

# Homiletics: Asking Questions of the Text - Part 6

by Tim Conway

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*Tim Conway emphasizes the critical importance of accurately preaching the Word of God through diligent study and preparation.*

**Duration:** 2:54:44

**Scripture:** Colossians 3:17, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 4:12, 1 Peter 4:11

**Topics:** "Biblical Preaching", "Theological Integrity"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of preaching the Word of God as the ultimate source of divine truth, rather than personal opinions, dreams, or the teachings of men. It encourages preachers to present theological dilemmas and thought-provoking questions to engage the minds of listeners and avoid spiritual slumber. The goal is to faithfully handle the Word of God, aiming to please the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

Well, today we're going to, Lord willing, get into the meat of things. The very heart of preaching. It would probably be good for us to turn to 2 Timothy 4. I know you know this text and we've mentioned it, but preaching.

We're talking about the ability to communicate divine truth. And that truth comes from one place. There's one source.

When we talk about preaching, we're not talking about preaching our dreams and preaching our opinions and preaching the vision and preaching the prophecy, the prophetic word that God revealed to us. We're not talking about preaching Calvin. We're not talking about preaching Spurgeon, preaching Lloyd-Jones, preaching Piper, preaching some system.

You all know the text. I charge you in the presence of God, 2 Timothy 4.1, and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom. There it is.

Preach the word. We must preach the word. I know that goes without saying.

But how many preachers read a text and don't preach the text? You know, that happens all the time. That is going to happen all over this city tomorrow. Men and women are going to stand in pulpits and read texts.

They're going to read a portion of Scripture and they're not going to preach it. They're not going to proclaim it. And listen, that doesn't just happen out there somewhere.

It happens in our own church at times where a man will read a passage and he won't preach the passage. We need to preach the word. Preach the word.

Preach the word. We're talking about what? Verbal. What are we talking about? We're talking about a man who speaks words.

Verbal proclamation of divine truth using the gifts God has given him, using the personality God has given him. He stands in the pulpit and he strings together words that come off his tongues into sentences, into paragraphs. And what is the purpose? It is to proclaim the divine truth that comes out of this book.

That is what preaching is all about. And I know we have different gifts, we have different personalities. That's a reality, but when you boil it all down, preaching is about a man.

He gets up, whether it's Bible study and it's in prison, it's on the college campus, you can stand on the street corner, you can be in the nursing home, you can be in a Bible study, you can be in the Sunday school class, you can stand in a pulpit somewhere, but it is a man who stands up. God has given us a word. There has been revelation from outside this world.

God sent a message into this world through men, carried along by the Spirit of God, and we take those words and get to the truth, get to the meaning of it, and we stand up and we articulate it with our tongue and our vocal cords so that it comes out of our mouth and it goes through the air however words are communicated and sound travels and it goes in that eardrum and it forms thoughts and impressions upon people's minds and hearts where they're moved upon by the truth of what God has spoken. This is what we're talking about when we talk about preaching. And, you're right there in the pastoral epistles, look at 1 Timothy 4.13. 1 Timothy 4.13 helps us, it gives us some of the components of what this communicating, verbal proclamation of divine truth is all about.

Paul speaking to Timothy, Timothy, until I come, where was Timothy at in the first epistle? He was at Ephesus. Until I come, it seems like what he's saying is, I have intentions of coming to Ephesus. Timothy, I've got you there right now.

In 2 Timothy, he was not at Ephesus anymore. That was a specific place he needed to be at that specific time. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

If we're looking for some of the components of this proclamation, we might find them there. There's other places where we could look. An exhortation, seems like Andre helped us out with exhortation lately.

An exhortation, we have reading of Scripture, I think that's pretty plain. We need to read the Scripture. We need to read what it is that God has actually said.

We want to teach, we want to exhort. What is teaching? Teaching is instruction. Teaching is doctrine.

We basically are giving the sense of what it is. Exhortation is, we are making an appeal. There is a persistent, strong appeal, a summons, an entreaty, we're calling on people to react and respond to that word.

Sometimes we think about encouragement. When you think about encouragement, encouragement in the Greek, encouragement in the English, it carries two strains of meaning. On the one hand, encouragement can be like we're seeking to comfort.

We talk about giving somebody a little bit of encouragement to do something, there's an appeal there, there's a pushing, there's an admonition, we're seeking to persuade. We're talking about a persuasive discourse. We're calling upon people to react to the word.

This is the idea. You read Scripture, you instruct, you teach it, you give the sense of it, and you are appealing to people to respond to it. That's the idea.

Teaching, admonition, or exhortation, and the reading of Scripture. You see it there. Then, we are not talking about standing in the pulpit and suggesting things.

We're not talking about making recommendations to people. We are talking about getting to the sense of the word of God and appealing to men's consciences based on what God has said. And that's where your authority is going to come from.

Our authority comes from Christ. Our authority comes from His Word. But that authority only stands in as much as we actually read the text, properly instruct from that text, and properly apply that text, and call for the response that God calls for.

If you don't do that, if you miss the meaning, then we're not actually communicating what it is that by the authority of Christ has been given to us. We've got to get to the root of the meaning. We hear Christ say, speaking to His Father, Thy Word is truth.

And you know what? His Word is always true. But it doesn't mean that the way you teach it is true. It is true.

And what God meant by it is true. But you seeking to proclaim it, your authority only stands or falls in as much as you accurately and precisely bring out the meaning that God intended for it to mean. Our interpretations of God's Word may or may not be true.

And so, this is where we find ourselves today. So much of preaching, yes, yes, the man has to mount the pulpit, or the teacher's seat, or whatever the scenario is of teaching. And there comes that time of the delivery of the sermon.

But we're talking today about what all goes into that sermon before you get to that place. The thing is, when you come to stand to preach, you need to have an idea that what you are going to say about God's Word is what God intends for you to say. That it's truth.

That you are rightly dividing the Word of Truth. You're rightly handling the Word of God. You can read a text and stand in that pulpit, and just because you read it doesn't mean that everything that you say after it is right and accurate.

You can read a text, go stand in the pulpit, and actually say the opposite of what's true. So we need to be very careful. We need to be very careful.

Brothers, we need to dig. We need to work. We need to strive.

We need to study to show ourselves approved. We need to fight. We must pray.

We must wrestle. Look, if we have anybody that's not willing to put in the work ahead of time, don't go into the pulpit to speak. I mean, if you think that, you know, well, I don't have to work.

I'm just going to go grab a Piper sermon. You don't want to take up preaching unless you're willing to be faithful before God in what has to go in to study ahead of time. I'm smiling.

I remember, again, back at the leadership training, Brother Andy, he said that the children over in the Far East, he said they ask him what that line is on his head. Have you heard him talk about that? And he said, from spending all the hours in this book scowling, you know, he crinkled his face and made that line real apparent, but that's basically everybody that's going to preach needs to have one of those lines on their forehead from just basically that scowl of what does that mean as we stare into God's Word. But... Can I ask a question on that? Yeah.

Obviously, there's no dogmatic time, and obviously you can give more time than what some of us can, but could you talk about just what does that look like for somebody that's got their own full-time job, but they're also in the pulpit as well? Do you know that Spurgeon actually compiled various volumes of sermon outlines specifically for men who had full-time jobs and also preached? He was trying to aid men like that. Because he recognized what we recognize today. You know, when I first began to preach, I was a full-time engineer.

When I first began to pastor, I was a part-time engineer, and was for three years. And so, I know those time constraints, and the whole time I had a family of six, and children that are growing up, and evangelistic, I mean, there was church planting involved in it too. Church lawns that needed to be mowed, and I was largely evangelizing the towns where the church plant was happening.

I was largely the guy doing construction, and cleaning, and lawn mowing, and had the family and the engineering. And so, I think the thing is that we have to be responsible for everything that we have in our life at the time. And certainly, I mean, we have a very understanding Father in Heaven, and He recognizes our constraints.

And so, the thing is that we have to do what we can do. But recognize this, that as I'm prioritizing my life, and I have those different things on my plate, what I don't want to do is I don't want to slight the sermon preparation because of my other responsibilities. I mean, what's going to happen is that a man who is going to give himself to handling the Word of God, is going to have to make sacrifices, and he is not going to be able to do certain things in his life that other men are able to do.

He is going to have to do things with his time that other men don't have to do. And there may be sacrifices, I mean, look, the reality is that if you have a wife who expects that you're basically, I mean, if you basically have an egalitarian marriage and your wife expects you to do 50% of everything, and 50% of diaper changing, and 50% of child bathing and all that, or 100% of it, and she expects you to cook, and she expects you to wash the dishes, and you're, you know, you probably shouldn't be preaching if you've got a secular job and you're going to be given to that model. When I was mowing the lawns, evangelizing Stockdale and Floresville, out on the streets, Craig and I would do some of that together, Craig was down in Floresville, later I moved on to Stockdale, but preparing to preach twice a week, you know, the reality is that doing family devotions, spending some time playing with the kids, you know, that's what my life looked like as far as that family involvement, but Ruby largely was handling the household and the home, and

much of the responsibilities with the children, and, I mean, that's, you know, a man is going to have to prioritize, because you cannot say, well, I have a full time job, I have a full time family, and I have these responsibilities, and therefore I'm justified to stand in the pulpit and give a shoddy sermon.

You know what, don't preach if that's your approach, because as you're prioritizing your life, handling the Word of God, look at this, charge here, well, we were looking at it before, but I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead by His appearing in His kingdom, preach the Word, I'll tell you what, you don't have any text with that magnitude that talks about how you raise your children, or how you love your wife, or how you handle your secular job, or how you, I mean, this is serious stuff, so you're going to have to make prioritizations in your life, so I can't tell you exactly what that's going to look like in every man's life, but if you're going to handle the Word of God, it's understandable that you won't be able to give the time that a full time pastor can, that's understandable, but that doesn't mean that it's understandable when you're not prioritizing your life right, so that's, I know that doesn't answer every question, but brothers, many of you know the text, but we read there in the Proverbs that it is, just think about this, it is the glory of God to conceal, what does that mean, where does He conceal things, yes, there may be secrets that are concealed, like in the DNA, as we get stronger and stronger microscopes, or out there in the heavens, stronger and stronger telescopes, but brethren, so much of what God takes glory in concealing is found right here. It is God's glory, God takes glory in concealing a matter, that doesn't mean that His intention is that it never be found out, it means it is His glory that the casual observer doesn't see it, and if you know, if you're familiar with the Proverbs, that Proverbs 2 actually talks about the knowledge of God, and it talks about what is required if we are going to find it, if we're going to discover it. It says this, if you seek it, insight, understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

If you seek it, we've got to be seeking, seeking, so we've got to dig, we've got to inquire, we've got to look, we've got to take the effort, what kind of effort goes into finding hidden treasure? I mean, somebody that's going to find treasure at the bottom of the ocean, from a sunken vessel, I mean the kind of effort that goes into it, you've got to have a boat, you've got to have the crew, you've got to have all the proper rigging, all the proper apparatus, I don't know if you need a submarine, or you've got the scuba diving, or the deep sea diving, I mean, there's investment that goes into it, if you're going to locate treasure, and searching, searching, that's how we're going to profit from Scripture, we've got to spend the time to search. Go lay down, go lay down. Hey, Ruby, are you over there? Did you call Rex? So, what does search mean? I mean, that's an easy word, what does search mean? You look for, and yeah, we need to look for, and the thing is, that when we come to God's Word, and we need to ask ourselves, what are we looking for? What am I looking for? If you're looking for silver, you know what you're looking for.

If you're looking for treasure, you know what you're looking for. What are the treasures of God's Word that we're looking for? You see what this tells us? It tells us that it is the glory of God to give us text in this Word, that when you casually read it, you don't see it. You have to dig, and the more you dig, the more treasure you discover.

That's how God's Word is. Isn't it interesting? I mean, you read man's writings, it doesn't get more and more profound, typically, the more you read it. I mean, I remember Piper had some keynote speaker up there at his conference one year when I went, and Piper read this guy's book, and in reading his book, he invited him to be the keynote speaker.

And when he got the guy there, it was evident, Piper was reading meaning into his book that the guy never intended. Piper's bringing out this wonderful stuff, and the guy was like, clueless. Like, where's he getting that from? And when the guy's asked to explain, he can't really explain.

And it's like, he didn't have any deeper meaning in there. Piper was reading it in. He's probably so used to doing that with Scripture.

But that's not the case here. It's like, you can read this for a lifetime, and you keep going back to the same portions of Scripture, and it's like, wow. Because God reveals things deeper and deeper and deeper.

All the life long, Brother Bob Jennings studying this book. And you know, you might have seen the interview that I did with him at the end of his life, about any regrets in life. And one of the regrets he had was that he didn't spend more time studying this book.

Why? Because he recognized, even from the amount that he did study it, that the more he studied it, the more he found. There are such treasures here. And look, if we're going to stand in the pulpit, we need... See, this is the benefit that we have, is that we take the time to discover the riches, so that when we go in the pulpit, we can share those riches with the people that are out there.

That doesn't mean that some of the people may not be just as gifted, or even more gifted than us, to be able to do it. But because we spent the time, we're able even to sit before a Piper or a MacArthur, and say things, and bring out things, because it's the truth of God's Word that ministers to their soul, and unpacks realities, and unpacks treasures. This is a very holy and sacred calling, and responsibility, and privilege, to be able to be the one that actually is going down in the mines to find the silver.

That's what we want to be about. Our objective is to un-conceal. And look, there's meanings on the surface.

It doesn't mean there's always some mysterious, deep meaning that we have to find. It doesn't mean that, oh, you know, I can never take it at face value. I always have to find some deeper, hidden... I mean, brethren, you know that's not the case.

Some things are very obvious. Some things are very clear. Some things are on the surface.

We don't have to read all sorts of hidden stuff into it. But, you know, the longer you study the Word, the more you begin to connect pieces. It's like, oh, this fits here, and that there.

You begin to understand certain emphasis, certain things behind the heart of God. Like certain doctrines, like the doctrine of repentance may just begin to reveal itself more and more. God shows you different facets of it, and it's just, you see more of the glories of God, more of the glories of Christ.

They begin to... But, look, when we come to Scripture, we need to be asking, we need to be looking for what is the treasure here? What is it that needs to be unpacked? What is it that God wants to say? We need to be interrogating God's Word. And I guess ever since I've been preaching, I've been minded that way. To come to God's Word and begin... Some of it's the engineering mind, you know, the problem solving that would often go into machine design.

Either the original design, or when you've got difficulties with something and you're problem solving, but to try to work through systematically what are the issues? What are the problems? What is the main thing

that needs to be communicated here? What are the potential problems in people's minds? Listen to Lloyd-Jones. Just recently, as I've been going through Ephesians, he made this comment concerning Ephesians 1.15-17. He said, the second matter which we observe is the way in which the Apostle prays to the Father. And you remember, he's praying in behalf of the Ephesians.

He's asking the Father of Glory that they may receive certain things. He says, let us pay close attention to His terms and ask ourselves why He said certain things. You see, ask ourselves.

We need to be asking, why does Paul say what he says? He goes on to say this, we need to ask ourselves why he has said certain things and expresses his thoughts in the way he does. The best way of profiting from reading the Scriptures is to ask questions of the Scriptures, to talk to the Scriptures, to take every phrase carefully and ask, why did he say this? Why that? Well, that's exactly, I came across that just recently as I was reading his sermon on that portion of Scripture and I remembered it and went and sought it out and dug it up and threw it in here because that's exactly the kind of thing that my own mindset is in approaching the Scripture. Ask questions.

Ask questions. Why? Why? Why? Why? And the question is, what happens to people who are listening to a sermon? I think about that. I think about what engages people.

When do you lose people? When do people sleep? When are people's minds most active? I know some of it has to do with what time of the day. I know that some of it might have to do with, you know, did they have their coffee or not? I recognize that. But most people are inclined, think about this yourself.

You think about how you think. You think about how you respond when a preacher is in the pulpit. What kicks you into gear? If your mind was strained, I know sometimes telling a story, certain things engage people.

Not speaking monotonously. I mean, there are certain things that can help. But I'll tell you this, most people, including myself, kick into the mode of a much deeper cognitive response when they're confronted with a problem.

It's just a reality. You're talking to people and you produce a reality in somebody's mind. It isn't just receive, receive, receive, blah, blah, blah.

It's just bouncing off their brain. You know, some are working harder than others. But as soon as you present a problem to them, something kicks in.

Because the mind starts working. Yeah, what about that? And you start contemplating. Brethren, the reality is this, when there's no theological dilemma to be dealt with, the minds of the listeners a lot of times fall asleep.

Present dilemmas. Present issues. I love to ask questions.

Why? Pose the question to the folks and then hopefully try to answer it right. I mean, the thing is, we want to ask questions of the text. We want to ask why when we're in the study.

But bring some of those questions into the pulpit with you. Bring them in. Have the people face the dilemma with you.

As you're looking at the text, folks, why does Paul say that right there? I mean, if you're like me, Scripture doesn't fit your norm all the time. It doesn't fit what makes you comfortable all the time. It doesn't fit your logic all the time, does it? It doesn't fit mine.

I mean, there's times I'm reading and it's like, man, that is not how I would have said that. Well, sometimes the reason it's not how I would have said that is because I've read my own presupposition in there as to what I think Paul means and what he's trying to say. It's like, well, Paul, if you're trying to say that, why didn't you just say it this way? Well, one of the reasons is maybe he's not trying to say what I think he's trying to say.

And sometimes he is trying to say what I think he's trying to say, but he's using an argument that just to me doesn't seem like it holds a whole lot of water. But perhaps if I understood it more in the context of 2,000 years ago, or perhaps if I really understood what his argument was, a lot of times it's maybe I understand the big picture of what he's trying to say, I just don't understand how that works. And for the life of me, I have tried to get a feel for the whole letter of 1 Peter, but why Peter diverges and starts talking about the spirits and gets talking about Noah and gets talking about baptism, it's like, Peter! Because there's flow, there's reason to 1 Peter.

He's got an overarching subject, but it's like in the flow of thought, how does he go there? How does that fit? I don't know. I mean, I just don't know. I actually was going to preach through 1 Peter before I headed in the direction of Ephesians, but David took it, so I backed off.

But I'm interested to see how David, you know, David's moving fast, and so he doesn't have the time to spend like I would have if I preached through it, because he's basically bringing a message once a month, but he may not even get into some of the depths of what I personally would want to answer concerning that. But brothers, if we're going to stand before men and faithfully exposit God's Word, we must persistently relentlessly incessantly ask questions of the text. And with God's help and God's guidance, we'll have the right answers to those questions.

And one of the things that goes into rightly handling the Word of Truth is to get to the root of the things that are said. I mean, that's a primary thing. Why what is said is said.

Why it's there. What point is the author driving at. How does what I'm dealing with fit in the big flow? What is the big picture? What is the author most concerned with? Typically when you're dealing with specific portions, this is one of the things about proof texting, guys, where you just, you know, you dive into the middle of a book and you preach on a text, people dive in and pull a text out to support some doctrine with little understanding of why that is even there in that book at that place.

And sometimes you're making this case for all these things when if you really understood why that text was in there, that's not really the case that's being made. And so I understand guys are preaching topically. Here's a text that seems to fit that topic.

And they kind of just dive in, reach in, grab it out, and they sever all the arteries and veins and tendons and ligaments that attach it to all the rest. And, you know, I'm not saying it's always going to lead you in a bad direction, but it really... Guys, I just want to encourage you in your studies, even if you're kind of bouncing around Scripture and you're pulling a text here and a text there, spend some time on every verse you go to. Get a feel.

Why is it in that flow? How does it fit in that letter? What's happening over there? Why is that being said right there? Get a feel for the context. You need to be asking those questions. And of course, when it comes to the exhortation, we need to be asking ourselves of the text all the time.

How does this impact my years in 2017 in San Antonio, Texas? And what is the impact for us? It's not just to be some dry, useless doctrine. We want application. How does this apply to us? What are the ramifications? And guys, what we want to refrain from, what we don't want to be, is we don't want to be that guy that says questionable things that they never prove.

Listening to a preacher who very boldly, confidently says something like, where did he get that? And he doesn't spend an iota of time even trying to prove what he just said. You ever have that experience? Some guy says something from the pulpit. It's like, you suddenly are like, I have real questions about whether that's true.

He just says it confidently and it goes right on. He doesn't even stop to articulate it all that, well, I know what I just said is questionable. This is why I say it.

Even if he just said, I got it from Charles Spurgeon, or at least it's like, well, Spurgeon said it. You ever have that happen? Anybody? Am I the only guy? You're looking around like, did anybody else hear that? I mean, that's not right. You don't want to be that guy that some men interpret passages in such a way that is foreign to any commentator.

I mean, you get a young guy and he just confidently says something about a text and it's like, guys, listen, when you're standing in the pulpit, you are preaching to some people that are all over the spectrum of intelligence and IQ, but you got some people that are pretty sharp out there. You typically have people out there who have studied their Bibles more than you. You typically have people out there that have asked the same questions of Scripture that you're asking.

If you give some shoddy or flippant answer, people know. And what happens is, your credibility in the pulpit is affected. Your authority in the pulpit is affected.

We don't want to be that guy, that preacher who never seeks to prove whether his interpretation is correct. He just says it. You know this text, desiring to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Now, I know that's dealing probably with Judaizers and people that are of a vastly heretical unorthodox position, but take it for what it's worth. Guys making confident assertions about things they don't know about. Don't be that guy.

Don't be that guy. And to not be that guy means you have to put in the proper work. Some men will blatantly contradict themselves.

They'll say this. They'll say another thing. And some come to an enormously difficult text.

And they just go over it like there's no difficulty there at all. Like seriously? I mean I know there's like 26 different interpretations of that text and they just right across it. I mean just, nope, no.

Brothers, some men will try to answer difficulties in a passage. Their answer is just shallow. It's illogical.

I'm a guy that's looking for logic in things. I mean prove this to me. And don't give unfounded answers to things.

Don't be the guy that in seeking to answer a question, all you do is produce ten more questions in the here's. And none of them are ever answered. Anyway, just authority.

If you want authority, you want to prove what you're saying. And the way to prove it is yes, there's a place for logic. But what you logically want to do is you want to show how Scripture interprets Scripture.

You want to show from Scripture why what you're saying is right. And you want to give good, solid answers. I know Lloyd-Jones, not when he was a preacher so much, but back when he was studying medicine, he was encouraged to study logic.

I mean guys, if you're going to preach, you need to know something about logic. You need to know what is logical and what is not. You stand in the pulpit and you say things that are illogical, that don't connect.

You're trying to argue a case. It's like being in a courtroom and you're arguing this case, but your argument is full of fallacies. See what happens is you lose credibility.

We don't want to be that. We must rightly divide. And guys, when I'm talking about dealing with problems in the text, and having explanations, and going deep, guys, don't invent problems where there's no problem.

Don't spend lots of time proving things that don't need to be proven. I mean, there are things that are obvious. There are things that are on the surface.

Let's just, don't shy away from the truth. Don't shy away from the truth. At the same time, don't shy away from indicating when we're confronted by a problem that we might not ever likely have an answer to, or at least not a sufficient answer.

Don't be afraid of that either. But I mean, here's the thing. I can look at a text and I can say, brothers, sisters, I don't know the answer to this question.

We all have it. I don't know what the answer is. But I'll tell you this, what we do know about the text is this.

There's no question about that. Therefore, fill in the blank. Apply it.

So, put them on the table. If there's problems, put them on the table. That lends great credibility to teaching.

You throw it out there. The guy's not skirting the issue. Do your homework.

Show yourselves approved. That's the idea. But approved, not just before your hearers, but approved before God.

So, brothers, listen to this. Nehemiah, chapter 8. A bunch of Levites. You want to know their names? Yeshua, Benai, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akub, Shebethi, Hodiah, Messiah, Kalita, Azariah, Josabad, Hanan, Peliah.

These were all Levites. Listen to what it says. They helped the people to understand the law while the people remained in their places.

They read from the book, from the law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading. Here's the thing. You aren't going to be able to apply, exhort, admonish, unless you first teach.

You've got to give the right sense. If you're going to appeal to men's consciences and press them to some end, press them to respond to the Word, they've got to be able to have... Look, the conscience is not going to be pushed and constrained and moved upon unless there's understanding, unless the people grasp what it is. So that's what they did.

The Levites gave a sense. What does that mean? That means you just don't read the text over and over and over. Yes, in studying you need to read it over and over and over so that you're getting the sense, but when you stand in the pulpit, it's not just a matter of you just read the text over and over and over.

That's not giving the sense. Giving the sense is in other words. This is how it reads in the Bible.

Let's get that from different angles. Let's give definition to this. Let's bring the sense out so that people easily are able to grasp this, understand this.

Listen to Paul, Acts 17, 2 and 3. Paul went in as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving. That's what we want to do. Explain, prove.

He reasoned with them. He reasoned. It was logic.

He was appealing to their reason. He was appealing at that level, and he was seeking to do what? Explain and prove. You want to prove.

You want to prove your case. You're coming into that pulpit to make a case and to go after their consciences and to unleash the torrent of that flood of God's Word and truth into their life. Like we talked about before, Lloyd-Jones was saying when we preach, we ought to leave men changed, like they can never be the same again.

You want to go into the pulpit to leave men where they can never be the same again after what they've heard. Well, how are you going to get there? Well, you've got to so move on their logic, their understanding, on their conscience to be able to produce such a result that they go forth changed. Well, how are you going to do that? You've got to prove things to them.

You've got to make a case. You've got to appeal to them at that level. Again, we need to know how to prove a case.

We need to know what that looks like. In trying to prove a case, sometimes guys are using evidence to prove their case, which doesn't hold water. It's not an airtight argument.

It leaves lots of questions. There's lots of holes. It's like, that doesn't exactly work.

Guys, it takes time. It takes time. You find two statements in Scripture, two propositions in Scripture that don't seem to fit.

The first sight, they seem like they're kind of contradictory. I mean, you know the time that it can take to actually sit down and try to unravel all that? I mean, sometimes it can take a lifetime. But, we've got to be men of the book.

We've got to be men of study. We've got to be men that are asking questions and seek to answer those questions. It takes time.

And guys, we're in the information age and you know what that can lead to? It can lead to shoddiness in taking the time that we need to take. You know why? We've got it at our fingertips. We can quickly find a reformed position on something.

We can quickly find what fifty different commentators say on a given text. Piper has pointed out that often our insight into the mysteries of Scripture diminish as we go to the writings of men and read more and more of their stuff. He says this, this is Piper, take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2.20 and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by quickly reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book.

He says this, slow down, query, ponder, and ask two. Guys, as we're dealing with Scripture, we need to remember this. All of this book from cover to cover, one God, one divine mind, and God's mind is singular.

It's harmonious. God doesn't contradict Himself. I guarantee you all the truths in this book fit.

They fit together when rightly understood. The reason they don't fit together a lot of times in our minds is because we don't rightly understand what's in this book. We are presented by problems that are very difficult for us to figure out.

Listen, when men create their own religions and thereby create their own gods and thereby create their own holy books, their gods are like us and the things they say are the kinds of things we would say. The kind of God we have that is so high above us and incomprehensible, we would expect that the true God... He wrote to us in ways that fit with our comprehension and our understanding, but it stretches us to the very limits and beyond. We would expect that, and that's just the reality.

Guys, I want to say this. Don't be afraid of asking questions of the Scripture in the sense that... Don't fear that somehow it dishonors God to do that. This is just for instance.

You can get in some circles, like King James only circles. You begin asking questions about how do I know the King James Version is the only inspired English Version? You know, even to ask that question in some circles is to like be scowled at. It's heresy even to ask the question.

Look, you could get to the place where it feels like, well, I don't want to ask that question because it's almost like all of a sudden, one day it's like, wait, how could Jesus be God when it said He grew in wisdom? How can that happen? You see, it's like I'm afraid to go there because if I go there, it's like I'm doubting whether He's God or something. Brothers, don't be afraid. It's okay to come before the Lord and say, Lord, I'm perplexed.

I don't get it. This is part of digging. This is part of searching.

He wants us to search. He doesn't tell us to be afraid of searching. Brethren, there is unbelief that is dishonoring, but ignorance and unbelief are two different things.

Saying to God, I don't know, is different than saying to God, I'm not going to believe that. I mean, I see it and I don't believe it. That's different than saying, Lord, I see what you're saying, but I don't know how that can be true.

I don't know how that truth fits with this truth. Lord, I can't make this work in my mind. That's okay.

You've got to ask questions like that. You want to ask questions like that. And I guarantee, if you're not asking questions like that, you are not going to go deep in your studies because the people you're preaching to are asking questions like that.

The people you're preaching to have those kind of things come up in their mind. And you've got a devil that's going about all the time, whispering in people's ears, trying to bring doubt. And what you want to do is stand in the pulpit and not encourage those doubts.

You want to encourage the faithfulness of the Word of God. You want to encourage the truthfulness of that. You want to give fuel for their faith.

You want to stand there and be able to unravel these things. And brothers, taking your ignorance before God, before you stand in the pulpit and confront the ignorance of your hearers, that's where you want to be. You want to be taking that ignorance to Him and you want to be wrestling with Him.

You need to remember that God seems to actually take pleasure in hiding things to the casual observer. And if that's the case, Lord, reveal to me what I can't see here. Show me more.

Show me. Others may choose to be casual in their handling of God's Word. If you're going to teach, you cannot be casual.

What's the verse you mentioned that Paul explained and proved in Acts 17? Yeah, Acts 17, 2 and 3. Right. He would take them off one by one. Because the thing was, he didn't have ballpoint pen in those days.

Actually, he wouldn't write a note. Because he didn't have a pen, he didn't have a quill, he didn't have an inkwell, he would take these little things and he would pin them in certain places where it would be kind of a reference to him. And then he would come home and take them off now that he had his quill and his ink.

And then he would write down the thoughts. But you'd see what he was doing. That's a perfect example.

He was trying to logically unravel the mysteries. And he was constantly pondering them. So, yeah, that's perfect.

Okay, well, let's ask, what are some of the questions that we need to ask? Yes, there are these hard theological questions, but, okay, I'm going to preach on something, whether that be a topic, whether that be a certain portion of Scripture. What are, here's some. This isn't exhaustive.

Some of these may have a degree of overlap. But these are ones that I think hold weight when I'm approaching Scripture. Do I know what the text is saying? Back when I was preaching through Hebrews, I remember when I was in Hebrews 13, when I started preaching through Hebrews, I think about three or four commentaries on Hebrews.

I didn't look at them all the time. Typically, when I got to a difficult text that I was feeling like I needed some help with, I would dive in. And for some reason, when I was in chapter 13, I looked at one of them, and I saw where the commentator said that as he was trying to get his own mind around a certain text, he said he read the text 20 times.

We want to ask ourselves, do we feel like we understand what the text is saying? You want to read it over. I remember a pastor who said that he would emphasize each word. In other words, he would read the passage and emphasize the first word.

Then he would read it and emphasize the second word. Then he would read it and emphasize the third word. There's something to that.

Because every time you read it and you emphasize that given word, it brings it to the surface. You're emphasizing the verbal action. You're emphasizing the direct object.

It's helpful. You're getting a feel of what's really being said here. Second thing, do I know what other things the same author has said that is similar in the same book? Because here's the thing, like I say, the text you find in a book, I recognize that there are certain places in Scripture.

You can go to Proverbs. You can go to different places in the Gospels where you might have a thought that is relatively an island unto itself. But most places, the text you're dealing with is a piece in the flow of a much bigger thought.

The thing you will find, like for instance, you deal with a text that has a feel with, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. And I want to get a feel for what in the world are the heavenly places. Well, what you want to do is you want to get a feel in the same letter.

Where are the other places where he talks about this? You see, I can say, well, I have a pretty good feeling about what that means in Ephesians 1.3. Yeah? But if I go look at the way he uses it over in Ephesians 6 when he's speaking about spiritual wickedness and he's using it there, it's like, is that really the meaning I thought that it had over there? Does it have two different meanings? Or is it a broader sense? So look throughout the same letter for similar things. And then I would say this, do I know what other things the same author has said that is similar in other of his books? Especially like if you're dealing with 1 Peter. What did he say in 2 Peter about those things? Or if you're dealing with Paul, Paul has numerous texts.

Or, you know, if you're dealing with John. When I was preaching through 1 John, I was making it a habit to read through the Gospel of John. Why? There's a lot of similarities.

And you want to get a feel for that. Like, preaching through Ephesians, you want to be very familiar with Colossians. There's a lot of similar thoughts.

Which is very helpful. So four, have I listed the possible meanings? When I'm confronted by a difficulty, put down the different meanings. Just recently, I don't know why I came across it, but John MacArthur was at their seminary and he was addressing a bunch of students.

And he talked about praying for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15. And I think he said that one of the guys from the seminary did his doctoral thesis on that. And I think he said the man presented 26 different interpretations of the Gospel of John.

You know, if you're dealing with a text, put down the different... Do I know the different ways? Think about yourself. What are the different ways you could interpret it? And then maybe you look at the commentators. Maybe you look at something.

What are the different views that are held? And then, am I actually seeking to eliminate some of them? Like, I don't think it can be this. Like, you know, this isn't directly something implied by a certain text, but like you're asking yourself the question, who wrote Hebrews? I have three arguments as to why I don't think it was Paul. Some say it was Paul, some say it was Luke, some say it was this guy, some say it was that guy.

I mean, there's some who obviously it is not. Timothy is spoken of in the third person. It's not him.

He didn't write it. Can't be him. You can rule him out.

So if anybody ever suggests that it's him, it's not him. It certainly isn't somebody who... I mean, you can rule certain things out. And so, you need to be doing that.

Ruling certain possibilities out. So, the fifth one was have I narrowed my list of possible meanings? Six, am I letting the text speak to me? In other words, am I really hearing it? Or did I run into that thing already in my head? Having my mind made up about what it means. You know, we can talk about exegeting versus isegeting.

Am I letting it speak? We've got to draw the meaning out and not put our own in. And, you know, you've got to be honest with yourself. You've got to be honest with yourself.

Look, I believe this, that if you're going to be honest with yourself, you've got to be honest with yourself. If you're really being honest with Scripture as a preacher-teacher, there are going to be times that you actually were going to preach something, and you had your textual basis for it, and you got studying it, and you recognized, it doesn't mean what I wanted to bring out of it. And if I'm really going to preach that subject, it's not going to be from that text.

Or if I'm going to preach that text, to be faithful, I need to totally change what I was going to preach. Didn't you say that happened to you while you were preaching early on? When you first started that you were preaching from Acts, and as you were preaching it, you started doubting if... you know what I'm talking about? It did, yeah. I remember it.

I was out at community, and I was preaching a text, and it was out of Acts, and yeah, in the pulpit, I was just thinking what I was going to say about that text I don't think is right. Anyway, it's not good when all of a sudden you're acting confounded and puzzled while you're preaching. Seven, am I comprehending all the potential problems? Brothers, I would go to Hebrews 5. Train your powers of discernment.

Brothers, like a good exercise, look at a text. Try to dissect it. Try to look at it.

And then, you know, Piper's doing all these things called a look at the book. Look at a text that he's done. Go do it yourself without looking at him.

After you do it, go look at him. See how he handles the text. Am I comprehending all the potential problems? Sometimes we read through the text, and we don't really see some of the things.

They're not apparent to us. They're not really jumping out at us. You made us watch a sermon by Piper.

He did that where it says if you do not forgive, you won't be forgiven. And it was really, really good. I've always wondered what that was, too.

That sermon, what was the title? Do you remember that? What does it sound like the text is saying? I mean, that might seem like a really obvious one, but don't go looking for secret meanings. Don't always be trying to put a spin on things. Go ahead.

I was going to bring up a text in 1 Corinthians, because for me, it really stood out to me when I started studying it, because it sounds like it's saying something that it's actually not. Well, yes. That can happen.

But you know what? Your assumption in approaching Scripture should not be, oh, well, I'm just going to assume right from the beginning that this text means something. It's got a mysterious meaning that is not really evident right on the surface. Assume that it means what it sounds to you like it means, because most Scripture is like that.

Now, are there some things where you have to say, like Bobby's going to say here, that a text that sounds like it means something doesn't actually mean that? Well, yes, that takes place. But you don't want to go there until you're constrained to go there. But go ahead.

What I would do secretly is I would read over it, because it was so confusing for a long time. But it's in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 29, and his whole argument seems to contradict itself when the way this is worded here, it says in verse 29, I do not mean your conscience, but for His. So, for the sake of His conscience.

But then he asks this question, for why should my liberty be determined by someone else's conscience? You're right. That sounds contradictory. And I've struggled with that same... But the word determined, when I studied it, it's also translated judged.

And so I came to the conclusion that he's asking the question, why put yourself in a position where your liberty is going to be judged by someone else's conscience? Right. So, I just thought of that, because I would ask myself, does that mean what it sounds like it will? It can't, otherwise Paul is contradicting himself. Right.

So, number nine, we need to ask ourselves this question, is there any non-literal language here? Am I dealing with a metaphor? Am I dealing with a simile? Am I dealing with some analogy of some sort? Because Scripture does that. Because simile, metaphor, analogy, parable, types and shadows, they're very useful forms of teaching which God utilizes and the authors of Scripture utilize all over the place. Just recently, the eyes of our hearts, or the eyes of our understanding.

Brethren, our hearts don't have eyes. In fact, he's not even speaking about the pulsating heart. He's speaking about that aspect of our personality, of our being.

Scripture speaks like this all the time. We have to ask ourselves, am I dealing with any non-literal language here? We need to ask ourselves, am I dealing with types and shadows and copies and spiritualization? That's important. Is this something that I need to spiritualize? And I brought this up recently in the Eschatology series.

I don't know how recent it's been now. Elijah the Tishbite and Malachi's Elijah are two different people. And we know so because Jesus tells us so.

And yet there are people whose Eschatology is such that they're looking for Elijah the Tishbite to come. And they're not satisfied in what Jesus said there. They want to take Malachi literally.

And you know what? We should take Scripture literally, unless we're led to believe otherwise. Eleven, am I dealing with hyperbole? What's some hyperbole? Devouring widows' houses. Language like that.

Hating father and mother. That's hyperbole. That means we use that.

We overemphasize something to make a point. That's what's being done. If you take hyperbole literally, it's error.

We've got to know that. If you take that which is meant to be spiritualized literally, it's error. If you take simile and metaphor literally, it's error.

You see, we have to be careful. Otherwise, we end up with erroneous positions on things. I had a thought a few points back.

You were talking about just hearing what the text is saying. I thought a good point on that that you've said before. When it comes to falling away in Hebrews, I know you've said before some men will come to a text and they'll really belabor and spend a lot of time on saying what it doesn't mean.

That they never actually get to the point of explaining what it does mean. And you said the same thing about when Jesus says to give to those who ask. Like so many people will read that and they'll come up with all these ridiculous scenarios to kind of dismiss the command from actually binding on them.

And they never actually get to what it means. And preaching the Word, there are times we need to indicate what it doesn't mean. But preaching the Word is far more about preaching what it does mean than what it doesn't mean.

And yes, if there's text that historically preachers have spent enormous amounts of time dealing with what it doesn't mean, it's probably the church is somewhat errant at that point. Because you know what it looks like when that happens? They're trying to explain it away. And so, yes, we need to be careful there.

Twelve, another thing to ask yourself. Am I being confronted when it comes... You know, we've got indicatives. That which just basically states a reality in Scripture.

But when it comes to what's required of me, I want to ask myself this. Am I being dealt with by a commandment? Am I being dealt with by a principle? Am I being dealt with by an example? Here's the thing. I can draw principles from Scripture.

For instance, a principle. Kind of a logical conclusion. Like this.

If I'm told in Scripture that I'm to submit myself to those that have the oversight over me. You know, Scripture says that. There are things that are implied by that.

Like, God doesn't mean for me to be a lone ranger and not part of a local church. Can you imply that there? Certainly. There's a principle to be drawn from it.

Example. We are called to imitate those who are a godly example. This rule of imitation is in Scripture.

We are to follow Christ. We are to imitate Christ. We are to imitate Paul as he imitates Christ.

This idea of following the example of the leaders that we have. That kind of reality is in Scripture. And so, we recognize this, that like, for instance, women.

1 Peter. Are they not being called to follow the example of Sarah? They are. Example is powerful.

And so we need to recognize when we're dealing with example, that is something we want to press upon people. And yet, does Samson make it into Hebrews 11? Cloud of Witnesses? Is there some things that probably are not so advisable that you imitate that Samson did? We have to be careful. A man after God's own heart.

Yeah, but he did some things that were not after God's own heart. Satan stirred him to number the people. A little bout with Bathsheba.

Not advisable to imitate. We go through the patriarchs. And so, we're asking ourselves, is there a commandment here? Are there principles I can draw from this? Is there example here? Even example of good people? Is this something to imitate? Is this something that we would say, no, other portions of Scripture would indicate we shouldn't? That's something.

13. Am I aware of any potential quotations? Now, I only say this really... You know, you want to ask yourself, is something being alluded to in the Old Testament? Is something being quoted from there? If so, how is it used back there? Because typically, the authors, you remember they're being carried along by the Spirit who also carried along that author back there. And that Spirit, again, is harmonious.

These things are not disjointed. But as much as quoting from there, think about 1 Corinthians. I really believe that what you find in 1 Corinthians is places where Paul quotes what the Corinthians wrote to him.

And he gives back the quote from them and seeks to answer it. Whereas if you take it as Paul making a statement and teaching us, you end up with a wrong conclusion. You say, well, give me an example of that.

How about 1 Corinthians 7? One and two. Just a good example. Very likely, somebody read 1 Corinthians 7. One and two.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. Okay, if you take it is good for a man not to have sexual relationships with a woman as being Paul's instruction to the church, I think you end up with an erroneous conclusion there. That is what they wrote to him.

They were writing to him saying, you can imagine this. First century Christianity, Jesus was single. Paul was single.

Barnabas was single. Paul's a spiritual father to us. Jesus Christ is our Lord.

They're single. We're getting saved now. Brother Joe over there got saved.

He's married to this wicked woman. We think celibacy is the right path. And then you've got people that are getting saved and their spouse isn't getting saved.

Certainly that can't be good. And so they write to him. It's good not to touch a woman.

Right, Paul? Right? And he says, hold on. If you've got the gift, okay. He said if you're married, uh-uh, you need to be touching each other all the time.

If you're married, one's saved, one's not, you stay together unless the unbeliever wants to go. You see, then it makes every bit of sense. If he starts out by basically saying, no, lay it down as the beginning, it's good for a man not to touch a woman.

And then he goes on to basically contradict all that. You see, then it's not harmonious there. And so, we just need to be asking.

And it happens other places in 1 Corinthians too. 1 Corinthians is a place where you want to be very aware that there are places where he's saying what they wrote to him. Exactly.

And see, some translations will go in and put quotes around it so that you see that the translators understand that it's coming. Other places, those quotes aren't found in the Greek. And other translations will not put those quotes in.

You may read them in there, but if you don't recognize that what he's doing is quoting somebody else, you may think that he's basically laying this down as his own teaching, his own premise, rather than this is what they're asking about. Just something to be aware of. 14, have I considered that some words have various meanings? We talked about world just recently.

Probably next Sunday, we'll deal with flesh. These things have different meanings. We need to recognize what the meaning is of a word in the context in which we find it.

Because if you interpret the word different than what the original author meant, you're going to come to conclusions that aren't good. 15, do I understand the flow of the whole book? I can remember when Brother Charles first began challenging me about Romans 7. And you know what I had to admit? I had never preached through Romans. I didn't really know the argument.

As I began to see the argument come together, at the beginning of Romans 6, I preached from the beginning to 6. I already recognized I had a problem. Before I got to the end of 7, I was at the beginning of 6 and I knew, uh-oh, something doesn't fit here. Because I began to see the argument and I began to see how it was coming together.

Know the flow. This is the thing about 1 Peter. It just perplexes me.

I hope to figure that out. I do hope at some point to even preach on 1 Peter, but we'll see. 16, am I letting Scripture interpret Scripture? Basic, fundamental, I know this is homiletics, but we're talking hermeneutics now.

How do we interpret Scripture? We've got to let Scripture interpret Scripture. You come across things like you're moving through the first chapter of Romans and you come to that Romans 16 and 17 and the righteousness of God. Well, is this speaking about an attribute of God? His righteousness? Or is this speaking about the righteousness that He looks for in us? That He gives to us? The righteousness which is basically our law-keeping.

Well, maybe right there, it's difficult to know exactly what is meant. But if you go over to Romans 3, the concept of the righteousness of God comes up again. And we're dealing with this righteousness that either comes through the law or comes by faith.

It is a righteousness which is for those who believe. See, it's a righteousness for us. That's what the righteousness of God is all about.

God is righteous, but that's not what's being dealt with there. But it's comparing Scripture with Scripture. Much like I said, the heavenly places.

You want to compare. Brothers, this is one of the things. We've got to be students of the Word.

You want to know Scripture. You want to get a feel for Scripture cover to cover. If we're going to be handling Scripture, we're going to be faithful to preach and teach God's Word.

We need to be men who devotionally are living in God's Word. Live in it. Brothers, listen to it.

Listen. If you've got audio Bibles, listen. Fill your minds full of it.

Be in it every day. Look, if you're going to preach or teach, there's simply no excuse for you not to be in God's Word every single day. Every single.

17. Am I allowing for progressive revelation? You think about Ephesians. We're going to get to it.

There were certain things that were not known in other generations as they have now been revealed. Brothers, we've got to recognize there is progressive revelation. What does that mean? That means like the Malachi thing that when it was given, it may not have been exactly clear, but in the progress, don't miss that reality that God has given more and more and more light.

That means that if we're seeking to deal with something in one place, much more light may have been given to it as we move forward. Which brings me to the next. Am I admitting to the fact that the New Testament contains fuller revelation? There's obviously overlap there, but this is where I think the dispensationalists are just... I think these guys that are basically saying that you basically are attacking Scripture if you say that the Old Testament cannot stand alone.

Look, the Old Testament by itself is true. The Old Testament by itself is not full. It's not complete.

It's not the whole story. And if you take Malachi's Elijah, it's not the whole story. And so we've got to allow for that.

We've got to allow for that progress of revelation. Number 19, am I allowing the same kind of accommodation of language in Scripture that we allow in our own conversation on a daily basis? What do I mean by that? Like rounding numbers? I mean, get into the book of Numbers. It's very interesting to me.

You will find, okay, this tribe, this number, it's rounded to the nearest hundred. And this one's like 18,523. It's like all those tribes happen to be perfect.

Round numbers to the hundred. And then this one, 523. Hey, I don't know if that tests you, but I'm kind of a numbers guy.

That stuff is like, I want more consistency than that. Am I saying there couldn't have been exactly 18,500 over there and 17,300 over there? And then whatever tens of thousands, 523 over here? It could have happened that way, but I suspect those were round numbers and that was an exact number. But we do that.

We do that in daily life. We have to allow that kind of accommodation, rounding numbers. I've already mentioned hyperbole.

How about just reference or observational positions? We talk about the sunrise. Is the earth turning? Is the sun rising? You see, we speak that way. We speak from vantage point.

We speak the way we speak. And these authors in Scripture did the same thing. God didn't dehumanize them in communicating with us.

And so we have to allow for that. I guess just one other thing. We have to allow in the same respect for just varied perspective from different authors when they give us the account of the same thing.

It's like two witnesses observing an accident and you ask them both for their testimony. They're different. We have to allow that.

You say, oh, but there's a single mind behind these two guys. Yes, but God is using human beings to communicate this and He's using them as they are, their personalities. He uses Paul's personality.

He uses Peter's choice of words. That's how God works. 20.

Are we committed to one interpretation? In other words, we come to Scripture, we recognize that Peter said there's no private interpretation. God has a meaning. It doesn't mean that there aren't sometimes shadows and types of fuller meaning that's carried out.

Things are spiritualized. But God has a meaning. It doesn't shift.

It doesn't vary. It doesn't change from one generation to the next. God has a meaning.

There may be cultural applications to things. I grant that. But God has a meaning.

And see, the thing is, when we come and we're confronted by this, we need to be committed to that. It's not like the guy preaching down in Elmendorf and the guy preaching up at Believers. God may lead them to a different meaning than He's leading me to.

There's a meaning here. I may choose to emphasize some things differently than the other guy, but there's a meaning in this text. We need to be committed to that.

21. Am I remembering that God wants us to search? That's important when I come to the text. Remember that.

I know I already dealt with it, but remember, when you come, God wants me to search. 22. Do I feel the harmony of Scripture? Again, there's overlap here, but by harmony of Scripture I mean, do I sense that when I come over here and I read that I'm supposed to hate my mother, unless you hate your mother and father.

And over here, if anybody loves father or mother more than me, am I okay with the harmony of that? One's hyperbole. One's not. We want to be comfortable with that.

Again, it's comparing Scripture with Scripture. 23. Am I aware of the genre? If you try to read too much into parables, you're going to go wrong.

For one, you need to recognize it's a parable. So you've got a story, an analogy being given. But you need to recognize that parables are meant to do what parables are meant to do, and typically it's to bring forth one primary spiritual truth.

You start pressing meanings on things. I think about the parable of the prodigal son. Who's the old son? The Pharisees.

Jesus condemns those guys. But see, if you read too much into it, he's a son, right? Who's the father representative of? God. The oldest son is a son.

You see, if you start pressing that too far, you don't want to go there, because that's not the meaning. That's not what you want to bring out. People press parables all the time and come up with meanings that are not faithful.

Yeah, brother, sadly, I've heard that parable also used to justify carnal Christianity for the other son, which I think is really, really bad. Yeah, we want to use that parable to teach that he can lose his salvation. He was dead, now he's alive.

Yeah, people can come up with all sorts of things. Obviously, the way that we're going to test parables is we're going to be comparing Scripture with Scripture. But just very quickly, think of Proverbs.

Bring up a child in the way they should go, and what? You know what? People take that as an absolute promise from God. It is not an absolute promise from God. It is a truism.

Proverbs are truisms. You say, what do you mean by that? I mean, Proverbs are basically a wise man examining the way the world turns and says, as I've watched, this is what I've observed. As a general rule, this is what you see.

There are exceptions to the Proverbs. Don't make them into promises. Don't make them into law.

If you do, you're missing what a proverb is and you're going to end up with a wrong conclusion. And you're going to end up one of these parents, look, I hope all your children get saved. And so you can look at that and say, promise or not, God saved all my children.

I hope that's the truth. But you've got some really faithful parents that have seen their children wander off. And you know what you don't want to tell them is this is a promise.

And the reason they have a child that's wandered away is because they were bad parents. And that's the conclusion you'll come to if you misapply that. Do you have a question? Back to the numbers, if you were preaching through John and you get to John 21 and there's 153 fish or John 6, the 12 baskets, would you spend time trying to sort that out? Does it have any meaning? The problem with trying to find meaning where Scripture's not clear that there's meaning is you just don't know.

I mean, if I say, here's the thing about 12 baskets, I can say this, it's very likely that each one of those 12 apostles had a basket in their own hands. They knew how many fish and how many loaves they started out with. And as they're collecting what's left over, these are the men who are going to be the foundation of the church.

Jesus brought these men through this time of discipleship to prepare them to take the Gospel to the world. We've got a scenario where very likely each man had a basket in his hands. He's got the proof of this

miracle staring him right in the face.

Might I bring that out? Yes, I might. But if I did, I would say, that likely is what happened. That's likely what we're confronted with here.

But if it doesn't say, for me to press... You know what happens? I hear some preachers. They say, we know we can't prove this from the text, and it's probable that this might have happened. And then from that point forward, they deal with it like it's a fact.

I hear that happen. It's like, wait, you didn't prove it was a fact. You said it might have happened like this, but now he goes on preaching as though it's a fact.

I just think if you're trying to draw meaning out where Scripture doesn't give us to say, hey, is 12 a random number? There is a significance to numbers in Scripture. And if a number comes out, like the number 1,000, or the number 3, or the number 7, or the number 4, or the number 6, or the number 666, or the number 12, or the number 40, well, you know what? Scripture does present significance in certain numbers. And I think to mention that is okay.

But to start trying to draw meaning out where you're doing it without biblical support, see, then you're just... If I'm a listener, you're not proving anything to me if you don't have Scripture to show me that your assumption or your guess here might hold validity. So I think we just need to be careful that we're not seeking to be authoritative about something that God hasn't really given us an indication there's significance to. Would you even put any effort in 153? See, that number doesn't hold any significance in my mind whatsoever.

Why is it so specific? It makes me ask the question and I'm just trying to discern am I wasting time? I wouldn't spend time there. Because that number doesn't jump out at me as being significant in any way, shape, or form. Our time is precious.

Our time is limited. And I think what we want to do is spend time on the things that matter and not get hung up and sidetracked by things that don't matter. There are things that are obvious in Scripture.

Christ making enough to feed 5,000. He tells the guys when they're in the boat and they're telling each other, oh man, we messed up. We didn't bring bread.

He's like, guys, there was a point to why I did that. See, we don't want to spend so much time on the trivial matters that we miss the heart and the meat and the thrust and the faith and the big picture and the glory of God. And so spend so much time with trifles that we get lost in that and we just want to be careful.

I was just saying, it's like missing the forest for the trees. Things are so far down in the weeds. Talking about this one blade of grass.

And the glory and the beauty of the landscape around you or the landscape of the text. Exactly. 24, am I approaching parables with simplicity? I kind of already mentioned that.

25, have I consulted the original grammar? We do want to know what the Greek is saying. If you don't know Greek, Hebrew, you need to at least have the tools where you can look at the actual words in the original. I mean, you know full well there in the last chapter of John, He's saying yes every time.

You know I do. Well, there's an exchange there of words that is precious and just goes deep when you look at the words in the original. And you don't see it happening in the English, but there's something happening there that is worth looking at.

26, have you compared English translations? I highly encourage you guys to have tools at your disposal so that you can look at Tyndale, Geneva, NIV, NET, Holman Christian, and of course, the ESV, the New King James, the Old King James, the New American Standard. You need to have these tools because look, there's no question about it, men of incredible talent, skill, scholarly ability, linguistic ability have been behind these translations. I mean, men who have known so many languages.

Look, for you to go and stand in the pulpit and say, stand up and say, well, this text really means, and like the eight or ten most substantial, most time-tested English translations say it different than what you're saying, and you say, well, it really means, it's like, guys, your credibility on that point is going to be really insignificant. You know, if you say that, if you basically are saying that a text has a meaning that none of those ten translations seem to carry or imply, I mean, you better have really good reason for even going down that path. Because if you don't, I mean, have you ever looked at the credentials carried by the guys that did the King James Bible? And I recognize they were men of their age, men of their time.

Certain of them had agendas. They were coming from certain religious climates. Many of them were Anglicans.

I mean, I recognize that there are factors, but read the different English translations. What time do we have? Okay. 27.

Do I know anything about the historical background? Look, if we're not familiar with certain realities about the times, then you're going to miss certain meanings. I mean, understanding the Jews' relationship with the Samaritans, understanding men-women relationships from 2,000 years ago in the Middle East, I mean, you begin to recognize the social factors behind Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well. I mean, it brings significance out in different respects.

But you just don't see if you don't have some idea about a historical context there. Look, you bringing historical facts that are not substantiated in Scripture, that is not an infallible argument. You need to recognize what I'm saying here.

If you can go from Scripture and show that the social implications you're trying to draw out, you can show from Scripture, see here, see here, see here, like Jews, their relationship to Gentiles, I can show you what the climate was like between Jew and Gentile from the pages of Scripture. I can prove it to you there. That's infallible.

You go study church history or you study Middle Eastern history from 2,000 years ago and stand in the pulpit and you're authoritatively saying all this from all that you know about archaeology and all the discoveries that have been made and you lay all this out like fact. Listen, God never promised to preserve history books. He never promised to preserve the archaeological record exactly.

Your historical statements are not infallible, so be careful, but we do have an idea about relationships between Jews and Samaritans. We do have ideas about relationship. You know, men and women, I can take you to the woman taken in adultery.

I mean, see, I can go there and say something about relationships between men and women at the time. Like, where was the guy taken in adultery? You notice he wasn't on trial? I mean, maybe that's speaking from silence, I recognize, but it's there, it's worth thinking about. I mean, I go back even further.

Judah. Judah goes in to Tamar. Everything's okay.

Tamar's found with child. Remember the first thing that came out of Judah's mouth? Burner with fire. Anybody find that funny? I find it funny because I was listening to Alexander Scurvy when I used to work for the Seitzmas and I was playing it and Jenny was sitting across on the other side of the room and I'm playing Scurvy.

And it's like going through that whole ordeal and it's like, you know, he's sleeping with prostitutes and then she's found with child. Burner with fire! And Jenny was like, wow. Yeah, it's the treatment of men and the treatment of women.

If you can prove that from Scripture, that's great. But if you simply want to bring out Edersheim and his huge volume on Jewish life, that's not inspired. So be careful.

Be careful about what you stress from the pulpit as being actual inspired. Yes? This may be better for us. It may take longer to answer, but you just referenced a woman called an adulteress.

Like James White and John MacArthur and different others would say, this isn't inspired. What would you sort of, if you were to preach or even reference that? I mean, let's say you alluded to it. You just alluded to it now, but you kind of didn't.

Jeff and I were having a discussion with somebody in the church just the other day. I mean, in the research that I have done, let me just step back. My assumption is this, that God has promised to preserve His Word.

That's my assumption. And I recognize that even when the Old Testament Hebrew was translated into Greek, what we call the LXX, the Septuagint. Anybody know why LXX? Roman numerals? Supposedly about 70 translators.

Yeah, exactly. That's the Roman numeral, supposedly 70 translators. That's where that comes from.

You start studying very carefully the New Testament where Old Testament quotations are made. They don't all come from the Hebrew. You say, hey, the Hebrew was the original.

And the thing was that in the Greek translation which is often quoted, the Septuagint is often quoted in the New Testament by the New Testament authors. When you begin to compare the Greek Old Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament, it's like sometimes pulling your hair out that it doesn't seem like they're saying the same things. But I recognize this, when Jesus came, He didn't say, oh, there's errors in the Septuagint, you better ditch it.

He actually quoted from it. What I know is this, that God allowed the Scriptures to be preserved to this point the way He's allowed them to be preserved. There are different theories on different portions of Scripture as to their validity.

You know what? Because we're talking about 2,000 years of history and nobody was there. The theories are only theories. Nobody knows for certain.

And you can listen to the theories. I have heard John Piper say he was very much an advocate of the ESV in his days at Bethlehem. I heard him speak to the woman taken in adultery.

He said, if you go back and look at the textual evidence, he said that account shows up in the early manuscripts. He says it's not always in the same spot, but the early church seemed to have believed that it was actually authentic. Not exactly certain which author to ascribe it to, but it seems like historically it was pretty much thought of as authentic.

I would simply say this, we don't know exactly, but when I read Scripture, to me, the world's different than reading the Koran or the Book of Mormon. It just has a different feel. And if you talk to me about the Christ of the Gospels, that feels like it's Him.

I mean, the Spirit bears witness to me that that sounds like the Christ of the New Testament. I would not have a problem preaching that text. Even White himself, if you read his King James Controversy, does not totally write off the possibility of Mark 16, 9 and following as being possibly credible.

MacArthur takes issue with it. He states there's been different endings to Mark. Again, does it bear witness? As I said before, this isn't authenticated, but I know Spurgeon preached many Gospel messages from Mark 16, 16, which undoubtedly saved many people.

I know that doesn't mean that it's inspired, but I'm just saying this, it has been tested by God's saints and seems to have been found substantial. I suspect that when you're dealing with a non-cessationist like MacArthur, that ending to Mark doesn't sit well with him. I think it contradicts his ideas about Scripture.

It doesn't contradict my ideas about Scripture. I'm okay with it. So, we all have to wrestle through that.

I can tell you this, if you spend your life as a preacher not preaching on the woman taken in adultery, not preaching on 1 John 5, 7, not preaching on the last half of Mark 16, you're not going to miss any major doctrine. I don't believe that these are demonic attacks and that this is proof of unholy Bibles and all the King James. The doctrine of the Trinity is not destroyed if you take 1 John 5, 7 out of your Bibles.

And I think that one is probably the most questionable of all the questionable texts. But you guys need to wrestle through that. And all you're going to be able to do is wrestle through the theories because none of the guys coming up with the theories were able to live for 2,000 years and track how the Bible came to us.

Guys, no book has been preserved like God's Word has been preserved. Nothing even comes close. This is a miracle.

As I was telling one of the brothers with Jeff a week and a half or so ago, guys, when I go into the pulpit, I am absolutely confident I have the Word of God in my hand. The Spirit of God has borne witness to me that I'm going there with that Word from God. But very quickly, 28.

Am I aware of any repetition? Guys, look for repetition. Holy, holy, holy means something. You've got four Gospels.

That means something. Look for repetition. Go to Philippians.

A brother down in Mexico wants to preach on Philippians. He asked me, is there anything I ought to take special note of? You know what? No book uses names and titles of Christ so densely as Philippians. And at the same time, no book speaks as much about joy and rejoicing.

That's significant. That's significant that joy and rejoicing are most condensed in a book where the names and titles of Christ are most thick. I like that, right? I mean, that means something to me.

But you want to look for repetition. Repetition is a teaching tool. 29.

Have I sought to develop word meanings from the context? What I mean by that is you don't just simply want your Greek tools. Look at the word used in context. Look at propitiation.

How is propitiation used in context? Wow, you go over to 1 John. Propitiation for the whole world. Look at the contextual use.

So often the context, it's not just running to some Greek lexicon and pulling out a meaning. Does Scripture itself bear witness to that meaning? 30. Am I interpreting brief statements with fuller? This comes up with divorce.

Look, divorce. No exceptions. If you look at Mark and Luke.

Yeah, but Mark and Luke aren't the full story on it. I know. Somebody like Piper says, yeah, but what if you only had Mark or Luke? Shouldn't they be able to stand alone? Well, look, I recognize those letters were written to certain people at certain times in certain places, and sometimes they only had that, but God has given us a full revelation.

If you're going to deal with divorce, you have to look at every single text. You cannot simply say, well, because the original recipients might have only gotten Luke, therefore, I ought to be able to tell you everything about divorce from Luke. See, to me, that's not a good interpretive method.

We've been given the whole Scripture. 31. Am I committed to the law of non-contradiction? This kind of comes to logic.

The law of non-contradiction. You can't say I'm justified by grace and say I'm justified by works when I'm talking about being justified in exactly the same sense. I can say I'm being justified by faith and I'm justified by works if what I mean by that is I'm using justification in two different senses.

Another question is this, when it comes to just asking questions of the text, but this is a question you can ask of yourself. Do I know what a true contradiction is? I mean, we can sometimes look at Scripture and say, well, that's a contradiction, when it's not a contradiction. Do I really know what a contradiction is? What is a true contradiction? A contradiction is saying A is B, A is not B, if you want to use it.

If I say that this is true, and then I say the very same thing is not true, that's a contradiction. If I say this Bible is black, if I say this Bible is red, you guys can look at this and say, well, both of those statements are accurate, but I'm not saying that the part that is black is red at the same time. We need to know what a true contradiction is.

We need to know about the law of non-contradiction. We need to be careful there. We are justified by works.

But if you say we're justified by works, and your definition of justification is exactly the same definition of justification given to being saved by grace, or justified by faith, justified by grace through faith, and if you say justification has exactly the same meaning there, then you're in trouble. That's a contradiction. But it's not a contradiction when you put different spins on the word justification, which you have to do.

Or you do have contradictions in Scripture. Luther couldn't deal with those contradictions. He wanted to tear James out of his Bible.

33, when considering difficult passages, have I carefully considered the plain passages dealing with the same subject? Eschatology. Ah, I just racked my head. I've had hours of conversation with some of these dispensational pre-mill guys, and it's like the parable of the ten virgins.

It's simple. Let's start with the simple. And you may remember when I went through my series on eschatology, I wanted to deal with the plain and the simple first.

That's where we want to go. 34, do I grasp on the general truths before I delve into the details? That's important. Am I getting a feel for the big picture? Again, I'd come back to Romans 7. There are four rhetorical questions set forth in Romans 6 and Romans 7. Paul sets forth the rhetorical question and then he seeks to answer it.

You see, if I step back and I see the big picture, but if you dive right in to Romans 7.14 through 25, you're not going to see the big picture. And then you're going to get confused and it's going to seem like, well, I feel like it's saying this. Okay, that's nice, but does that really fit? Are you seeing the bigger truth here? Are you seeing the broader picture? 35, have I considered the literal teaching on a subject before considering the figurative? Literal before figurative.

People come to these witnesses. The witnesses in Revelation. Well, have I dealt with witnesses through the rest of the Bible where it's very literal? Take the literal teaching on what it is to be a witness and two or three being an authoritative witness.

You bring all that's said about being witnesses and bring that into the figurative, much like the same thing with regards to the devil. Look at the plain teachings on the devil and then you come over to Revelation and being bound for a thousand years and stuff. Before you start diving into all that figurative stuff, look what's being said.

See if there's things that fit. Jesus said, now the ruler of this world is cast out. You know, that's pretty plain language.

You may wonder, well, what does that mean by cast out? I recognize we might have to wrestle with what does that actually mean? That's pretty plain. You see, there's these guys that say, oh, he's being bound for a thousand years. Well, it doesn't look like he's bound for a thousand years.

And Peter seems to deny that he's bound by a thousand years. He's prowling about looking for whom he may devour. Oh yeah, but you've got to deal with the Lord saying He's cast out.

There's something about the cross that cast Him out. We've got to deal with... Go to the plain before you go to the crazy. Have I considered the author's tendencies? Like, you know what's very interesting? Paul likes to talk about justification.

The author of Hebrews talks different. He talks about perfection. Different authors have different language that they are more comfortable with or that they use.

Have I considered the author's tendencies? Verse 37, are my conclusions logical? Do my conclusions align with Scripture? If I'm going to go and say that the devil's bound for a thousand years, and I'm going

to give it some meaning, does that square with the rest of Scripture? It's like yesterday, I was meeting with a family and we got talking about the parable that Tawfiq dealt with a few weeks back where the kingdom of God is like the mustard seed and this thing grows up and the birds come. Oh, how many... The interpretation's the birds there. And Arthur Pink says, well, the kingdom of God is Christendom and that basically the thing grows and it just becomes inhabited by demons because after all, birds over in this other parable.

It's like, okay, for starters, let's compare Scripture with Scripture. If I actually go back to the apocryphal language found back in Daniel and Ezekiel where things are likened to trees that grow up and get so big that birds roost in their limbs, it's never seen as a negative thing. It's simply seen as an expression of how big the tree got.

We need to compare Scripture with Scripture. And then I would just say this, where does Jesus use terminology where the kingdom of God is Christendom? Well, the father of the family where I was talking said, never. And you say, well, Arthur Pink said it.

It's in a book. It's on the shelf. Well, okay.

We just want to be... Here's the thing. That's not to say that a lot of what Arthur Pink has to say may be right on. I'm just saying this, that we want to be very careful that if we come up with meanings, does it square with everything in Scripture? Is it consistent? Is this harmonious with the big picture? Are my conclusions Scriptural? Are they logical? 38.

Have I considered both sides of a doctrine? Brothers, if you're looking at... You get somebody like Wesley talking about perfectionism. Or you get this Armenian Calvinist debate. Brothers, really examine both sides of a position.

Some things have 26 positions like the interpretation. But examine both sides before you just flippantly write off. And that carries the next question.

Be careful about creating straw men. Brethren, we can just sail along and it's like, oh, Wesley's position on perfectionism. Yeah, yeah.

You go read Wesley. He's not so far off in left field as you may think. And he's emphasizing certain things that I think a lot of, especially this young and restless Reformed community probably need to recognize about holiness.

You see, Wesley had an emphasis on holiness that a lot of people in the Reformed camp might do well to take serious note of. That's not saying Wesley didn't say some things that were off. But before you create a straw man like in Wesley, you think of these guys throughout history that we easily like to just knock over.

Aha! He's got this view. You know what? Typically, what people in your camp have portrayed the guy to be is different than what the guy really is and the position that he's setting forth. Hear people out.

Sometimes people from other camps put a different spin on things that's worth considering. It may have some legitimacy. There may be some light there.

Don't think our little Reformed community and all the commentators that nicely fit into our little prepackaged idea of what true Christianity looks like are the only ones that have ever had any truth. Be careful you don't create a bunch of straw men. You have in your mind somebody that's just easily knocked over.

Somebody holds this position that is contrary to your position and you've so structured it in your mind that it's just easy like ha-ha. That's basically what I did with Charles Leiter when he first told me about Romans 7. You know, ha-ha! That's like the most foolish thing you could believe. You just so easily knock it right over and then you find out maybe I'm not being so wise and maybe I don't know things like I really do need to know.

So just be careful about building straw men. Am I ignoring any verses? I mean, guys, you want to deal with election? There's guys over here making shipwreck of the faith. Don't ignore doctrines.

You know, you can deal with the doctrines like you've got this agenda going in. Yeah, I want to deal with this. I know there's these texts over here that I don't know how in the world they fit.

And you know what? You've got five guys out there listening to you preach and they're thinking about that text and they're thinking, you didn't even deal with that. You'll get guys that come into our church and they're coming from different theological backgrounds. Don't ignore difficult verses.

41, do I possess a readiness to abandon my own presuppositions? Guys, Scripture talks about renewing the mind. You need to be subservient to Scripture. Which means as you're studying, you need to be ready to let go.

Guys come to Scripture all the time with agendas. And if you're just self-serving, trying to support your own agenda, and you're going to harden your heart, and you're going to put blinders on your eyes because of your own pride and your own position and your own prejudice, you're not in a good position. We need to be ready to abandon our own presuppositions.

Which brings me to 42. Are you saved? I mean, the Spirit of God is as we see in 1 Corinthians 2, very instrumental in having the mind of Christ. I know we already talked about, but 43, are you humble? Are you surrendered? Brother, pure logic doesn't work.

High IQ, that's not getting it. Claiming to be wise? What? Scripture says they were fools. That text in John 7.17, which basically I take from Jesus' teaching, that if our will is willing to receive the Word, if we're willing to do the Word, then you will know whether the truth is legit, whether it's true, whether it's from God.

In other words, God will teach. God will show you. God will reveal.

If you are submissive to the Word of God, your ability to go in Scripture and ask questions of it, come out with the right meanings, you know what? Your ability to do that is going to largely depend on your willingness to actually live out what you see and what God reveals to you. Verse 44, are you pure? Sin is believing lies. You ever think about that? Every sin, there's deception behind it.

Every sin, there's lies behind it. You're trying to deal with truth. You're trying to come to a true position.

How are you going to come to truth if your life is riddled by deception? I hope you see that there's a vast inconsistency there. Sin is opposed to truth. Wisdom is from above, and it's first pure.

We see that in Scripture. Verse 45, do you have faith that you can understand? What I mean there is, you don't have to have a college education and know the Greek, but you can have faith that there is a God who reveals truth. And that if you go in search, you don't have to have all the right commentators on your shelf.

Now look, if you're a young preacher, you do well to compare what you're going to teach with what commentators say. Especially if you're getting into questionable areas. You should test what your conclusions are with what gifted and able preachers and scholars have come to conclusions of, especially as young preachers.

Test it by that. But brothers, when we confront this Word, we need to have the faith that you know what? There are treasures here, but I believe that God is willing if I search for them, He's willing to reveal them to me. He's willing to give me what I need.

Brothers, I believe that I'm called to preach. And so when I'm confronted by a hard text and I'm pacing the field out here and I'm praying, Lord, You want me to feed Your people. I want to preach through an entire book so that it's not just my agenda.

It's just not my topical preference. I'm wanting to give the whole counsel of God. I want to go through this.

Lord, I'm up against something. I don't know what to do with this. I don't know what this means.

I don't know how to figure this out. I don't head out to that field full of all these doubts about whether God's going to give me something or reveal something to me. And it's true, I may need to come in and I may go through 30 commentaries from what I have on my shelves and what's online.

I may do that. It's kind of like asking God to heal a sickness in one of my children. You know what? God may supernaturally do that.

And God may use a doctor to do it. Kind of the same way. I may pace the field and God may, as I'm thinking and I'm mulling over Scripture and I'm running it through my mind, God is opening things up to me.

Other times it may be I am sitting there and I'm looking at a certain commentator and it's like, yes! That is it right there. That is what that means. I had a sense.

I couldn't articulate it exactly. And there it is. John Calvin has done it.

And I just mentioned him. There's a lot he says. I don't reference him a lot, but there's been a few things he's said over the years that it's like, wow.

And others. There's a whole list of guys. As I've said before, I think [studylight.org](http://studylight.org) is by far the best commentary reference online that you guys have access to today.

I know there's other things. I know it's not absolutely exhaustive. Precept Austin is another one that I've recommended.

But remember Piper's caution to us. Asking ten questions of Galatians 2.20. Taking two hours to answer it. Very likely, prayerfully doing that can take you where simply running to the commentaries may never take you.

But after you spend the two hours, there may be three of those questions that you don't have time to spend two more hours. Maybe two of them don't matter, but maybe one of them does matter. And I would like to see some ideas at least from some other men who I respect as to what their leanings are on this thing.

Anyway... I was curious to hear your thoughts on something that I know we're pushing time, but quickly I was going to ask. So I know you were strongly emphasizing in the beginning on preaching the text and how men just preach things that aren't in the text. But I've read a few sermons from Spurgeon where I look at his text, and I don't think he's preaching it, but the sermon is glorious.

And it seems like quite a few men in that century and the ones before did that. But they told you they were doing it. There are places where Spurgeon would quote a text and kind of give you maybe in three lines what the meaning was, and then say, I'm preaching the Gospel from this.

And he would just go off in his own direction. He put his own spin on Scripture to get to the Gospel on a regular basis. He was an evangelist more than he was a pastor who God raised up to exposit Scripture for the sake of the flock.

That's just a reality. He was an evangelist. And that's not to knock him as far as what he did, but I believe that God calls certain men to primarily equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

He equips some men to preach the Gospel for the conversion of the many. And I think Spurgeon was later. And so he often put that sort of spin on the text.

And quite honestly, as much as what you're saying is right, his preaching was glorious. When I'm looking for the meaning in a certain passage, I don't reference Spurgeon. Why? Because he didn't preach through Scripture like that.

He didn't preach through to kind of dissect verse by verse and open it up for the sake of the flock. If he preached on a text, he ran to the cross. And he preached it to the lost.

And very oftentimes, his approach would be, those of you that are saved, I don't have any word for you. He wasn't denying the fact that the Gospel doesn't feed God's people. He's basically saying, you know, to the saved here, he just wasn't going to preach to them primarily.

And he often did that. You can't fault him for that. But look, I've heard Don Johnson do it before.

He took a passage about Paul being on the ship as they were seeking harbor, as winter was coming on, and they got taken away by the wind and driven before the storm, and they were shipwrecked. Anyway, he took that whole account and he spiritualized it. And he said he was going to do that up front.

And it was good. If you're going to do that, I think you need to tell people you're going to do that. And I wouldn't highly commend that practice to young preachers.

These are men who know their Bibles extremely well. And so they're able to take a narrative in Scripture and spiritualize it in a way that's theologically full and accurate. And until a man is accomplished to where he can do that, has the kind of credibility going into the pulpit, because I can tell you that if a young believer goes up and he's telling me he's going to do that with Scripture, I'm going to be like, oh, no.

I hope God gave him grace to do this. So that is still preaching the Word. Well, if you ask me, was that God's intent for that portion of narrative in Acts? Was it for the sake of being spiritualized? I would say there's certainly no indication from the passage that that's the intent.

So is it safe to overlook the assumption that I might have as far as that Scripture being stripped of its intended power based on the fruit? In other words, to say, well, Spurgeon's ministry was blessed of God. And I'm just asking an honest question because that's a thought that goes through my mind because had I lived in his age and even not being centuries separated from him, I wouldn't say that he was false or anything he did was wrong in that regard. So the reason I ask that question is because that's pretty much what I'm doing at this point.

I'm overlooking and kind of bearing my assumption that I was led to believe that the Scriptures are stripped of some of their authoritative power when they're preached out of context because everything we've been talking about is to preach it with its intended emphasis. But when a man like Spurgeon has such blessing and fruit, when he does that, is that what he'll do? Well, what he's doing is he's actually preaching the truth that is clear and intended in other passages and seeking to pull those realities that are in the Bible and in other passages and the real intent. He's simply trying to draw those truths out from this verse over here that originally was not really intended to produce those truths, but he's being biblical and God owned it.

I would just be really cautious because we're not Spurgeon. We're not gifted like Spurgeon. I would just be real cautious.

I mean, Don Johnson's a gifted guy and probably that message was brought forth with power and conviction. Will the Spirit use such truths to save people? Evidently yes. I think we need to be careful.

I would just be very cautious. I would not use Spurgeon as license to go in and put our own meanings on text. And I don't think Spurgeon would have commended that practice.

It's just very like, for instance, and I think Craig did this at the prison too, that it's a narrative account. His parents went to Jerusalem. Jesus is 12.

They go there. They leave. He's not with them.

He's back there in Jerusalem. They look around for Him. They can't find Him.

They go back to Jerusalem. They look for Him. They can't find Him.

Days are going by. They could discover Him in the temple. Well, Spurgeon preached that passage about what's the title of it? Supposing Christ to be with you.

Well, was that narrative given to express a truth about somebody that thinks Christ is with them, but He really isn't? No, it's not in the passage. But does it bring a thought out? Did it produce a thought in Spurgeon's mind and perhaps inspired by the Spirit to preach about people who suppose that Christ is with them and He's really not with them? Well, yeah, it did. And He preached it.

And probably bunches of people were saved. But is that what that text means? I think we want to be cautious. Because the mandate is preach the Word.

Undoubtedly, you can look at that sermon and it's theologically correct. And it's truths that are very explicit, very plain in other passages. It's just not really the original intent of that text, but it brought something to mind in Spurgeon's mind that led to, as was typical with him, an evangelistic message.

There seems to be an inverse in my experience because the type of churches that I... well, fake churches that weren't real. But when I was lost and going to church, the typical message were such messages. I mean, just completely unsound, but that was the norm.

And then there were very few expositors whereas in what we would call good churches, the opposite is true. Expositing is emphasized and you have very few men that God blesses that. But I remember this one preaching where Jesus was dealing with a man and the scripture says he removed his cloak.

And some preacher preached on casting aside your garment of doubt. And even to this day I'm like, there was nothing in the scripture that said that man had any doubt. But this preacher took it as an occasion.

So I guess I'm just thinking of that and that's why I have that question because from where I was saved down, typically, that's the only kind of preaching. Very fruitless nonetheless, not like Spurgeon's. But that was the emphasis.

So what rings in my mind is maybe from where I came from there was such a lack of clarity and theological soundness that that was all they had was their own spin void of any truth. Yeah, because you recognize what it is. I mean, it's me basically taking a text and me putting meaning where I want to see it, not where God originally intended it.

And, well, yeah, you had Spurgeon who could have preached these verses through Scripture and done it accurately, precisely in accord with what God's true intention was. But you recognize that he was not able to prove that reality from those texts. He simply spiritualized them, brought out truths that are proved in other places.

And it's a practice that definitely can lead to all manner of shoddy preaching, inability to actually prove. You see, this is what Paul was doing. He was reasoning.

He was proving from the Scriptures. You can't prove those doctrines from those passages and that's the problem. You've got a man who's got perhaps the credibility.

He perhaps has established his ability to handle Scripture and rightly divide the Word through other means than by that sermon. But it opens the door for not preaching the Word. It opens the door for preaching your own ideas, your own opinions.

Correct me if I'm wrong as I'm listening. It seems like a big difference between what Spurgeon did and what Bobby described in the faith churches is that Spurgeon actually would take a passage and then speak truth, whereas what Bobby just described, they would take a passage and speak lies or things that aren't anywhere else in the Bible. And I think that could be a big difference in knowing the practice, talking about the practice Spurgeon did compared to what a lot of false teachers do where they have their own agenda and they want to say something false to manipulate people.

And they'll pull a Scripture for that purpose and then what they say is just bondage and lies and things that tear people down. And what Spurgeon did was he would take a Scripture from the Bible and use it to say something that's true and helpful. The issue is proving.

You see, yes, that's the reality, but the problem is as the hearer being able to discern the one from the other, what he's doing is he's not actually proving from the passage itself that that is what the meaning is. He's taking truths and he's reading them into the passage. I mean, this is a perfect example of eisegeting a text.

He's reading in a meaning that he's giving to this passage. No, I'm talking about Spurgeon. And what he's doing is he's reading a meaning that yes, we say is true versus another preacher that may be taking erroneous thoughts and reading them in and implying them and trying to draw them out of this text.

I mean, draw out. They're bringing out what they're putting in. The problem is that as the hearer, it's not being proven to you.

That's the whole point. You're not actually proving and reasoning from that text. Like what I'm going to do tomorrow is go into Ephesians.

I want you guys to read it. I want to point out what the meaning is there. I want to draw that meaning out from the passage itself.

Well, you're not able to actually eisegete a passage by that approach. That's the issue. You're reading a meaning into it that yes, it may be true, but you can't verify the truths that he's teaching from the passage itself.

It just makes for a good skeleton to hang all these truths on. But you're not proving from the passage. And so that's the issue.

It is a form of acceptable eisegesis when somebody with the credentials of Spurgeon stands in the pulpit and one of those credentials is being how he was owned of the Spirit in doing that. But I would just caution. I would caution you men because you start handling Scripture that way and you're going to end up with this kind of thing.

And the example that I was given just to clarify, it wasn't error. What I meant by the fruit is just everything from ecclesiology to doctrines on being filled with the Spirit. But the preaching itself, it was truthful just like Spurgeon's.

Like the guy was saying, when we come to the Lord, we need to not have doubt, which is true, but that's not what the text was saying similar to what Spurgeon was doing. So if it was just error, there would be no question about it, but because of the scary similarity, that's just what made me think. Timothy says, when John Johnson did it and typically when Spurgeon did it, they indicated they were doing it.

Right, that's a big difference because what they seem to be implying is that this text teaches that. No, it doesn't teach that. You see, then it's a credibility issue in your own mind.

You're like, this guy doesn't have a lot of credible standing with me because he's misapplying Scripture. Whereas when Don Johnson stands up and actually gives five minutes to say, well, he tried to justify the practice. So you knew what he was doing.

And then it became interesting. It became engaging because it's like, okay, how's he going to take all this that happened with their ship? How's he going to work this into...? It was interesting then. It was engaging.

But yeah, when people do what you're doing, to me as a listener, it's like that's not engaging. That's shoddy. Brother Conley, it might be a little off subject, but it has to do with the matter of preaching.

I remember hearing Washer say something like he would take a raven over 20 dead Calvinists in preaching. And when this was talking, that was ringing in my head because I remember, I think it was Raven that said that an old lady came up to him one time and said, you remind me of my grandfather. And he asked, well, who was your grandfather? Charles Burton.

What does Washer mean in that sense? Is it right to say that Raven unpreaches like Isis preaches? In a sense, no. No, it's not. I'm sure Paul meant, I want a guy that's alive.

I want a guy that's on fire. I want a guy that has conviction. I want a guy that preaches like he really believes what he's preaching.

I want a guy that goes up and he's real. I think that's what he's talking about. If you know Paul, and you know his theology, you know that he definitely is a Calvinist.

And so he would reject the Arminian flavor of a Ravenhill or a Tozer. But life. Somebody that goes in the pulpit, they were dangerous.

They were unpredictable. Just the monotone kind of, okay, open your Bibles to blah, blah, blah, blah. It's just boring.

It's all academic. Point one, point two, point three, application. You just never knew.

Charles Leiter was personally in lots of meetings. And he said a mother and a daughter got up and sang. And so here he comes up to the pulpit after they've gone down.

And he looks out at the crowd and he says, well, that was one of the biggest exhibitions of the flesh I've ever seen. Sorry. I know one of the pastors I traveled over to Romania with, when he was in his seminary days, Ravenhill was still alive and he was preaching up in Dallas.

They went and they listened. I mean, they loved him. They were followers of him.

They came and they sat up in front row center and he's up there preaching. And the friend of this pastor said, that's right. And he said, son, I know that's right or I wouldn't have said it.

He was like... I don't need a cheerleader. I mean, he said, you know, one time there was some girl back there in the back row and she pulls out her brush and she begins to brush her hair and he's like... When you sit, it's kind of like listening to Don Johnson. We had him over here at Hackberry and he jumped up on the front row of the seats and when he first went out to community, he came up over that pulpit.

He hit his hand so hard there was blood on the pulpit. The pulpit leaned way over. My brother-in-law was in the front row.

He said, it was like that pulpit was going to fall over. Gordon Bayless, he used to come. I mean, you just never knew.

I think that's what Paul's talking about. You know, somebody that goes in the pulpit and they're being led of the Spirit. They're a live wire.

They have conviction. Charles said that some of the things Ravenhill did, some of them were probably of the Spirit and some were probably of the flesh. And later in life, he became more of a circus exhibition to have at a conference because it tended to draw people because they just wanted to come see that.

And you get certain flamboyant preachers who are especially expressive and it tends to draw people. People tend to enjoy that. You know, the guy that's monotone, the guy that's boring, the guy that just doesn't seem like he believes what he's saying.

It doesn't matter how orthodox it might be. It's just, yeah, I'd take Ravenhill over that any day. I mean, there was a time when we all were listening to the revival hymn.

It's on YouTube now. We were passing that all around the church on CD one time. Collections of different sermons put to music.

Pull that back up. I mean, there's various quotes from Ravenhill in there and Ian Paisley and Paris Reedhead and Duncan Campbell. You listen to those guys.

Wake it up, you sleepy church! I mean, you talk about a guy that Ian Paisley's going to be with the Lord now too, but that guy... it's like, wow! He was in parliament and he stood up when the Pope came and the Pope's bodyguards punched him in the head. You've got to love guys like that. Look, going to a service where you don't know what's going to happen.

Where there's anticipation like something's going to happen. That's the kind of preaching that I would think anybody would want to be part of. I did have one question.

And it was with respect to the difference between a preaching like that of Spurgeon versus the type of preaching that you've been really spearheading this morning. And that is, how do the roles of a man, say like Spurgeon versus a man who's more focused in on like that? You know, preaching the Word, focusing on executing the text. How do their roles differ within the edifying and building up of the church? Here's the thing you guys need to remember.

Spurgeon did the time-consuming wrestling with God to learn what Scripture means by what it says before he ever got to spiritualizing a text on whether Christ is in the camp. I mean, from Luke 2, he has done the kind of exegeting. He has wrestled with the difficult and problematic text.

He could exegete Scripture responsibly. He had wrestled through different meanings on different texts. His theology was solid.

And you can see that. It breaks through everywhere. And you know, he wrote prolifically and preached prolifically.

And who's got 63 volumes of their sermons that have been preserved? There's nothing like it in the English-speaking world. But his solid doctrine breaks through everywhere. So, what you don't want to do is you don't want to miss the fact that the very kinds of things that I'm telling you guys you need to be doing and faithfully handling and preaching the Word of God, you don't want to in any way, shape, or form think that Spurgeon didn't do that as well.

He certainly did. He certainly did that and knew his doctrine and knew the teaching of Scripture well before he got to the place where he's spiritualizing texts and preaching evangelistically to people. Would you

have any comments on preaching through Song of Solomon? How do you exposit something like that? I know people have interpreted it.

And of course, I believe it's Christ and the church. Well, it's kind of basically what you want to do because if you take... See, somebody like John MacArthur would say that the Song of Solomon is just a picture of marriage. We don't have any license to spiritualize it.

I would say this, I really do believe that its main significance is that that you draw out when you spiritualize it. But if you're going to spiritualize it, you need to be able to substantiate that teaching that you bring from it from other places that are not spiritualized. From clear teaching in other places.

If you are really forcefully developing a doctrine, developing some theology from your spiritualized interpretations that don't stand up anywhere else in Scripture, you are on dangerous ground. You don't want to go there. So when you begin to handle a text like that, you just need to be able to show that if you draw this meaning out, you can go to clear passages and show that that indeed is a biblical reality so that you're not trying to draw out something that God never intended you to draw out.

And that's comparing Scripture with Scripture. And that's exactly what proving. How did Paul prove? He went to the Old Testament.

He took Old Testament. How did Peter prove? After the day of Pentecost. Old Testament quotes.

That's how he proved it. What do you do to prove? Well, you go to Scripture. And see, now we have a full-orbed New Testament.

And so, boy, we've got so much about Christ and His people and His relationship to His people that if you really want to make the Song of Solomon come alive, you need to be pulling all that. Look, if you're ignorant of the Gospels, you should not be preaching on the Song of Solomon because you're not equipped. You're not ready for that.

You don't have the materials suitable to really faithfully unpack it. Paul's commandment to Timothy about preaching the Word just doesn't mean... he's not saying preach expositionally. You've got Peter there who's grabbing a number of different texts to prove that Jesus is Christ.

You've got Paul grabbing a number of different texts and just bringing those. In the Reformed Baptist circles, the various Reformed circles, it can really be, if not hinted at, it can be just thrown out there on the table as a rule that if you're not expositionally preaching from one end of a book to the other end, you're not faithfully preaching. You can't validate that from Scripture.

But, we do know this, that if you preach topically, you are going to have certain tendencies in the topical matter that you bring out. Somebody that only preaches topically is almost certainly not going to deal with numerous things that Scripture deals with. Because honestly, going from one end of Ephesians to the other end of Ephesians, there are things that come out that I normally on my own probably would not have gone after.

It's there and I need to deal with it. And I can tell you, having to go end to end in a book, you often get to the time not only that if it was left to you to choose what you would preach on, you probably wouldn't have gone there, but there's actually a portion you don't want to preach on. It's like, I don't want to deal with that.

I don't want to go there. And yet, if you're faithfully moving through, you've kind of got to deal with it. It may be a difficult passage or whatever.

Guys, one other question you want to ask yourself, I'm just going to throw this at you at the end here, is ask yourselves as you approach a text, what problems are in the church, both local and universally? What are the errors? I just want to hit on that because sometimes the questions that you ask of a text are going to have to do with the theological climate both in your local church and in the broader church at large. There may be some things that in a certain generation, I didn't even need to answer from a passage. But you know what? You get craziness.

Craziness comes up at different times. Somebody has some thought about a text. Sometimes it's in your own local church.

All of a sudden, you get this little movement over here. You get this guy over here and he's saying something about Scripture. And it's like, what? Where do you get that? Well, from that text right there.

That text doesn't mean that. And so, that's just another question you want to ask. Is there any theological climate that surrounds this passage that I'm dealing with that is going to require me to deal with something? Because you're going to take a specific amount of time and deal with something if it's a passage that has to do or addresses a very prevalent error either in the church local or in the church broader.

Anyway, we can end with that. Father, I pray that You would help us, equip us, gift us, lead us, guide us. Help us to explore and find the mysteries, the treasures of Your Word.

Lord, open our eyes to the glories of Your Word. Give us preachers and teachers with a gift to unpack, with a gift to see, with a gift to be faithful. Lord, help us to preach the Word.

In season, out of season, help us to preach it. Help us to be faithful. Help us, Lord.

Every one of us here at Grace, every one of us that are here in this room today that are handling the Word, help us, Lord. We want to stand before You and give a good account. We want to be faithful.

We want to properly handle the Word of God. We want to aim to please You. We ask for all of this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

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