

TEACHING GOD'S WORD

Dr. Larry Powers / Calvary Curriculum's Children's Ministry Conference / February 2025

John Bunyan - Pilgrim's Progress: *The teacher had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, and the world was behind his back. The teacher stood as if pleading with men and a crown of gold did hang over his head.*

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *The work of teaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called. I say without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is teaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the Church, it is the greatest need of the world also.*

G. Campbell Morgan: *The supreme work of a Christian minister is the work of teaching. This is a day in which our great peril is that of doing a thousand little things to the neglect of the one most important thing - teaching. May God help us to keep the main thing the main thing.*

C.H. Spurgeon: *But when you teach children, you are, if it be possible, in a more responsible situation even than a pastor occupies. He preaches to grown-up people, who, if they do not like what he preaches, can go somewhere else; but you teach children who have no option of going elsewhere. If you teach the child wrongly—he believes you; if you teach him heresies—he will receive them; what you teach him now—he will never forget. You are not sowing, as some say, on virgin soil, for it has long been occupied by the devil; but you are sowing on a soil more fertile now than it ever will be again—soil that will produce fruit now, far better than it will do in after days; you are sowing on a young heart, and what you sow will be pretty sure to abide there, especially if you teach what is wrong, for that will never be forgotten.*

Dwight L. Moody: *When an adult is saved, they have only part of their life ahead of them, but when a child is saved they have their entire life to live for God.*

1. STUDY

Walter Kaiser: *In 1742, John A. Bengel observed: "Scripture is the foundation of the Church. The Church is the guardian of Scripture. When the Church is in strong health, the light of Scripture shines brightly; when the Church is sick, Scripture is corroded by neglect; and thus it happens, that the outward form of Scripture and that of the Church, usually seem to exhibit simultaneously either health or else sickness; and as a rule the way in which Scripture is being treated is in exact correspondence with the condition of the Church." After almost three centuries we can affirm the validity of Bengel's words. The Church and Scripture stand or fall together.*

John Stott: *The systematic teaching of the Word of God is impossible without the systematic study of it. It will not be enough to skim through a few verses in daily Bible reading, nor to study a passage only when we have to teach from it. No. We must daily soak ourselves in the Scriptures. We must not just study, as through a microscope, but take our telescope and scan the wide expanses of God's Word, assimilating the grand theme of the goodness of God in the redemption of mankind.*

2 Timothy 2:15

“Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

- Study Diligently (*study* - Gk *spoudazo* - sweat)
- Study Reverently (*approved unto God* - Gk. *dokimazo* - pass the test)
- Study Faithfully (*a workman* - Gk. *ergate* – a faithful laborer)
- Study Accurately (*rightly dividing* - Gk. *orthotomeo* - cut straight)

C.H. Spurgeon: *We all have great need of much hard study if our ministry is to be good for anything. He who has ceased to learn has ceased to teach. He who no longer sows in the study will no longer reap in teaching.*

The teacher must understand the parts of the Bible they are teaching. *A teacher must know that which they would teach.* Use the following, simple method of Inductive Bible Study to understand your text.

a. The Context

1) **Historical Context**

Every text must be interpreted in its historical and cultural context. What is the background and setting of your text? Use Bible introductions, handbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries to discover the background of your text.

2) **Biblical Context (Book / Chapter / Verse)**

Where does your text fit in the book / chapter? What are the verses before and after your text?

b. The Content

1) **Look (Observation) - What does Say? (A Detective)**

With just the Bible, make a list of observations, asking - who, what, when, where, how, and why? What is the theme of the text? What is the structure of the text? What is the thought-flow of the text?

2) **Learn (Interpretation) - What does it Mean? (A Scientist)**

Use whatever resources are at your disposal to understanding what the text means. This may involve doing Hebrew or Greek word studies and utilizing commentaries.

3) **Link (Correlation) - How does it Relate? (A Theologian)**

Scripture best interprets Scripture, and Scripture never contradicts Scripture. Make a list of key cross-references that will explain and amplify your text.

4) **Live (Application) - How does it Apply? (A Doctor)**

Meditate on how to apply the text to yourself and your hearers.

Ezra 7:10

“The good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

- Pursue God’s Word (*seek* - Heb. *darash* - whole hearted search)
- Practice God’s Word (*do* - Heb. *asah* - to put into action)
- Proclaim God’s Word (*teach* - Heb. *lamed* - to prod, an ox goad)

Derek Kidner: *Ezra was a model leader in that he taught what he had first lived, and what he lived he had first made sure of in the Scriptures. With study, conduct, and teaching put in this right order, God could use him in a great way.*

2. ORGANIZE

When preparing your Bible study make sure to teach to the correct age level. Don’t dive into the Greek and Hebrew with 1st graders. But, also keep in mind children are bright and generally only lack two areas that we as adults possess 1) Vocabulary and 2) Life Experience. Bring these two areas to their level and you will have a better chance that they will grasp and engage with what you are teaching them.

Throughout history, God’s teachers have taught 3 main types of teachings - Topical, Textual, and Expository. Though Pastor Chuck used all 3 kinds, the hallmark of Calvary Chapel is Expository Teaching.

Advantages of Expository Teaching:

- It enables the teacher to give the whole counsel of God over a period of time.
- It gives occasion for teaching on many Bible texts that we might never teach on.
- It gives opportunity to impart practical admonitions, which might seem offensive to some.

Isaiah 28:10

For precept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little, there a little.

Steven D. Mathewson: *Verse-by-verse teaching is the proclamation of a Scripture passage by unpacking one verse after another. The study moves through the text much like a Bible commentary does, proceeding phrase-by-phrase and analyzing select words. It is sometimes referred to as “continuous exposition” or “the running commentary method.”*

Verse-By Verse Teachers:

H.A. Ironside, G. Campbell Morgan, D.M. Lloyd-Jones, J. Vernon McGee, Chuck Smith

Recommended Help:

Calvary Chapel Distinctives – “The Priority of the Word of God” by Chuck Smith

When teaching children, topical or textual approaches are usually much more preferable. Carefully follow the lesson plan and materials you are given as a teacher. What’s most important is an organized, systematic approach, creatively teaching children the Bible in a way that is most appropriate to their age and life experience. Be passionate. Teach children to love the Bible.

John R. Stott: *I pity the teacher who teaches with no Bible in his hands, or with a Bible that's a cut and paste of his own making rather than the Word of the living God. Such a teacher cannot expound Scripture because he has no Scripture to expound. He cannot speak because he has nothing to say, at least nothing worth saying. Ah, but teach with the confidence that God has spoken and that He's caused what he has spoken to be written and appointed us to give it, and we will be caught up in the glory of having God's Word in our hands and on our lips.*

a. The Overall Theme

- One of the challenges of teaching is that you can end up saying many things that may seem disjointed. What is the overall theme or central point of your study? As you put together your study, keep connecting all you have to say to that big idea.
- Haddon Robinson: *Fragmentation is a particular danger for teachers. Some studies offer little more than scattered comments based on words and phrases from a passage, making little attempt to show how the various thoughts fit together as a whole. A teaching should be a bullet, not buckshot.*

b. The Outline/Flow of Your Study

- Determine which details of your study to treat in-depth and which to summarize.
- For longer sections of the Bible, use paragraph-by-paragraph teaching.
- Since some Bible studies can seem random and disconnected, consider using points and alliteration in developing your studies.

c. The Introduction / Conclusion?

- The Bible has... an Introduction - *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...* (Gen. 1:1) and a Conclusion - *Even so, I am coming quickly...* (Rev. 22:20)
- The Gospel of Matthew has... an Introduction - *The beginning of the genealogy (Gk. genesis) of Jesus Christ...* (Matt. 1:1) and a Conclusion - *Go and make disciples ... and I will be with you always.* (Mt. 28:20)
- An effective teaching has ... an Introduction / (Body) / and a Conclusion
- A study is like playing a golf hole ... the introduction is like the tee shot, the body is like the fairway game, and the conclusion is like putting the ball into the hole!
- A study is like flying an airplane... the introduction is like the take off, the body is what happens in flight, and the conclusion is like the landing.

Van Cleave: *There seems to be a common tendency to underestimate the value of small things. The introduction and conclusion of a study are small parts, but they are extremely vital to its success. Because they are small parts, teachers often overlook their importance. Some writers on teaching insist that the introduction and conclusion should be given more preparation than any other part of the study. This may be going too far, but not much.*

- Carefully consider how you will introduce and conclude your study.

d. The Illustrations

- A picture is worth a thousand words. Use simple, short, and applicable illustrations. Illustrations are especially important for children. But be sure to illustrate at their level.
- Spurgeon: Illustrations are to teachings what windows are to houses.

3. PRAY

Luke 11:1

Now it came to pass, as Jesus was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, Lord teach us to pray. Though Jesus was the greatest teacher who ever lived, the disciples didn't ask Jesus to teach them to teach, but to teach them to pray!

Pray through your teaching asking God to reveal what He wants you to say and how He wants you to say it. Plead for His power and anointing on your life.

David Larsen: *We have not prepared to teach until we have prayed. We cannot represent God if we have not stood before God. It is more important to learn to pray than to teach.*

E.M. Bounds: *Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still! He who has not learned well how to talk to God for men will have little success in talking to men for God.*

Andrew Blackwood: *In teaching, there is one rule I lay down and never make an exception, and that is to pray more than I teach. In studying the prophet can build his altar and lay the wood on it. There he can lovingly place his sacrifice, the study, but still he knows that the fire must come down from God. Come it will, if he prays before he teaches.*

Faris D. Whitesell: *The teacher must soak his studies in prayer. He should pray as he teaches, pray as he teaches, and if possible follow up his studies with prayer.*

Alexander Whyte: *Steep every sentence of your study in prayer, and even after you have taught, pray that God drives His Word deeply into your hearts of your hearers.*

C.H. Spurgeon: *All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. I pray when choosing a topic, when digging into the text, when seeing God's deep truths, when receiving fresh streams of thought, and before, during, and after I teach. Nothing can so gloriously fit you to teach as descending fresh from the mount of communion with God to speak with men. None are so able to plead with men as those who have been wrestling with God on their behalf. It is even helpful to pray after you teach. For if we cannot prevail with men for God, we will at least, endeavor to prevail with God for men.*

1 Thessalonians 1:5

"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in full assurance."

- A Conviction about God's Message - The Word of God is Powerful!
- A Conviction about God's Might - The Holy Spirit Attends the Word of God!
- A Conviction about God's Method - Teaching the Word is God's Chosen Method!

John Stott: *Fire in teaching depends on fire in the teacher. Our studies will never catch fire unless we are on fire and the study burns with conviction in our own souls!*

W.E. Sangster: *I'm not interested to know if your teaching could set a river on fire. What I want to know is if I picked you up by the scruff of your neck and dropped you into the river, would it sizzle?!*

4. TEACH / “Simply Teach Simply”

Robert Murray McCheyne:

Think yourself empty. Read yourself full. Write yourself clear. Pray yourself hot. Teach yourself strong.

1 Peter 4:11

“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God (Gk - *as if God himself were speaking*). If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.”

Nehemiah 8:8

“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

- Read God’s Word (Help Your People See What It Says)
- Explain God’s Word (Help Your People Know What It Means)
- Apply God’s Word (Help Your People Do What It Tells Us)

Chuck Smith: *Several years ago we started Maranatha Music. The first album was made in a garage that was converted into a studio. The cost for the production of the first album was \$3,500. Because of the many other constraints we had to turn over the management to others, and after a few years it was reported that they were losing money. As I became involved again, I discovered that they were now paying as much as \$60,000 for single artist albums. The producers were trying to the perfect album for the music critics not the general public. What we needed to do was to try and create albums for the common listener. So we went back to making the albums for the general public and came into profitability again. And it’s like this with teaching. I think that there is a danger in trying to create the perfect study that only a select group of people can understand. It should never be our desire to be known as great teachers or scholars, but simple teachers who teach simply.*

Lewis Smedes: *I was just about to bend my six-foot-four frame into our eggshell blue 1952 Plymouth to drive to a little church in the decayed center of Paterson, New Jersey. I was heading out into the ministry. Before getting into the car, I turned to one of my former professors, and asked: “Do you have one last word of wisdom for me?” I’ll never forget his words. “When you teach, remember you are teaching to ordinary people, so keep it simple.”*

2 Timothy 4:1-4

“1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

- A Great Privilege - *charge* (vs. 1) - “order from a high ranking official”

Mark 16:15: *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

2 Corinthians 4:1: *Therefore, since we have this ministry... we do not lose heart.*

Mark Steege: *It is through our teaching that God impacts lives. We are to be evangelists, awakening others to the good news. We are to be heralds, proclaiming the messages of God. We are to be ambassadors, calling others to be reconciled to God. We are to be stewards of the mysteries of God, dispensing the Word that will meet every need. We are to be witnesses, telling others of all that God has said and done. We are to be like prophets, urging our people to live lives worthy of God. As we reflect on teaching... what a wondrous privilege and honor it is!*

- A Great Purpose - *preach* (vs. 2a) - “to declare God’s message”

Convince (–) - How Not To Believe

Rebuke (–) - How Not To Behave

Exhort (+) - How To Behave

Teach (+) - How To Believe

Hebrews 4:12: *For the Word of God is powerful and effective...*

Isaiah 55:11: *My Word will not return to me void but will accomplish what I please...*

- A Great Perseverance - *be ready* (vs. 2b) - “stand your ground”

“in season and out of season” (when its popular and when its not)

“with all longsuffering” (Gk *makrothumia*) - “remain faithful”

- A Great Priority - *they will not endure sound doctrine* (vs. 3-4) - “

Homer Kent: *Motivated by their own desires, these people will reject sound doctrine and the Word of God, and substitute for it their own cravings. Longing to have their ears made happy, they will find and follow the teachers who will tell them exactly what they want to hear.*

Warren Wiersbe: *The fact that a teacher has a large following is not always a sign that he is teaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he’s just tickling “itching ears” and giving the hearers what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. While the teacher they least like to hear is the one that’s giving the message they need to hear the most!*

Will Sangster:

Called to teach?! Commissioned by God to give His Word?! A herald of the Great King?! A witness of the Eternal Gospel?! Could any work be more high and holy?! To this supreme task God sent His only Begotten Son and appointed His apostles. And to this work He has called us?! In all the deception and confusion of the times, is it possible to imagine a work more important than that of teaching?! No! What a great honor it is to teach!

Cotton Mather:

The job of a teacher, rightly understood is the most honorable, and important job that anyone in the whole world can ever have, and it will be one of the wonders of all eternity to think about why in the goodness of God He would ever let any of us have such a job! A teacher has the awesome privilege of being a bridge between God and the world He sent His Son to save! A teacher gets to tell about measureless width, length, height, and depth of the love of God, and invite all who are willing to come into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This is a work which an angel might wish for as an honor to his character, indeed a job which every angel in heaven might covet to have for a thousand years to come. It is such an honorable, important, and useful job, that if anyone is blessed by God to have it, they may look down with disdain if they were ever asked to be a king, and shed a tear of pity for the brightest ruler of the earth!
