

## **Students of Scripture, part 1**

(Assorted)

(preached 8/18/21; Pine Grove BC Wed PM)

### **Introduction**

You may have come expecting Psalm 26, and on Monday morning, I had every intention of preaching Psalm 26 to you.

But as I began studying, our men's meeting this past Saturday morning kept burning in my heart.

We had a good time in there as we wrapped up the 2nd chapter in our systematic theology.

Which by the way, I would highly recommend you buying a copy of that for yourself.

It is a great resource for your home that will help you in your Bible reading and study.

The second chapter in that book is on bibliology, which is simply a category of theology that deals with the study of God's word.

As we finished off that chapter and reviewed what we learned, I was really impressed with the men's recollection of some important truths about God's word.

And I was very encouraged to see their growing knowledge of how the Bible came about and how it is to be used by believer's today.

So when I sat down Monday, my heart was still encouraged by that.

Therefore, what we are going to do tonight and for the next few weeks is simply an outflow of some of the truths that are encouraging our hearts in men's meeting on Saturday morning.

Now I have entitled this series of messages, Students of Scripture.

And the content of these messages will be drawn from a series of messages that I did here on Sunday nights 7 years ago.

I was a brand new pastor to Pine Grove, and my heart burned then with a desire to make this church students of Scripture.

And that burning in my heart is still there, so we are going to return to some basic truths of Bible study.

You see these in action every time I stand in this pulpit.

You likely use some of these principles as your read and study the Bible.

But you can never be reminded too often about the value of the word of God and you can never be taught too frequently how to study the word of God accurately.

And above all, you display your love of God when you have a love of His word.

Besides the church is not just about the pastor and preacher.

The church is the body of Christ, and we all need to know how to accurately handle the word of God.

When I began my job as a manager of a restaurant, the owner of the restaurant gave me two goals.

The first goal was to earn my salary back by increasing sales within 2 years.

And the second goal was to work myself out of a job.

In other words, I was to be a manager who could be absent but the business not miss a beat.

Not the second goal was much harder than the first.

Good businesses naturally grow, so sales naturally increase and extra labor usually means more volume of business.

However, the second goal of working myself out of a job was a bit more challenging.

Training people to do their job in your absence is difficult.

The fallen human heart is always tempted to do the least amount of work possible.

And that temptation combined with less oversight from management means that employees are difficult to train.

It is not impossible, but it can be very difficult.

Strangely, that second goal of working myself out of job has always been a driving motivation of pastoral ministry.

Now, hear me clearly.

I love what I do, and Lord willing, I will pastor Pine Grove until THE rapture or my personal rapture to heaven.

But what I mean is this.

One of my goals in pastoral ministry is make each of you into people who can open the Bible and know what it means by what it says.

And then be able to deliver that truth to others.

Don't get me wrong, the church and the world needs men in pastoral ministry.

We need men who are trained to study and preach the word.

That role in God's kingdom will never disappear.

But the church also needs members of the body of Christ to be able to read and interpret and share biblical truths as well.

Now, I don't want to disparage preachers and preaching, but I will tell you that some preachers have no desire to train you to do these things.

Some men want to be the only Bible scholar in the flock.

Some men, due their own pride and arrogance, want to make them indispensable to a church.

They want to create job security by making the church utterly dependent on them.

But this a recipe for disaster.

Case in point is the Roman Catholic church.

They elevated their priests and their Pope to a position where no one could know the word of God without them.

And the end result today is a false religious system made up of the sinful desires and theology of priests and bishops and cardinals and a pope who lead people to hell.

But this is what happens when the people are uninterested in being students of Scripture themselves.

This is what happens when people rely solely upon others to teach them the truths of the Bible.

Now understand, every believer needs help in studying Scripture.

Some believers need more help than others.

So we are grateful for teachers and preachers and those who help others learn the word of God.

In fact, I moved my family 3000 miles away to be taught by some of the best Bible scholars on the planet.

But that cannot replace the believer's ability to rightly divide the word of truth.

So that is our goal over the next few weeks.

To sharpen our skills in rightly dividing the word of God.

I have put a rough outline of where we are headed over the next few Wednesday nights.

Some of these outline points will overlap and repeat, so this is not a perfect outline.

But it will serve to keep us on track and headed in the right direction.

Not sure how long it will take us, and I do want to set aside some time at the end answering your questions along Scripture.

We are just going to begin with outline point #1 and set sail.

So let's begin with what I call Bible Study Basics.

## **I. Bible Study Basics**

The first question to consider when studying Scripture is how do I approach it?

And that answer is found in how you view Scripture.

Is the Bible a collection of unrelated truths?

Or is the Bible a collection of interrelated truths?

Well, let's start with how a person often formulates his view of Scripture, and that is often through their past exposure to the word of God.

Now I recognize that not everyone grows up in a church.

I also recognize that the fallen human heart has no interest in the word of God.

But for people who grew up around the church, our view of the Bible is often formulated by how it was taught and preached to us.

And for the majority of people, they were taught to view the Bible as a series of unrelated truths.

And the reason I say this is that the church in general is presented the Bible as a series of topics to be considered.



In Sunday School, we move from topic to topic.

In pulpits, preachers move from topic to topic.

Now understand, topical preaching is not always bad.

I am doing it now in fact, but over time, people begin to see the Bible as a series of unrelated topics.

Marriage, finances, friendship, parenting, church, service, giving.

But this was not God's design for His word or for the men who preach His word.

In fact, topical preaching is not the only type of preaching that contributes to a person's view of the Bible.

There is also textual preaching, where a preacher picks a verse or a set of verses, then reads and uses it as a platform to talk about what he wants to talk about without ever explaining what the verses mean.

The end result is that the people see the Bible as simple a series of unrelated truths that just float around waiting on someone to pull one out of the air and use it to say whatever they want to say.

Again, this is not a helpful practice in helping someone formulate their view of Scripture.

So this brings us to expository preaching.

Which is the preaching that fills this room 99% of the time we are together.

And what is expository preaching.

It is preaching that explains the word of God using the context of a chapter and book and the entire Bible.

It is preaching that explains the word of God using grammar and history and culture.

It is preaching that seeks to explain the word of God to the people of God so that they know what God means by what He has said and delivered to the world.

But above, expository preaching is how the word of God was preaching in the Bible.

Take your Bibles and turn to Nehemiah 8...

The book of Nehemiah details the return of Israel from exile in Babylon.

The nation of Israel was overthrown in 586 BC by the Babylonians, and they were carried back to Babylon for 70 years.

God eventually arranged their release back their land, but when the people got back to their homes, they were spiritually starving.

And people who are spiritually dehydrated need the word of God.

They need preaching.

They need teaching.

They need instruction.

So they gather together to hear the word of God, and how does God present his word to them?

It is topical or textual or expository?

Look at verse 1.

***1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they [a]asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had [b]given to Israel. 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who could listen with understanding, on***

*the first day of the seventh month. 3 He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from [c]early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiyah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah and Meshullam on his left hand. 5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiyah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place. 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, [d]translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.*

Note verse 8.

My translation says that Ezra and the others were translating the text to give understanding to the people.

The Hebrew word for translating is parash, and it means to make something distinct or clear.

In short, Ezra and the priests read the OT to the people and clearly explained the meaning of the text to them.

This is why expository preaching is biblical preaching.

Not convinced yet?

Turn to Acts 17:1..

In Acts 17, Paul is in the midst of his missionary ministry of taking the gospel of Christ all over the known world.

Unlike the book of Nehemiah, Paul is not preaching to encourage the people like Ezra.

Paul is preaching to evangelize the people.

But note that evangelistic preaching is no different.

Verse 1.

***Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,***

***3 [a]explaining and [b]giving evidence that the [c]Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the [d]Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, [e]along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and [f]a number of the leading women***

Once we see the word explain in verse 3.

This time, it comes from the Greek word *dianoigó* (dee-an-oy'-go), and it literally means to open something up.

Dia means across.

A diagonal line goes all the way across an object.

And *oigo* means to open.

The way to preach is to take the word of God and open it completely up to the people of God.

To explain it to them.

To exposit it to them.

This is expository preaching.

This is biblical preaching.

Still not convinced?

Well, this one will convince you because we are about to look at how Jesus preached.

And though this is just one example of Jesus doing this, he explained passage all the time in his ministry.

But turn to Luke 24:13.

In Luke 24, we are in the days after the crucifixion of Christ.

Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday, but he rose on Sunday.

And after his resurrection he appeared to a number of people.

This is one of those resurrection appearances.

Verse 13..

***13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was [d]about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing***

*Him. 17 And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You [e]the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." 25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the [f]Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning [g]with Moses and [h]with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*



As Jesus walked with 2 men on the road to Emmaus, he opened the OT and “explained” to them the things concerning Him in Scripture.

The Greek word here for explain is a little different than Acts 17.

The Greek word is dierméneuó (dee-er-main-yoo’-o).

It has the same dia prefix, but the second half of the word is not the idea of opening across but rather explaining across.

Biblical preaching fully opens up the word of God but also fully explains the word of God.

And biblical preaching is explaining the word of God to the people of God.

Now why is all of this important to understanding how to study the Bible?

Simple.

You read and study the Bible as it was often modeled for you.

If the pastor simply let the Bible fall open and pointed his finger at a verse to preach, then the people under him tend to view their Bible study in the same way.

Every day is either throwing a dart at the Bible to figure out what to read or finding a topic to study about.

However, if you have been taught that explanation of the Bible is key to understanding, you will study the Bible in the same way.

And this is so important.

In fact, I would argue that expository preaching whets your appetite for your own personal Bible study.

It only serves as an appetizer for your desire to know the word of God in a deeper way.

Furthermore, biblical preaching makes you a student of Scripture and a discerner of truth.

In fact, proper expository will make you listen to every sermon with a critical ear.

Remember the Bereans?

They were the next stop for Paul after he left Thessalonica and the Bible says that they listened to Paul but they checked his word against the OT to make sure the truths he was preached aligned with the truth of God.

Let me ask you?

How many people can listen to a sermon and know where to go in the Bible to see if the sermon was biblically accurate and consistent with biblical teaching?

I will answer for you.

Not many at all!

And you may say, well why in the world would you want to teach us how to do study the Bible?

Won't this mean more trouble for you?

Well, hopefully not because my goal is to always accurately expelling the word of God to you.

Having more ears to hold me accountable is a blessing because I have no desire to stand before the Lord having misrepresented His word to His people.

My desire is to accurately explain God's word to God's people and have God's people agree with my explanation.

Not because they like me but simply because they see that my explanation is consistent with what the Bible teaches.

So proper Bible study begins with a proper view of the Bible.

And a proper view of the Bible begins with an understand of what the Bible is and how it is to be taught and studied.

Now, let's move from that basic truth of Bible study to a second basic truth of Bible study.

The Bible is written to be understood.

Please understand that the nature of God is not confusion.

God is a God of clarity and order not chaos.

What God has written is not meant to be mysterious.

What God has written is not meant to make us argue and fight.

What God has written is meant for the blessing of his people.

Now that last statement is key.

God's word is for His people.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 2:6..

Paul is opening his first letter to the church at Corinth with some basic truths of Christianity.

And a basic truth of Christianity is that only the saved can understand the word of God.

Verse 6..

***6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written,  
"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,  
And which have not entered the heart of man,  
All that God has prepared for those who love Him."***

In verse 7, you see the word mystery.

Paul speaks God's wisdom in a mystery.

That does not teach that God's word is a mystery.

In fact, it teaches just opposite.

In the OT, God has not revealed all that He was going to do.

He had not revealed the church age.

He had not revealed a group of mostly Gentile people who would put their faith in a Jewish Messiah until he returned from heaven to establish His kingdom.

That was a mystery in the OT that has now be made clear in the NT.

Therefore, preaching in this age is not mysterious.

It is the explanation of all that God has done and is going to do.

But here is the catch.

Unbelievers will never understand biblical preaching or even Bible study.

Look at verse 10..

***10 [d]For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the***

*world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, [e]combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

*14 But [f]a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually [g]appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

Notice the connection here.

The Spirit of God inspired the word of God.

The Spirit of God is given to those who are saved.

So, the saved understand the word of God but the unsaved do not.

I want to be blunt here.

If someone in your life or if you constantly complain about not being able to understand a sermon or being unable to understand the Bible, that person or you is not saved.

You cannot sugar coat that.

That is plain in Scripture.

Now that does not mean that there aren't difficult parts of Scripture.

There are.

But when very little or none of the Bible makes sense to someone, it is not the Bible's fault, it is fault of the unbelief in the heart of the one reading.

Look, folks who have been in and around the church for years and show no interest and no understanding of Scripture reveal their lack of saving faith.

To know Christ in a saving way is to know and understand His word.

And in areas where you don't understand, there is a hunger and pursuit to gain understanding.

And where there is not that hunger and pursuit, there is no salvation.

In sum, the Bible was written to be understood by those who are saved.

And those who are saved will desire to read it and understand it.



Now that is probably enough for tonight, but let's recap a few things before we go.

## **Conclusion**

### **#1 - The goal of preaching is explanation of the Bible.**

I don't want to beat a dead horse, but preachers who don't help their people understand the Bible are spinning their wheels at best.

And at worst, they are leading people astray.

Can you imagine being in a church for decades and never growing in your understanding of who God is?

Can you imagine being in a church for decades and only getting learning about what the preacher likes and doesn't like?

The goal of the pulpit is to explain the ways of the Lord to people.

Nothing more and nothing less.

**#2 - The goal of the believer is the understanding of the Bible.**

Since I am asking questions, let me ask this one.

Can you imagine being in a church for decades and never growing in your understanding of Scripture?

Except this time, it is not the fault of the preacher but rather a result of laziness at best or unbelief at worst.

My goal in ministry is to make all of you Bible scholars who understand and obey the word of God.

And my goal in ministry is to help the unbeliever understand the gospel so that he can repent and trust alone in Christ.

**#3- The goal of the Bible is the glorification of God and the salvation and sanctification of believers.**

Ultimately, the Bible exists to reveal God to the world, so the world can know the way to heaven.

And the Bible exists to call believers to obey God, so that they can worship God rightly and obey God fully.

And may God do that in all of our hearts at Pine Grove Baptist Church. LET US PRAY.