

HOME-ILETICS

ACTS 2:42

This past week I made up a word – then I discovered I’m not the only person who’s done so. The *Dictionary of Unword Words* is a list of unofficial words. Here’re a few terms invented by ordinary people...

Blamestorming... is trying to think of people to blame for your mistake.

Blimple... is a large pimple.

Calorosity... is the desire to see the dessert menu even though you’re on a diet and you know you shouldn’t be ordering a dessert.

Comedicide... is when a pastor deliberately tells a bad joke.

Exaspirin... is an aspirin bottle sealed with an irremovable cotton wad.

Fivehead... is a forehead with a receding hairline.

Garbpaction... occurs when you’re too lazy to tie up the trash bag and take it outside, so you push the garbage down further into the can.

Memnants... are the chipped or broken M&Ms at the bottom of the bag.

Negatile... is the area of the bathroom floor where the scales weigh one to five pounds lighter. If you’re on a diet you’re aware of the negatile.

Onosecond... is the period of time between pressing the send button and realizing you really shouldn't have sent that email.

Obliviot... is an idiot that doesn't know he's an idiot.

Nostralgia... is a reminder of the past brought on by a specific smell.

And finally, here's your pastor's own made-up word. Someone should add it to Wikipedia later this afternoon. It's the term, "**Home-iletics.**"

Now, if you've attended a Bible College or a Seminary you've probably heard a similar term - "**Homiletics.**" In a Catholic Church the official name for the sermon is the "**homily.**" "**Homiletics**" refers to "**the art of preaching.**"

Schools for pastors have whole departments devoted to the subject. One seminary I read about offers sixteen different courses on Homiletics.

But **Home-iletics** is when you take the power of biblical teaching and add it to the dynamics of a small group of believers meeting in a home.

Suddenly, *the teaching AND the fellowship* are both enhanced.

The Bible study becomes more pertinent and applicable - while the fellowship among believers becomes more focused and spiritual.

Home-iletics generates tremendous power - life-change results.

Beginning in a few weeks CC will launch a new emphasis - utilizing a new method - hoping for new results. Rather than sit on our laurels and be content with the status quo, we want to unleash the power of **Home-letics**.

We want CC to be as *strong as possible* and *grow as much as possible*.

This morning I want to explain our new approach, *after I provide you a biblical basis for what we're doing...* Though the method is new to us, the idea is as old as Christianity. Today, I want to talk about **Home-letics**.

And here's where we'll start... *the most powerful change agent on the planet is the Bible!* Understand the high priority God places on Scripture!

In Judaism, the name of God was considered sacred. So much so, the rabbis thought of God's name as too holy to even write or speak.

In Leviticus a man was stoned for blaspheming the name of God.

God's name was highly revered. Yet that's why Psalm 138:2 is so stunning - we're told, **"God magnifies His Word even above His name."**

Hebrews 4:12 unveils the Bible's enormous influence... **"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."** The

Bible is alive and active. It's powerful or effective. It's surgical – it cuts to the heart.

The Bible is no mere book. It has a life of its own. It's self-propelled. Isaiah 55 tells us the Bible never returns void – in other words, it always accomplishes that for which it was sent. Men might fail, but not the Bible.

God's Word lays bare our motive – it challenges our assumptions – it stirs up our faith. Martin Luther once wrote, *"The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold of me."*

Come under its sway, and the Bible will make you a different person.

Psalm 119:9 is one of my favorite verses. The psalmist asks, *"How can a young man cleanse his way?"* And I love the logic behind this verse...

Notice, the psalmist doesn't ask, *"How can a young child cleanse his way - or a middle age woman - or an old man?"* Kids, and grandmas, and geezers aren't really known as rebel-rousers... So you clean up the way of a grandma - *no biggie* – how dirty could it have been in the first place?

But young men! Oh my, adolescent men are cocky, and passionate, and reckless, and stubborn, and hotheaded, and hormonal, and impulsive, and obstinate, and independent... *I know, because I was one!* Yet here's the point - *if you can cleanse a young man's way you can affect anyone!*

So how can a young man cleanse his way? Psalm 119:9, “By taking heed according to Your word.” This is why the Bible is vitally important...

This Bible alone has the ability to renew a mind - transform a character - create a new outlook - break old habits – redirect a passion - produce sensitivity - spawn self-discipline - develop faith! Paul assures us in Romans 10:17, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

What can tame a young man’s passions? There’re a 1000 shortcuts...

Just pray over him - cast out the demon – slay him in the Spirit – have him see a counselor - enroll him in an accountability group... the list goes on and on. But make no mistake about it - the only hope for a young man to live a pure and godly life is a steady diet of God’s Word!

Once, I received a letter from a member of our church. It was a keeper. It read, “Thank you for teaching God’s Word and not a lot of other stuff.”

We teach you God’s Word, but how we do it is just as significant...

I don’t just **teach from the Bible** – *pick a topic I want to talk about and then find a supportive text*. No, we **teach the Bible**. We examine the text in its context. We move through a book chapter by chapter, verse by verse.

Read Acts 20. It’s Paul’s farewell to the elders of Ephesus. There he tells them, “I have not shunned to

declare to you the whole counsel of God.” In other words, Paul preached the whole Bible – not part and parcel.

He later said to Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” This is why we say it takes *the whole Bible* to make a *whole Christian*.

Churches are either like McDonalds or your Mom. They serve up Happy Meals and McFlurries - junk food. Or they cook you meat and vegetables.

Isaiah and Leviticus can taste like spinach compared to steak from Luke, and ice cream from Revelation. But you need the whole menu - not just nibbles. It's the whole Bible that provides a well-rounded spiritual diet.

I want to feed you like your mother. I don't mind laboring in the kitchen to cook you up a nutritious meal – but you've got to come to dinner...

And the dinner hour at Calvary Chapel is our *Through the Bible Study*.

On Sunday AM we tackle certain books, and touch on vital passages – but we go line upon line in our weekly *Through the Bible Study*.

That's the first half of [Home-iletics](#) – solid, thorough Bible teaching.

I said earlier that Bible teaching is the most powerful change agent on the planet - *that's true*. But the environment in which it's taught and studied is also a factor. Like flying a kite... It's always fun to fly a kite, but

it's more fun on a windy day. A kite launches easier and sails higher with the wind.

You can read the Bible in an ivory tower, all by yourself, and you'll benefit. But study the Scriptures with other believers in committed, caring relationships - then discuss how to apply it practically - then encourage each other to follow-through – then pray for one another as they do.

When all that happens it's like Bible Study on steroids.

This is one of the reasons the early Church saw Christianity spread like wildfire. The first Christians harnessed this small group dynamic.

They took seriously their call to love one another and be the family of God – and they sensed they could best function like family if they were meeting in a home. People were less likely to slip through the cracks.

In Acts 2:42 we're given a description of life in the first church – the Church in Jerusalem. It says, **“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...”** At the top of their agenda was *consistent Bible teaching*.

That's what we've been discussing – the first ingredient of **Home-iletics**.

Yet along with Bible study came **“fellowship, breaking of bread** (or communion and worship), **and prayer.”** The early Christians captured the interactions that were conducive to a smaller group meeting in a home.

Later in verse 46 Luke sums up life in the church, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house...”

Christians had big, corporate meetings like our Sunday AM services.

In the Temple large crowds could assemble. Believers were reminded they're not alone. They gained strength from numbers. Even today, all Christians need to be reminded that we're part of the larger body of Christ.

This is why Hebrews warns us about “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” If we subdivide into little house churches we can grow introverted and self-absorbed. As Christians we're one body. We have a group identity that makes *our impact stronger* and *our light burn brighter*.

But the believers in Jerusalem also went from “house to house.”

They met in smaller groups – more personal settings. Christians also gathered in homes where they could interact and get to know each other.

They still studied the Bible, but they helped each other apply what they learned. They lived out their faith together in a community – in a family.

Older women taught younger women. Married couples encouraged newlyweds. Older parents mentored younger parents. Some people were role models. Others were understudies. But all believers found a place to belong.

The church enjoyed a family life that promoted spiritual growth.

Understand Christianity emphasizes what theologians call “**Incarnational Truth.**” The word “**carne**” is Latin for “**meat or flesh.**” Eat a bowl of *chili con carne* and you’re eating *chili with meat.* “**Incarnate**” means “**in the flesh.**”

When Jesus came to Earth He came *in carne.* John’s Gospel puts it, “**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**” This is *The Incarnation.*

But much of God’s truth is communicated *in carne.*

God wants all Christians to be bearers of Incarnational Truth. He wants us to embody His love, and grace, and wisdom, and mercy. He wants us to show the world His truth through our deeds and actions – not just words.

This is why to really know *the Word of God* and *the Truth of God* it requires that you be in community. You learn about grace – not just in the abstract, but in a family – by rubbing shoulders with gracious people.

This is also why *podcasts* will never replace *preachers.* It’s not just a message God sends. He adds voice to His message through a messenger.

God doesn’t just want us to hear or read truth, but to see it lived out.

This means even in an age of electronic media the Church is still relevant – fellowship is still vital - small groups are still essential. There’re certain lessons and truths Christians cannot learn apart from one another.

When Paul wrote to his friend, Philemon, he greeted him, his wife, his son, and “the church in your house.” Apparently, the church in Colosse’ met, and studied God’s Word, and worshipped in the home of Philemon.

And this was not a random event. Church historians teach us that for the first 275 years of its existence, the Church met in small groups.

This means the most successful period of Church expansion occurred when fellowships of believers were based in a home setting. Big groups are certainly needed, but a home provides an informal, friendly, inviting, and less-threatening atmosphere that’s suited for spiritual growth.

Let me tell you what I observe happening in our church. Every church consists of three groups of people – the **crowd**, **core**, and **community**.

The **crowd** shows up on Sunday morning. They come to church when it’s convenient - when there’s nothing else to do, they’re committed.

But if the lake calls - or they get free tickets to the game – it’s audios amigos! “*Asta la vista, baby, I’ll see you at Christmas or Easter.*” You don’t know if a member of the crowd stops coming because nobody ever really got to know them in the first place. They’re a ship passing in the night.

Whereas, the **core** members of a church are just the opposite – they’re here every time the doors are open. They stay for both services. If a core person isn’t here you know it immediately - their five jobs get left undone.

These are the people who laugh at my jokes even when they’re not funny – even when I’m committing “*comedicide*.” They just love to hang out at church. Around 2:00 in the afternoon you have to send them home.

But in between the **crowd** and **core** there’s a **community** of believers. These folks are *committed to Jesus* and *connected to the Church*.

The community group may not be out-front or visible - but they’ve found a place in the church. There are people they know and that know them.

If they miss a Sunday they have a few friends who’ll give them a call. If they miss a friend at church, they care enough to pick up the phone and return the favor. Calvary Chapel has become a place where they belong.

The community gives and receives. They serve and they’re served. They love and they’re loved. They care for folks, and folks care for them.

And here’s what I see happening in our church...

I don’t mean to be negative - I’m just keeping it real... Our **crowd** remains *steady*. Our **core** remains *strong*. But our **community** has *shrunk*.

We attract a **crowd**. We keep our **core** group strong and healthy. But we're having problems expanding the **community** circle of our church.

And there're two reasons. For some people it's **a lack of food**; for other folks it's **a lack of fellowship**. To move from crowd to community you have to be *confident in your faith*, and *conscious of your need* for others.

This is why some of you need to **feed** your faith. You're malnourished. Sunday morning isn't enough. You have some catching up to do. You need an accelerated study. You could benefit from the *Through the Bible Study*.

Still others of you need to be in **fellowship**. You don't need more Bible teaching per se, but you need the practice of living it out with other people. You need encouragement and examples - *to apply what you know*.

And up until now, if I made a suggestion that would help you both it would involve another night of the week... If you're getting fed on Sunday nights with the *Through the Bible Study*, I'd say attend a home group.

If you're part of a home group I'd say why not give Sunday nights a try!

But if you're like me your life is busy. You can't carve out another night.

This is where **Home-iletics** kicks in. Why not consolidate what you need into one night? **Feed** and **fellowship** at one

time - *the kind of Bible teaching you're accustomed to receiving at CC – with the advantages of a small group.*

Beginning this September we're going to combine our *Through the Bible Study* with the dynamics of home fellowships. There'll no longer be a Sunday night Bible study at this building; instead there'll be multiple *Through the Bible Groups* meeting every night of the week, but Saturday.

One group is going to meet at the Chapman's house on Sunday night at 6:30... You'll get there at 6:20. Donna will have guacamole and chips.

You'll say hello and make yourself comfortable on the couch, in front of the big screen. Right at 6:30 James will pop in the DVD. My mug will appear on the screen with a few announcements - then we'll have worship. We'll be getting video from CC worship leaders all over the country.

Then I'll take the next 45 minutes and study through 1-2 NT chapters.

Afterwards, James will have some questions aimed at provoking discussion and application. The group will end in prayer. And then everyone will crash the fridge, and hang out until Donna runs you off.

Of course you might not want to go to the Chapmans on Sunday nights. Especially if Tech ever beats Georgia - you don't want to hear them gloat.

Instead you might live in the Grayson area, and have kids, and it's more convenient for you to go to the Bagwells on Wednesday. Or maybe you live in Lawrenceville and choose to hang out with the Davies on Friday.

Maybe you're newlyweds and you've seen Billy and Polly over the years. You've admired their healthy marriage. You're amazed Polly hasn't killed him yet. You might attend their group and get to know the Williams...

Or maybe you've tasted a treat from Xoshe' kitchen. You live in Norcross, but you don't care! You're headed to the Riveras in Snellville.

Here's what's going to happen... you'll get the same Bible Study content you've been getting on Sunday nights, but you'll enjoy it and apply it in a home setting with people who are committed to doing life together.

This means your faith will not only grow strong, but you'll be cultivating relationships with people who'll be there for you in a tough time – in a trial.

You'll learn the Bible, but you'll also learn how the Scriptures have shaped Charles Yeager into a better man - and helped Don and Jan Liesenfelt raise their kids - and enabled Darrell and Twila Yoder to be good witnesses at work - and taught Paul McInnis to run a honest business.

You'll be learning God's Word and building relationships with like-minded believers. It's [Home-iletics](#) - Through the Bible, but in a home setting. That's why we're calling them **TBGs - Through the Bible Groups.**

The videos will be shot most weeks at Calvary 316 on Wednesday nights. Our little church in Barrow County doesn't need home groups – *we're one big home group*. All those guys have are Sunday mornings.

They lack LBS, Men of Valor, Free Birds, Discipleship Groups, Ladies' Night Outs – all the activities we at Stone Mountain take for granted.

Calvary 316 needs a mid-week get-together. And this will serve as the backdrop for the videos that we'll show in the Through the Bible Groups.

The Lord has blessed us with media savvy guys in Zach and Casey, and we believe we can produce a well-done DVD for the groups.

If you've been coming on Sunday nights you know right now we're in the book of Isaiah. We'll be reaching a stopping point in a couple of weeks.

The last Sunday night in August will be our last Sunday night service.

Then beginning the week of September 12th our Through the Bible Groups will kick off in the book of Luke. We'll dive into Luke, Acts, Romans, on through the NT. When we're done we'll backtrack to Isaiah.

Here're a few other details...

Beginning August 12, both the Strand and Link are taking over Sunday nights. All of a sudden our teenagers will have the building to themselves.

They'll be able to rock out in the sanctuary. They'll have a corporate worship time - then they'll meet separately as HS and MS groups.

For the adults, Sunday nights here will be replaced by eleven *Through the Bible Groups* – meeting in homes located among eight school clusters.

All our **TBGs** will try to stay on the same schedule. We've built into our calendar a few off-weeks where groups that get behind can catch up.

We want to continue through the Bible together as one church. This way if you miss your normal group you can attend another **TBG** that week.

Next Sunday morning, *August 22*, we're having a **TBG Fair** where you'll be able to meet each of our host couples. They'll have directions to their house, and details about their group – *if they offer childcare*, for example.

And let me suggest, it may take a few tries to find a group right for you.

Reid Ingle has crushed defensive ends with his bare hands. Ramous Fields gets out of his car to help little old ladies cross the street. You might have to check out Reid and Ramous' group to decide where you fit best.

Let me share with you my heart. For me, nothing about this new format changes. My work load remains the same. Every week I *prepare two Bible studies* and *pastor two churches*. And I love what I do. Despite some trials

along the way, I'm excited about what God is doing through our churches.

For the last 30 years I've stayed by my post, and tried to lead and feed this church faithfully. It's been quite a ride. God's will is full of surprises.

Here's my approach. Seldom do I present my plans to God and ask him to rubber stamp them. I listen for the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit. I try to discern which way God's wind is blowing and then lift my sails in that direction. I want to be led by the Spirit, not motivated by my own agenda.

Remember the story in 2 Samuel 5. When the Philistine army heard that David had become king of Israel they immediately marched against him.

They deployed their troops in the Valley of Rephaim.

When David heard what was happening he inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?" God replied, "Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into Your hand."

And true to God's word – the Philistines were routed by David's army.

But the Philistines were slow learners. Once they recovered they tried the same tactic. Again, they deployed troops in the Valley of Rephaim...

Understand this was *the same enemy, same strategy, David led the same army, on the same battlefield, same*

circumstances and time frame. If you were David what would you do? To me, this would be a no-brainer.

I've already prayed about this once – why would God's answer be any different this time than it was the last time? I would've assumed that God would give me the same marching orders... *but I would've been wrong.*

Thankfully, David didn't assume. Again he inquired of the Lord, and God said, "You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines." David obeyed, and again defeated the Philistines.

But the story reveals our tendency... So often we're creatures of habit.

We settle into a routine. We like to do *the same things - the same way - with the same people.* No wonder we're plagued by *the same results.*

God's *message* will never change, but His *methods* often do.

God told David to circle behind the enemy and wait for the sound of marching in the treetops – *wind rustling the tops of the mulberries...* Like David we have to wait on the wind - the Spirit of God. *The answer my friend, is blowing in the wind....* Sorry, most of you are too young for that!

Never forget the seven last words of a dying church, “[We have always done it that way.](#)” God is always up to something new and different.

Unlike us, God is bound to no tradition. Try to put God in a box and He’ll blow out the sides. He’s always reaching out to new people in new ways.

You can’t live the Christian life and be resistant to change. It’s part of the fabric of Christianity. When the wind blows we set sail and anchor up.

The fall of the year is a season of vivid change. The green we’ve lived with for six months will soon turn to red, yellow, purple. Colors explode.

The heat dissipates... the breeze starts to blow... the air gets chilly...

This fall is shaping up to be a season of change at Calvary Chapel, and change can be tough at first. It’s initially painful. Remember, “[There’s no growth without change. But there’s no change without loss. And there’s no loss without pain.](#)” God wants *us to grow – our church to grow* – and if we want to follow the Holy Spirit its necessary that we’re willing to adjust.

I like what hockey player, Wayne Gretzky, once said, “[I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it’s been.](#)” That’s how I want to lead.

It’s my job to look ahead and see where God is taking us next.

And here's what I see... On a good Sunday AM we'll have 500 to 700 adults worship with us. Then that Sunday night we might have 90 people.

Yet Sunday night is the most important study of the week.

We have even fewer folks in our home fellowships and small groups.

We need to shake things up! Let's make it easier for people to take advantage of the opportunities. Let's consolidate nights and combine *Through the Bible* with *home fellowship dynamics* – its simple *Home-iletics!*

At our last Through the Bible Study we had 75 people. My goal is 200 folks by year end. We're starting with 11 groups. I hope we have 20 soon.

There may be someone here this morning who'd like to host a group.

I trust everyone will want to come! Invite your friends. Grab your neighbors and bring them. It may be the person you've invited isn't comfortable at church, but they might be open to visiting someone's home.

I believe God is leading us into a new season at Calvary Chapel – a season of growth and expansion. I believe He wants to make us stronger.

I'll be around this morning to answer any questions you might have...

I'm hoping you'll take the class in *Home-iletics* - and join a *TBG!*

As you may've heard, our *"Through the Bible Study"* is coming home... literally. Beginning Sunday, September 5, there will be no more ***"Through the Bible Study"*** in this building. Our church is replacing our Sunday night service with eleven different home fellowships scattered among eight different school clusters.

Each week I'll video the study at Calvary 316, and we'll show the DVD in our home fellowships. This provides the content of the Through the Bible approach, but it harnesses the growth-inducing dynamics of a small group.

You'll watch the DVD – then discuss the study and apply it practically.

We'll be starting afresh in the NT – in the Gospel of Luke.

Right now to study through the Bible, and participate in a home group requires two nights of your busy week. We're combining the two into one...

And we're hoping everyone at Calvary Chapel gets involved in a **TBG**.

That's what we're calling them... *TBGs*... **Through the Bible Groups**

And this morning, immediately after the service we're having a TBG Fair in the Brook. You'll have an opportunity to meet almost all of the group leaders, and

find a home where you think you'll fit in, or that's close to you.

You got a brochure with your AS. We hope you'll check it out.

This new venture starts the week of September 12.

Let's keep it in prayer. I believe the Lord will use it in wonderful ways.

And if you question the wisdom of this idea... let me suggest you listen to last Sunday's message – ***Home-iletics***. What we're doing is biblical.

I believe getting people involved in a small group is one of the keys to moving more folks into a growing relationship with God and His Church.

Tonight, and next Sunday night, we have two more studies in Isaiah before we make the change... In fact, before we leave Isaiah I want us to take another look at what made this man so usable in the hands of God.

If you will, let's turn in our Bibles this morning to Isaiah 6...