Announcer (0:03)

The Missouri State Journal a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Adair Seifert (0:09)

Humans have five senses, vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. All five senses play a key role in daily life. But they can also help us explore literature in a more profound way. Dr. Victor Matthews, Dean of Missouri State University's College of Humanities and Public Affairs, wrote a book that explores scripture by using the five senses, and his new book, experiencing Scripture, the five senses and biblical interpretation, readers will experience the role that the senses play and understanding biblical text. I'm Adair Seifert and today we'll explore Matthew's new book.

Dr. Victor Matthews (0:47)

This happens to be my 19th book published. It is a study of how the five senses are found in biblical narrative, in biblical law, and then in my interpretation of events that are described in the text. So, what it does, basically, is explore something that I've done for many years, which is the social world of ancient Israel. But what it allows me to do is to think about, well, what did these people smell? What did they hear? What did they do? And all those kinds of things that a part of our everyday life, and we don't think about them. We take them for granted because we use them all the time. But then looking at the text and saying, okay, well, they're describing walking through a field, well, what would that be like? Well, you could hear the crackling of the, of the stalks of grain as they walk through the field, or they can see the birds flying, or they might hear the wind as it came through the trees. Those kinds of things are what I'm trying to bring out. Well, as they say, I've been writing on the area of the social world for many years. This, however, was something that was brought to my attention. A book by a fella who's an American historian, and he was writing about the senses of the Battle of Gettysburg. I said, I had never thought about that. But, of course, the roar of the cannon and all that kind of stuff. So, I started looking at similar kinds of things in warfare in the ancient in ancient Israel, and in the ancient Near East. And, of course, there's lots of stuff that you can talk about a couple of articles, and then I convinced the publisher, yeah, I should write a book on that.

Adair Seifert (2:23)

Matthews shares one of the areas of his research that surprised him the most.

Dr. Victor Matthews (2:28)

You know, I think maybe smell was the one thing that I hadn't really thought about, particularly. But if you're on if you live on a farm, you're used to hearing the animals and smelling the result of those animals. But I live in town, and I don't think about that, except when I have to pick up the poop from my dog. The result is, what would it have been like to live in a rural area? I mean, the only experience I've really had of that other than visiting farms was when I was in Damascus years and years ago, and I would go through the bizarre and smell the exotic spices and watch little boys pick up poop from donkeys because what they were doing was taking it home and they were going to use it as fuel. Because they could they did that in antiquity, they talk about it in the text, and here we have it in real life. If you haven't walked the ground. You just really don't know what you're reading necessarily. You don't know how far away things are, you don't know what they might have run into along the way. I mean, the best example is the story of the Good Samaritan. People don't know where it happened. All they do is examined what happens when the Samaritan helps the guy who has been hurt. But it's actually in the wadi KELT, which is a dry riverbed that runs from Jerusalem down to Jericho.

Adair Seifert (3:45)

Matthews explains how he integrates his books and research into his classroom at Missouri State.

Dr. Victor Matthews (3:51)

I'm teaching students about how to use social science methods to examine the text, historical geography, and sensual aspects of the text. And just basically opening your mind to what the storyteller can tell you can make such an impact.

Adair Seifert (4:12)

He shares what he hopes readers gain from his book and where they can purchase it.

Dr. Victor Matthews (4:16)

I'm hoping it will open a new avenue for them to explore meaning. So often we treat the biblical text as law or literature, but I want it to become alive for the people that inhabit the text, and then in turn, for those who read it. I would like them to really think about how the senses can liven up a Bible study. Make it something that is identifiable with us rather than something long ago. It's available through the publisher Fortress Press, and through Amazon in both the Kindle as well as the paperback versions.

Adair Seifert (4:55)

That was the dean of Missouri State University's College of Humanities and Public Affairs. Here's Dr Victor Matthews. I'm Adair Seifert for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer (5:04)

For more information contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397 the Missouri State journal is available online at ksmu.org.