

## **The Real Stuff**

### **Bible Study Software at Covenant Church of Pittsburgh**

**By Daniel Foster**

For Bible-believing churches, is there anything more important than the Bible itself? How we preach, teach, interpret and study the Scripture is a defining characteristic of many churches.

In most cases, the methods used to study Scripture have not changed much in the past 200 years. But what has changed drastically is the technology available for speeding up and enhancing that study. High-tech, computer-assisted Bible study is not just for pastors anymore but is starting to impact churches at every level, changing lives in the process.

Covenant Church of Pittsburgh is one congregation that values the Bible and works hard to make sure everyone from the leaders to the laypeople are equipped with the best available tools for Bible study.

Thirty-six staff members, led by Bishop Joseph Garlington, serve the 3,000 people who attend Covenant Church. Nearly every staff member uses Logos Bible Software to prepare for the many classes and study groups offered by the church each week.

Bishop Garlington is an “early adopter” of technology and has been using Logos Bible Software since the first version was released more than a decade ago.

He considers Logos Bible Software to be a vital component of his own personal ministry, which currently includes “writing two books, one article and one or two messages per week.” Bishop Garlington recalls the days when he used to travel with a salesman case filled with Bibles, concordance, Bible dictionaries and lexicons.

“Today, my Dell laptop has the equivalent of a small seminary library on it and it only weighs 7.5 pounds—and that’s heavy in the computer world,” Bishop Garlington said. The books on his hard drive allow him to work wherever he happens to be, turning lost time into productive time.

Logos Bible Software also gives Bishop Garlington increased confidence in the accuracy of his exegesis and sharpens the Greek and Hebrew language skills he acquired in seminary.

“I studied both Greek and Hebrew at Fuller, but tools that are unused become rusty,” he said. “I’ve been able to recover a significant portion of the skills acquired by utilizing the remarkable linguistic tools in Logos Bible Software and its incredible power to plumb the depths of the original languages. I am more confident in my exegesis than ever because of the reliability of the tools I now have.”

Going beyond sermon preparation, Bishop Garlington notes the lasting impact that in-depth Bible study has on his own life.

“Last year, I was working on a series of messages that dealt with the ‘favor of God.’ The insights I drew, just from the elementary aspects of the study, were life-changing,” he said.

Bishop Garlington believes in the potential for Bible software to revolutionize the way people study the Bible. He has promoted its use among Covenant Church staff because he sees the value of the software for encouraging rich, well-researched teaching while saving time for each busy staff member.

Rather than simply load the software onto staff members’ machines, Bishop Garlington arranged for a series of intensive training sessions using the computer lab in their community center. These sessions, led by an authorized Logos trainer, provided an opportunity to reinforce advanced Biblical research methods while teaching the technology at the same time.

At Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, the impact of better Bible study spreads far beyond the leadership to also touch lives within the congregation. The software helps laypeople “ratchet up” their Bible study to the next level...regardless of where they begin.

Covenant Church makes it easy for anyone to get started with Logos Bible Software by offering it in the church bookstore.

Bishop Garlington said, “The large number of Logos users in the church gives us a ready pool of ‘tutors’ for anyone seeking to use their computer power to more effectively study the scriptures and go as deep as they would like.”

With staff members and laypeople alike using the same Bible software platform, Covenant Church promotes a culture of serious Bible study that permeates every aspect of the church. This, in turn, grows members in the areas of maturity and discipleship.

“As a pastor and teacher, one of my greatest joys is for a student or member to come with some exciting insight they’ve discovered in the Scriptures, and you know that they have that power available to them—without seminary training,” said Bishop Garlington.

Of course, this also means that he now has people bringing their computer to church, following along as he unfolds the Word...and even double-checking his research on some of the finer points!

“I must confess that with so many people sitting in your services with their laptops open to the finest Bible software available to them, you have to stay sharp when you’re presenting the Word,” he said. If it doesn’t mean what you say it means, you’ll soon see some ‘raised eyebrows.’ But as we say here at CCOP: ‘It’s all good!’”

When asked whether he could do his job without Logos Bible Software, Bishop Garlington responded, "Twenty years ago, I wouldn't leave home without my salesman's sample case loaded with my traveling library. Today, I wouldn't even begin to do what I do without this software."

*Daniel Foster works in press relations at Logos Bible Software, [www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com), which offers digital library collections for pastors, teachers, student, and laypeople.*