



Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible
November 2012

\$16, 224 pages, paper
 978-0-8308-3782-3

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Christians or Americans?

What was your motivation behind writing *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*?

O'Brien: Numerous conversations and relationships with Christians from around the world have convinced me that much of what we believe depends on our culture, not necessarily on Scripture. That is, though we often say we believe certain things or behave certain ways because we are Christians, it is actually because we are Americans. As a church historian, I am constantly reminded that all biblical interpretation is influenced by the cultural and historical context in which Christians read the Bible. But most Christians fail to recognize this in their own time and place. We're trying to help people come to terms with their cultural and historical context safely and constructively.

What causes most people to misread Scripture?

Richards: Our worldviews help us read some parts of Scripture very well while encouraging us to misread other parts. Since the biblical writers had their own worldviews, they left some things unsaid. When we encounter these implied elements of a story, it is usually a missing piece. We then fill in the gap with something that "goes without being said" from our own worldview. This can lead us to misread. This is not, however, a lost cause. The purpose of the book is not to discourage but rather to encourage the modern reader. Recognizing common patterns can help us be better readers of Scripture.

What is distinct about this book?

Richards: Rather than merely bash Westerners for misinterpreting Scripture, this book seeks to identify the subtle ideas in our worldview that are often unconsciously read into the text and cause us to misread Scripture. Becoming aware of these patterns may help us read Scripture more faithfully.

Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Mission Board, SBC, stationed in East Indonesia. He is coauthor of *Discovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology* and *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology*. He is the author of *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* and *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* in the *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* series.

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(M.A., Wheaton College Graduate School) is a part-time instructor of religion at the College of DuPage and editor-at-large for *Leadership* journal with Christianity Today. He is scheduled to complete his doctoral work in theological studies in 2012. O'Brien has previously published *The Strategically Small Church* (Bethany House, 2010).

O'Brien: We have identified nine habits or tendencies Western readers have that can cause us—all of us—to misread the Bible. No book that we know of has tried to offer practical, constructive guidance for people who want to take criticisms that Western interpretations are not representative of all Christians seriously. We want to apply the Bible faithfully to our lives and encourage Christians to read Scripture in community across ethnic and national boundaries.