In 1990, Os And G.J. Shutte published a book entitled *Bunyan in England and Abroad* in which they maintained that “the last forty years of Bunyan scholarship have seen a remarkable increase in our knowledge of his work and environment. In the absence of fresh sources what we know of his biography has not and probably cannot be much further advanced.”
On Reading Biographies

“When I start to read a biography, I often think of what Solomon wrote: ‘He who walks with the wise grows wise’ (Prov. 13:20). Phillips Brooks amplified that truth when he wrote in 1886: ‘A biography is, indeed, a book; but far more than a book, it is a man...Never lay the biography down until the man is a living, breathing, acting person to you.’”

- Warren Wiersbe
“We must never, after reading the biography of a great man, merely imitate him. Our day is cluttered with men who are carbon copies of greater men. I do not think God is interested in cookie-cutter pastors and preachers. He wants each man to be himself and, with fear and trembling, to “work out his own salvation.” But each of us can learn from the lives of those whom God has singularly gifted and used.”

- Warren Wiersbe
On Reading Biographies

“The object of reading biography...is not imitation but inspiration.”

- Phillips Brooks
The Necessity of Godly Models

1. Godly people translate conceptual truth into understandable reality.

2. “Modeling is the greatest form of unconscious learning” (Albert Bandura, Stanford University psychologist).

3. We are profoundly affected by other people.

4. We gain deep penetrating judgment & wisdom by inspecting the lives of other people.
5. We are able to see for ourselves how “ideas have consequences” (Richard M. Weaver).

6. We gain new insights and increased understanding by which we are able to govern our own lives for the glory of God.

7. “Being informed is prerequisite to being enlightened” (Mortimer Adler).

8. We become “sharpened against the whetstone of another man’s wisdom and character” (Howard Hendricks).
John Bunyan
National Portrait Gallery, London

John Bunyan
by Thomas Sadler
(1630?-1685)
oil on canvas, 1684
29 1/2 in. x 25 in.
Purchased, 1902
BUNYAN’S BIRTHPLACE
Elstow: John Bunyan’s Birthplace
Elstow

• Elstow is a small village located a little more than a mile southwest of Bedford, England.
• The word stow survives in the names of many towns and villages, sometimes separately, as Stow in Cambridgeshire, Stowe in Buckinghamshire, Stow-on-the-Wold; more frequently as the terminal element, as in Chepstow (OED).
• It was also known as Helenstow, which means the stow or stockaded place of St. Helen.
Elstow

• It was called Helenstow because of the dedication of the old Saxon church to Helena (c. A.D. 246-330), the mother of Constantine the Great.

• In 1078 a Benedictine nunnery was founded and remained the central feature of Elstow life until the surrender of the monasteries during the Reformation.
In 1553, a grant was made from the Crown to dissolve the site of the Abbey of Elenstow. The church was dismantled and reconstructed in this present form.
but that when he was ready to go some comrade desired to take his place. This all-too-forward substitute had his way, but it cost him his life, for, “coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel, he was shot into the head with a musket-bullet, and died.”

This, which he seemed to think was a narrow escape for himself, startled Bunyan for the moment; but not for long, for he soon went on in his old reckless, roistering fashion, growing, as he said, more and more rebellious against God, and careless of his own salvation.

Then came a great event in his life, carrying many consequences with it. “Presently after this I changed my condition into a married state, and my mercy was to light upon a wife whose father
Elstow Village
From Dr. John Brown’s Book

Go then, my little book, and show to all
That entertain, and bid thee welcome shall
What thou shalt keep close, shut up from the rest,
And wish what thou shalt show them may be bless’d
To them for good, may make them chose to be
Pilgrims better by far than thee or me.

John Bunyan
FROM BIRTH TO PRISON
(1628-1660)
Outline of Bunyan’s Life

- Thomas Bonyon (also spelled Bonnionn), Jr. (1603-76) and Margaret Bentley (1603-44), John Bunyan’s parents, marry in Elstow Church.
- John Bunyan born in November, 1628 and is baptized on November 30.
- John attends grammar school and then follows his father’s trade, a braseyer or tinker.
- Bunyan’s mother dies on June 20, 1644.
Outline of Bunyan’s Life

• John’s sister dies in July, 1644.
• His father marries Anne within a month of his mother’s death.
• On November 30, 1644, Bunyan reaches the army regulation age of 16.
• Bunyan served in the parliamentary army for about 2½ years.
• John returns to Elstow to work as a tinker.
Sometime between 1647 and 1650, John marries his first wife. There are no recorded details of her life or of their marriage.

She brings two of her father’s books with her into the marriage: *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* by Arthur Dent and *The Practice of Piety* by Lewis Bayly.

They have four children.
Outline of Bunyan’s Life

• Bunyan’s blind daughter is born in the little roadside dwelling in Elstow known as *Bunyan’s Cottage* and is baptized on July 20, 1650.
• St. John’s Church is founded in Bedford with John Gifford being its first pastor.
• Bunyan begins to come into Bedford from Elstow to listen to the preaching of John Gifford.
Outline of Bunyan’s Life

• John Gifford was a godly man who had been converted to Christ after he escaped imprisonment as a Royalist soldier; formerly a great drinker, gamester, and swearer, he turned to Christ and served Him faithfully for the rest of his life (five years).

• Bunyan is received into the membership of St. John’s church; his name appears on the roll of members.
• From 1653 to 1655, John Gifford disciples Bunyan, often in the dining hall of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist.

• John Gifford dies early in September, 1655.

• In 1655, Bunyan moves to Bedford, whose population in his day is between 1,000 and 2,000. There his life is darkened by sorrow: his wife dies (1658) and he is left to care for his four children, including his blind daughter.
Outline of Bunyan’s Life

• In 1655, Bunyan is asked “to speak a word of exhortation” in their gatherings at St. John’s, his first preaching of the Word; God’s call becomes evident to him and to those who hear him.

• In 1658, Bunyan writes *Sighs from Hell*, his work on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.
Outline of Bunyan’s Life

• In 1659, Bunyan marries his second wife, Elizabeth, who bears him three more children.

• In the autumn of 1660, St. John’s Church is taken away from the congregation by the Restoration of King Charles II.

• On November 12, 1660, Bunyan holds a conventicle (an illegal religious meeting) at the little hamlet of Lower Samsell, about 13 miles south of Bedford.
• Magistrate Francis Wingate issues a warrant against him, that if he persists in preaching, he will be arrested. He is arrested at night and the constable and Bunyan stay nearby until morning when they depart for Bedford on foot. His wife Elizabeth is pregnant with their first child; the news of his arrest causes her to go into labor for 8 days; the child dies.