

The Authors



Maralene and Miles Wesner are multi-talented teachers and prolific writers. They have published more than 150 Audio-Visual Education aids, and pioneered new reading methods with their *Phonics in a Nutshell* (1965).

They have written articles, and mission studies for Southern Baptist periodicals. They were in the original group of writers to develop WMU's Big "A" Club material.

They've published several books with Broadman Press: *A Fresh Look at the Gospel* (1983); *You Are What You Choose* (1984); and *How To Be a Saint When You Feel Like a Sinner* (1986) and self-published 30 books by Diversity Press.

They are noted for their no-nonsense style, their clear illustrations, and their willingness to face controversial issues. From the dual perspectives of both academic and religious professions, they seek to be a bridge between the spiritual and the intellectual worlds.

They hold Masters Degrees (MEd) from Oklahoma University plus work toward a Doctorate. Miles also attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and served as a high school counselor. He has been the bi-vocational pastor of a small rural church for more than 50 years.

Both Maralene and Miles taught in public school and collages and served as educational consultants. Maralene taught Psychology and Speech for South-eastern Oklahoma State University for 32 years. She was chosen Oklahoma Teacher of the Year in 1975.

They have planned, led tours, and done research in all of the 50 states, Canada, Mexico, Europe, Egypt, Japan, and the Holy Land. In 1985, they were among a small group of Americans who were invited by Dr. Joseph P. Kennedy of the US/China Education Foundation and Bishop Ting, leader of the Three Self Movement, to participate in the First Symposium on the Church in Nanjing, China.

Now, they use their lifetime of varied experiences to write insightful sermons, essays, and books.



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If Jesus Were Here Today

101 Sparks of Inspiration

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Stumbling to Zion

Sensible Sermons

FINDING
Truth
IN THE
PARABLES

Maralene & Miles Wesner

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Preface



The Bible is full of stories. Some are historical and factual, meant to be taken literally. Many others are parables about spiritual and moral issues, meant to teach a deeper lesson.

We don't necessarily know which stories are factual and which are not. Often, however, it doesn't matter; the meaning is what's important. Unless the story can be applied in our lives today, it's useless. Paul said, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

This verse tells us that the information in the Bible is there for a purpose. When we read or hear scripture, we must let it speak to us in a personal way. Unless the passage helps us answer our questions or solve our problems, then it's not God's word to us.

As we deal with fifteen of the most popular and well-known Bible stories, let's get beyond the facts to the meaning. The Bible is not a historical book or a scientific book; it's a theological book. The truth is in the lessons it teaches.

This way of studying the Bible requires both thought and prayer, but it's essential to Christian growth. Always ask the following questions: What is the purpose of this passage? Why was it included in the Bible? What deeper meaning is it trying to express? How can I apply this scripture in my everyday life? Most importantly, how can it speak to me today?

(If these parables are presented as a series of sermons or lessons, this Preface may need to be used as an introduction to explain the format and the purpose of each one.)

1.

Of Snakes and Temptations



One of the first stories in the Bible takes place in the garden of Eden:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman