



## Learning Biblical Exposition

*by Pastor Perry Tinklenberg*

ITEM is still bearing fruit in Ukraine. The Lord called ITEM to train students in formal theological education, and the addition of workshops on Biblical exposition has challenged and strengthened Ukrainian pastors. The workshops teach them to sharpen their skills in understanding Biblical texts and to shape Biblical sermons based on the internal structure of each text.

The workshop material was heavily influenced by the Charles Simeon Trust, an international ministry that teaches students to preach and teach. ITEM Board Member Rob Toornstra adapted the material, and it transferred cross

culturally very well. I found the format easy to work with and trustworthy. By the last session, a first-time participant provided a commendable outline highlighting the theme of his text with supporting internal structure of his particular Scripture.

The best summary for ITEM's ministry came from Kiev Regional Bible College Director Vitalii Tkachuk, who expressed great appreciation for the foundational principles that produce expository preaching. He described the teaching principles as solid, transferable and reinforced at each workshop.

Of course, that is the strategy behind all workshops on Biblical exposition. The goal is to promote hermeneutical principles that are easily remembered, attainable and worthy of regular practice to proclaim the Word of God, instead of the best thinking of the individual preacher.

## Christ-centered preaching

*by Dr. Rob Toornstra, CRC Pastor*

"I realized that I have a lot of work to do...But I'm excited about doing it!" That was the comment made by one participant at a recent preaching conference in Campina, Romania. This young preacher had been involved in a preaching ministry for years. He said some of his sermons had been expository, but many had not. Instead, most of his preaching had been topical—he chose Scripture passages on a theme and strung them together to craft messages.

This individual was one of about 30 pastors and elders who attended ITEM's "Preaching Christ from the Epistles" conference in late March. Together, the group—led by Rev. Bill Wilton and I—studied Galatians. We learned how to apply the message of a particular text in the context of the whole Bible. Discussions at the small group level helped cement the ideas being taught in the lectures. In our sermons Wilton and I tried to model what was being taught.

The response to the seminar was overwhelmingly positive. Many expressed appreciation for learning practical techniques on how to study one passage of Scripture to find the message that God intended to communicate to His people. The participants were challenged to take what they learned at this three-day conference and practice it in their pastoral ministry. No doubt, this will involve hard work. But there is great joy in studying and applying the message of Scripture each week.



## Long-term learning

*by Phil DeHart, PCA Missionary, SE Asia*

My third trip to Timor, Indonesia, came as an invitation from ITEM and the Calvinist Reformed Churches to bring theological education to the churches' pastors, school teachers and high school students.

The module on Old Testament Survey sought to help students establish familiarity with each book of the OT and how the books fit together. The students learned to dip into the Old Testament at any point and understand context. Ultimately the goal was for all to delight in God's Word because it declares who we are in relation to God.

We focused on each book's basic structure and how it contributes to the story of Redemption, with Christ as its fulfillment. Time did not permit extensive engagement with the content, so I brought in the large themes and ideas to show how they connect with each other. The covenant and theocracy were the main connecting features with a heavy emphasis on the various types of Christ throughout the Old Testament.

While teaching, I observed several things about the islanders. The people of Timor have pride in their community and enjoy doing things together. Jonson Dethan, a leader in the Calvinist Reformed Churches, encourages the younger generation to take on leadership. Not surprisingly, having large families, as Jonson also has, has been one way the church has grown significantly. Jonson places a high priority on theological training for the students, so that they may be shaped by the Bible.

Concurrent to my module was another training program for tech students on cultivating sandalwood trees. Sandalwood, the second most valuable wood in the world, is native to Timor but has died out. Jonson sees this as a key investment for Timorese, especially the local pastors who have no retirement plan. All this showed that the Christians of Timor are taking a long-term approach to ministry and life.

## Opportunities to Pray for ITEM

1. Dick Moes is teaching in Indonesia through April 7. He will be exploring new locations for ITEM while he is there.
2. Steve Swets and Bill Boekestein will teach Biblical Hermeneutics in Kenya, April 4-14.
3. David Smith will teach Biblical Theology April 30-May 4.
4. Will Hesterberg will visit North Carolina April 7-12 to recruit instructors and raise money.
5. We need more instructors in India.

## Upcoming in the May issue

If any readers need to take the required minimum distribution from their IRA accounts and want to use that money to make a donation to ITEM, we will have an article in the next issue that explains how to do that.

## How to contribute

In the U.S. send contributions to ITEM, PO Box 31456, St Louis, MO 63131 or [www.ITEM.org](http://www.ITEM.org). Email: [lwhesterberg@gmail.com](mailto:lwhesterberg@gmail.com). Contributions to ITEM in Canada may be sent to ITEM, c/o of Action International Ministries, 3015 A, 21<sup>st</sup> Street NE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2E 7T1. **Phone 618-939-5069.**