

EDITORIAL

One of the most significant developments in the life of our Society this past year was doubtless the appointment of our Society's first-ever full-time executive director. After a careful search and vetting process, the ETS executive committee selected Mr. Michael Thigpen to serve in this important role. In writing this year's editorial, I thought it would be beneficial to the members of our Society to get to know Mike better. Mike graciously agreed to field a series of questions, and you'll find his answers below.

The Editor: "I understand you have a rather unique background, Mike. Can you tell me a bit about some of the major milestones in your educational and professional pilgrimage thus far?"

Mike Thigpen: "I did my undergraduate work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My experience there had a profound effect on me. It was at UNC that I first learned Hebrew from Dr. Jack Sasson. He was a knowledgeable and patient teacher who really led me to love the language. At UNC I also had the opportunity to study NT with Dr. Bart Ehrman. He was an excellent professor who challenged me to think deeply about the text. I think one of the greatest lessons I learned was to appreciate how much I could gain, even from someone with whom I deeply disagreed.

Seminary, as for many in our Society, was a transformative time in my life. The deep love for missions, passion for the Word, and dedication to personal discipleship instilled by my professors at Columbia Biblical Seminary has truly left its mark on my life. In particular, studying Hebrew and OT with Dr. Chip McDaniel and Dr. Alex Luc helped me confirm that this was the area of study I needed to pursue further. Their passion for helping the church understand and appropriate the OT was contagious.

It was also at CIU that I had my first opportunity to teach. While serving as the seminary's faculty assistant, one of my duties was to teach the intensive summer Hebrew sessions. As difficult as those long summer days were, I found that I loved being in the classroom and that God had gifted me to communicate in that venue.

From Columbia we moved to Cincinnati so that I could pursue my Ph.D. at Hebrew Union College. I cannot say enough about the program or my professors. It has been a truly humbling experience to study there.

While doing my coursework, I started working at U.S. Bank. Little did I know that I would end up spending almost seven years there! What started as a part-time job ended up as a full-time career. Along the way, I answered phones in the call center (studying Akkadian in-between calls!), managed call center teams, and eventually became a call center director. My last position at the bank was as a project manager handling the Bill Payment portion of the secure website. After leaving the bank, I spent a short time in the pastorate before taking an undergraduate faculty position teaching OT and Hebrew.

The Editor: “How did you become aware of the ETS executive director’s position, and how did the process unfold that led to your appointment?”

Mike Thigpen: “Like all the ETS members, I knew that the Society was moving towards hiring an executive director. The general idea seemed appealing, but it wasn’t until I read the job description that I thought, ‘Wow. That’s me.’ It wasn’t long before a few friends told me, after reading the description that it seemed like a perfect fit.

The process was very well done. Communications from the search committee and then later the executive committee were clear and timely. We all know that is not always the case when applying for a position! These little details were a great encouragement to me along the way. After submitting my initial materials, I was contacted and asked to submit a full application. A few weeks afterwards, I found out that I had been selected for the final interview phase.

In April of 2009, I drove to Louisville to interview with the executive committee. Over the course of two days, the committee interviewed three final candidates for the position. The interviews were rigorous yet congenial. I think for me the most memorable part was after the interviews were over. Saturday, as I was driving home I thought, ‘I was excited about this position before, but now, after hearing more and interacting with the executive committee, I really would love to do this job.’

I interviewed Friday and Saturday. Sunday, was my wife Bonnie’s birthday. Monday, Carolina won the NCAA tournament. Wednesday, Bruce called to offer me the job. That was a very good week!”

The Editor: “What are some of the experiences and skills in your background that you feel prepare you uniquely to fill this position?”

Mike Thigpen: “Over the past ten years, as God has guided my steps, I have had the opportunity to gain extensive experience in project management, eBusiness, customer service, personnel management, pastoral leadership, and teaching at the undergraduate level. It had been my prayer that God might lead me to serve in a capacity that would draw on my academic, ministry, and business training. Serving the Society as executive director is fulfilling that aspiration.”

The Editor: “What are your short, medium, and long-range goals as you serve as our Society’s first-ever full-time executive director?”

Mike Thigpen: “We’ve made a number of strategic improvements to the back end operations. The website’s content management system has been updated and in general the site is significantly more stable and responsive. Over the next few months, we’ll be working on the site’s navigation and overall look and feel. In addition to these changes, we are in the process of bringing the online access to *JETS* current so that members can view the most recent issues online. On a personal note, I also need to find a little time in between projects to finish those last few dissertation chapters!

Over the next year to eighteen months, I’ll be working through our membership trends and doing some-long range financial analysis. We have been blessed as a Society, both with abundant resources and excellent leadership. Since its inception, ETS has been led well, and our current state is a

testimony to the faithfulness of our leadership. Now it's my job to come alongside the executive committee to help them continue the good work. In addition to these analytical tasks, we'll be working on bringing a new employment connection feature online so that members can post their resumé materials online and employers can post job opportunities and search for candidates. We're also working on an online archive for papers read at the annual meeting.

My long-range goals are to develop plans for sustainable and manageable growth, to explore additional publication opportunities, develop new revenue streams, to leverage our technology to provide additional electronic delivery options for our journal, and to increase the overall value of our memberships and subscriptions."

The Editor: "You mentioned that you are in the process of completing your dissertation. How far along are you, and what is the topic of your research?"

Mike Thigpen: "Currently, I stand about halfway done, with four chapters outstanding. My dissertation topic is divine motive in the OT. The project involves the collection and analysis of every passage that gives an explicit citation of God's motive for a particular act. The finished project will provide a catalog of the passages and their key features, an analysis of the various divine motives, an exploration of the relationship between divine motive and divine action, and a summary of the key themes and motifs found in the motive passages. The last section of the work is a comparative analysis of the literary use of divine motive in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel."

The Editor: "Thank you very much, Mike, for taking on this large, yet very strategic and significant responsibility. I certainly pledge my support to do everything I can to help your mission succeed. It certainly seems that the Lord brought you to your current position for such a time as this, when the opportunities are virtually endless for kingdom work and evangelical scholarship. May God richly bless you as you serve as our Society's executive director, and may he help you finish your dissertation efficiently and with distinction."

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