

4 WAYS TO AVOID IN PREACHING THE WORD

Using the Word in speaking is not always the same as preaching the Word. We are to be “*rightly dividing the Word of truth*” but some, “*concerning the truth have erred,*” (1Tim. 2:15,18). Below are 4 popular ways of using the Word apart from its intended meaning.

1 **Motivational** – *Preaching Inspiration*

The Bible is a Dale Carnegie course. This way doesn't concern itself with the meaning of the passage (doctrine). Rather it focuses on a phrase to motivate to self-fulfillment. It virtually ignores the goal and contextual truth of the passage. It might take David killing the giant, to inspire positive thinking to overcome your giant issues. Or take *sowing and reaping* from the Bible to motivate giving seed money to them to reap a physical blessing for you. (Not to say that God's truth cannot motivate one into God pleasing ways).

2 **Psychological** – *Preaching Behavioral Modification*

The Bible is Psychology 101. The goal is to bring success to one's life and foster positive relationships. That, by itself is not necessarily wrong. However, it observes behavior in the Bible and then decides the reasons that produced such according to their own personal understanding. It is not the reason or point the passage itself is making. For example, one might say David committed adultery (true biblically) because he had “low self esteem” of his manhood (not taught biblically), and therefore the solution to correcting his bad behavior is obtaining “high self esteem” (not taught biblically).

Psychology observes behavior but oftentimes its reasoning why and solution to correct it is different than the Bible. Again, observation and interpretation are two different things. Some observe that both ape and man can walk on two legs. Some therefore reason that man must have evolved from the ape. But it is the Bible that will give revelation to such similar behavior: God created each after its own kind (Gen. 1; 1Cor. 15:39). The problem is man observes (even correctly and this is science) but does not interpret such by Christ the Son of God. This is philosophy of which the Christian is to beware (Col. 2:8).

3 **Methodology** – *Preaching Formulation (how to)*

The Bible is a Method Manual. The emphasis is not on “*what*” God says He wants done – objective truth. But the emphasis is “*how*” to get it done according to the speaker – subjective experience. An example would be: *How to deliver a good sermon*. Some say: “1. Reality, be yourself. 2. Simple and Clear. 3. Voice Inflection. 4. Animation. 5. Humor. 6. Passion and Energy. 7. Authority. 8. Visual Aids. 9. Spirit and Prayer.”

One cannot find this formula in God's Word, only the command to “preach the word” when en-gifted by the Lord in dependence upon Him in our weakness.

4 **Proof-texting** – *Preaching Personal Expression (my way)*

The Bible is My Proof Book. This way comes up with an idea that's different from what is specifically instructed in Holy Scripture. But it then finds a passage anywhere that shares a general theme or a broad ambiguous word, and uses it to *prove* their idea as biblical. (Not to say we shouldn't have clear chapter and verse for what God truly says).

Example – **Idea:** *Believers meeting together on a mountain get more godly inspiration.*

Proof – God called Abraham to go unto a *mountain* and a blessing followed (Gen. 22). Moses got revelation for Israel on *Mount Sinai* (Ex. 19). Our Lord’s first message to His disciples was on a *mountain* (Mt. 5:1, 2). Christ was transfigured on a *mountain* (Mt. 17:1). After Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper, they all went to the *Mount of Olives* (Mt. 26:20). The “great commission” was given from a *mountain* (Mt. 28:16). The revelation of the return of Christ was given to disciples while on a *mountain* (Acts 1:10-12). John received the revelation of the New Jerusalem from a *high mountain* (Rev. 21:10). Tourists are inspired when they visit the *Mount of Olives*. A traditional song is, “Go tell it on the *mountain*.”

Of course no such command or promise is given to the church. But Scripture itself was pieced together to make the idea appear right and biblical. This way uses the Bible to *back up* my thoughts rather than using the Bible to reveal God’s thoughts.

The Right Way: DOCTRINE

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

Doctrine (teaching) is God’s thinking on something - an event, action, or statement. Observation tells one *what* happened. Doctrine gives the *why* of the action – what it means (interpretation). Doctrine reveals the character of God: His wisdom and ways. Doctrine is objective truth that stands independent of one’s experience (subjective). To know the correct meaning forms correct understanding to do correct actions. (Col. 1:9-10).

For example, one may observe a boy washing his father’s car. You could reason that it is because the boy is obedient. But the father might tell you the boy disobeyed and came home late, so washing the car was his punishment. Now his washing the car is evidence of disobedience, not obedience. Revelation, not observation, gave you the true meaning.

All Scripture is God inspired. But we are to be *“rightly dividing the word of truth”*. To avoid legalism we must understand that while all Scripture is *for* us, it is not all *to* us. The rituals and terms of the OT were given to Israel, not the church. The NT claims the OT was written *“for”* the Christian’s learning and hope in the examples of God and His ways (Rom. 15:4; 1Cor. 10:6,11). But the NT is written *“to us”* (Heb. 10:15) to practice in faith.

It is the epistles (letters of instruction from the risen Lord Jesus to His church) from Romans to Revelation that give us God’s interpretation of the statements and actions in the 4 gospels and Acts. The gospels witness that Jesus died and rose again. But they really don’t tell us why. It is filtering this action through the epistles that give us the true understanding of why. The Lord Jesus died as a full redemptive payment for our sin, thus removing judgment. He rose again proving He is Lord and that God accepted His sacrifice. His death removes our debt. His resurrection removes our doubts. We learn this from the apostles’ doctrine – the epistles (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 1:4, 3:23-26, 4:24-25).

There is no substitute for preaching the Word (sound doctrine) and rightly dividing it. True, the gifts are different and thus styles of delivery different, but it’s His pure and true Word alone that truly builds us up and rightly represents the worthy Lord Jesus Christ.