

MAGAZINE

# biola

the magazine of biola university

**FREE!**

how BIOLA is  
→ LEADING →  
a MOVEMENT to **GIVE**  
AWAY THOUSANDS  
of **Educational**  
**RESOURCES**



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For a third straight year, U.S. News names Biola one of nation's 'most promising and innovative' schools
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how BIOLA is  
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by Jason Newell

On a Wednesday back in August, professor Joanne Jung paced across a computer screen in Indonesia, leading a class discussion on personality types and spiritual formation. About 3,200 miles to the southeast, professor Doug Geivett delivered a video lecture about worldviews and movies to a viewer in Melbourne, Australia. And up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, someone with an apparent interest in creation care watched professor Garry DeWeese teach a class on environmental ethics.

Three Biola professors offering biblical teaching on three different continents — all for free.

Welcome the world of Open Biola, a groundbreaking new website that offers hundreds of prerecorded Biola classes, lectures, articles and other educational resources, without payment or registration. Found at [open.biola.edu](http://open.biola.edu), the site allows visitors from anywhere in the world to easily search, stream, download and share videos and other learning materials that engage academic topics from a Christian perspective.

The site is a major milestone for Biola — the next step in a significant effort to serve the global learning community, particularly those who may not otherwise have access to such biblical resources, said Biola President Barry H. Corey.

“Open Biola represents Biola’s commitment to make our most beneficial educational resources widely available to anyone who has access to a computer or a mobile device,” Corey said when the site launched in August. “As a source of thoughtful Christian perspectives on topics ranging from business and science to philosophy and theology, it is our hope that Open Biola will serve the needs of Christian and secular audiences around the world by helping to articulate and foster a biblically centered worldview.”

## Biola For Everyone

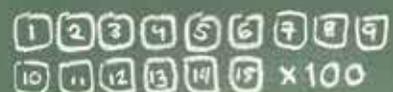
Offering free resources is nothing new for Biola. Even from its earliest days, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles sought to equip believers with books and training for little or no charge (as professor Fred Sanders recounts on page 20).

In recent years, the university has made a push to get more of its offerings online, particularly as it has joined other universities in sharing hundreds of free class videos and audio files on both iTunes U and YouTube. Over the past few years, Biola has built up one of the 100 most-viewed university channels on YouTube, and until recently was also recognized as one of 42 “featured providers” on iTunes U, spotlighted alongside such schools as Cambridge, Cornell, Harvard, MIT and UCLA.

Now, Open Biola — an idea several years in the making — seeks to expand greatly on the impact of those resources. While the site offers much of the same content that has previously been available (and will continue to be available) on YouTube and iTunes U, it also includes several distinct features designed to enhance visitors’ experiences and simplify the search for information. Specifically, Open Biola allows visitors to:

- ▶ browse content by topic, author, collection or academic department;
- ▶ download or stream content in the format of their choice — including HD video, standard video or audio;
- ▶ comment on and discuss content with others;
- ▶ share content via social media, including Facebook, Google+ and Twitter;
- ▶ explore author profiles, which link to each author’s videos, publications and biography; and experience an optimized site design for each device, whether desktop computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

## OPEN BIOLA stats



1,500+  
RESOURCES



SINCE AUGUST 2012  
LAUNCH OPEN BIOLA  
HAS ATTRACTED

12,000+  
UNIQUE VISITS from



All told, the site is one-of-a-kind in Christian higher education. As of November, Open Biola had more than 1,500 individual resources, including more than 829 hours of video and audio, from 470 different Biola professors and guest contributors. And more content is being added continually.

David Nystrom, Biola's provost and senior vice president, said Open Biola can be thought of as the university's tithe to the world — a way of giving from its resources to serve the global cause of Christ.

"We are doing this because we think that there's material here that could be of benefit for God's work worldwide," he told *Christianity Today* in October, adding that the site embodies Jesus' teaching of giving without expecting anything in return.

That's not to say that all of Biola's online resources will be free. The university continues to charge tuition for its numerous for-credit online degree programs and classes, and is working to expand the number and reach of these paid online programs in coming years. Open Biola, while offering the full recordings of dozens of classes, doesn't involve enrolling or certification for those who view classes on the site.

But together, between the tuition-charging programs and the free resources,

university leaders hope to help meet a growing need for theologically conservative thinking across the globe. This commitment is outlined prominently in Biola's newly released University Plan ([biola.edu/plan](http://biola.edu/plan)), which identifies seven aspirations that will guide Biola forward over the next decade — including a desire to extend Biola's educational reach throughout the world.

Open Biola is one of the plan's first major accomplishments, and so far, it appears to be making a significant impact.

## Reaching the World

Already, Open Biola has generated a strong following. Since its launch in August, the site has attracted more than 12,000 unique visitors from 128 countries. About 17 percent of the total traffic has been international, coming from such far-off countries as India, Brazil, China and Saudi Arabia.

And with more than 52 days of content viewed so far, the site's analytics show that on average, someone in the world is now watching free content on Open Biola at any given moment of the day.

Chris Grace, Biola's vice president for student development and university planning, said he's been amazed by the impact of the courses, whether on Open Biola, iTunes U or YouTube. Grace, who is also a psychology professor, said he gets a new email at least once every few weeks from a viewer who has tracked down his contact information to thank him for his Intro to Psychology lectures. They come from all backgrounds: a 50-year-old man in Bahrain, a university professor in Switzerland, a young woman in Puerto Rico. Some of the most entertaining notes are from students at other universities.

"My prof is useless, but after watching your lecture, things just stuck more," one read. "You presented it in a fun, engaging

manner, and I just have to tip my hat to you."

Professor Erik Thoennes — whose Theology 1 and Character of God classes are popular resource on iTunes U and who now has more than 50 videos on Open Biola — said it's been encouraging to get notes from people around the world who have reported growing in their passion for Christ as a result of watching the online courses.

It's particularly touching to hear from those who aren't able to enroll at Biola because of finances, location or other life circumstances.

"Thanks so much for your passion for Jesus," one person wrote. "Thanks to the miracle of technology, I am being deeply affected by it, years after you recorded it. Awesome!"

And it isn't just Christians who are viewing the content. Grace said he knows that many of the people who view his online lectures are not believers, and he hopes that the Christian perspectives that are integrated into Biola's classes are able to plant seeds, however small.

One such example recently came in the form of an email from a professing atheist who had come across videos of a Biola art class, and admitted that he was expecting to be subjected to the "rantings of some preachy, benighted, Bible-thumping philistine." Instead, he was pleased to find the stereotypes proven wrong by the course's rigor and sophistication, he wrote.

"That person's perception of a Christian institution and a Christian intellectual just changed," Grace said. "That is just one more person who is now less likely to say, 'Why would you go to a Christian university?' That is awesome. I'm just continually amazed at the untold impact these courses are having." **B**

**"Open Biola represents Biola's commitment to make our most beneficial educational resources widely available to anyone."**

# Explore For Yourself

To explore Open Biola and its growing collection of more than 1,500 free educational resources, just visit <http://open.biola.edu>. Here are three popular ways to browse the site and find something that interests you.

## Browse by Collection

Open Biola has more than 100 “collections” of content, which organize related videos into a single group. This option makes it easy to find all of the videos from a semester-long class, an academic conference or a chapel series.

### SUGGESTED COLLECTIONS:



## Browse by Topic

Each item on Open Biola has been classified according to its subject matter, making it easy to find a resource you're interested in. For example, clicking on “ethics” from the home page’s topic list leads to more than 100 resources. From there, you can search deeper within the results by clicking a second topic, such as “politics.”

### SUGGESTED TOPICS:

EVANGELISM   ART   LEADERSHIP   BUSINESS

## Browse by Author

Each of the 470 people who have contributed content to Open Biola — whether classes, conference lectures, chapel messages, articles or something else — has a profile page. There, you'll find the author's brief biography, social media accounts, links to published books and the full directory of the author's Open Biola content.

### SUGGESTED AUTHORS:



**Erik Thoennes** Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies



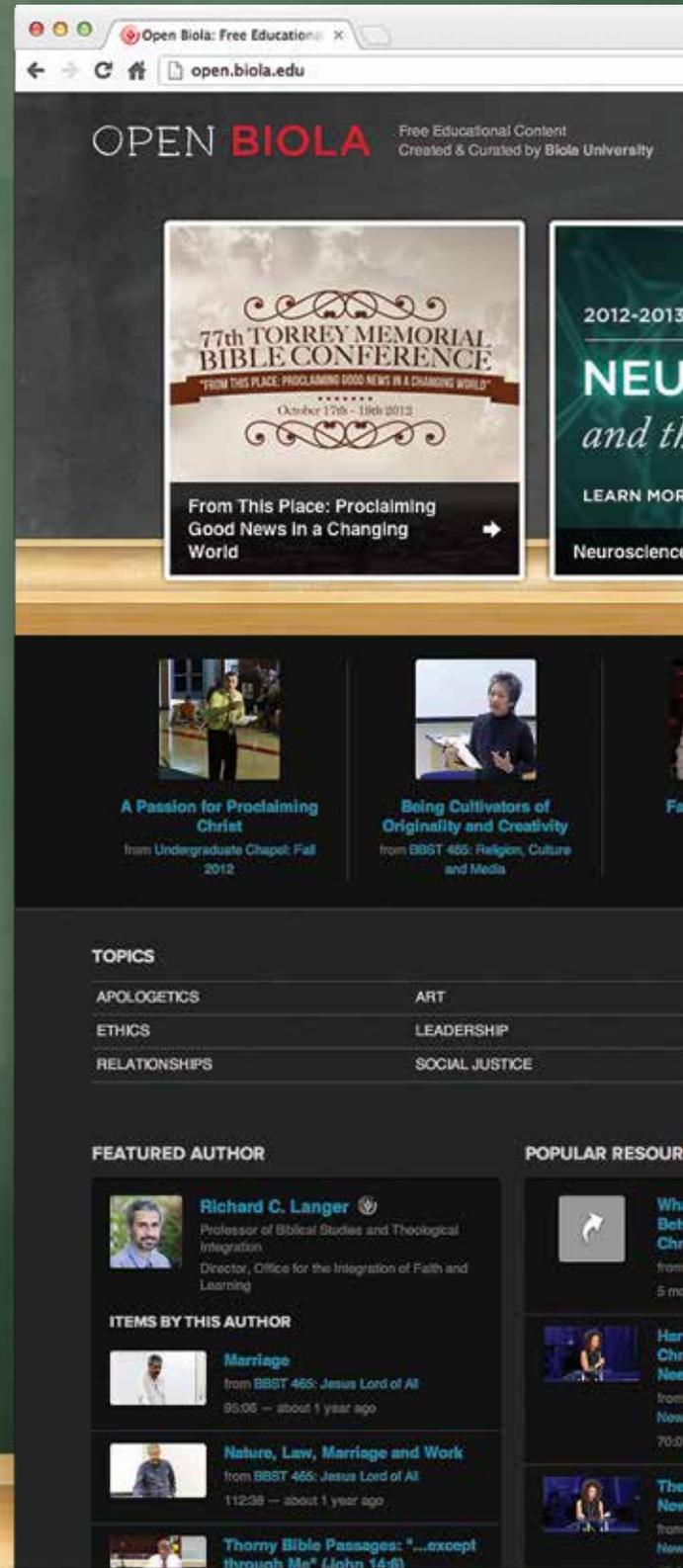
**Joanne Jung** Associate Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies

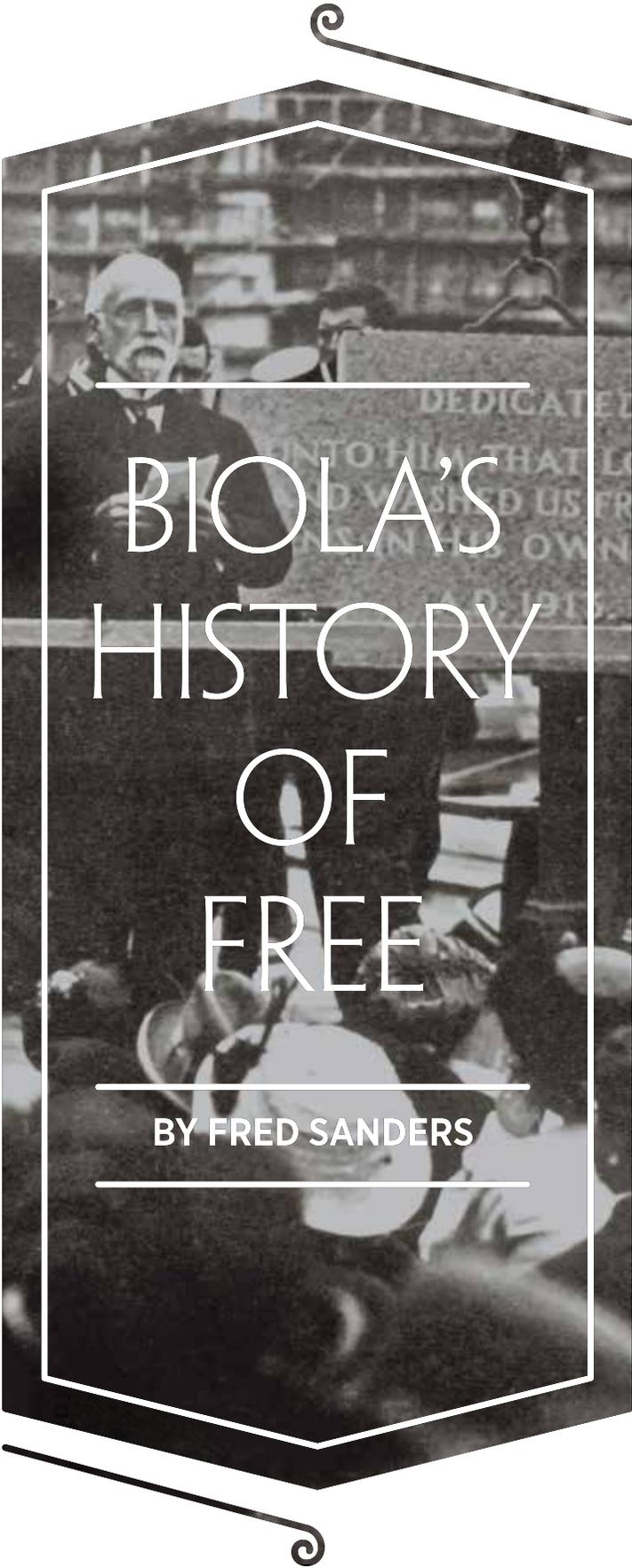


**Tim Muehlhoff** Associate Professor of Communication



**Dallas Willard** Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern California





# BIOLA'S HISTORY OF FREE

BY FRED SANDERS

AT BIOLA, FREE GOES ALL THE WAY BACK: IN FACT, BIOLA HAS BEEN GIVING THINGS AWAY SINCE BEFORE THERE WAS A BIOLA. THE SCHOOL OFFICIALLY CAME INTO EXISTENCE IN 1908, BUT IN THE YEARS BEFORE THAT, OUR FOUNDERS WERE ALREADY COMMITTED TO DISTRIBUTING BIBLICAL TEACHING AT NO CHARGE.

Our first president was Lyman Stewart, the Christian businessman and philanthropist who helped found the Union Rescue Mission as early as 1891. Stewart was also the visionary behind the Los Angeles Bible House, a missionary publishing foundation that printed millions of copies of Bibles and tracts, with a special focus on distribution in Latin America. Stewart was already in the free business, and starting the Bible Institute of Los Angeles in 1908 was really his way of distributing more Bible knowledge, more effectively, from the most strategic location.



## THE FUNDAMENTALS

The most spectacular stunt of mass educational generosity in Biola's history was the publication of *The Fundamentals*. Published serially from 1910 to 1915, *The Fundamentals* were a series of 12 paperback books, totaling 90 chapters in all. These chapters argued in defense of a wide range of traditional Christian beliefs, emphasizing the historical reliability of the Bible and the classic Protestant teaching about salvation. They were printed and mailed at no charge to any pastor, teacher or missionary who requested them by postcard. In the final volume, an editorial noted that they were being sent to a "mailing list of 100,000 addresses of Christian workers, all of whom have asked for *The Fundamentals*."

By the end of the project, 3 million copies had been given away, one third of them overseas. The whole set was anonymously sponsored by "Two Christian Laymen," who in fact turned out to be Lyman Stewart and his brother Milton. The final editor of the series was R.A. Torrey, Biola's first academic dean. Historian George Marsden notes that Stewart and his editors had assembled "a rather formidable array of conservative American and British scholars, as well as a number of popular writers." *The Fundamentals* were deeply encouraging to conservatives and had a large influence on the churches for decades.

## NO TUITION!

Current students and parents may be surprised to learn that there was originally no charge at all for tuition at the Bible Institute. The entire business model was designed to make free instruction possible, with students paying only for the costs of delivery. Day and night classes were offered at no charge, and a correspondence school was also available "at a trifling cost."

A typical advertisement (from the December 1917 issue of *The King's Business*) leads with the key word: "Free training of consecrated young men and young women, to make them efficient Bible workers, prepared for any field of Christian endeavor, is the sole object sought by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles." The advertisement was an appeal to donors, asking them to give financially to support Biola's mission of free Bible education. As it explained, "The greater the number of students, the more necessary the generous co-operation of Christian men and women in carrying on this unselfish work, for, be it known, the student pays only actual cost for board and gets all training in the school absolutely FREE." After all, it concluded, "It doesn't take a mathematician to figure out that a large faculty, the heavy running expenses and the interest-bearing indebtedness, must be met from voluntary sources." The Bible teaching was intended to be free, but Biola was always realistic about the hefty cost of doing business downtown. Somebody had to pay for all that free learning. As a 1918 ad to prospective students stated, "Here's the Key: Free to You."

## ON THE AIR

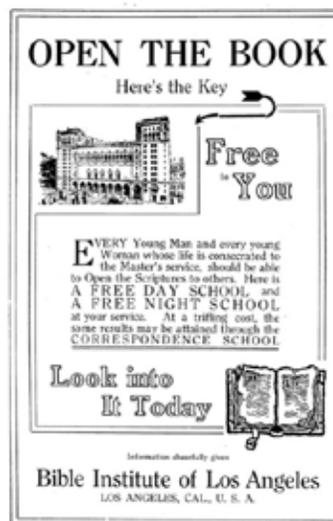
With a clear understanding of its mission, Biola was alert to the opportunities created by new media and emerging technology. In the 1920s that meant radio. The first AM radio station in America was licensed in 1921, and by 1922 Biola was already on the air in Los Angeles. Soon the school acquired the call letters KTBI, standing for The Bible Institute, and had 750 watts of free Bible teaching emanating from the most powerful broadcast tower west of the Mississippi. What went out on the air through those early shows was exactly the same content as was taught in the classrooms at the Institute. New technology had significantly lowered the cost of delivering the teaching to a much wider audience. Over the decades, Biola adopted different strategies toward radio, selling its station after the stock market crash of 1929 but redoubling its commitment to good programming. The chairman of Biola's board, Charles Fuller, hosted "The Pilgrim's Hour" and "The Old Fashioned Revival Hour," and later president Louis Talbot made "The Biola Hour" a high-rated fixture on West Coast radio. Other famous teachers like Al Sanders and Lehman Strauss were also staples of Biola's radio ministry.

## FREE TODAY

As Biola grew into its current institutional profile as a full liberal arts university with a range of majors and graduate programs, it became more difficult to carry out the founders' vision of free Bible education. Lyman Stewart prayed that "from this place, streams of influence" would radiate outward, and he obviously intended that whenever possible, Bible teaching would be free, or as affordable as possible. And wherever possible, free teaching still happens: in professors from the seminary guest preaching in various churches ("pulpit supply"), in tours of musical groups, in volunteer ministries

downtown, in a wide variety of mission trips, and — now — in online resources like Open Biola.

The high cost of doing business in higher education has been a major challenge to Biola's abiding commitment to give away as much Bible instruction as possible. But free is in our DNA, and the school remains vigilant in its quest to utilize any new technology that enables us to spread the word while meeting our expenses — anything that sets us free to be free. ■



**Fred Sanders** is a systematic theologian, associate professor at Biola's Torrey Honors Institute, and one of Biola's resident historians. Follow him on Twitter at @FredFredSanders.