

# The “Logos” Bible Study: An Experience of Building a Model of Effective Religious Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract

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New models for prison ministry are crucial during the current era of mass incarceration in America—a time when the potential reach of prison ministries can grow as the population of incarcerated individuals grows. In this article, I lift up one prison ministry in New Jersey as an example of how Christian evangelicals who are engaged in traditional prison ministry can bravely open their minds and hearts to models of religious education that go beyond individual conversion toward communal transformation. In this article I present an example of a neo-evangelical group named Jericho Ministries, Inc., a prison ministry that understood this and consequently tried to develop a prison ministry that was not only a charitable endeavor, but also a just one.

### 〈 Keywords 〉

Prison ministry, Incarceration, Christian evangelicals,  
Religious education, Communal transformation

## I. Introduction

New models for prison ministry are crucial during the cur-

rent era of mass incarceration in America—a time when the potential reach of prison ministries can grow as the population of incarcerated individuals grows. In this article, I lift up one prison ministry in New Jersey as an example of how Christian evangelicals who are engaged in traditional prison ministry can bravely open their minds and hearts to models of religious education that go beyond individual conversion toward communal transformation. In her book, *God in Captivity*, Tanya Erzen(2017) shares this important insight:

For many faith-based ministries, the emphasis on the individual rather than the community justifies mass incarceration. This results in charity instead of justice. Charity is episodic; justice is ongoing. The one changes individuals, the other societies (125).

In this article I present an example of a neo-evangelical group named Jericho Ministries, Inc., a prison ministry that understood this and consequently tried to develop a prison ministry that was not only a charitable endeavor, but also a just one.

During my second year of a Master of Divinity program at Princeton Theological Seminary, I participated in a mandatory Field Education placement, which led to an opportunity to walk alongside Jericho Ministries as they engaged their deep commitments and struggled to adapt their work. The unforeseen consequence of this process was the development of an innovative, liberatory model of Bible study.

This article takes an in-depth look at Jericho's two years of courageous theological exploration and discourse. In the first section I will give a brief history of Jericho Ministries and situate it within the broader Christian theological contexts of

20<sup>th</sup> century America. This will lead to considerations about how the leadership of Jericho prioritized Christian discipleship and expressed that priority through the organization's practice of prison Bible study. In the second section, I will demonstrate that Jericho's Board of Trustees developed a desire to start a practice of Bible study that would focus more on the unique needs of incarcerated persons. This led to an invitation for me to join their search for a new model of Christian Education in the prison environment, as Jericho Ministries worked to become more relevant to the lives of incarcerated men and women by embracing a liberatory form of religious practice and instruction. In the final section, I discuss how a new form of religious practice - the Logos Bible Study (LBS) - resulted from the willingness of Jericho's leaders to take seriously their context, engage in profound conversations with the inmates they were serving, and re-consider ways to live out their commitments in light of new social and theological realities.

The subject of this article is the new model for prison ministry created by Jericho's leaders called the Logos Bible Study. It is a model that encouraged transformative critical reflection and about which the following incarcerated participant offered the following reflection (Atkins, 2020):

"[The Logos Bible Study] has prepared me [for return to society] by helping me to grow in all areas of my life. It has given me the tools to assess my strengths and weaknesses, come up with a plan, and put it into action. It has given me the confidence to know that I am an individual possessing gifts and creative capacity. It taught me healthy expression. It prepared me to engage with culture in an intentional thoughtful way so as to not fall to mindless conformity. Most of all, it prepared me by helping me realize: that I am not in this life alone; that

God placed me (and everyone) here for a reason; and that, while we must absolutely focus on the necessity of an occupation, we must also find and develop our vocation [calling]. Logos has prepared me indeed(305).”

Such an encouraging reflection was the result of Jericho Ministries engaging in a process of re-evaluating and modifying its religious practices by looking at the values that gave birth to the practices alongside the environment in which the practices occur. This process is called Pastoral Praxeology—first described by Jean Guy Nadeau of the University of Montreal (Nadeau, 1993). This article limns the participation of Jericho in this process and demonstrates how other organizations can use it to adapt to other social contexts.

## II. The neo-evangelical roots of Jericho Ministries, Inc.

In 1987, two ordained ministers—a man ordained in the Presbyterian Church(USA) and a woman ordained by Elim Fellowship, a Pentecostal tradition—came together and created Jericho Ministries while seeking prayerful guidance to answer what they considered “God’s call to offer the Gospel to those incarcerated by a system whose high recidivism rate demonstrates the need for an enhancement of rehabilitation procedures.” Jericho started with three aspects of ministry: evangelism, discipleship and aftercare. Volunteers would evangelize through preaching, one-to-one engagement and worship services. They would offer discipleship through Bible studies and give after-care services such as support groups for the families of in-

mates(Atkins, 2020). This research is interested in the second ministry of Jericho: Christian discipleship through Bible studies.

In its brochure, Jericho Ministries described its Discipleship Ministry in the following way: "New-born Christians need to know how to relate the Bible to their everyday problems. Inmates have their own peculiar set of everyday problems to deal with. We need to encourage them to live out their faith, as well as share it with others. Through Bible study and discipleship training we enable them to develop a Christian life-style for the harsh setting of the prison environment." Donald McKim, a theologian who produced influential research about the authority and interpretation of scripture in the 1980s offers some helpful lenses with which to read Jericho Ministries' discipleship objectives at the turn of the century(McKim, 1994). McKim would see the work of Jericho Ministries falling in line with the "neo-evangelicals" of the 20th century with its presupposition that regeneration("being born again") is a primary goal of Bible study. McKim would also note that Jericho places such a high authority on the Bible that they would declare that people "need" to learn how it offers guidance for solving everyday problems. McKim would situate these points of view within the tradition of American neo-evangelicalism(McKim, 1994, 90). Neo-evangelicalism shares in the belief of the evangelical tradition from 19th century England that there is a necessity for conversion or a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and that it is urgent to evangelize or to seek the conversion of sinful people to Christ. Since the witness of the Holy Spirit is tied "directly" to the content of the Scriptures (the Gospel), then by the work of the Holy Spirit the authority of Scripture comes "to be known and established for believers." Simply put, for neo-evangelicals, the Bible is authoritative be-

cause it is the Word of God(McKim, 1994, 89-94).

Jericho Ministries confirmed that it was within such a tradition of neo-evangelicalism with its official statement of faith found on the back of its brochure "An Introduction to Jericho Ministries, Inc.": "We believe that Jesus Christ is ... the only Savior of the world. Salvation is to be sought and found in no other ... We believe that the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God, the supreme rule of faith and practice. Scripture records the mighty acts of God in history and seeks to relate them to every phase of human life today under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

Jericho's neo-evangelical statement of faith was a guide for the sorts of Bible study curriculums that the organization used. One Bible study curriculum that Jericho used primarily in its prison ministries to sixteen federal, state and local prisons and jails in New Jersey was called *The Covenant and the Kingdom: A comprehensive personal and church Bible resource* edited by Charles Simpson. The book offers 126 lessons in Christian doctrine and supports each doctrine with Scriptures. The editor of the book states in the preface that the lessons were prepared under the conviction that "the Holy Bible is the Word of God, and is the standard for faith and practice ... [and] with the conviction that the Holy Spirit is the instructor of divine truth and a relationship to the Holy Spirit is essential to understanding the message of the Bible(Simpson, 1995, 6)." The fact that this quote matches almost word for word with the Statement of Faith of Jericho Ministries demonstrates how this became one of the primary resources of Jericho's prison Bible studies during the 1990s and early 2000s.

### III. Jericho Ministries, Inc. growing beyond its roots.

Since its inception in 1987, Jericho Ministries, Inc. has sought to use Scripture as the primary authority on God and God’s will for humanity. The organization saw Scripture as its primary resource for participating in the Holy Spirit’s work of spiritual renewal in prisons and ultimately that perspective led the organization’s leadership to find ways of engaging Scripture in the prison environment.

The Covenant and the Kingdom demonstrated that it was a valuable asset to Jericho’s original mission in its first lesson on “The One True God.” The curriculum states that the purpose of Lesson 1 is to look at how “God revealed Himself in Scripture (Simpson, 1995, 17).” In Lesson 7 the curriculum declares, “the Bible teaches that [humanity] has a purpose for living.” Jericho preferred to use tools like The Covenant and the Kingdom because they affirmed its evangelical conviction that the Bible has the authority to inform humanity’s understanding of self and of God. A brief look at how a typical lesson is planned in the Covenant bible study can offer more insight into Jericho’s priorities for prison Bible Study.

The lesson starts off with the topic, and then makes clear the purpose of the lesson. Next, it offers a glossary of terms to ensure that the students understand important concepts within the lesson. Then, it launches into the topic through a series of subtopics. Each of these subtopics has a series of statements and Scriptures that support each statement. After the subtopics, statements and supporting Scriptures are discussed, then the class goes on to discuss ways of practically applying the lesson to their lives. The “application” section of the lesson offers

statements and questions that invite the student to consider how the lesson can enhance their understanding of their personal lives. After the application section, a concluding statement is given to summarize the major tenets of the lesson (Simpson, 1995, 137-139). The Covenant and the Kingdom Bible Study has a lesson plan that supports the perspectives of many American neo-evangelicals at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Jericho ministries adopted this model for the prison Bible study programs in order to affirm its original neo-evangelical mission in prisons. The organization was given a time slot in the prison chapel for performing their religious programs—a time slot that they held throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.

During my second year in the Master of Divinity program at Princeton Theological Seminary, I participated in a mandatory Field Education placement, which led me to enlarge my own perspectives on prison ministry (Princeton Theological Seminary, 2017, 2.) Once my internship was over, the Chaplain Supervisor invited me to continue my work in developing an effective and transformative religious practice in the prison milieu and allowed me to start a new Bible study program at the prison. He gave me the time that preceded the slot for Jericho Ministries. In the Fall of 1998, when the Field Directors and Board of Trustees of Jericho Ministries invited me to join their organization and their conversations about finding ways to develop the scope of their ministries from a format that reflected a simple charity perspective toward a more complex work for the justice of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Jericho Trustees were looking for a new discipleship program that would have the same level of conversation with the Scripture as The Covenant and the Kingdom but would also offer more opportunities for



students to gain insights on practical applications of the Scriptures. Jericho recognized the peculiarity of the problems that the incarcerated face and therefore worked to bring them a Bible study that more directly addresses the prison milieu—an environment of constant surveillance, control, deprivation and threat of violence.

A report to the Board of Trustees of Jericho Ministries in May 2000 showing the essential content of my conversations with the Trustees demonstrates that it was a priority for Jericho to create Bible studies that directly addressed the living situations of incarcerated students. The report's section titled, "Needs of the Inmates: What themes should be considered," proposes a survey that would find out what the inmates considered important to learn and what format best suits them for learning within the prison environment. "Consideration should be given to the personal and environmental challenges faced by the inmates and what God has revealed to them as themes for discipleship training...[In light of] the culturally-based factors of diversity and division that exist in the prison culture(Atkins, 2020, 380)." In the year 2000 the Trustees gave me the support necessary to give incarcerated students an opportunity to contribute to the structure and content of Christian education they would receive.

Even though the exact content of those conversations with the incarcerated Christians at the prison served by Jericho were not cleared for inclusion in this research, the desires of the inmates for an enriching discipleship program were well summarized within the mission statement of a program for prison residents who had sentences of 10 years or more(Atkins, 2020, 332). During my student internship at a prison through Princeton Theological Seminary, I served as a facilitator in a program for young "long-termers"—young adult detainees who

had prison sentences of 10 years or more. The program had the following mission statement: "We commit to develop our abilities to gain knowledge of ourselves, to further our quest for knowledge in general and to encourage each other in these efforts. In order to achieve these goals, we establish this program, through which we become accountable to each other for our behavior and consequently, more responsible for our individual lives (Atkins, 2020, 434)." The mission statement reflects what many incarcerated people recognize as effective prison programs—those that offer tools for creating enriching lives during and after incarceration.

After I presented the mission statement of the prison's young long-term program to the Jericho Ministries Board of Trustees, they agreed with my suggestion to have Jericho staff and volunteers to find resources that match the spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs that have been expressed by the prison residents. I worked with the Board of Trustees, actively to find resources that would reflect sensitivity to the situation of prisoners and their unique challenges in trying to live a Christ-centered life in prison. In our conversations I recognized that the Trustees were interested in the establishment of mentoring relationships between volunteers and prison residents and we agreed that the structure and content of their Bible studies were important for achieving those relationships. During my seminary studies in Christian education, I was introduced to Roberta Hestenes' book *Using the Bible in Groups* and to the book *Freire for the Classroom: A sourcebook for Liberatory Teaching*, edited by Ira Shor. I put these two works into the conversation with the Trustees regarding the formation of Jericho's new discipleship program. The Trustees and staff of Jericho Ministries decided to adopt certain per-

spectives and suggestions of Hestenes in the creation of the new discipleship program. Dr. Hestenes, a Presbyterian minister and the first woman president of a Christian liberal arts college named Eastern College, offered perspectives on structuring small group Bible studies that the Trustees found interesting. Hestenes wrote that one could build a successful small group Bible study by having a good understanding of the following issues:

- the promise or purpose of the group;
- the contracting of participants;
- the types of participants;
- the time schedule of the group activity;
- the intentional selection of the type of group;
- the types of participants;
- the commitments of the participants;
- and the stages of group life(Hestenes, 1983, 19).

The Jericho Trustees already had firm understandings about the purpose and the type of participants of the group: the discipleship of incarcerated young adult men alongside Jericho volunteers within a prison facility. However, the Trustees were open to question and to grow their perspectives on: (1) the structure of the discipleship group and (2) the exact "contracted" requirements of those wanted to participate in the group.

### **1. A new structure and new norms for discipleship**

The insights of Hestenes helped to shape the structure of the new Jericho discipleship program and the new requirements of its participants. Hestenes states that discipleship groups

offer “a complete experience of learning about and living the Christian faith.” These groups use methods of “sharing questions, inductive discussion Bible study with attention to application and conversational prayer” in order to focus on helping the participants to discover the possibilities of Christian life through “personal sharing, discussion Bible study, an emphasis on active discipleship and praying aloud(Hestenes, 1983, 26).” Jericho’s leadership felt that what Hestenes suggested could render more effective the model that they were following with The Covenant and the Kingdom Bible study. The Hestenes model offered a structure that would allow for the incarcerated Christians in the program to have access to enriching mentoring relationships and that allowed them to bring the testimonies of their personal lives into conversation with the testimonies of the Bible.

In order to maintain such a discipleship group, there needed to be clear rules and expectations given to the participants in the group(Ter Avest, 2020, 15). One major discipline that was considered essential to the Bible study was regular attendance in the group. “If the purpose of the group includes building relationships of love and care among the members, a floating population will make it difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish the group’s purpose(Hestenes, 1985, 28).” While previous Bible study programs sponsored by Jericho did not mandate a certain level of attendance(all people were welcome at any time), this new discipleship program would mandate it, since the Jericho leadership decided that a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit would be possible for group participants if they made Bible study a priority in their schedules(Atkins, 2020, 384).

In regard to other behavior norms, our conversations with

Hestenes' work led the Jericho leadership to some insights that it would use in the creation of its new discipleship program. In *Using the Bible in Groups*, Hestenes states the importance of members of the discipleship group making commitments to confidentiality and limited advice giving. The Jericho trustees agreed with including this requirement in the new program in order to encourage participants to put important parts of their life stories into conversation with the Scriptures (Atkins, 2020, 386). Jericho was very sensitive to the prison environment where correction happens daily. They wanted to put to work their belief that the Holy Spirit could speak to the lives of everyone through Bible study. Therefore, Bible students should focus on sharing what they believe the Scriptures might be saying to their hearts and minds instead of imposing their experiences and insights on others (Groome, 2020, 48). The participants need a space where they can feel confident that others will listen to and learn from the testimonies of their joys and challenges without being interrupted by condescending or ignorant corrections or judgments: "One common tendency when someone shares a concern or problem is for other group members to begin telling the speaker what he or she ought to do. Often these solutions are proposed long before the true situation has been really understood. Careful listening should precede any suggestions. [The epistle of] James tells us to be 'quick to listen, but slow to speak' (Hestenes, 1985, 29)." Jericho Ministries was trying to create a new program that could help people to listen deeply to each other as well as to the teachings of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to recognizing that Hestenes' insights would be useful in shaping the structure of a new discipleship group, Jericho's leadership was also open to a new teaching style for

delivering the content of its new program. In their work in New Jersey prisons, the volunteers from Jericho Ministries, when following the format of *The Covenant and the Kingdom Bible study*, would use a classic teaching style where the instructor brought information to the students. According to *The Covenant and the Kingdom*, the instructor was an elder in the Christian faith and the information was Scripture-based Christian doctrines. However, Hestenes brought to Jericho's leadership an understanding of a function of Bible group instructors that could lead all participants—students and instructors—into deeper understandings of the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Hestenes called the leaders of small group Bible study “facilitators or enablers” in order to insist on their role as helpers and guides “rather than as teachers or experts.” The small group “facilitator” focuses on encouraging the group participants to engage the biblical texts as well as other members of the group with the hope of everyone fulfilling the purpose of the group and experiencing positive self-development (Hestenes, 1985, 36). Inspired by Hestenes, the Jericho Ministries Discipleship program called for group facilitators instead of Bible “teachers (Atkins, 2020, 384).”

Hestenes' declarations on the functions of Bible group instructors also helped Jericho to understand forms of “liberatory” teaching as inspired by Paolo Freire. Liberatory education is a type of education actively seeks the empowerment of students instead of the submission of students through normal western models of education that can be used by dominant political forces to convince students to support the status quo (Shor, 1987, 1, 5).

Nina Wallerstein was inspired by Paolo Freire to write about an approach to liberatory education called “problem-posing

education." Problem-posing education is a process that follows what Freire considered the purpose of education: human liberation. This form of education does not presuppose that the learner is an empty vessel to be filled by the teacher as an object of education. Rather, problem-posing education offers the perspective that learners enter into the process of learning "not by acquiring facts but by constructing their reality in social exchange with others(Wallerstein, 1987, 34)." Problem-posing education, as opposed to classical problem solving, is a group process that uses personal experience in order to create social connectedness and mutual responsibility. This process is a response to a social situation where societal pressures undermine students' confidence and consequently the students are in need of social empowerment. In this form of liberatory education define the problems through various shared perspectives and the instructor offers solutions but also invites the students to critique those solutions and share their own ideas for resolving the defined problems. The problem-posing approach argues that critical thinking starts with an individual sharing his or her understanding of the historical and socio-economic context of his or her life and then continues toward discerning actions and decisions that people can make in order to gain control of their lives or, in other words, "true knowledge evolves from the interaction of reflection and action(Wallerstein, 1987, 34)."

The Board of Trustees of Jericho Ministries believed that having facilitators who encouraged the problem-posing approach to education would create a space in the prison where the transformative work of the Holy Spirit could take place and be evidenced in the practical lives of the incarcerated students(Chang, 2017, 15). The problem-posing approach seemed

to be a useful tool that would help Jericho to achieve its goal of helping inmates in their desire for deeper understandings of themselves and their world in practical ways(Atkins, 2020, 363).

#### IV. The new Discipleship Program of Jericho Ministries: the “Logos” Bible Study

In November 2001 I presented a draft of the new Discipleship Curriculum that Jericho Ministries was going to use at a prison for young adult males aged 18 to 27 in New Jersey of the new ministry with the goal of creating “a dynamic for learning that enables disadvantaged and incarcerated young people in Christ to translate Scriptural teachings into understandable methods of application for various life situations(Atkins, 2020, 383).”

A member of the Jericho Trustees had read *The Unseen Essential* written by James Gills and believed that his evangelical perspective would help make Jericho’s work more relevant in the lives of the incarcerated. James Gills is a world-renowned ophthalmologist who founded St. Luke’s Cataract and Laser Institute in 1968 and has treated cataracts for over 40 years. According to [www.Lovepress.com/gills.htm](http://www.Lovepress.com/gills.htm), he has authored 195 medical articles and co-authored 10 medical reference books. In addition to this, he is an executive who was awarded the 1990 Florida Entrepreneur of the Year for the State of Florida, as well as the 2000 Philanthropist of the Year by the National Society of Fundraising Executives. IronMan.com’s Triathlon News articles from December 2012 report that he received the two awards in light of his purchase of the IronMan Triathlon in 1989 and his creation of Love Press, a Christian not-for-profit publishing company, around 1986—through which,



Dr. Gills has authored 19 books on Christian living. Gills has had the practice of giving his books for free to the incarcerated and has donated to over 2000 prisons and jails in the United States, including the ones served by Jericho Prison Ministries.

Members of the Board of Trustees eventually agreed that Jericho would buy and distribute the *Unseen Essential* as part of its new discipleship program. The book is a fictional story about a successful engineer who is surprised that his wife tries to divorce him and puts a restraining order against him while he was reaching the pinnacle of his success. As he tries to put his life back together, he meets an older Christian man who mentors him in the Christian faith. Through this story Gills offers an evangelical perspective on how the Christian faith can translate into daily life. Gills teaches through the book that faith is the "unseen essential" of life and the four steps of faith are (1) coming into agreement with God's perspective on the sinful nature of humanity; (2) development of a dependency on God for a nourishing life; (3) gaining enough trust in God to surrender to the processes that God offers humankind for growth; and (4) seeking oneness or intimacy with God by establishing practices that make one always aware of God's presence (Gills 1990, 224-228). The Jericho Trustees liked not only the lessons being taught through the lives of the book's main characters, they also liked that in the story the lessons of faith were being taught through a Bible-based mentoring relationship between the two main characters.

The influence of Gills continued as his book *Temple Maintenance* was discovered by the leadership of Jericho and was eventually included in the new discipleship group. This was another book that was freely given to prisons by Gills. The

chaplain at the prison where Jericho was serving introduced it to the Trustees who quickly added it to the supplemental reading of the Logos Bible Study. Temple Maintenance introduced Gills' perspectives on theological anthropology, which the leaders of Jericho thought would help the practitioners of the Logos Bible Study to find practical applications of the lessons learned during the Bible study. The perspectives in spiritual anthropology presented in Temple Maintenance were drawn directly from the books of Watchman Nee—especially Nee's book called *The Spiritual Man* (Nee, 1998). It is understandable that a physician and evangelical author like Gills would be inspired by the theological anthropology of Watchman Nee, since Nee offers a kind of spiritual dissection of the human being (Roberts, 1980, 75).

The theological anthropology of James Gills' Temple Maintenance offers that the human being is made up of three parts which all need proper nourishment in order to function properly: the body, the mind and the spirit. He equates each of these parts to the different parts of the classic Tabernacle of Israel: the outer court is the body, the holy place is the mind, and the holy of holies is the spirit (Gills 1989, 22). Watchman Nee inspired Gills with his own tripartite view of the human being: the spirit, the soul and the body (Roberts, 1980, 79). Gills posits that the human body is a wondrous temple that should be enjoyed and appreciated as a gift from God through proper maintenance. Gills sees the mind as having attributes such as thought, reason, memory, emotions and will. He also sees the Bible term for the mind to be the "soul" and uses it interchangeably with "mind" in his book. The mind is the "holy place" because it has the capacity to receive the mind of Christ and be renewed through the Word of God, which makes

it capable of being put to work in the service and worship of God(Gills 1989, 70-74). The Board of Trustees of Jericho Ministries decided to follow the perspectives of Gills and Nee, and their related tripartite views of the human being, focusing the Logos Bible Study on one particular aspect: the mind.

I will now return to the mission statement of the Jericho Ministries(quoted above), in order to demonstrate what motivated the leadership of Jericho to treat the mind as a subject separate from the soul, spirit and body. By offering in the statement that new-born Christians need "to know how to relate the Bible to their everyday problems," the leadership of Jericho had several discussions on levels of education for the incarcerated as well as methodologies for learning how to read and to increase one's level of understanding of the Scriptures. I, along with members of the Jericho's Trustees and staff believed that prison could be an ideal place for Christian education to occur if "its components are adjusted to the language, culture and needs of the prisoners(Atkins, 2020, 379)." This perspective led to deep discussions about the importance of having a practice of Christian discipleship that intentionally works to increase the capacity of the mind to understand the Holy Scriptures and how to practically apply them to one's life (Grümme, 2020, 69).

Princeton religious education professor James Loder's work offers an additional resource. Loder was greatly inspired by Sigmund Freud and Søren Kierkegaard in his writings on human development and Christian Education. The aspects of his work that deeply penetrated the conversations on Christian discipleship among the leaders of Jericho included his concepts of metanoia or repentance, transformation and the transformational Logic of the Holy Spirit as explained in his book *The*

### Transforming Moment.

Loder addressed the Greek New Testament word, “metanoia,” acknowledging that the Greek word basically means “to change one’s mind” or to experience a conversion resulting from the coming of the Kingdom of God through the presence of Jesus as mediator(Loder, 1989, 225). The Jericho Trustees agreed and offered that “metanoia” could have other nuances such as the re-formation of self and the reversal of one’s past that goes beyond the NJ Correctional System’s normal expectations of rehabilitation and recovery(Atkins, 2020, 384). For Loder the concept that was more important than “metanoia,” but included it, was his perception of transformation. In his treatise on transformation, Loder’s profound reflections on human development and divine order come to light. He states that transformation occurs when hidden orders of coherence and meaning are revealed within a person’s given frame of reference and begin to alter the truisms of the given frame of reference and to reorder its components(Loder, 1989, 229). In its quest to create a new ministry that could create a space for transformation in an institution for incarceration, the Jericho leadership decided it needed a religious practice that could challenge the adopted and imposed frames of meaning of the students. The Logos Bible Study chose to offer a Loder-inspired method of transforming “existing self-imposed and socially imposed models of learning and development(Atkins, 2020, 386).”

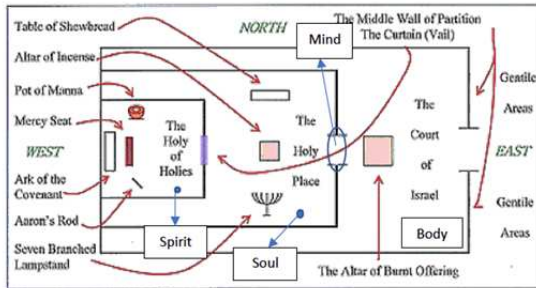
Loder’s principle of the transformational logic of the Spirit was a key concept in the formation of the Logos Bible Study and even though an in-depth look at this concept is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note here its influence in the discussions leading to the formation of the Logos Bible Study. Loder posits that human beings have a logic or

process of psychological development that can occur by living and learning over time. When the human spirit comes into relationship with the Holy Spirit, the human process of development can be transformed by the Holy Spirit's logic of transformation (Son, 2017, 274). In other words, when the human spirit, which is grounded in the human psyche, enters into communion with the Holy Spirit which is grounded in God, the human spirit's developmental transformations on psychological and physical levels are transformed so that "all of the human spirit's creative expressions in the field of human action point toward the same origin and destiny as the Holy Spirit. In his consideration of the neurological work of Wilder Penfield and of the dialectical work of Søren Kierkegaard, affirmed what some have called the "brain-mind theory," where even though the mind and brain work together as a unit, "the mind has the specific function of focusing and sustaining awareness, reasoning, deciding and understanding" (Loder, 1989, 76, 153). The mind is the composer of meaning because it uses information stored in the brain to compose meaningful conduct in everyday life. Loder's perspectives inspired the Jericho leadership to make sure that the Logos Bible Study would become a practice that gave opportunities for the participants to gain a greater understanding of themselves and of God in order to experience a re-orientation of the self toward God that leads to positive self-development despite the prison context.

For the Jericho Trustees, their concern about the transformation of one's psychological development in the prison context—where understanding can be dulled by illiteracy, special educational needs and the harsh environment—required that their new discipleship practice of prison Bible study pay special attention to the mind. Donald McKim would say that their

concern over the mind follows the neo-evangelicals who historically held that reason can be an instrument of faith that can believers can use “in the service of further obedience and understanding(McKim, 1994, 94).” Watchman Nee and James Gills both acknowledged the Greek words for mind used in the New Testament scriptures-“dianoia(Mark 12:30)” and “noos (Romans 12:2)”-however both folded it into the soul. Jericho’s Logos Bible study was created to address practical ways for a person to gain a healthy body, mind, soul and spirit.

While the spirit remains a source of inspiration, and the soul a mediator between the information received from the external world of the body and from the internal world of the spirit, the mind is the doorway of understanding that deciphers language, social codes and cultural cues. If we were to use the temple analogy, the mind would be the doorway to the soul as pictured in Figure 1.



[Figure 1] The Temple with a modified theological anthropology

## V. Conclusion

The Logos Bible Study was launched in February 2002 and it

started with five volunteers and 12 inside students who made a commitment to the practice. The volunteers were instructed to use the problem-posing method of teaching based on the belief that the Holy Spirit can offer something for everyone to share in the Bible study. Everyone who participated in the practice made a commitment of 12 weeks, one session per week, an hour and a half per session. Each participant made a promise to listen to the perspectives of others and to refrain from making statements that generalize to judge others. The participants (inmates and volunteers) were told to expect to study Scriptures along with large and small group discussions about: spiritual perspectives on human personal and social values; the emptiness a person can feel without relationship with God; the importance of submitting the body and mind to God's enlightenment process; and increasing one's intimacy with God by gaining and maintaining a healthy soul and spirit (Atkins 2020, 384). Every participant, whether incarcerated or not, was expected to have an enriching experience where relationships with God would be deepened.

Until the creation of the Logos Bible Study, Jericho Ministries used styles of Bible studies in New Jersey that were patterned after *The Covenant and the Kingdom: A Comprehensive Personal and Church Bible Resource*—a resource used primarily by American Evangelical Christians. While there were organizations in other counties and States who practiced Bible Study in prison, there is no evidence in the reports to the Jericho Board of Trustees that any of the practices of these other groups influenced Jericho's formation of the Logos Bible Study (LBS). LBS was a practice that was unique to Jericho Ministries' history with its blend of evangelical authors and modern theologians. It stands to reason that a ministry that was founded

by a Presbyterian minister and a Pentecostal minister would initiate such a practice. Nevertheless, Jericho's willingness to use a technique from Liberatory Pedagogy also demonstrated a sincere desire to try unfamiliar methods to help the incarcerated to have better lives despite the hardships of prison and to help change prison culture. Giving the incarcerated the opportunity to bring their life experiences into direct conversations with the Bible and into conversation with the life experiences of the civilians coming into the Bible study from outside of the prison, fostered the development of skills in critical self-reflection for all of the participants and created a religious practice that was pertinent, emancipative and transformative despite the penitentiary environment.

The whole process that led to the Logos Bible Study had elements of pastoral care, critical theological reflection and charismatic hope. Looking back on it, Jericho's process of evaluating one of its religious practices while being mindful of its values and of the area in which the practice was occurring resembles an exercise in Pastoral Praxeology (*La Praxéologie Pastorale*): "Pastoral praxeology is contemplative and critical commentary on a practice or physical action that is targeted for amelioration in terms of relevance, coherence and efficiency. Since it is pastoral, this form of praxeology is interested in those practices motivated by issues that are fundamental to human existence and by the remembrance of the spirit of Jesus Christ (Nadeau, 1993, 11)." This quote by Jean Guy Nadeau gives the core elements of this methodology and reveals the process that created the Logos Bible Study to be an example of Pastoral Praxeology—an example that can be replicated in other environments and with other religious practices.



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한글 초록

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**“로고스” 성경 연구:  
21세기 효과적인 종교교육 모형의 구축**

찰스 아트킨스 주니어 (몬트리올 대학교/교수/캐나다)

교정선교의 새로운 모형은 미국의 대중적인 투옥의 시기에 중요한 것이다. 교정선교의 잠재적인 형태는 수행자들의 수가 증가함에 따라 새로운 주목을 받고 있다. 이 논문에서 연구자는 뉴저지의 교정선교에 집중하는데, 전통적인 교정선교에 참여하는 복음주의 기독교인들이 수행자들의 마음을 적극적으로 개방하고 공동체의 변형을 위해서 개인의 회심을 초월하는 종교교육의 모형을 제시하는 것이다. 연구자는 여리고 선교의 명칭을 지닌 새로운 복음주의 집단의 사례를 제시한다. 교정 선교는 결과적으로 동정을 나누는 것이 아니라, 정의의 실천이며 실현인 것이다.

〈 주제어 〉

교정선교, 투옥, 기독교 복음주의, 종교교육, 공동체의 변형, 여리고 선교

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