. We're the Reformed tradition so we're not going to publish anything that we feel is too Armenian." They'll just make decisions like that. You can sort of pick that up by experience. My experience has been that if you ask them, they'll tell you. (laughs)

They'll just give you what they're looking for and what they're not looking for. If you ever have a question, I would say to ask the publisher.

BF: A lot of times they'll also have their doctrinal statement written down for you online. You'll be able to see where they are going to be.

MH: Right... how broad or how narrow is it at this or that place, yeah.

BF: A lot of times they make sense as you go on. I was having a conversation with P&R about a book idea, and they said, "Well, as long as it fits within the Westminster Confession of Faith." And I thought that made sense, but I didn't know that was requisite.

MH: Puritan and Reformed—that would make sense! (laughing)

45:00

BF: Absolutely, it makes great sense! All of a sudden you now know with that little bit of information that P&R is going to be consistent with the Westminster. I was looking at Kregel earlier today and their doctrinal statement is up on their website for potential authors. So a lot of times they'll tell you what they believe and where they stand.

MH: Listeners should know that. Not all publishers are created equal. They have different audiences in mind. They have different ways that they want to brand themselves. They've all got different doctrinal commitments—or not. The higher-end publishers are going to get a lot of dissertations and nuts-and-bolts work, with primary sources and reviews of other literature in that book. They're just not all the same. What you want is you want something that (as you guys have laid out, both here and in the book)... If you want a reasonable level of comfort that this is an academic work and the author has put some serious time into the subject and the people who publish this have vetted and approved it for that reason... Does it have footnotes? Are there a lot of footnotes? Does it have a substantial bibliography? Does it have an index? These are the marks of something that's a little more serious than not. They're just handy ways to tell.

DZ: Don't forget, too, if you want your book to be totally out of price range but you also want to survive the apocalypse you go with Brill. (laughter)

MH: We've all had the experience of wondering what bank will give me a loan for the Brill title! They're outrageous. They've been around for 250 years. They can get away with that. You know, that's actually a decent point to make. Brill, Peeters, Oxford, Cambridge, and publishers like that used to think it was a sin to put anything in paperback because it might lower the price. Those kinds of publishers know up front that anything they publish will be bought by a certain number of libraries. So they can literally put something out on the first day knowing they will meet their costs based on how many libraries will buy anything they do. That means that the individual customer suffers, because they can charge you whatever they want. They don't need your purchase to break even on

your project or to make a profit. They've already done that with the libraries. They can get away with it so they do! It's just the way it is.

DZ: I was going to say just to add one more thing to it... The reason ... you need to evaluate a book by opening it is because there are good publications coming out from essentially something like self-publication. I think about Rick Brannan. His lexical commentaries on the pastoral epistles are fantastic, but that's just a step up from self-publication, yet they're still highly academic.

MH: Absolutely. We've had Rick on the podcast before because of the association with Logos. People have gotten to know him a little bit more. He blogged (I think he still blogs) with a decent amount of frequency. But people have gotten to know him and that he's a nuts and bolts guy in the text. He puts these things together. And you're right—it's convenient that he can publish this through Lexham and he was putting stuff out by himself. He's done all this work and it's still really good stuff. Enough people know him now, I think, and can trust what he does that they understand that. But you're right—that's a good point. Especially in this day and age, you can still produce things and essentially do them on your own and it can still be good material. It's great if you have a name—that you've published things before in regular publications or journal articles. Then you go out and do self-publishing. It's still you—you're still the same guy or girl doing that. So that helps, too. You can find lots of good stuff doing that.

Another question: What can a library give you that the internet won't?

50:00

DZ: There's tons of great stuff on the internet and there's lots of good books on the internet, too.

MH: Like Wikipedia? (laughter)

DZ: No, I'm thinking of something like www.archive.org, for instance. There is really good, classic, biblical studies material that is now outside of copyright so it is on the internet for anyone. But that was a published book with a good academic publisher, and it's just that it's out of copyright now. That just happened to me. I'm reviewing a book and he mentioned a series and I noticed the date and I said, "Oh, man, that should be available on archive.org." It was called *Beginning of Christianity*. And yeah—five volumes are on archive.org that I can use there. That was considered one of the monumental five-volume series on the book of Acts for such a long time and it's still cited today. That's freely available online. But newer publications, like you said before about journal articles, they're just not freely available because they're still under copyright.

MH: Exactly. Talking about libraries... again, one of the big questions I think to sort of narrow our focus here before we get into some method issues... There are going to be a lot of people in this audience that don't live near a university. They don't live near a seminary. Obviously they have the internet, but what advice do

you give them for how to do good research? Archive.org is a good source. Do you have other suggestions?

BF: I was going to say that I don't want it to be a shameless plug, but I think Logos is a great resource for people who don't have that library. One of the things that is helpful is that a lot of schools or universities are opening up a lot more digital sources that can be free (journal articles, etc.). But if you have gone to a school that doesn't allow alumni into their services or if you've never gone to school and so you don't have a school to go back to and to go to their online library, use something like Logos where you can build a repository but also find things that may be outside of the common Google searches or scholar.google.com searches. I think that would be a wise investment of your time, especially if you enjoy this process of researching.

DZ: Like you were saying, Mike, Brill publishes knowing that primarily it's libraries that are going to buy their volumes, right? That's somewhat true of all of the academic presses. Their main focus is the libraries and the higher-tier scholarship, as opposed to trade books that are hoping lots of people in the general populous are going to buy it. What that means for your listeners is that those academic works are largely sitting there in libraries. They're sitting on library shelves, unless they've been digitized at a place like Logos or whatever it may be. There's the two stages of doing research, right? It's actually finding what is the stuff I should be reading, and then there's the actual getting of it. The finding of the things in the book... we mentioned ATLA or ATLAS, which is kind of the main database. But it is a subscription. If you don't have connection to a university... Do you mind if I throw out just a few other things?

MH: Sure, oh yeah, go ahead.

DZ: Scholar.google.com was mentioned. But there are three other online databases that are free and searchable. Again, this is just to find the content, not the actual resource yet. One is ixtheo.de. Then there's the Documentation for Biblical Literature, Innsbruck (so Innsbruck University), and that's called BILDI. There's another one called BiBIL and that's the Biblical Bibliography of Lausanne. All of these are free, and you can search by title, keyword, or author. That would help you find the relevant literature on the topic.

MH: It's like a card catalog we're searching through for a bibliography.

DZ: Exactly.

MH: Those are useful. Like you said, that gets you to what you need to read, and then the question becomes, "Well, how do I get that thing?" And that becomes more of an obstacle. I think it's fair to say that the trend is software. Logos obviously has a lot of stuff and we license from probably 170 or 180 different publishers, and a number of those are the high-end academic ones. I would think that the software for someone who's not living near a library is good just for that

reason alone—even without the databases and reverse interlinears and all that kind of stuff, just to have access to a lot of that material. We have been able to license journals, as well. Not as many as we'd like, but you can get to an awful lot through the software. I'm glad you mentioned it, Ben—that's true. I've also noticed a trend in publishers that they're trying to make more of their content digital through subscriptions. Have either of you ever tried any of those?

DZ: I have the advantage (and Ben is probably the same)... because we're connected with universities, we just have it because we're faculty. So I can't speak to being outside of a university because (laughing) I've been in post-secondary education for so long!

MH: They're still a little pricey, but I think what you would pay for basically one Brill volume you might be able to get a subscription to some reference book/resource that a publisher like Brill or Oxford or Cambridge would have. You have to measure the price. This is just a number plucked out of my head and I don't know if this is the case, but they might want \$100 for an annual subscription to access their dictionary series (Oxford or something like that), but that's actually worth it because if they give you access to a lot of their reference materials for that price, you could spend \$100 on their website in just one title. Those kinds of things are still worth it.

BF: Has Logos thought about doing something like that?

MH: Yeah. We've thought about doing a subscription. There is a subscription program (Logos Now) where you can get access to the materials for a pretty low monthly price, and that's the logic to it. You allow the consumer to pay the monthly price and they essentially use what they care about, as opposed to buying a software package and they get 200 books that they're not really going to use. It just depends on the consumer. Some people will use most of that stuff and some people won't use any of it. That's a new trend, and I think it's going to continue. I think the academic world is going to go the way of Netflix and Amazon Prime. People are used to that. It makes sense to offer something like that, so sure—why not?

Have any of you tried... You're still attached to universities so maybe you haven't, but maybe you still know the situation. Do your libraries (connected with your institutions) allow people in the community to get like a borrower's card or number that will allow remote access? The sub-question to that is, could somebody in Hawaii get the same privilege—in other words, pay for a borrower identification number so they can access your material over the internet? Are you aware of anything like that?

BF: Mike, I don't know about that, but I would imagine (this is just Liberty and I don't know if I should say this) if someone applied to Liberty Online and paid the \$50 application fee, they would then be given a student ID and a log-in, and

whether they would take classes or not I would assume they would have access to the library.

DZ: I think that's the same for me, as well, but I can't say 100% for sure.

MH: I've never registered, so I can't affirm or deny that, either! (laughs) But if they do that, it's a great deal!

BF: It would be a great deal. It's actually a clever idea that you just kind of implanted in my mind, and maybe the minds of your listeners.

M H: Well, I can speak from experience as a community person. When we moved to Washington state, for some reason the University of Wisconsin just does not have the best alumni warmth (laughing) that other institutions do. We can get to certain things, but I can't access the online database (like ATLA) for free. Maybe they've changed it. It's been so long since I looked. But I couldn't, so what I did is I drove over to Trinity Western (20 minutes away) and asked for a library card. They said sure, so I paid for a library card that gives me an ID number. I can use the databases from anywhere. I haven't tried it for quite a while because I have an institutional ID now, but for a while I could not download an article in PDF from my house. I would have to go and be in the library to do that. But I know other institutions don't have that restriction. If you have a borrowing privilege—if you have an ID number and you can access their holdings from a distance—you can actually still get to material in PDF with that identification number.

1:00:00

BF: I think that you would be able to at Liberty. I think that's how their system is set up.

MH: For our listeners, if you want to tap into not just journals, but high-end reference books that are in digital form that publishers license to colleges and universities (whole books and whole series of books), this is the thing that you really need to try to do. You need to try to create that institutional affiliation or go directly to the library, and then you can get access to a lot of this material.

We spent a lot of time talking about what stuff I should and shouldn't look for. I hope listeners heard this: nobody landed on the side of "the internet is just a total waste of time, don't ever use it."

BF: That's right.

MH: It actually does have some good purposes and some good content on it. We talked about peer review and differences in publishers—what should I look for, what's an academic book and what isn't, all that sort of thing. But what you guys do in the book, other than that stuff, you sort of do two things. You talk about how to research a topic and then you give some practical advice about if you get tied into formal education, how to navigate that and balance it with life. In other

words, examining why am I pursuing formal education, and how do I balance my home life, my church life with this. I want to talk about both of those things before we finish the episode.

Where should people start when they're researching a topic? Just talk about what you recommend to your students about starting off and then once you get your feet wet, where do you go from there. Just give us an overview of that.

BF: That's a good question.

DZ: I always tell my students to start with Bible dictionaries. I love Bible dictionaries, and it's because of what you said before, Mike—they're designed to give you a lay of the land. Depending on which Bible dictionary you look at, looking it may be a super-quick lay of the land and not necessarily helpful beyond a basic definition of what you're looking at. But others, like the IVP black dictionary set or Anchor Bible Dictionary... these are quite comprehensive. Once you read that, you have a good sense of what's going on in the field regarding that topic. Bible dictionaries (by the way, for your listeners just in case they don't know) are not like the Merriam Webster dictionary where you're looking up a definition. It's more like an encyclopedia. You're looking at topics: people, places, and things. The other reason the Bible dictionaries are so good (especially the bigger ones) is that they always end with a bibliography. You've got a ready-made bibliography ready to go there. It doesn't take more than looking at two or three places max. As long as you're looking at the right places, you can build a list of other things to look at quite quickly.

MH: Yeah, this is why you should care about footnotes! (laughs) This is why you should care about using academic books that do have footnotes and bibliographies. They will tell you where else to look. They'll give you the next thing to go chase down. If you don't have that... Honestly, if you're reading a book that doesn't help you go beyond that book itself, that's kind of a waste of time. It really is. It might be wonderful for one or two thoughts, but it's like, "Great, but I still have five or six other questions and you didn't help me with those. Where do I go?" Again, if they haven't given you a bread-crum trail in footnotes and bibliography, it's a dead-end.

DZ: We've mentioned Logos a few times, but I would say again that there's a great dictionary that's accessible for free to everyone, and that's the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*. I always tell my students when they hem and haw over the price of the IVP black dictionaries that they need to get their Logos account and download the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*. It's awesome, it's huge, it's really good articles, and it's the newest Bible dictionary, so it's the most up-to-date one right now.

MH: Yeah, you can just google "Faithlife Study Bible" and if you create the account there, you'll get the *Lexham Bible Dictionary* with the Study Bible. It doesn't cost you anything.

DZ: Through your app or through your web browser or through Logos if you have Logos.

1:05:00

MH: So you start them off with Bible dictionaries. They find a good entry. (There's an excellent entry, by the way, in the *IVP Dictionary of Poetry and Wisdom* on the Divine Council. I highly recommend that one. (laughter)

DZ: There's a few really good ones in the *Lexham Bible Dictionary*, too.

MH: Right! (laughter)

DZ: By me, as well.

MH: For this podcast, listeners can go to www.logos.com/nakedbible and create an account. There's some material there...

DZ: It's a picture of Trey without his shirt on! (laughs)

MH: NO, it's *not* a picture of Trey without his shirt on!

TS: Oooohhh....

MH: Please don't give anyone that idea! (laughter)

TS: Actually, that would sell like hotcakes. That's exactly what they need to do! Mike, we need to look into getting like a calendar or something. A Nekked Bible Calendar. (lots of laughter)

MH: They're going to offer some deals for listeners. There's just a lot of stuff that you don't have to pay the high dollar amounts to just get your feet wet and get into some really good starter resources. If you haven't done that, you really need to check it out.

Beyond the Bible dictionaries, what's the next step? "I've read that, I kind of get the lay of the land, I sort of know what I'm looking for and I'm ready to jump into this topic." Where do people go from there? What's your research advice?

BF: Danny, keep going. You said you tell the students to start there. What's your next step in the process?

DZ: For me, coming from a biblical studies perspective, it's looking at a Bible dictionary and then it's looking at one or two of what I would call one of the top technical commentaries. I can expand on how to know that for sure, but when you go to something like *Word Biblical Commentary* and you read about the passage that you want to write on or that you want to study—again, looking at their footnotes or looking at the bibliography for that passage will... First off, you'll

see overlap from some of the Bible dictionaries because they're in conversation with one another. But it will add to your list. By the time you look at two commentaries and one or two Bible dictionaries, you've got a substantial list of resources to look at.

MH: *Word* is a higher-end commentary. They will not produce Hebrew and Greek in transliteration, so that's an obstacle. But that's not what you're talking about. You're not saying, "Hey, after a Bible dictionary you're going to magically read Greek and Hebrew so go to the *Word Bible Commentary*." That's not the point. When you go to the *Word Biblical Commentary*, they have bibliography in each section up front of each of the verses that they're going to discuss. Like Genesis 1:1-3, before you even hit the discussion, they've given you a lot of resources that the writer will be interacting with in the course of what you read. Just use it for that! Who cares if you can read the Greek or Hebrew? Right there they've just given you a whole block of journal articles and dictionary entries. That's just worth the time alone just to read through the bibliography.

DZ: That's one of my favorite things about *Word Biblical Commentary*. I wish more commentaries had that format. But for the rest of them, really, you're looking at the footnotes and seeing what they're quoting as they discuss that passage. You'll find the information there. So those are the two steps that I tell them. The third one is for if you're going for a particularly exhaustive look at something. So if you're working on a thesis or a PhD, for example, you're supposed to be a lot more exhaustive. Not every single thing is going to be listed there. That's when you would go to those online databases like ATLA or Index Theologicus and those types of places. For most students and for your listeners, a good Bible dictionary and a good technical commentary are going to give them plenty of things to read and interact with.

MH: I would agree. LBD (*Lexham Bible Dictionary*), the Intervarsity set, *Anchor Bible Dictionary*... those are sets that I would hope all my listeners would have access to. There's no excuse with Lexham because it's free. The other ones are highly recommended, but I know when I've written for these publications that they only give you a certain amount of word count. They'll restrict the number of sources, often. So what you're trying to do as a person contributing to one of these things is to decide, "What are the best resources I can put in the bibliography? I only have a certain amount of space. What's going to be the most helpful?" That's why you should use these things. The person producing the content for that thing is trying to help you get to the best material possible. I don't know... is the old ISBE on archive.org? Do you know that, Danny?

1:10:00

DZ: I don't offhand.

MH: You might actually be able to find the old ISBE (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*) somewhere reproduced in PDF or something like that. It's out of print and has been replaced (probably decades ago now).

DZ: It is there.

MH: See, for many, many years, ISBE was the standard Bible encyclopedia (Bible dictionary). There it is for free! You've got to learn about some of these sources. That's what we're trying to do in this episode—to try to get you to some of these things. You can actually do a lot of good research and you don't pay a dime for it.

DZ: And once you have those, if you don't have any access with a library... Again, if it's out of copyright, it's likely going to be on archive.org. The other place I wanted to make sure I mentioned, too (because it's a great spot) is biblicalstudies.org.uk. That's amazing the amount of work that Rob Bradshaw has done there. A lot of that is still in copyright, but Bradshaw chases down the authors and gets permission from them, so it's still there even though for the publisher it's still in copyright. And there are journals that eventually put out all their stuff. For instance, if you went to www.biblicalstudies.org.uk and you typed in "Heiser," you would see Mike's article *from Bulletin of Biblical Research* because the *Bulletin of Biblical Research* does, I think, a four-year embargo.

MH: Something like that.

DZ: So after that it's all online. Even without a university library, you can still even now get your hands on some good journal articles. That's a prime spot.

MH: Absolutely. We should say something about commentaries. People can go up to my web page (www.drmsb.com) and put the word "commentaries" in the search field. I would advise putting it in as a plural. I did a little bit of a series (I don't know how many parts) on what's the difference between commentaries and that not all commentaries are created equal. If we can summarize here, how would you describe the differences between different kinds of commentaries that people could use?

BF: I would say that based on your purpose, different commentaries accomplish different purposes (like all books). Every once in a while, I'll use a commentary for a devotional. I'll work my way through a commentary (or part of one) just devotionally. In that context, I use more of a pastoral commentary. I'm reading before bed at nighttime and that's been a blessing. Danny's talked about the commentaries he recommends that his students pursue after their first initial work with a Bible dictionary, and he wants them to pursue a higher-end academic commentary.

MH: Visually, what's the difference?

BF: Visually?

MH: If I'm holding two commentaries, how are they going to look and read differently?

BF: The academic commentary is going to have the languages right there. You're going to see them throughout. For those of you who don't know the languages, that's going to be intimidating, and so you might want something a little less academic. The pastoral commentary or something sort of... *The New Application Commentary* or the *NIV Application Commentary* that Zondervan does—I enjoy that because it talks about the text and then summarizes that section with some sort of application. To me, I find that encouraging and edifying. Crossways has the pastoral commentary that Kent Hughes has written. They're very short and they don't have any footnotes. It's not going to be something that a professor is going to go, "Great job, this is an awesome paper!" if that's all you have used, but if you're looking for something that's going to just be readable in a setting like a nightly devotion, that's a great idea.

MH: Yeah, a pastoral commentary, like you said, would be something that summarizes. It takes a section of scripture and summarizes it.

BF: Going back to primary research with the very first question that we talked about... The text is going to be the primary source. A pastoral devotional commentary is further down the line. It's going to summarize, it's not going to go to the languages and show you the linguistic work that it took to get to where they're drawing the conclusion.

1:15:00

MH: Right. And it's not even going to be verse-by-verse. It might be tied to a particular translation. It's not going to be original language oriented. It's not going to be verse-by-verse.

BF: It might even be tied to their sermon outline. To me, there's a value in that, especially based on the reader's skill level. The audience listening to this podcast is all going to come with different abilities and different backgrounds. For some, that will be a fantastic resource.

MH: I think, just like with books, you can visually tell the difference between a scholarly commentary and an academic one. Again, are there footnotes? Are there original languages in there? Are they doing Greek and Hebrew in there—even in transliteration, but especially if it's the Greek and Hebrew characters? Is it not only verse-by-verse, but even phrase-by-phrase? If you're seeing that kind of stuff, that's an academic commentary. You have to have a certain set of skills to basically have that be useful to you. If you're looking for something that's not that, well then you want to pick up something that doesn't have that kind of stuff in it. It's more summarizing, you might have an application section in there, you might have the sermon outline (as you mentioned, Ben). There's a wide range of different kinds of commentaries that are aimed at different audiences to try to accomplish different things. It's not that one is good and one is awful. You can only use evaluative terms like that when you judge them properly on what they're trying to do.

BF: That's a good word.

MH: It's not fair [to judge them wrongly].

DZ: The academic commentaries, unlike the pastoral or more devotional, don't really get to the point of saying, "So what does this mean for *me* or for my community," and that's a perfectly valid question. It's just that they're doing different things. An academic commentary is not going to ever get to that point. Also, you're going to be encountering multiple perspectives on a passage in a technical or academic commentary. You'll get some of that in a more pastoral commentary because that kind of bridges the gap with some of the academic discussion, as opposed to something like a devotional commentary where you're really only hearing one perspective, for the most part, on the passage.

MH: Yeah, they're not going to take you through all the ins and outs of all the debates on this or that. That's what academic commentaries do. A pastoral, devotional commentary is going to skip all that and land somewhere immediately. They're going to go from that perspective and talk about applying it to life, and so on and so forth. There are a number of discernible differences between different kinds of commentaries that people need to be aware of.

To wind down, I want to land on this: What about the person in the audience who may be in seminary now or in a graduate school master's program, or even in a Bible college—some kind of formal educational situation. I can tell you right now... My experience is sort of atypical. I've had the (how do I correctly assess or describe my situation?)... It wasn't a continual horror story (laughing), but it had lots of that in it. I had to work full-time cumulatively for fifteen years going through graduate school. That's not something I recommend, it was just something that had to be done. There wasn't going to be another way to do it. So it can be a real struggle. Other people don't have anywhere near that sort of gauntlet to travel through. I don't regret it. Providentially, I think it was a wonderful thing. That's not to say it was ever easy, because it wasn't! But I'm appreciative of it. But for people just generally, there's a lot that goes into this. You might have to move. Sometimes you can't get an online situation. How should people think about getting into degree programs? Why would anybody do this? Why go to seminary? Why get a degree? If you take that leap, how do you just balance life with your circumstances? How do you live through the thing and do well and not destroy your family and yourself?

1:20:00

DZ: Everyone's story is a little bit different. For Ben, it was step-by-step with the Spirit really saying, "This is your next step" and never really knowing. For me, I started with a one-year Bible school out of high school, and then I knew I wanted to study more. After the first year and a half at an undergrad college, I knew that I wanted to teach. The path, essentially, was laid for me at that point. If I wanted to teach New Testament at a seminary, I next needed to get a grad-level degree, and then next I needed to pursue a PhD. In some ways, it was kind of the vocation that I was aiming for. I knew what I needed to do.

BF: I think everybody should do it because I think it's one of the greatest blessings of my life. That's biased by my own experience. It's a joy to wake up and to study. But it's also exhausting! It's mentally exhausting, and in some way, somehow, it's physically exhausting when you just find yourself sitting there in a library for hours upon hours. That's surprising to students. I think students expect, "I'm coming to seminary and it's going to be like church camp. (laughter) There's going to be this spiritual high."

MH: "Everybody's in my corner..." (laughing)

BF: Yeah! And they get here and it's just different. I know my first semester of seminary... I mentioned I came from an education background. I saw that they were offering Romans and I was like, "[Gasp] They have a class on *Romans*? This is going to be *awesome!*" So I jumped into my first semester and took Romans. I go to the bookstore and they hand me Moo's commentary with the *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, and that was the textbook. (laughs) I open it up and I'm like, "I don't understand what these words mean!"

MH: Uh-oh!

BF: I remember just reading and going, "I'm not stupid, but this makes *no* sense!" And so I came in and I just remember kind of hitting this crisis of "what am I doing here? I don't get it!" So part of my challenge to students is to walk themselves through the seminary calling in a proper order. One of the reasons I think Danny and I wrote this book is because we wish we both would have had this book in our own initial seminary experience. When you come and you are expecting this...

MH: You don't like the white-knuckle experience?

BF: It is! You're expecting this time where you're really just going to grow and you *do* grow, but not always equally in your intellect and your relationship with the Lord. Sometimes those come in different ways. This is a long answer, but I remember at one time in my seminary experience I was just kind of burnt out and I remember going to a local bookstore and saying, "I'm not looking for anything academic. I need to find a book that tells me Jesus loves me." (laughter) So I look through all the topics and I find a Brennan Manning book and I'm like, "Oh, he's going to tell me Jesus loves me. I just need to remember the simplicity of the gospel and of my faith." So I challenge students to create times in their own life to remember that. If you have a family, tell your family (your wife or husband or kids or parents) to call you after the first month of seminary and remind you of the gospel—remind you that you have a calling. Because you're going to get in over your head pretty quickly. My kids are learning how to swim this summer, and at the beginning of the summer my four-year-old wouldn't put his face in the water. Yesterday we were going swimming and he jumps in the water and comes back

up. The water will recede. You will be able to breathe again. But it's disconcerting that first time you're dunked under and you have the white-knuckle experience.

1:25:00

DZ: I was going to say, too, that the other reason why you would get into a degree or a program or a seminary is that you really need to trust in the mentorship and guidance that's given to you. That's not only one-on-one stuff, but it's also the degree and program itself. This really came home to me only in hindsight. Once I became a faculty member, we had to go through a curriculum review process. It was at that point that I realized that the faculty members actually sit around with all of their ministry experience and scholarly experience and discussion with the church leaders and pastors all around here in our denomination to say, "What do pastors who are coming up through the M.Div. and going out into ministry really need to know? What are we not doing well? What do we need to push them on?" For me, it wasn't until hindsight that I realized how important that was, because if it was up to me, I would have just taken Greek, Hebrew, Biblical Studies, and maybe a little bit of theology, but that's it. But when I did an M.Div. I had to take Counseling and Pastoral leadership. And I realized, for instance, in the Counseling (because I was forced to take a course like that), I learned that I wasn't actually a very good listener. But I learned empathy and compassion and I realized I had my own stuff from my childhood that I had to deal with, too. When you take something like an M.Div. (or whatever it might be), there are people behind that process who said, "The people who are going into ministry or this vocation really need to be exposed to this information through these courses." So we need to honor that, as well. In the midst of it, sometimes you're just biting down on your lip and saying, "Why am I doing this?" It's only in hindsight that I've been able to really appreciate those things that I went through that, if left to myself, I would have never taken a course like that.

BF: That's good. I know for us it's on the second page of our degree completion plan and I just never turned to that page. (laughs) I thought, "I can figure this roadmap out myself! I'll start at the end of the line." That's why I took Romans so early. I think your words here, Danny, are really wise.

MH: Yeah, I think it's also okay if... For listeners who are thinking about what it would be like to take a class... "I'm thinking about maybe going into the ministry or maybe doing this or that." Just take one. Even if it's just auditing, you get exposure to what this is like. It's not as expensive, you don't have the pressure of assignments. Why not? Just get your feet wet. Try it out. If you're never going to go that direction, that's fine, too. When you do different things (my own experience here), the Lord will tell you, "do this or that," or "I want you to go further here." He'll make it very clear to you if you may not need a degree for what you really want to do in ministry. I may take two or three more courses, I may just learn how to be a good student... those things will become evident. You don't have to have all the answers up-front. I think a lot of people feel some kind of pressure to know exactly what the will of God for them is up-front. You don't

need that. God knows what he's dealing with when he's working with people! You just don't have to have that.

BF: I think the Church would benefit from a lot more men and women who said, "I only want to take one class, and I'm going to take a hermeneutics class or a class on how to teach the Bible." It would give back to the local church in great ways. You don't have to say, "Oh, if I go to seminary, I'm really committing to quit my job and to go take a pastorate." I don't think that's true. I think, in some cases, some people who did that would eventually recognize, "I want to take a pastorate," and I think a lot of people would just find 20, 30, or 40 years of vibrant ministry as lay-leaders within the church, as deacons or elders. I think that would be great.

MH: You might be in a situation where maybe your pastor didn't go to seminary. Well, why not devote some resources into letting him take a class? Or if your elders or deacons or whatever, or you teach in church, or you run small groups... Maybe your church will help you out. Just take a class. It'll raise the bar a little bit. It helps you to interact with people a little bit better. You're able to answer questions. It's not like there's a silver-bullet class that will let you know the answers to everybody's questions, but the more you put into your mind and the better your thinking becomes, you're just going to naturally be able to help people a little bit more when they do have questions, and interpretation is part of that.

DZ: Entering into the conversation... exactly. Education formulates you as a person such that you know that if you don't know the answer, you think you know how you can start finding the answer and entering into the dialogue. That's so much of what formal education is about. It's not giving you all the answers because there's just too much to know, right?

1:30:00

MH: Absolutely.

Well, this has been good. I want to thank you guys again and recommend your book. What we talked about really just scratches the surface in some areas. If you're thinking at all about taking coursework in any way (even just auditing a class), there's a lot in this book that you'll really benefit from—just good advice. Certainly, if you are taking the plunge as a student it will help you navigate the process of what a degree program is like. It's just good advice on how to manage your time, how to manage your family relationships, your local church, all that sort of thing. You said you wished you would have had this kind of book going into it all, that somebody would have given you a heads-up, "Hey, this is going to happen to you!" or "Hey, when you run into this, here are some things you should think about doing or not doing." There's a lot of that kind of material in this book. It's not just all about good study habits and resources and how to sort of tackle a topic. You're going to get that, too, but it's a fully-orbed, well-rounded discussion of what it really means to be in this sort of situation—surviving and thriving in seminary—but even if that's not your plan, you're going to pick up a lot of good things in the book. Thank you guys for writing it.

DZ: Thank you so much for the endorsement!

MH: Yeah, absolutely! Lord willing, people will get this, and I know if they'll get it they're going to get something good out of it. On any given page you're going to learn something useful. So thanks again.

DZ: Thanks very much. I was going to say, too (and I wanted to make sure I was allowed to say it), that the plan is to keep the conversation going that this book is starting. That's going to happen in the next few weeks as we launch a website called www.thriveseminary.com. It'll be more discussion and topics like this, both from us as well as soliciting articles from seminary students, as well, to hear what they're going through and how they're tackling these types of things, so this conversation will continue.

MH: That's a good idea.

DZ: Yeah, so hopefully that will launch in the next few weeks.

BF: We would love some of your audience who are seminary students or graduates to email us and we'd love to continue that with their help.

MH: When that goes live, let me know and I'll blog about it. We'll amend the episode page for this episode. We'll have a link to the book, obviously, on the episode page. But once that site is live, just let us know and we'll make sure people know about it.

DZ/BF: Thanks very much.

MH: Have a good one, you guys!

DZ/BF: Take care, bye.

TS: All right, Mike. That's very interesting. It's always good to know where us laypeople can go to get information to learn more.

MH: Yeah, it's important. There's a lot of good material out there that, as we pointed out, you don't even have to pay anything for. There's a lot of good research stuff out there and people ought to know about it.

TS: Next week, back into Melchizedek, Part 3!

MH: Yep. We're going to wrap up Melchizedek. One more part—we're not going to break that into two. One more part and we'll be done with him.

TS: Then we've got the Q&A, so don't forget. I've gotten some questions, Mike, so if you've got any Melchizedek questions go ahead and send them to me at treysticklin@gmail.com for our Melchizedek Q&A.

MH: I can't imagine that there would be anything left! (laughs)

TS: You never know what stone is left unturned, so I guess we'll find out. All right, Mike. We just want to thank Danny and Ben for coming on the show and also for our sponsor of the episode—Faithlife, with their Logos 7 Basic Package, which you can sign up and get for free right now by going to www.logos.com/nakedbible. We thank them again for that. Please go support us by supporting them and getting that free software. I think you'll love it, obviously! With that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast. God bless.