

# Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

## **Don't Be Afraid, Just Believe**

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While Christians believe the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, the reality is many passages of the Bible can be interpreted differently. In fact, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart make the case in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* that anyone who reads the Bible should be familiar with the processes of exegesis and hermeneutics. Very simply put, exegesis is an attempt to determine what passages meant to the original audience and hermeneutics is an effort to see the contemporary meaning of the ancient texts: what does the Bible mean in the here in now. Or as a friend and mentor put it: "it can't mean to us what it didn't mean to them."

Fee and Stuart argue that these two steps should not be left to the "experts." They believe anyone who spends a lot of time in the Bible can and should become familiar with exegesis and hermeneutics. Sometimes applying them can take considerable effort. Sometimes we are blessed with passages that are crystal clear; they mean today exactly what they meant 20 centuries ago. And often we see them exactly when we need them. This recently happened to me.

Through much of 2018, Ramona and I prayed for direction for a new chapter in our lives. As God has begun to give us some clarity on the path, I have at times been attacked with the very powerful weapon of doubt. Have I heard the calling correctly? Am I up to the tasks God is putting before us? What if I fail? At the end of 2018 I was not only battling such doubts but was helping a friend with similar challenges. As I was attempting to minister to her and myself, God blessed me with two passages in a single session of Bible reading that are as clear as anything you will ever read.

The first occurs in Chapter 5 of Mark. Jairus, a synagogue leader, falls at Jesus' feet, asking Him to heal Jairus' dying daughter. In 5:35 we read: While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. Why bother the teacher anymore?" In verse 36, Jesus assures Jairus by saying "Don't be afraid, just believe." Could Jesus have made it any simpler than that?

Jairus' daughter was indeed dead and onlookers would mock Jesus when he said she was sleeping. But Jairus did just believe and Jesus restored the girl to life. Just one chapter later, we see the exact opposite result. Jesus returns to His hometown of Nazareth and the people there who know Him as the son of a carpenter refuse to believe in Jesus. Due to their lack of faith, Jesus was able to accomplish little there.

After reading Chapter 6, I went back to Mark 5:36 and re-read Jesus' words to Jairus. Perhaps it's mere coincidence that Jairus and Jerry sound so much alike, but I could hear Jesus speaking directly to me as I reread His words. I need to stop fearing and believe. Belief means I can trust the path God has set us on. And my friend can trust that God has great things planned for her. If we don't, Jesus will accomplish little in our lives.

Fee and Stuart are right; we need to be fully equipped to read the Bible for all its worth. But we are also blessed with passages that have withstood the test of centuries and are as powerful in their simplicity today as they were back then. "Don't be afraid, just believe." When we look at a problem from Jesus' point of view, that's all we must do. I can't wait to share this with my friend.