

# SOUTHWEST ELDERS CONFERENCE

THE WORD OF GOD

THE PRACTICAL USE OF SCRIPTURE IN THE MINISTRY OF ELDERS

“FEED MY LAMBS”

JOHN 21:15

AUGUST 26-27, 2011

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TEACHING NOTES  
JAMES G. MCCARTHY

**The Word of God**  
**The Practical Use of Scripture in the Ministry of Elders**  
 “Feed My Lambs” (John 21:15)

<b>Conference Schedule</b>	
<b>Friday Evening, August 26</b>	
6:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Registration
6:30 p.m. - 6:45 p.m.	Introductory Remarks
6:45 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.	Teaching Session 1—Review of the 2010 Conference - How to Make Decisions as Elders (pages 3-5)
7:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Break
7:30 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.	Teaching Session 2—How to Build Up the Saints Through the Teaching of the Word (pages 6-15)
8:15 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Assemblies’ Reports on their Work for the Lord
<b>Saturday Morning, August 27</b>	
8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Registration for one day participants
9:00 a.m. - 9:20 a.m.	Welcome / Hymns
9:20 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Teaching Session 3—How to Formulate a Sermon Thesis (pages 16-23)
10:00 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.	Break - snacks provided
10:20 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Teaching Session 4—How to Prepare a Sermon Efficiently (pages 24-33)
11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.	Assembly Reports
11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.	Group Prayer
<b>Saturday Afternoon, August 27</b>	
12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Teaching Session 5—How to Deliver a Sermon Effectively (pages 34-38)
2:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	Teachings Session 6—How to Raise Up the Next Generation of Bible Teachers (pages 39-40)
2:30 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.	Break
2:50 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Assembly News and Announcements
3:15 p.m. - 3:50 p.m.	Teaching Session 7—How to Use God’s Word in Evangelistic and Pastoral Ministry (pages 41-48)
3:50 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Closing Comments
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Q & A time with the Speaker

**TEACHING SESSION 1**  
**FRIDAY EVENING INTRODUCTION**  
**REVIEW OF THE 2010 SOUTHWEST ELDERS CONFERENCE**

**PRINCIPLES OF CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING IN THE CHURCH**

**Working Through Concerns and Differences**

- Elders must take adequate time to understand the issues related to a pending decision, bring it before God in prayer, receive direction from the Lord, and reach an agreement (Psalm 40:1; Proverbs 3:5-6; James 1:5). This may include getting advice from others in the assembly (Proverbs 15:22).
- Elders should express their reasons for a position in objective terms that all can understand and evaluate.
- Elders must commit to work toward an agreement and to avoid speech that is disrespectful, inflammatory, or adversarial (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 2:1-4).

**Approaching a Decision**

- Before making a decision, all elders should have an opportunity to speak and to be heard. They should listen to one another and weigh the pros and cons together.
- When a matter is not particularly important to an elder or directly related to his ministry, he may choose to say little, granting tacit support to a proposal and allowing the other elders to decide the outcome. If he believes that a proposal is wrong and that he cannot support it, he is responsible to speak up and make his opinion known.
- Though the elders may invite deacons or other saints to discuss a matter or to advise them, the elders maintain the right to make the final decision (1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17).

**Making a Decision**

- Elders should set aside personal preferences and consider the needs of the church as a whole (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).
- Elders should give greater weight to the opinions of those who have much at stake in a decision or who will carry the burden of executing a decision (Ephesians 4:2-3). Likewise, they should give greater weight to the input of those who have more expertise in a matter, than those lacking such knowledge and experience (Philippians 2:3). Similarly, elders who do not have a strong sense of God's leading in a matter or who do not understand it well should defer to those who do (Proverbs 11:14).
- Ideally, all elders should be in full agreement with a particular course of action. Sometimes this is difficult to achieve. If unable to reach a unanimous, unqualified agreement, it is acceptable that all *consent* to a particular course of action. This means that though an individual elder might prefer a different course of action, he is willing to go along with an alternate course of action favored by the other elders.
- Most importantly, the elders must do that which is pleasing to the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9). Their decisions must be just, impartial, and based on sound biblical principles. They should not defer to a fellow elder whose judgment does not meet these criteria, regardless how esteemed he is, how knowledgeable, how much he has at stake in the matter, or how strongly he asserts his opinions.

- Elders should decide on the course of action that best meets the biblical principles and priorities that God has set forth for the church. Ultimately, this is *to do the will of God* (Ephesians 6:6).
- Elders should consider how a decision intended to be made public will be received by the saints and present it wisely that it might be found acceptable by the saints (Proverbs 15:2). They should not, however, make decisions based on popular opinion. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29), should always be the elders’ stand. The elders should instruct those in the church who disagree with them in a matter that the Lord will hold the elders responsible for their decision and its outcome, not the congregation (Hebrews 13:17).
- Once the elders have formed a consensus and have made a decision, each elder must support the decision before the church as one man. They should avoid any expression of disunity or lack of support for the decision (1 Corinthians 1:10; James 5:12). They should strictly guard the confidentiality of their private discussions and not reveal opinions expressed by elders during the decision-making process.

### **Not Making a Decision**

- On matters of great importance, *consent* is an inadequate standard for action. Unanimous *support* is necessary. This means that in addition to all parties being willing to go along with an important proposal, all parties must be in favor of it. They all must be convinced that it is God’s will for the church.
- Though the majority of elders may favor a proposal, they should nevertheless respect the viewpoint of the minority and not move ahead unless there is a true consensus. Given more time for study and prayer, sometimes they will find that the minority was right and the majority was wrong.
- If the elders cannot form a consensus or do not have peace about moving ahead, they should delay making a decision to provide more time for prayer, study, consultation, and reflection.
- After much discussion, if an elder not only has concerns about a proposal but disagrees with it or objects to it, he is responsible to clearly express his opposition and exercise his right to veto the proposal. Should he do so, there is no consensus; the proposal has failed.
- If a consensus cannot be formed, elders should take the course of action that requires the least amount of change. Usually this means doing nothing new or different.

### **DEALING WITH PERSISTENT INDECISION**

For the smooth operation and progress of the Lord’s work, it is necessary for elders to work well together and to make sound decisions in a timely manner. When elders regularly find themselves on opposite sides of issues, cannot resolve problems, and no longer share a common vision for the work, something is wrong. Each elder should begin by examining his own heart to see if he is out of fellowship with the Lord and no longer sensitive to the Spirit’s voice. The elders should also examine their relationships with one another. Has their love for one another grown cold? Has resentment built up? Are unresolved offenses, bitterness, a lack of forgiveness, or pride the problem? Possibly the elders need to spend time together outside their meetings, rebuilding relationships and trust. Confession, apology, and forgiveness may be necessary.

When an elder regularly acts in an independent manner, often blocks the initiatives of the other elders, is stubborn and unbending, or leads with an attitude of superiority and self-importance, the other elders may find it necessary to speak to him about his behavior and exhort him to change his ways. Should this fail, the elders should ask him to resign or, if warranted, remove him from the eldership as being no longer qualified (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:3).

## **QUESTIONS THE CHAIRMAN CAN ASK TO HELP THE ELDERS FORM A CONSENSUS**

### **Working Through Concerns and Differences**

- Does each of you feel that the group understands your position?
- Are there additional Scriptures that might help us make the right decision?
- How might we modify this proposal so that those who have problems with it can support it?
- If we were to reject this proposal, what would be the consequences?

### **Approaching a Decision**

- Have we adequately considered the biblical principles involved and all matters of justice?
- Has everyone had adequate opportunity to speak and to be heard?
- Do we need more time to think and pray about this decision?
- Does anyone have additional information that we should consider before making a decision?
- Are we ready to decide?

### **Making a Decision**

- Those who have expressed concerns about this proposal, are you now willing to consent to it?  
Or, in matters of great importance: Are you now willing to support it?
- Let's go around the table and have each man express his position on the matter.
- Is everyone in favor of going ahead with the proposal?

**FRIDAY EVENING— TEACHING SESSION 2**  
**BUILDING UP THE SAINTS**  
**THROUGH THE TEACHING OF THE WORD**

**Acts 20:18-21, 27**

You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

**2 Timothy 4:1-4**

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

**1 Thessalonians 2:13**

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

**Ephesians 6:17**

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

**Psalms 119:111**

Thy word I have treasured in my heart, / That I may not sin against Thee.

## **BUILDING UP THE SAINTS THROUGH THE WORD**

### **Sunday Morning Teaching and Preaching**

- teach the Bible by the book
- formulate a plan to meet current needs
- emphasize the New Testament, but do not neglect the Old Testament
- occasionally use topical series to address pressing needs
- preach the gospel to the lost, but don't overemphasize the gospel with the saved
- include overviews that present the big picture
- don't just teach, preach
- emphasize exegetical teaching and expository preaching
- encourage and motivate the saints

### **Midweek Bible Classes**

- present systematic teaching at an appropriate academic level
- train the saints in inductive Bible study methods
- include homework and self-study assignments
- emphasize life-change
- introduce the saints to good reference materials
- learning is proportional to thinking, so include discussion
- promote discovery

### **Creating an Atmosphere of Bible Learning**

- facilitate the reading and purchase of high quality books
- raise the level of everyday conversation to spiritual matters
- develop a list of intriguing verses for discussion
- ask good questions
- be an eager learner, teaching by example
- talk about what you have learned from others
- promote Bible conferences and good speakers

## SAMPLE WEEKLY LESSON

Curriculum written for adults and motivated youths.

### **Lesson 1**

New Testament Seminar V

**Read: John 1-4**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

The author of the fourth gospel is John, the brother of James. Jesus called them the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17), which is remarkable given the gentle tone of John’s gospel. He was a fisherman from Galilee and along with his brother a business partner of Peter. We know that Capernaum was Peter’s city of residence (Mark 1:21-29). This indicates that James and John also lived there or nearby.

John identifies himself as the author of the fourth gospel through five subtle references to one of Christ’s disciples (John 1:35-37; 13:23; 19:26-27; 21:20-23; 21:24-25). Though he never names this disciple, it is clear that he is referring to himself. Often he designates him as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). Elsewhere John refers to himself simply as “another disciple” (John 18:15) and “the other disciple” (John 18:16).

John opens his gospel, writing, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:1-3). These echo the opening words of the Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1). The Greek Septuagint translation of Genesis 1:1 and the Greek text of John 1:1 are identical, both starting with the words “*en arche*,” “in the beginning.”

Unlike the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which are very similar, the author of the fourth gospel takes a different approach to telling Jesus’ story. Much of his material is unique, possibly as much as 90% of it. Additionally, John gives greater emphasis to the final days of Jesus’ life than do the synoptic writers. About 40% of his gospel is dedicated to the final Passover, crucifixion, and resurrection. This is an effective technique for slowing down the action and causing the reader to enter more deeply into this most important period of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

John 1:4 could well serve as a theme-verse for John’s gospel: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). John formerly states his purpose for writing late in the book, stating, “Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).



## A CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

- I. Pre-Passover 27 AD—Jesus’ Ministry Begins in the Jordan Valley and Galilee 1:1-2:12
- II. Passover 27 AD—Jesus’ Ministry in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee 2:13-4:5
- III. Feast of 28 AD—Jesus’ Healing Ministry in Jerusalem 5:1-47
- IV. Passover 29 AD—Jesus’ Miracles and Teaching Ministry in Galilee 6:1-7:1
- V. Feast of Booths 29 AD—Jesus’ Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem 7:2-10:21
- VI. Feast of Dedication 29 AD—Jesus’ Ministry in Jerusalem, Beyond Jordan, Bethany, and Ephraim 10:22-11:54
- VII. Passover 30 AD—Jesus’ Saving Ministry in Jerusalem and Appearance in Galilee 11:55-21:25
  - A. Events Immediately Before Passover 11:55-12:50
  - B. Jesus’ Final Ministry to His Disciples at the Passover Feast 13:1-17:26
  - C. Jesus’ Arrest and Trials 18:1-19:16
  - D. Jesus’ Crucifixion and Burial 19:17-42
  - E. Jesus’ Resurrection and Appearances 20:1-21:25

As can be seen from the outline above, John’s Gospel is organized around the annual Jewish feasts. John refers to the Passover in John 2:13; 2:23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28; 18:39, and 19:14. He mentions the “Feast of Booths” in John 7:2. He refers to the “Feast of the Dedication” in John 10:22. In John 5:1, John refers to “a feast of the Jews.” This is probably a reference to Pentecost or the Feast of Booths. Without these references, it would be much more difficult to know when the events in Jesus’ life occurred. With respect to Jesus’ adult life, Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention only the Lord’s final Passover.

## A GEOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF THE GOSPELS OF JOHN AND MATTHEW

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are organized around the geographic locations in which the events in Jesus' life occurred. Each gospel has the same basic structure.

Below is an outline of the Gospel of John based on the geographic locations mentioned in the book. When compared to the geographic outline of the Gospel of Matthew to the right, significant differences are apparent. Note that while Matthew refers only to the Lord's final visit to Jerusalem, John records five visits by Jesus to Jerusalem. About 65% of John's Gospel takes place in Jerusalem, whereas about 36% of Matthew's Gospel records events that occurred there.

Gospel of John	Gospel of Matthew
1. Prologue: Location not Specified 1:1-18	
	1. Bethlehem 1:1-2:12
	2. Egypt 2:13-18
	3. Nazareth 2:19-23
2. Bethany Beyond the Jordan 1:19-51	4. Judean Wilderness 3:1-4:11
3. Galilee 2:1-12	5. Galilee and the North 4:12-18:35
4. Jerusalem 2:13-3:21	
5. Judea 3:22	
6. Samaria 3:23-4:42	
7. Galilee 4:43-54	
8. Jerusalem 5:1-47	
9. Galilee 6:1-7:9	
10. Jerusalem 7:10-10:21	
11. Jerusalem 10:22-42	
12. Bethany 11:1-53	
	6. Judea Beyond the Jordan 19:1-20:34
13. Ephraim 1:54-57	
14. Bethany 12:1-11	
15. Jerusalem 12:12-20:31	7. Jerusalem 21:1-28:15
16. Galilee 21:1-25	8. Galilee 28:16-20

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO PRE-PASSOVER 27 AD—JESUS' MINISTRY BEGINS IN THE JORDAN VALLEY AND GALILEE—JOHN 1:1-2:12**

1. John opens his gospel, writing, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). He continues, stating, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

A. List seven things that we learn about the “Word” from John 1:1-14?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

B. Why does John refer to the Lord Jesus as the “Word”? What is the significance of this term?

2. Speaking of the Lord Jesus, John writes, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Explain what John means by this and how it relates to your life.

3. When telling of John the Baptist’s ministry, the writers of the three synoptic gospels emphasize his preparation of the Jewish people for the reception of the Messiah. They tell of John’s call to repentance and of people confessing their sins and being baptized. Where does John place the emphasis of John the Baptist’s ministry in the fourth gospel (John 1:6-36)?

4. In John 1:35-51 we learn of Jesus' first five disciples: John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael. In addition to the fact that all five were Jewish men, is there anything else significant about these men that they share in common? If so, describe what it is and explain why it is significant.

5. John describes the miracle at Cana, writing, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11). John records other signs performed by Jesus and states that there were many (John 2:23, 3:2; 6:2; 6:14; 11:47). Complete the table below, listing each of the miraculous signs specifically described by John.

Biblical Reference	Description
John 2:1-11	Jesus turns water into wine.
John 4:46-54	
John 5:1-9	
John 6:1-14	
John 6:16-21	
John 9:1-12	
John 11:1-44	
John 20:1-18	
John 21:5-11	

6. Jesus' first miracle was to change water into wine (John 2:1-11). Assuming for moment that He had at His disposal any reasonable resource of His day, how might Jesus have faked this miracle? In other words, if this was not a genuine miracle, how might have Jesus fooled His disciples and the headwaiter into thinking that He had actually changed water into wine?

7. Having considered Jesus' first miracle more closely, what is your conclusion? Was the changing of water into wine a notable miracle or something that could easily have been faked?

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO PASSOVER 27 AD—JESUS' MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM, JUDEA, SAMARIA, AND GALILEE, JOHN 2:13-4:54**

8. John records Jesus' first public act in Jerusalem in John 2:12-22. Explain how the prophecies in the two following Old Testament passages add meaning and significance to this event.

A. Psalm 69:9

B. Malachi 3:1-4

9. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:5-7). Carefully considering the context, what does Jesus mean when He tells Nicodemus that he must be "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5)?

10. The Gospel of John contains the best-known verse in the Bible: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

A. What does the word “for” at the start of the verse express?

B. What is the subject of the main, independent clause in the verse? (An independent clause can stand on its own and is not dependent upon any other clause for its meaning.)

C. What is the verb of the independent clause?

D. What is the direct object of the independent clause?

E. How does the clause “that He gave His only begotten Son” relate to the rest of the verse? In other words, what does this clause express with relationship to the rest of the sentence?

F. How does the clause “that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” relate to the rest of the verse? What does this clause express with relationship to the rest of the sentence?

11. According to Jesus, why do some sinners refuse to come to Him for salvation (John 3:19-21)?

12. What important principle of Christian ministry can we draw from John the Baptist’s example in John 3:22-36?

13. Jesus told the Samaritan woman whom He met at the well outside the city of Sychar, “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24).

A. What does it mean to worship God “in spirit and truth”?

B. How should we apply this truth to our lives?

14. List four principles related to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with sinners that we can draw from Jesus’ example in John 4:1-42.

A.

B.

C.

D.

15. Jesus told His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34). What did Jesus mean by this and how can you apply this truth to your life?

16. Jesus told His disciples, “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows, and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor” (John 4:35-38). What principles do you see in these verses that should cause us to be enthusiastic and optimistic when telling others about salvation through Jesus Christ?

## TEACHING SESSION 3 FORMULATING AN EFFECTIVE SERMON THESIS

### Defined

A thesis is a short, one or two sentence statement of what you intend to say. It is a promise to present and to prove something of value. An effective thesis statement should be:

Biblical	Your thesis should be true and clearly demonstrable from Scripture. Avoid philosophical statements based on personal reflection, rather than on insight based on the clear teaching of Scripture.
Exegetical	The best thesis statements borrow words and ideas directly from Scripture, quoting it directly or restating what is plainly taught in God's Word.
Specific	Vague or abstract statements are of little use. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Be definite.
Concise	Short is better. Eliminate unessential adjectives and adverbs. Use powerful verbs. State the matter plainly and with poetic flare if you are able.
Insightful	Pray and consider your text until you see something fresh that excites you and that will excite your audience. Don't state the obvious. Don't prove something that everyone already knows to be true.
Relevant	Address a real and current need of your audience. "Scratch them where they itch."
Intriguing	When you state your thesis, you want your audience to sit up and say, "Now this is going to be interesting." Almost any biblical truth, no matter how well-known and common place, can become fascinating with a little creativity.

Your sermon should be thesis-driven. Move from lesser to greater points in a logical manner. Prove your thesis and prove it convincingly. It is better to understate and over-prove than to overstate and under-prove. Virtually everything you say from start to finish should be organized around your thesis and supportive of it. Do not allow your focus to spread nor drift. Eliminate all extraneous points and remarks, no matter how interesting to you. Winston Churchill, one of the greatest orators of the twentieth century, said, "If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time—a tremendous whack."



## How to form a thesis

- put your sermon aside and ask God to speak to you personally through the text
- pray and think deeply about your text
- study your text thoroughly: outlining, paraphrasing, performing word studies, and the like
- look for a central insight that speaks to you
- once you have personally interacted with the text, consider how you might adapt your insight for your audience
- turn your insight into a thesis statement
- edit your thesis until it has all the elements of a great thesis

## Exercise

### Forming a Sermon Thesis

**Text:** Matthew 6:19-24

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. <sup>22</sup> “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! <sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

1. Consider the text and state a personal insight drawn from it.

2. Building on your personal insight, write a thesis statement for a sermon to be delivered next week at the preaching service of your assembly.

## EXAMPLE OF A SERMON THAT LACKS A CLEAR THESIS

### “JESUS’ TEACHING ON EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY RICHES”

#### INTRODUCTION

**Opening Words:** In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us about the importance of living our lives for eternal glory, rather than for earthly riches, which will not last. Consider His words carefully.

**Read:** Matthew 6:19-24

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

<sup>20</sup> “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

<sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

<sup>23</sup> “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Let’s look at each point that Jesus makes here.

#### SERMON BODY

I. Do not lay up treasure upon earth (6:19)

II. Lay up treasure in heaven (6:20)

III. Your heart will be where your treasure is (6:21)

IV. Your eye is the lamp of your body (6:22-23)

V. No one can serve two masters (6:24)

#### CONCLUSION

Live for God and you won’t be disappointed, for the life lived for God is the best life.

## EXAMPLE OF A SERMON WITH A CLEAR THESIS

### “YOU CAN’T LIVE FOR HEAVENLY AND WORLDLY RICHES”

**Audience:** Christians

**Objective:** Challenge Christians to living for Christ with regard to possessions and life ambition.

**Theme:** Comparison of living for Christ with living for the things of the world.

**Thesis:** You cannot live your life for the glory of God and eternal riches and the glories of this life and earthly riches, so decide between the two.

**Text:** Matthew 6:19-24

#### INTRODUCTION

**Opening Words:** Some of us may think that we can be highly successful both in this life and the next. Simultaneously, we hope to achieve great success in our chosen field and receive great riches for our efforts, AND be godly Christians living who live wholeheartedly for God and eternal glory. It may seem possible to do both, particularly if you are highly talented and willing to work extremely hard. The Lord Jesus, however, taught that you will fail. It can’t be done, so decide between the two. Live for the world or live for God, but don’t think for a moment that you can live for both. Jesus teaches this in Matthew 6:19-24.

**Read:** Matthew 6:19-24

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

<sup>20</sup> “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

<sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

<sup>23</sup> “But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

**Comment:** Here the Lord commands us to be ambitious in this life, to accumulate much; but to do so for that which is of lasting value. He gives us four reasons:

- **TIME:** How you invest your life will determine whether your investment will last or perish with time.
- **HEART:** How you invest your life will affect your inner most being, whether you will love God or the things of this world.
- **MIND:** How you invest your life will affect your worldview, whether you will understand the Wall Street Journal or your Bible.
- **SERVICE:** How you invest your life will determine whom you will serve, whether it will be money or God.

**TRANSITION:** Consider Jesus four reasons in the text of Matthew 6:9-24.

## I. Reason #1: Duration

Matthew 6:19-20 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”

### Exegesis

- A. Christ commands us:
  - 1. “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . . .”
  - 2. “But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven. . . .”
  - 3. You cannot live for the world without disobeying the Lord.
- B. Be ambitious, lay up treasure, but in heaven
- C. Not necessarily a prohibition against home ownership and financial investments, but a prohibition against making these your life-purpose, your focus, your treasures
- D. sell low (earth) / buy high (heaven)
- E. Earthly treasure will not last
  - 1. rust: an eating (akin to *bibrosko*, to eat); corrosion, rust, a decaying (of teeth): “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” (John 4:32).
  - 2. destroy: *apanizo*, literally “to cause to disappear”: “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).
  - 3. moth and rust destroy: slow but certain loss: car, house, every possession, even your body
  - 4. thieves break in and steal: quick and sudden loss: burglary, embezzlement, stock market crash
- F. Mark 8:36-37 “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? “For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”
- G. Luke 12:33 “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys.”

### Application

- A. It is a matter of duration: only what you do for Christ will last
- B. How you invest your life will determine whether your investment will last or perish with time. Ultimately, all efforts to accumulate lasting wealth on earth will fail.
- C. Have you invested your life in a world destined to burn (2 Peter 3:7)?
- D. Have you invested your life in God’s glory, the proclamation of the gospel, the winning of souls, the establishment of Christ’s church, the building up of the saints?

TRANSITION: The second reason we cannot live for this life and the next has to do with our hearts. Some Christians have a huge capacity for God. Other continually struggle with spiritual dryness. Here the Lord tells us about one major reason for this.

## II. Reason # 2: Affection

Matthew 6:21 “. . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”

### Exegesis

- A. your heart follows your treasure
- B. King David v. King Solomon
  - a. David: heart for God, desire to build the Temple
  - 1 Chronicles 28:9 “As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.
  - 1 Kings 11:4: “For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*. “
  - Proverbs 15:11: Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, How much more the hearts of men!
- C. What is the focus of your affections?
- D. Is it the same as the focus of your investments?
- E. It is all too easy to get caught up in earthly things.
- F. Illustration: Hiel the Bethelite (Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34).
  - “In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his first-born, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun” (1 Kings 16:34-1).

### Application

- A. How you invest your life will affect your innermost being, whether you will you love God or the things of this world. You cannot love both.
- B. 1 John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

TRANSITION: The third reason why we should live for God alone has to do with spiritual insight. Why do some have 20/20 when it comes to the things of God, while others struggle with spiritual truth and insight? The Lord tells us in Matthew 6:22-23.

### III. Reason # 3: Perception

Matthew 6:22-23 “The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

#### Exegesis

- A. “clear”
  - a. “single” (KJV); “whole” (NIV)
  - b. *aplous*, simple, single, sincere; of the eye: clear, sound, healthy
- B. “bad”
  - a. “evil” (KJV)
  - b. “*poneros*”: that which causes labor, pain, sorrow, evil
- C. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?”
- D. Hebrews 5:11-6:1 “Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity. . .”

#### Application

- A. How you invest your life will affect your worldview, whether you will understand the Wall Street Journal or your Bible.
- E. Check our spiritual eyesight?
  - a. Is your worship flat and wearisome?
  - b. How is your personal time with God?
  - c. Are in the Scriptures, or have you “already read the book”?
  - d. Do you look forward to Bible teaching?
- F. Matthew 19:24 “And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”
- G. Revelation 3:17-18 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.”

TRANSITION: A fourth and final reason why we should not try to store up treasure on earth as well as heaven has to do with authority over our lives.

#### IV. Reason # 4: Subjection

Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

##### Exegesis

- A. “hold” *antecho* (*anti* + *echo*)
  - a. to hold firmly to, to cling to, to be devoted to
  - b. “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9 NAS)
- B. “despise” *kataphroneo*
  - a. literally “to think down” or “against”
  - b. to think slightly of, to despise
- C. “mammon”
  - a. a common Aramaic word for riches
  - b. akin to the Hebrew word signifying to be firm, steadfast (whence “Amen”); that which is to be trusted
- D. Context in Luke: <sup>13</sup> “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. <sup>14</sup> Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him. <sup>15</sup> And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God (Luke 16:13-15 NAS)”

##### Application

- A. How you invest your life will determine whom you will serve, whether it will be man and money or God
- E. You are going to serve someone. Who will it be?
- F. If: “I can serve God and serve the world,” you are mistaken: “No one can serve two masters”

#### CONCLUSION

- A. Be ambitious. Store up treasure. But do so in heaven. Only there will it have true and lasting value.
- B. Don’t think that you can live for this world and the next. As we have seen, the Lord says that you cannot live for both.

## TEACHING SESSION 4

### EFFICIENT SERMON PREPARATION

#### Prepare Yourself

- Am I spiritually qualified to preach?

“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching” (1 Timothy 4:16).

- Am I spiritually right with God and walking in the Spirit?

“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (Luke 6:45).

- Am I willing to serve as God’s spokesman?

“Now, gird up your loins, and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, lest I dismay you before them” (Jeremiah 1:17).

- Am I yielded to God to preach His Word?

“Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, ‘I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, “Go prophesy to My people Israel”’” (Amos 7:14-15).

- Do I have God’s message burning within me?

“But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke,” we also believe, therefore also we speak” (2 Corinthians 4:13).

- Do I have a heart to minister the Word to the saints?

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs’” (John 21:15, NKJV).

- Am I willing to pay the price of good preaching?

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).



### **Consider Your Audience**

- Pray for your audience.
- Make a list of representative individuals.
- Make a list of known spiritual needs.
- Ask God to give you His message for your audience.

### **Select and Study Your Text**

- Select the passage of Scripture that best expresses the message that God would have you preach.
- Study the passage for yourself, interacting with its message and allowing God to speak to your heart.
- State your theme and thesis.
- Make an outline of your main and subordinate points.
- Develop your points more fully through further in-depth study.
- Collect useful cross references and word pictures.
- Illustrate each major point.
- Write transitions between the major points.
- Write an introduction and a conclusion.

### **Refine Your Message**

- Is your message Christ-centered?
- Are your points biblical?
- Are all points clear and relevant?
- Does your message progress and develop the argument?
- Is your argument compelling?
- Does every point and illustration contribute to your thesis and outline?
- Is your message clear and understandable to your audience?
- Is the focus of the message maintained throughout?
- Is your message authoritative?
- Is your message accurate?
- Is your message appropriate for your intended audience?
- Do you have at least one fresh spiritual insight?
- Is your message original and creative?
- Is there anything that is not necessary that you can omit?
- Does the pace keep moving or does it bog down?
- Is your message interesting?
- Is your message well illustrated?
- Are your divisions clear and easily articulated?
- Is there practical application throughout the message?
- Are there important places where you need to work out the wording to insure clarity and force?
- Does the introduction introduce?
- Does the conclusion conclude?
- Are the sermon notes brief, stating only the essentials?
- Is the length of the message reasonable?
- Have I budgeted my time for each page?
- Are the page numbers clear?

## **Prepare Your Delivery**

- Mark your text with delivery cues, noting areas needing special delivery, for example: *slow down; go through quickly; forceful; tenderly; increase volume; check time; lightly with humor; storytelling mode; optional; make sure they get it; reason with them; earnestly.*
- Mark your text with time cues every five to ten minutes, indicating where you should be ideally.
- Practice your introduction and conclusion.
- Practice reading your Scripture text until you can do it well.
- Practice speaking through your main points, secondary points, and transitions.
- Check that your notes are clear and brief enough to maintain eye contact with your audience throughout.
- Review all points on the speaker evaluation sheet. Select one or two delivery areas to emphasize in an effort to improve your preaching.
- Ask one or two knowledgeable people to evaluate your message.
- Talk through your message with someone.

## **Evaluate Your Message after You Deliver It**

- Meet with your evaluators and listen to their counsel.
- On a master sheet, record comments you receive on all your messages, taking note of trends.
- Set a strategy for improvement.

## THREE BASIC BIBLE STUDY STEPS

### STEP ONE—OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The first step in understanding a biblical text is careful observation. Here the question we must ask is: What does the Bible say? Our goal is to carefully consider what has been written, to take note of the words the author uses, the way he puts them together, the meaning of each sentence, the point of each paragraph, and the flow of the argument.

There are several basic questions we should ask about the text, often summarized as: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?

- Who is the author?
- To whom is he speaking?
- What is his main point?
- What are his sub-points?
- What does he want the readers to do?
- What are his stated reasons?
- What are his goals?
- To where does the text refer?
- To what time period does the text refer?
- In what manner does he say his readers should act?
- What truths are presented?
- What commands or prohibitions?
- What promises, exhortations, or rebukes?

When doing observation, consider printing out the text and marking your observations directly on the printout. Underline important statements. Highlight key words. Label conjunctions and prepositions to show how they are functioning. Connect similar concepts with lines. Number words in a list. Take note of words, phrases, and ideas that repeat. Identify commands, exhortations, conditional statements, comparisons, contrasts, and the like. Circle rhetorical questions and their answers. Use pens or pencils of various colors to highlight important elements of the text. Draw figures to identify themes and references to people, objects, and ideas: tablets for references to the law of Moses, a dove for the Holy Spirit, a book for the Word of God, a happy face for praise, a sad face for rebuke. Write comments to preserve insights. At the same time, avoid over-marking the text with trivial information, lest it become so cluttered that it becomes useless.

Avoid the common tendency when doing observation of branching into interpretation, asking: What does the text *mean*? That will come later and will only be effective after you have given adequate time to observing what the text says. Indeed, most errors in interpretation can be traced back to a lack of attention to the details of Scripture.

The more time you spend observing a text, the more you will benefit from it. So, ask God to give you insight and take your time. Read the text over and over and think deeply about what it says. When you think you have gotten everything you can out of the text, take a break, and then examine the text again. Repeat this process until you are sure there is nothing more to observe.

## A Fish Story

*The following is an edited version of Samuel H. Scudder's account of an anonymous student's first learning experience under the tutelage of Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), Swiss ichthyologist, professor of zoology and geology at Harvard University, and founder of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. This oft-told story has helped many Bible students appreciate the importance of careful observation.*

It was more than fifteen years ago that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz and introduced myself as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my background and goals in education, and whether I wished to study any special branch. "Zoology, especially insects," I answered.

"When do you wish to begin?" he asked.

"Now."

"Very well." He took from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol. "Take this fish and examine it. We call it a *Haemulon*. By and by, I will ask about what you have seen."

With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me. "No man is fit to be a naturalist," he said, "who does not know how to take care of specimens."



**Professor Agassiz**

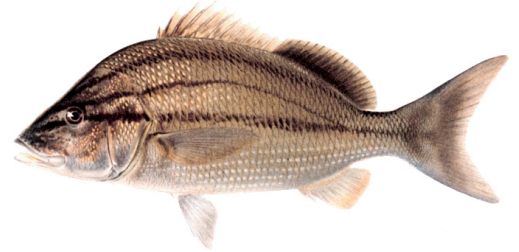
I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray and occasionally moisten the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed, when they discovered that no amount of *eau de cologne* would drown the perfume that haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes, I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the professor, who had left the museum. When I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry. I dashed fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate it from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of a normal, sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but to gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed; an hour; another hour. The fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face—ghastly. From behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters view—as ghastly. I was in despair. I concluded that an early lunch was necessary. So, with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in its jar and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that the professor had been at the museum but had gone and would not return for several hours. My fellow students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly, I drew forth that hideous fish, and, with a feeling of desperation, again examined it. I could not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were prohibited. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish—it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my fingers down its throat to see how sharp its teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish. Now with surprise, I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the professor returned.

“That is right,” he said, “a pencil is one of the best eyes. I am glad to notice also that you have kept your specimen wet and your bottle corked.” With these encouraging words he added, “What have you learned?”

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me: the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips, and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fin, and forked tail; the compressed and arched body. When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment said, “You have not looked very carefully. Why, you haven’t seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal. It is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself. Look again; look again!” He left me to my misery.



#### **Haemulon**

The fish in Professor Agassiz’ laboratory was the haemulon, commonly called the grunt fish because of its ability to make pig-like sounds by grinding teeth in its throat.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish? But now I set myself to the task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the professor’s criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly. Toward its close, the professor inquired, “Do you see it?”

“No, I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before.”

“The next best thing. I won’t hear more now. Put away your fish and go home. Perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish.”

This was disconcerting. Not only must I think of my fish all night and determine what this unknown, but most visible, feature might be, but I must also give an account of the fish in the morning aided only by my poor memory. I walked home by Charles River distracted and perplexed.

The cordial greeting from the professor the next morning was reassuring. Here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious to know if I had discovered the feature he thought so important.

“Do you perhaps mean,” I asked, “that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?”

“Of course, of course!”

His enthusiasm repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically, as he always did, upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next.

“Examine your fish!”

He left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour, he returned and heard my latest observations.

“Good, good! But that is not all; continue.”

And so for three long days, he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. “Look, look, look,” was his repeated injunction.

This was the best entomological lesson I have ever had, a lesson whose influence has affected every subsequent study, a legacy Professor Agassiz has left me, as he has left to many others, one of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

## STEP TWO—INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The second basic step when studying the Bible is interpretation. Here the goal is to understand the intended meaning of the author. Take into account the personality and writing style of the human writer—the prophet whom God used to preserve the revelation in writing—but never lose sight of the fact that “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16, NIV). The prophets wrote under the supervision and direction of the Holy Spirit. Peter explains the process, writing: “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture down to its very words. Paul writes, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

When interpreting Scripture, the goal is to find its *objective* meaning, that is, the meaning that was intended by the author. Or to look at it from another perspective: How were the original readers supposed to understand the text? What did it mean to them as they took the words in their normal, usual, and customary manner?

### Levels of Information



- **Morphological:** the significance of the grammatical form in which a word occurs.
- **Lexical:** the dictionary meaning of the word based on its normal usage.
- **Syntactical:** the significance of the arrangement of words and phrases in a sentence.
- **Contextual:** the meaning contributed to a sentence by its surroundings on various levels: paragraph, section, book, and the Bible as a whole.

Here we must put aside our personal emotions, opinions, and biases. We are not looking for a *subjective* meaning of the text: *What does it mean to me personally. How do I feel about it? What is my opinion on this topic?* Such

questions play a role later when applying the text, but not here.

A text may have many *subjective* meanings, but it has only one *objective* meaning. Imagine ten spiritual, knowledgeable, and skilled students studying the same text independently in ten separate rooms. In an ideal world, they would all conclude the same things about the text. This would line up perfectly with what the author intended to communicate through the text. This would be the text's objective meaning.

Finding a text's objective meaning starts with a clear definition of each word. A good dictionary close at hand is necessary to accomplish this. If a word occurs frequently in Scripture, say fifteen or more times, and has a narrow range of meanings, you can get a pretty good idea of what it means by examining each occurrence. Here Bible software can be a great help, providing a list of every occurrence and a definition of each at the click of a mouse button.

Next consider the grammatical form of each word. If a word is a noun or pronoun, take note of its case, gender, and number. Such details can affect their interpretation significantly. In Galatians 3:16, for example, Paul bases his argument on the fact that Moses uses the word "seed" in Genesis 22:16, rather than the word "seeds," the singular form rather than the plural. If a word is a verb, take note of its mood, tense, voice, person, and number. Again, each part is significant. Jesus told the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58), using the present tense of the verb *to be*, rather than the past tense as one would have expected. This is significant and should be noted.

Once you have a good understanding of the definition of the words and their forms, consider the word order and their relationships, the structure of the sentence. Pay special attention to prepositions and conjunctions. They connect elements and communicate how they relate to one another.

Within a passage, distinguish *plain language*—words meant to be understood in a simple and straightforward manner—from *figurative language*—words meant to be understood in a metaphorical sense. As you take the words in their normal, usual, and customary manner, it will be clear whether the author is speaking plainly or whether he is employing a figure of speech. Accept symbolic, typological, and allegorical interpretations of God's Word only when the author clearly indicates that the figurative meaning of the words is what is intended. Someone has said, *If the first sense makes sense, don't look for another sense.* Another has said, *The Scriptures say what they mean, and they mean what they say.* Both statements are good advice.

The Holy Spirit has communicated God's revelation in propositional truth—rational statements to be understood with the mind. Consequently, eschew mystical interpretations of Scripture. Ours is a faith grounded in historical reality. Avoid interpretations also that spiritualize the text, imposing a symbolic or allegorical meaning to a passage that makes perfectly good sense when taken in its plainest sense.

Finally, interpret a text within the context of the Bible as a whole. The Scriptures have a unified and consistent message. As such, we must understand each part within the context of the whole. This means comparing Scripture with Scripture, and using that which is clear in God's Word to explain that which is not, never the other way around.

*Context is the key to interpretation.* We must understand a verse within its surroundings, giving special emphasis to the words that precede it. What does the sentence mean within the paragraph in which it is found? How does the paragraph fit into the flow of the author's immediate argument? How does the argument fit into its section of the book? How does the section fit into the thesis of the book as a whole? What is the historical and geographical setting of the book? All of these describe the text's context and

contribute to a proper understanding of it.

Failure to give proper consideration to context is the number one cause of faulty interpretation. Usually the interpreter has good intentions. Nevertheless, because of bad technique, he misrepresents God's Word by interpreting it wrongly. Sometimes a lack of attention to context is evidence of dishonesty. It is often warned: *A text without a context is a pretext*. In other words, don't be misled by interpretations devoid of context. Often they are nothing more than a deceptive attempt to prove an unbiblical doctrine. One form of such decontextualization—usually sincere, but sometimes not—is *proof-texting*. This is when controversial theological assertions are followed by a string of verses in parenthesis without explanation or context. It may look convincing, but don't give such lists much weight until you look up each verse and verify its meaning in context.

### **STEP THREE—APPLICATION: HOW SHOULD I APPLY IT TO MY LIFE?**

When studying the Bible, the third and final basic step is application. Here we go beyond the question, *What did the author want the original readers to do?* to the more personal question: *What does the Lord want me to do?*

Begin with prayer. Ask God to speak to you through His Word and to show you how the text properly applies to your life. When you find an application, write it down. Be specific. Ask: What does God want me to do? How will I do it? By what date will I get it done? This will transform your application from a vague impression to a concrete action. Then, go out and do it. James writes, "Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (James 1:22). As you follow through and accomplish that which God has given you to do, He will bless your life.

Applications can take many forms in Scripture. We can learn much about how we should live from the self-revelation of God in Scripture. His every attribute—qualities such as love, mercy, kindness, truthfulness, faithfulness, and righteousness—instructs us how to live. To whatever extent we can, we should strive to be like God. The same is true of the example of the Lord Jesus. God incarnate, He is the perfect manifestation of God. Paul writes, "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him" (Colossians 1:19). Consequently, the Lord Jesus is our perfect example in every way. John writes, "The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked" (1 John 2:6). We see this on the night of His betrayal. John writes, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). The Lord washed His disciples' feet and told His disciples, "I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:15). This applies equally to Christ's disciples today. We should do as He did, knowing that it is the Father's will to conform us to "the image of His Son" (Romans 8:28).

There are other godly examples in Scripture that we can follow: Moses, Joshua, Ruth, Hannah, David, Josiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Esther, to name just a few from the Old Testament. In the New Testament we might think of John the Baptist, Jesus' mother, Mary Magdalene, John, Stephen, Barnabas, Aquila and Priscilla, and Timothy. Paul told the Christians in Philippi, "Brethren, join in following my example" (Philippians 3:17). So should we. We can also learn from the godly example of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts.

Bad examples in Scripture can also provide valuable lessons for our lives. King Solomon is probably the best bad example in Scripture. Casting aside his great wisdom, he pursued a life of folly and sin. Solomon summarizes the lessons that he learned in the book of Ecclesiastes. From these Scriptures we can learn how



*not* to live. Likewise, we can learn much from the bad example of Israel in the Old Testament. After reminding the Corinthians of Israel's idolatry and judgment in the wilderness, Paul writes, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Among the easiest applications in Scripture to spot are commands and prohibitions. If a text states something that we as Christians should do, then to do it is our application. Conversely, if God's Word states that we should not do something, then we should not do it.

We can find other applications for our lives in the form of warnings. Paul continues his instructions to the Corinthians about the dangers of participating in idolatrous worship when he writes, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 1:12). A wise person will learn from this warning given to the Corinthians and apply it to his or her life.

We can also draw applications from the promises of Scripture. For example, the Lord said us, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). One could easily draw several personal applications from this promise.

A good way to learn how to find personal application from Scripture is to observe how others do it. When listening to a sermon or reading a Christian book, take note of how the teacher or author applies the Scriptures. Take note of the form in which the application occurs. Make a list of the various forms in which applications are found and add to it regularly. You can start your list with the forms already mentioned: 1) the attributes of God; 2) the example of the Lord Jesus; 3) the good examples of godly men and women; 4) the good example of the early church; 5) the bad examples of foolish men and women; 6) the bad example of Israel in the Old Testament; 7) commands; 8) prohibitions; 9) warnings; and 10) promises.

## TEACHING SESSION 5

### SERMON DELIVERY—SPEAKER EVALUATION FORM

Sermon by:

Date:

Content		Delivery	
<b>Introduction</b>		<b>Physical</b>	
Interest Level		Gestures	
Introduced Topic		Movement	
Reading of Text		Eye Contact	
Thesis		Posture/Bearing	
Transition		<b>Voice</b>	
<b>Body</b>		Tempo	
Development		Pitch	
Exegesis		Volume	
Structure		Pattern Variety	
Illustrations		<b>Language</b>	
Clarity		force/vividness	
Unity		authority	
<b>Conclusion</b>		fillers	
No new material		grammar	
Concluded		pronunciation	
Effectiveness		articulation	

COMMENTS:

# Public Reading of Scripture

## The Importance of Reading Scripture Well

A well read biblical text can have greater impact than anything you might say in your sermon. Take the time, therefore, to consider how you will read your text and practice it several times. The most important rule is to read in such a way as to bring out the true meaning of the passage. This, of course, requires that you have studied the text and understand its meaning. Then apply the following principles of emphasis, pause, and expression.<sup>1</sup>

Employ the following principles when preparing a text for public reading. These principles also apply to preaching in general. (Italicized words in the verses below are to be emphasized.)

### Emphasis

- Emphasize words that bring out the meaning of the text.

#### Incorrect

You shall love your neighbor as yourself<sup>P</sup> (Matthew 22:39).

*You shall love your neighbor as yourself<sup>P</sup>* (Matthew 22:39).

You shall love *your* neighbor as yourself<sup>P</sup> (Matthew 22:39).

You *shall love* your neighbor as yourself<sup>P</sup> (Matthew 22:39).

#### Correct

You shall love your *neighbor* as *yourself<sup>P</sup>* (Matthew 22:39).

- Emphasize new ideas, not old ones or new ideas reworded.

Incorrect—Beloved, I am not writing a *new* commandment to you, but an *old* commandment which you have had *from the beginning*; the *old* commandment is the word which you have heard” (1 John 2:7).

Correct—”Beloved, I am not writing a *new* commandment to you, but an *old* commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the *word* which you have heard.” (1 John 2:7).

- Emphasize words that contrast ideas.

Incorrect— “Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a *loaf*, will give *him* a stone? Or if he shall ask for a *fish*, he will not give *him* a snake, will he? If *you* then, being evil, know how to *give* good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven *give* what is good to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:9-11).

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the points that follow are drawn from an unpublished paper titled *For Reading Out Loud* by Clifford Warne, Paul White, and Annie Valloton.

Correct— “Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a *loaf*, will give him a *stone*? Or if he shall ask for a *fish*, he will not give him a *snake*, will he? If *you* then, being *evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your *Father* who is in heaven give what is *good* to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:9-11).

- Emphasize words that contrast, not words that are actually synonymous.

Incorrect—”The *lips* of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable, But the *mouth* of the wicked, what is perverted” (Proverbs 10:32).

Correct—”The lips of the righteous bring forth what is *acceptable*, But the mouth of the wicked, what is *perverted*” (Proverbs 10:32).

- Use similar intonation to emphasize parallel parts of contrasting clauses.

Incorrect—”*Righteousness* guards the one whose way is *blameless*, But *wickedness* subverts the *sinner*” (Proverbs 13:6).

Correct—”*Righteousness* guards the one whose way is *blameless*, But *wickedness* subverts the *sinner*” (Proverbs 13:6).

- Stress contrasting pronouns.

Incorrect—”*You* are from below, I am from above; *you* are of this world, I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

Correct—”*You* are from below, I am from above; *you* are of this world, I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

- Usually the adjective, not the noun, receives the stress.

Incorrect—”And others fell on the good *soil*, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty” (Matthew 13:8).

Correct—”And others fell on the *good* soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty” (Matthew 13:8).

- Emphasize verbs in the imperative.

Incorrect—”Ask, and it *shall be given* to you; seek, and you *shall find*; knock, and it *shall be opened* to you” (Matthew 7:7).

Correct—”*Ask*, and it shall be given to you; *seek*, and you shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7).

## Pause

- Don't rush through the text, showing your audience how fast you can read. Rather, use pauses to emphasize important clauses and give your audience time to think.

Incorrect—"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:33-34).

Correct—"But *seek first His* kingdom and *His* righteousness; /and *all* these things shall be added to you. / "Therefore *do not be anxious* for tomorrow; /for tomorrow will care for itself. /*Each* day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:33-34).

- Read complete phrases (a group of related words), pausing at the end. Do not overuse pause, resulting in a herky-jerky, stop-and-go style.

Incorrect—"Go / therefore / and *make* disciples /of all the nations, / *baptizing* them / in the name of the Father / and the Son /and the Holy Spirit,  
Matthew 28:19

Correct—"Go therefore and *make* disciples of all the nations, / *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

- You do not have to pause after every comma or punctuation mark. Pause for emphasis and to promote thought. The meaning of the passage should be your guide.

Incorrect—"For I am convinced that neither death, / nor life, / nor angels, / nor principalities, / nor things present, / nor things to come, / nor powers, / nor height, / nor depth, / nor any other created thing, / shall be able to separate us from the love of God, / which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Correct—"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, / nor angels, nor principalities, / nor things present, nor things to come, / nor powers, / nor height, nor depth, / nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

- Don't pause before a restrictive phrase or modifier (a phrase that limits and is essential to meaning). These are not separated by a comma from the word or phrase that they modify.

Incorrect—"For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those / who are at Laodicea, and for all those / who have not personally seen my face" (Colossians 2:1).

Correct—"For I want you to know how *great* a struggle I have on *your* behalf, and for *those* who are at Laodicea, and for all *those* who have not personally seen my face" (Colossians 2:1).

- Pause before non-restricting phrases (a phrase that is non-essential, is usually separated by commas, and which would not change the meaning of the sentence if left out).

Incorrect—"When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, / then you also will be revealed / with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

Correct—"When Christ, / who is our life, / is revealed, / then you also will be revealed with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4).

- The pause is a powerful device. Use longer pauses for greater emphasis. Don't be afraid of a prolonged pause in an especially dramatic section. Mark Twain wrote, "The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause."

Incorrect—"And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, / have mercy on me, /and send Lazarus, /that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; / for I am in agony in this flame' (Luke 16:24)

Correct—"And he cried out and said, / 'Father Abraham, // have mercy on me, // and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; ///for I am in agony in this flame' ///'" (Luke 16:24)

## Expression

- Vary your volume, tempo, and pitch to complement the text. In this way you can add emotion, meaning, variety, and depth to your delivery.
- Raise your volume for emphasis and to grab your audiences' attention, shaking them up if necessary.
- Lower your volume at sensitive portions, like a quiet movement in a classical symphony.
- Increase your tempo to express excitement and urgency.
- Slow your tempo when going through complicated portions to increase understanding.
- Raise your pitch to express agitation and when forming questions.
- Lower your pitch to add authority and solemnity.
- Change your pattern of delivery regularly to fit the passage and to avoid sounding monotone or lulling your audience to sleep.
- Articulate each word carefully, "chewing" your words, opening your mouth, and moving your lips.
- Speak up! Never mumble or drop your volume at the end of a sentence. Remember that you are God's spokesman.

**TEACHING SESSION 6**  
**RAISING UP**  
**THE NEXT GENERATION OF BIBLE TEACHERS**

**Mark 1:17**

And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

**Mark 3:14-15**

And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.

**2 Timothy 2:2-3**

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

**2 Thessalonians 3:7-9**

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, that you might follow our example.

**1 Corinthians 4:15-16**

For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.

**1 Corinthians 11:1**

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

# RAISING UP BIBLE TEACHERS THROUGH PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP

## **Disciple Selected Individuals**

- invest in men of character who are gifted and called to teach and preach
- test faithfulness with short, measurable assignments
- provide personalized training in graded steps
- allow for periods of non-training for personal growth and assimilation of previous training

## **Disciple the Whole Man**

- emphasize character development
- help your disciple become a better husband and father
- provide accountability and encouragement
- spend quality time together, including casual time

## **Co-teach and Co-Preach**

- lead by example, demonstrating your zeal for God's Word
- study how to preach and teach
- preach through a book of the Bible together
- teach a Bible course together
- teach through the whole Bible together
- memorize Scripture together
- prepare for teaching and preaching assignments together
- travel together when preaching in other assemblies

## **Provide Exposure to Good Preachers and Doctrinal Challenges**

- attend Bible conferences together
- listen to audio files of good preachers and critique the messages together
- expose to doctrinal controversies
- expose to cults and false teaching
- visit together a mosque, a Mormon temple, a Catholic Mass, a Kingdom Hall, and the like

## **Provide Opportunities to Gain Experience and Additional Training**

- arrange opportunities to preach in other churches
- send on short term mission trips
- challenge to increasing responsibility
- critique and review messages
- invite on pastoral visits
- encourage outside training, especially biblical Greek and Hebrew

## Resources

*Seven Laws of Teaching* by Milton Gregory

*Teaching to Change Lives* by Howard Hendricks

*The Seven Laws of the Learner* by Bruce Wilkinson

*The Practical use of the Greek New Testament* by Kenneth Wuest

*Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages* by Haddon W. Robinson



# TEACHING SESSION 7

## USING GOD'S WORD IN EVANGELISTIC AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

### An Outline of the Gospel For Use in Evangelism

#### 1. Build Interest

- Begin with everyday talk; then move the conversation to spiritual matters.
- Share your personal testimony of salvation.
- Stress that you have a relationship with God, whom you love—John 3:16; Matthew 22:37
- Explain that God is offering men a new life and eternal life—Matthew 11:28; John 10:10; 1 John 5:13
- Encourage the person to learn about Jesus by reading the gospels, especially Luke—John 1:4; 1:18
- Ask yourself: Is this person interested in hearing more? If so, ask the Person: *Can I show you from the Bible how you can know God and be at peace with Him?*

#### 2. Present the Problem of Sin

- Sin is an offense against God—Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4; Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28
- Death is the penalty for sin—Psalm 51:4; Luke 15:18; Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:11-15
- God calls upon us to repent—Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; John 3:3-8
- Ask yourself: Is this person under conviction of sin? If so, ask the person: *Are you willing to turn from sin and submit your life to God?*

#### 3. Explain God's Provision of a Savior

- Jesus is the God-Man—John 1:1,14; 1 Timothy 2:5
- Jesus died on the cross for our sins—Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 4:25
- God offers forgiveness and eternal life—Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 6:23; Mark 1:15
- Ask Yourself: Does this person understand the gospel? If so, ask the Person: *Can you explain how a sinners like us can get right with God?*

#### 4. Encourage Faith in Jesus

- Explain that salvation is received through faith—John 3:16; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:9-10
- Ask yourself: Is this person ready to make a decision for Christ? If so, ask the Person: *Will you trust Jesus Christ as your Savior?*

## DISCERNING SALVATION

Elders must regularly discern whether a person is born again or not. Examples include 1) an individual asking to be baptized, 2) an individual wishing to be received into fellowship, 3) a couple asking to be married, 4) a person volunteering to serve as a Sunday School teacher, and 5) a person asking for counsel with a serious personal problem. In each of these examples, before the elders can act they must ask: *Is this person truly saved?* Discerning whether a person is born again or not requires a knowledge of two aspects of a person's life: doctrine and conduct.

### True Doctrine

A genuinely saved person will understand and confess the gospel of Jesus Christ. He or she should be able to clearly articulate that we are saved by faith, that our faith must be in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose on the third day. In order to be saved, a person must believe that he is a sinner and that Christ died on the cross for his sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

A saved person will readily admit that he is a sinner and needs a Savior in order to be right with God. He will not take from the gospel, diminishing the perfect work of Christ, or add human works to it (1 Corinthians 15:2; Galatians 3:10; 1:8; 2:21). He will be remorseful for his sin, knowing that his sins contributed to Christ's death on the cross. He will be trusting Christ, and Him alone, to save him.

It is important to distinguish between a person one who merely accepts Christianity as his religion of choice and a person who is truly saved and trusting Christ as his Savior. The former has a relationship with the church as an institution and views Christianity as the best way to live one's life. For this person, the gospel is a creed to be recited and affirmed. In contrast, a true Christian has a relationship with God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:18). He has had a life-changing experience in which he has repented of his sins and chosen to place his faith in Jesus to save him. A new person in Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he wants to obey God. Set free from sin, he is able to do so.

In addition to the gospel, a genuinely saved person will also hold fast to the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith. Two are especially important.

- There is one God who eternally exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is equal in attributes, power, and glory (Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 4:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14).
- By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, whose name was Mary. He is the unique Son of God, true God and true man (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-14; 5:22-23).

Recognizing that we live in an age in which false teaching is prevalent, we cannot assume that individuals identifying themselves as Christians necessarily hold to biblical doctrine. We need to ask good questions. At the same time, we cannot expect new believers to articulate doctrine as clearly as a mature Christian. With instruction, a true believer will grow in the grace and knowledge of God and exhibit discernment that can only be explained by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus taught, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). When a person denies, rejects, or resists biblical doctrine, there is reason for concern. The Lord taught, "A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers" (John 10:5).

## **Proper Conduct**

Though salvation is not through good works, a truly saved person will manifest new life by the manner in which he or she lives. As a new creature in Christ, evidence of spiritual life should be apparent in every saved person's conduct (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Repentance and Good Works—Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20; James 2:14-26

A person's conduct before and after salvation should be different. This change will be more readily seen in the life of a person who came to Christ as an adult and who was an openly rebellious and flagrant sinner than in the life of person who came to Christ as a child. It should, nonetheless, manifest itself to some degree in every saved sinner's life. Good works are the normal and expected outcome in the life of the person who is saved.

The Practice of Righteous not Sinful Living—1 John 2:4; 3:3-10; Galatians 5:18-24

A believer's life should be characterized by holiness. Dead to sin, he or she is no longer a slave to sin. A saved person may at times sin, but his or her life is not characterized by sin. He is known for the fruit of the Spirit, not the deeds of the flesh.

Sensitivity to Sin—1 John 1:8-10; Romans 7:15-25

A believer has an awareness of sin. He readily recognizes his sin and confesses it to God. He does not tolerate sin, but is distressed until he has repented, forsaken, and confessed it.

Confession of Christ—Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 10:32-33

Salvation is a personal decision but one which soon becomes public. Baptism is an expected expression of belief. Some will confess Christ more easily than others, but all who are His must take their stand and own Him as Lord and Savior.

Love for Other Believers—1 John 3:14; 5:1; John 13:35

True believers have an affinity for one another. Despite differences of culture, race, and social status, believers love one another and want to fellowship with one another.

Love of God not the World —1 John 2:15; John 8:42; 14:21

When a person loves God, his love for the things of the world diminishes and fades away. He values the eternal, not the temporal. He lives for treasures in heaven, not earth. This is not burdensome for him but the desire of his heart.

## Questions to Consider

The following questions can be helpful when evaluating whether a person is saved or not.

### True Doctrine

- Who is Jesus?
- Why did you need to be saved?
- Have you ever done anything that wrong that was serious enough to send you to hell?
- If you were to die and God were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” what would you say?
- If you were to die and God were to ask you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” and you could only answer with only one word, and that word would you choose?
- What remains for you to do to be saved?
- Why did Jesus die on the cross?
- What is the connection between Jesus’ death and your sins?
- How do good works and baptism contribute to your salvation?

### Proper Conduct

- What changes have taken place in your life since being saved?
- What good things do you do now that you did not do before?
- Is there unrepented and unforsaken sin in your life?
- What evidence do you see in your life of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
- Whom have you told that you have trusted Christ to save you?
- Does your family know about your decision?
- Have you been baptized or are you willing to be baptized?
- How do you feel about meeting with other believers for worship, fellowship, and instruction?

### Evaluation

If approached with love and sensitivity, most believers are pleased to talk how they came to Christ and their relationship with God. A person who is not truly saved is often reluctant to explain how he or she came to Christ or to answer questions about his or her spiritual life.

Evaluating replies to questions about doctrine is fairly straightforward. If a person holds to a false gospel or a false concept of God, his or her profession should not be accepted as genuine. Matters of conduct are more difficult to evaluate. Here it is best to look at the big picture, rather than to judge a person based on one specific issue of conduct. Sometimes a believer is doing well in most areas but is struggling in one and in need of counsel, encouragement, and accountability to overcome the sin.

There is often a degree of uncertainty as to a person’s standing before God. In the final analysis, of course, only the Lord knows with absolute certainty a person’s spiritual standing. “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). How much ambiguity can be tolerated depends on the circumstances. More is acceptable when considering a person for baptism, for example, than when considering the marriage of a person of questionable faith to a believer. Prayer should play an important role when evaluating a person’s spiritual condition.

## USING GOD’S WORD IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

### **Shepherd the Sheep**—John 21:15-17

So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

### **Preach the Word**—2 Timothy 4:1-2

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

### **Admonish the Wayward**—1 Thessalonians 5:14

And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.

### **Guard the Flock**—Act 20:28-31

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

### **Equip the Saints**—Ephesians 4:11-13

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

### **Aim at Obedience from the Heart**—1 Timothy 1:5

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

### **Instruct in Biblical Sanctification**—Galatians 2:20 (also Romans 6:1-14)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

**Be Forthright in Your Counsel**—Matthew 22:16

Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any.

**Practice Directive Counseling**—Acts 20:31

Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

**Be Loving and Transparent**—1 Thessalonians 2:7-8

But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.

**Rest in the Sufficiency of God's Word**—2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

**Seek to Present Every Man Complete**—Colossians 1:28-29

And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

**Prepare to Give an Account to the Chief Shepherd**—Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

## Scriptural References that Address Common Pastoral Needs

When shepherding the saints, think biblically and apply Scripture to every situation. Keep the Bible between you and the person whom you are pastoring, making God's Words your words.

Area of Need	Scriptural References
abortion	Psalm 127:3-5; Psalm 139:13-16; Exodus 20:13; 21:22-25; Job 31:15; Luke 1:44; Titus 2:4; Romans 9:11; Genesis 9:6
anger	James 1:19-20; Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 4:26; 4:31; Galatians 5:20; Matthew 5:22; Proverbs 15:1
anxiety	Philippians 4:6-9; Psalm 94:14-23; 139:23-24; Matthew 6:25-34; 1 Peter 5:6-7
bitterness	Hebrews 3:12; 12:15; Ephesians 4:31
conceit	Philippians 2:3-4; 1 Timothy 3:6; 6:17; James 3:16
contentiousness	Galatians 5:18-21; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Proverbs 26:20-21; 25:24; 1 Timothy 6:3-6; Titus 3:2
covetousness	Exodus 20:17; Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11
critical spirit	Proverbs 26:20; James 4:11; 5:9; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Matthew 7:1-5; Philippians 4:8
debt	Romans 13:8; Proverbs 22:7; Proverbs 22:26
discouragement	Joshua 1:6-9; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Psalm 27:13-14; 32:11; 62:5; Isaiah 40:31
dishonesty	Proverbs 12:16-19; 21:6; Ephesians 4:25; Psalm 120:2
divorce	Matthew 19:3-9; Malachi 2:16; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16
drug addition	John 8:34-36; Romans 6:16; 2 Peter 2:18-19
envy	Mark 7:20-23; Titus 3:3-5; 1 Peter 2:1-3
fear	Psalm 27:1-14; John 14:1; 14:27; 16:33; 2 Timothy 1:7; Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 56:3-4; 23:4; Philippians 4:13; Luke 1:37
financial troubles	Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:19; Malachi 3:10
gossip	James 3:1-9; Matthew 15:18; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 3:10
hatred	Luke 6:27; 1 John 2:9-11; 3:14-16; 4:20-21
homosexuality	Romans 1:26-27; Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-11
immodesty	1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3
immorality	1 John 3:9; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Hebrews 13:4

impatience	Galatians 5:22-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 2:24; James 5:7-8
indecision	Romans 4:20; James 1:5-8; Joshua 24:15
irritability	1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Colossians 3:12
jealousy	1 Corinthians 13:4; 1 Timothy 6:6; Exodus 20:17; Proverbs 6:34; 27:4; 1 Corinthians 3:3
job loss	Psalm 37:25; 1 Timothy 6:8; Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:12
lack of direction	1 Corinthians 9:26-27; James 1:5-8; Ephesians 2:10
lack of faith	1 John 5:4-5; Ephesians 6:16; Hebrews 11:6
laziness	Proverbs 24:30-34; 21:25; 6:9; 26:13-16; Timothy 5:8
loneliness	Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:8
lust	Matthew 5:27-28; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Job 31:1; Galatians 6:8; Psalm 119:9-10
medical crisis	2 Corinthians 6:6-9; Psalm 103:1-5; 139:13-18; James 5:13-18
miscarriage	Psalm 139:13-18; 116:15; Matthew 18:10; Luke 18:15-17
persecution	Matthew 5:11-12; Philippians 4:5; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 3:14-17; 4:15-19
personal conflicts	Matthew 18:15-22; James 4:1-2; Galatians 5:26
poor attendance	Hebrews 10:23-25; Acts 2:42; 20:7; Luke 22:19-20; Romans 12:10-13
poor parenting	Proverbs 22:6; 29:17; Ephesians 6:2-4; Colossians 3:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:14-15
pride	Philippians 2:3-11; 1 Peter 5:5-6
procrastination	Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:4; 13:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12;
rebelliousness	John 14:15; 14:21; 1 John 2:4; Luke 6:26; Matthew 7:21; Mark 7:6
failed romance	Psalm 34:18; 147:3
selfishness	Philippians 2:3-7; 1 John 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:21
stubbornness	Psalm 32:8-9; Proverbs 18:1-2; 1:7
unbelief	John 20:27-29; Hebrews 3:12
unforgiveness	Matthew 6:14-15; James 2:13; Luke 17:3-4; Matthew 18:23-35
unloving	1 Timothy 1:5; 1 John 4:7
unsaved husband	1 Peter 3:1-2; 1 Corinthians 7:13-16
vengeance	Romans 12:19-21; Proverbs 20:22; Luke 6:27-33; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:8-12
worldliness	1 John 2:15-17; Romans 12:1-2; James 4:4; James 1:27; Matthew 6:24; Matthew 16:26; 2 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 11:24