

Teaching the Bible
“WHOSE AUTHORITY?”

Dr. Jerry Nelson
www.SoundLiving.org

We are people are people who believe the Bible. We believe the Bible because it is God's Word. We believe God superintended the writing of the Bible in such a way as to ensure that what he wanted to say to us is in fact said to us. We call this book a “revelation” because it is God revealing himself to us. The Apostle Paul said it this way to Timothy: *“All Scripture is God-breathed...”* Each story, each poem, each lesson, each word was specifically intended by God to communicate to us very specific truth about himself and our relationship to him.

This is not just any book. This is not just one of many important books; this book is unique. We believe this book, like no other book, is God's word to us. If that is true, and we believe it is, then it is an awesome thing! We have in our hands the words of God. Not just any God but THE God; The God who created everything; The God who created us; The God who is sovereign Lord; The God who has our destinies in his hands; That powerful, eternal, God of all gods, has spoken.

There is an interesting story told to us in the book of Exodus chapter 19: The people of Israel had fled from Egypt under God's direction and had come to Mt. Sinai. There at Mt. Sinai God met with the people. It says that in the morning there was thunder and lightning and a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses let the people out of the camp to meet with God and they all stood at the foot of the mountain.” That's a vivid picture. And again it says that when the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet they trembled in fear. And they said to Moses, *“Do not have God speak to us or we will die.”* Can you imagine such an experience - To have God speak to you? Like the Israelites of old, most of us are ill prepared to stand in the presence of God and hear directly the voice of God. I believe we too would cower in fear – the experience too overwhelming. But God has accommodated himself to our weaknesses – he has spoken to us through the prophets and the apostles.

AND IT IS STILL GOD'S WORD – God has spoken. And if God has spoken, don't you want to know exactly what God has said? Because of who God is, it is vitally important that I know precisely what he has said. I don't want to misunderstand when I'm listening to him. I want to be certain I know exactly what he is saying.

If you were lost in a large and dangerous city at night and called a knowledgeable friend to give you directions to safety – you would listen very carefully, and write down exactly, every word they said. You wouldn't want to miss one word. Your life would depend on understanding it exactly as your friend said it. When God speaks to us through his Word – it is not good enough to hope we understood him. It is not good enough to hear just what others think he might have meant. When God speaks I want to know exactly what he has said – my life depends on it. **Now, my point is this, preachers and teachers – “When you stand before people and presume to speak for God – are you certain it is what God has said?”**

In Jeremiah 23 there is a very sobering passage from the Lord. *“This is what the Lord Almighty says concerning (false) prophets: They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord...But which of them has stood in the council of the Lord to see or to hear his word? I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. Yes, the Lord declares, I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, ‘The Lord declares’. They distort the words of the living God.*

There is a special curse on those who claim to speak for God what God has not said. Deuteronomy 18:20 *“A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say...must be put to death.”* If we are going to stand before people and say, “Thus saith the Lord” or “God has said such and such” – we had better be certain it IS what God has said. That is why we must teach this book CAREFULLY! And we must be careful that what we say this book says IS what it says. It alone is the Word of God. It alone is what God has said.

Why should people listen to you when you teach; because you are clever, funny or entertaining? What authority do you have to speak to people expecting them to listen and respond? Is it because you are the teacher that they should listen? What if you teach what isn't important or,

worse yet, isn't true? Is it because you are the teacher that they should do as you say? What if you teach what God has not said? The only true authority we have is the authority of God. And if we do not speak what God has said, we lose that authority.

When the United States Ambassador in New Delhi meets with your Prime Minister – for whom does the Ambassador speak? The Ambassador speaks for the President of the United States. Whose word does the Prime Minister want to hear? The Ambassadors? NO. The Prime Minister is interested only in the word that the Ambassador carries from the President.

Many times in the New Testament, we are called “heralds” or “ambassadors”. Paul says it this way, “We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” Whose appeal is it? Ours? NO. It is God’s appeal. It is only to the extent that we communicate what God has said that we teach with any authority.

Listen to some examples of teachers in the Bible and what they did: Ezra (Nehemiah 8). And so on the first day of the seventh month, Ezra brought the Scriptures before the people. And all who were old enough to understand were there and Ezra read the Scriptures from daybreak until noon. And when he opened the book to read, the people all stood up. And in Nehemiah 8:8 we read: *“The leaders read from the book of the Law of God making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.”* Yes, the teachers were making things clear – they were helping people to understand what was being read – BUT what were they making clear? Was it their own words? No, they were giving the meaning of God’s Word. It was not Ezra’s word the people needed to hear – it was GOD’S WORD.

Consider the example of Jesus himself: In Luke 4 we are told that Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth and the Word of God was handed to him to read. He stood up and found a passage in Isaiah and he read it. And then he sat down and began to teach and explain what that passage of Scripture meant. Jesus demonstrated again that the authority of the teacher is connected to the authority of the Word of God. Only as we carefully study and explain God’s Word do we have anything important to say.

In the book of I Kings, King Ahab was in a difficult situation when his enemy, the Aramites, was making war against him. On one occasion he was considering whether it would be wise or not to attack a certain city. He sought the council of his advisors who all said “yes” he should attack. But Ahab was concerned that maybe his advisors were only telling him what they thought he wanted them to say. So he sent for a man of God, a prophet/preacher, who was known to speak for God. The preacher’s name was Micaiah. A messenger was sent to Micaiah to invite him to come to King Ahab. When the messenger found Micaiah he said to him, “Look all the other advisors say the same thing – that the king will be victorious – when you speak to Ahab make certain you say the same thing.” Micaiah’s response is the response I want to have and the response I want everyone of you to have when it comes to what you say when you teach: *“as surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me!”*

It is very tempting to tell people what they want to hear. It is very tempting to teach ideas and subjects that are currently popular, that people find enjoyable, that people say “good job” BUT it is imperative that we teach only what the Lord tells us. And this book is the Word of the Lord. Therefore what we teach must be from this book and it must be what the book says – what God says.

Paul wrote to Timothy *“Do your best to present yourself to God as...a workman who correctly handles the word of truth.* Are you an ambassador for God? - then be careful, very careful to speak only his word. Our lives and the lives of the people we serve depend on it.”

What is Biblical/Expository Teaching?

"Biblical/expository teaching is the declaration of God's message, as found in the Bible, by a teacher to a people with the same intentions as the original writers." "Expository" means to "exposit" or "expose" the text. For examples: When the gospel writer John recalls tells of an incident in the life

of Jesus he does so for the purpose of communicating something very specifically about Jesus to his readers; when the Apostle Paul writes a paragraph in his letter to the Ephesians he does so with the intention of communicating something very specifically to his readers. The task and privilege of the biblical/expository teacher is to expose those specific intentions to his hearers. The teacher might also say other biblically based things about that subject but the teacher will have misused the Bible if he/she has not communicated what the author intended in this specific text. We have already attempted to convince you, if you weren't already convinced, that that the only teaching that is truly biblical is teaching which is biblically based – teaching which reveals what God has said - not just what we or others think. Therefore when we teach the Bible our task is to uncover or to expose what the text of Scripture says and reveal that to our audience.

What are the values of expository teaching.

1. Expository teaching, wherein a primary text is developed for the listeners, allows them to see for themselves how the text unfolds. It demonstrates how the Bible is to be read and studied.
2. Expository preaching/teaching allows the listener to test the truth: Not only does an expository message/lesson demonstrate for hearers how to study the Bible but it allows them to test the credibility of the message and the teacher/preacher.

Our job as a teacher or preacher is to accurately determine what God meant and communicate that to the people in a way they can understand and apply it to their lives. Only when we accurately reflect god's intention do we teach with authority - God's authority.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Teaching and Preaching

I. **The Spirit in the life of the teacher** (ethos) While God can use even a donkey (Balaam's) to communicate his word to people, he usually chooses to use those in whom his word is already at work changing their

lives. When the Spirit of God is changing the teachers' lives, it gives even greater credibility to the witness of the teacher.

II. **The Spirit in the preparation of the sermon**

Every teacher needs the immediate help of the Spirit in illuminating the Word to the teacher so that the teacher understands what God means and has spiritual insight into how the Word applies to the teacher's life and the lives of those he is teaching.

Every teacher needs what in past years was known as "unction" or "anointing" which is a supernatural work of the Spirit enabling the teacher to teach clearly and thus effectively. At the same time we know that the Spirit expects the teacher to study well in preparation for teaching ("Study to show yourself approved..."). There must be a combination of unction (anointing) and preparation – either without the other is ineffective.

III. **The Spirit in the listeners' preparation and response**

Spiritual change is supernatural (I Corinthians 2:14). We pray for the Spirit of God to a spiritual work in the minds and lives of students. Nothing spiritual happens without God's intervention.

Four things every lesson/sermon should be:

1. It must be **TRUE** - consistent with the text
2. It must be **CLEAR** - understandable.
3. It must be **INTERESTING** - if people aren't listening they won't change.
4. It must be **RELEVANT** - it must be applicable to their lives.
We want them to do something as a result of this message.

(From Biblical Preaching by Haddon Robinson)

STEPS IN LESSON PREPARATION:

STEP # 1 PRAYER

1. **"A" ADMIT** to the Lord my need - without his help I cannot do this in a way that will honor him. John 15:5 "Without me you can do nothing."
2. **"P" PRAY** for help. Psalm 50:15 "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will glorify me." I pray for insight, understanding, efficiency, and application. This is my prayer throughout my preparation.

3. **“T” TRUST** Him. God has commanded me to teach. What God demands, God provides. I choose to trust him to do what he has promised to do - to help me.
4. **“A” ACT.** I proceed with my study assuming God’s intervention. I expect him to help me. I find that I often repeat my prayer for help and reaffirm my trust. But I find that I must act - I must work - depending on God.
5. **“T” THANK** God for his help.

“APTAT” from John Piper The Supremacy of God in Preaching

STEP # 2 STUDY THE CONTEXT and THE TEXT:

A. Consider the whole book's CONTEXT

Illustrations:

Revelation - Pastoral intent to 7 churches, 1:3

I John - expose false teachers 2:26 and give assurance of salvation 5:13

Genesis written by Moses before entrance into Canaan -

Compare 3:21 with sacrificial system.

Compare the "Tree of life" with Revelation 21.

Ruth - Compare 4:11-21 with overall purpose of the book.

Consider Ruth's nationality - a foreigner

Judges 17:6; 21:25 How does this comment affect the book?

I Corinthians see 1:11 (reported problems in the church; 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; questions they had asked Paul.)

B. Determine the immediate text - where does the text begin and end? The Bible is written as any other literature with "thought units". We must determine the unit we will preach/teach.

Illustrations:

Genesis 1:1-2:3 Teach in parts or whole? Where to divide?

Genesis 2:4-25 Teach in parts or whole? Where to divide?

Genesis 3:1-24 Teach in parts or whole? Where to divide?

Romans 1 Where should we divide the texts?

Romans 2 Where should we divide the texts?

Romans 3 Where should we divide the texts?

How 3:19-20 summarizes Chapters 2 and 3

How 3:21 introduces the next idea (Cf. 1:17 this was Paul’s intention all the time)

C. Consider the immediate CONTEXT - before and after your text.

Illustrations:

John 6 Feeding of the 5000 and teaching on "bread of life."

Luke 15:1-2 Governs all three parables.

James 1. Are verses 9-11 part of 1-8 and 12-15? Are verses 9-11 a sermon against the wealth and for poverty?

Genesis 3:21 cf. with 3:7

D. Study the Text

1. **Read** it many times.
2. **Immerse** yourself in the text. Go through it sentence by sentence, paraphrase it, make sense of it, and put it in context.
3. **Do relevant word studies, if in doubt.** How is this word used elsewhere in the immediate context, by this author in other of his books, by other authors? (Caution: The same word can be used in two different ways; cf. Romans 7 "Law" as law of God and as principle or influence.)

STEP # 3 DETERMINE THE MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT.

What is the subject (what is the author writing about?)
and

What is the author saying about the subject?

A. Determine the subject of the text.

(Go through the text and apply the subject to the parts. Does the subject fit? Is your stated subject an exact description of what the passage is talking about?) Illustrate incorrect subject with Romans 7:1-6 especially verses 2-3)

Illustrations:

"The large brown cow got up slowly."

Romans 4

Romans 5:1-11

Genesis 3:7-14

Revelation 21-22

Romans 8:31-39

B. Determine what the text is saying about the subject? (Look at each thing you think the author is saying about the subject and ask, "Does this statement fit the subject?")

Illustrations:

1. "The large brown cow got up slowly."

What is the subject?

What is the author saying about the subject?

2. "In evangelism the Holy Spirit is most important. If the disciple teaches, it is because the Spirit **teaches** the disciple. If the listener is **convicted**, it is because the Spirit has penetrated their thinking. If the listener is **converted**, it is by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. If the new believer **matures**, it is because the Spirit makes him or her competent."

(Lucado "When God Whispers Your Name" p 37)

What is the subject? _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

_____,
_____,
_____,
_____.

3. "Today's preachers/teachers have lost much of their authority because they no longer base their sermons on the Bible"

Subject? _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

_____.

4. G.K. Chesterton once said that it is often supposed that when people stop believing in God, they believe in nothing. Alas, it is worse than that. When people stop believing in God, they believe in anything." (Malcolm Muggeridge)

Subject? _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

_____,
_____.

5. Psalm 117 “Praise the Lord all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord.”

Subject: _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

_____ ,

6. Matthew 5:14-16

Subject? _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

_____ ,

_____ ,

_____ ,

7. I Corinthians 6:1-7

Subject? _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

_____ ,

_____ ,

_____ ,

_____ ,

8. Romans 5:1-11

(1) “Therefore since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (3) Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; (4) perseverance, character; and character, hope. (5) And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us. (6) You see at just the right time, when we were powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. (7) Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. (8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. (10) For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more , having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life. (11) Not only is this so,

but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

Subject? _____

What is the author saying about the subject?

C. Do a verbal paraphrase of the entire text attempting to make sense of each part in relationship to the whole. Does each part illumine the subject?

Illustration: Romans 5:1-11

Justification by faith results in peace, grace and hope. Those results are based on Christ's death for us and guaranteed by the obvious fact that if God reconciled us to himself when we were enemies, he will surely keep us now that we belong to him.

D. Outline the text.

Illustration: Romans 5:1-11

- A. (1-2) Since we have been justified through faith we have:
 - 1. Peace with God
 - 2. We stand in grace
 - 3. We rejoice in hope
- B. (3-5) We even rejoice in our sufferings
 - 1. Sufferings produce hope.
 - 2. Sufferings aren't a contradiction of hope.
- C. (6-8) God demonstrated his love by dying for us
 - 1. He died for us while we were still sinners (verse 8).
 - 2. He died for us while we were powerless and ungodly (verse 6)
 - 3. Dying for someone, even the best people, is unusual.

D. (9-11) Surely if God would die for us while we were enemies he will save us now that we belong to him.

E. State the idea of the text in one sentence!

Illustration: Romans 5:1-11 Because of what God did for us while we were still his enemies, we have a guaranteed new relationship with God that produces peace, grace and hope.

Remember the question: If the Holy Spirit (who wrote this text) were to respond to what you think is the idea of this text would he say, “Yes that is what I meant when I inspired those words”?

STEP # 4 DETERMINE HOW TO PRESENT OR ENGAGE THE STUDENTS/AUDIENCE IN THE DISCOVERY OF THE TEXT’S MEANING AND APPLICATION TO THEIR LIVES.

Illustration of one method:

Study Questions for Romans 6

Compare 6:1 & 6:15 Basically the same question and answer.
(V1 Shall we continue to sin that grace may abound? By no means!)
(V15 Shall we sin because we are under grace, nor law? By no means!)

V2 Why should we no longer sin?
(We died to sin.)

V3 Into what were we baptized?
(Into Christ and his death.)

V4 What is the result of being baptized into Christ?
(Buried with him into death/ Raised to live a new life.)

V5 In what two ways are we united to Christ?
(Death and resurrection.)

V6 Why should we no longer be slaves to sin?

(Our old self was crucified with Christ.)

V8 In what two ways are we connected to Christ?

(We died with him and we live with him.)

V9-10 What two things are true of Christ after his resurrection?

(Death can't rule him again, he died to sin once for all- not be repeated.)

V11 As a result of Christ's death and resurrection, how are we to consider ourselves?

(Dead to sin, alive to God.)

V12-13 What should we therefore NOT do and what should we do?

(Not let sin reign in our bodies, not offer our bodies/ Offer ourselves to God)

V1-13 Why does the doctrine of grace lead to holiness instead of more sin?

(We are connected to Christ in his death and resurrection.)

V15 Restate the question Paul asks and how he answers it. Cf V1

(Shall we sin because we are under grace not law?)

V16 What is a principle of slavery?

(You are a slave to the one you obey.)

V16 Name two kinds of slavery and the result of each?

(Sin/death, (Obedience/righteousness)

V17-18 Contrast your past with the present.

(Slaves to sin/ Slave to righteousness.)

V19 What used to be true compared to what should be true now?

(Formerly we offered our bodies to impurity/ now we offer our bodies to righteousness.)

V20-21 What was the end result of being a slave to sin?

(Death)

V22 What is the end result of being a slave to God?

(Eternal life)

V23 What is the Summary

(The wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life.)

V15-23 Why does the doctrine of grace lead to holiness instead of sin?

(We were set free (v18,22) from slavery to sin in order to be slaves to righteousness, to God.)

Discussion Questions for Romans 6

1. Theologically, we know that we are no longer in Adam, we are now in Christ. Our baptism, if water, symbolizes this reality; if spiritual, is the reality of being “in Christ.” Practically speaking, what are the implications of being dead to sin and alive to Christ? *(This is an important foundation for the rest of this passage.)*
2. Why should a Christian stop sinning even though he or she knows God has forgiven and will forgive sins?
3. If we are dead to sin, how does God help us understand and live in that truth, free from sin’s ruling power? What are the implications of this regarding old sinful habits and propensities?
4. Is there a “controlling” sin in your life that you commit willingly because you are counting on God’s grace to forgive you? What would it take to walk away from that sin?
5. What differences are there (the differences between yielding to sin and yielding to Christ) in your life since coming to know Christ?
6. What are the characteristics of someone who is dead to sin and is continually offering him/herself to God as an instrument of righteousness and do you know someone like that? What circumstances led to them live in such a way?
7. What benefits and pleasures do people THINK they gain from sinful living?

8. What are the benefits and pleasures of righteous living?
9. In what areas of your life do you need God's help to loosen the grip of certain sins?
10. The reality of this passage is the change in masters (from sin to righteousness). If you are a believer and are caught in the enslavement of sin, what must you do to be free?

See also: Pages 26-32 of Woudstra's The Book of Joshua excellent on proper exegesis, particularly related to OT texts.

The following is based on Hughes Oliphant Old's article "Preaching as Worship" in *Worship Leader*, Sept/Oct 1998

"As early as the time of Moses, preaching has been a major component of worship." P23 For a non-speaker, he preached a lot. The second commandment leads us to understand that much of worship is remembering God's great acts and praising him. "Preaching is worship because it recounts the story of how God has created us, guided us, brought us to himself and blessed us. In telling this story we are witnessing to God's redemptive glory." P24 Look at Nehemiah 8:1-11 for an example of preaching from the Word. Jesus was a preacher. Not just the "snippets" we see in the Gospels but the longer sermons that he must have preached in the synagogues when he sat down after reading and taught the people. Then we have Jesus' command to his disciples to preach and teach Matthew 28:18-20.