

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Syllabus*

I'm so glad you are interested in learning how to teach others the Bible! Teaching God's Word is essential to everything we do as Christians:

- Sharing the gospel (Matthew 4:23; Acts 19:9-10)
- Making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20)
- Growth in Christian maturity (Colossians 1:28)

This class is different from a "How to Read the Bible" class, because the intention is not merely for you to learn how to read the Bible better—which you will, but to be able to pass the Scriptures on faithfully to others.

The class breaks up into two parts: Part 1—Teaching and Part 2—Observing. This comes from Jesus' command in Matthew 28:20, "teaching them to observe all I have commanded you." It's not enough for us to merely be taught how to teach, we have to put it into practice! To observe the commands of Jesus is not merely to look on them, but to keep them—to do them.

Many studies spend a lot of time teaching but not much time pushing students to actually put things into practice. This class will ask you to do both. Everything you learn you will be asked to put into practice. Practice. Practice. Practice. It's the only way to become a better teacher.

In Part 1, we will learn about teaching in theory. We will look at the Scriptures that show us the role of teachers in the Kingdom of God and what kind of character we should expect of them. We will learn that all teaching should center on Christ and drive at application. You will learn how to rightly divide the Word into an outline that fits the passage, and you will learn how to use helpful reference tools.

An intermission stands between Parts 1 and 2. During this week, the class is encouraged to bring favorite children's storybooks to sit and read in front of the class. This serves a few purposes. First, it will help members of the class to get comfortable presenting in front of one another. Second, it helps us see that good teaching actually stems from good reading. Third, it will prepare members of the class for teaching 75% of the Bible—narrative.

In Part 2, we will practice teaching. Every other week, a lesson will be presented on a certain genre of Scripture, including literary devices that are particular to that genre. At the end of class, passages will be either chosen or assigned. Each class member will take home a *Lab Worksheet* and prepare a lesson on their selected passage (**Teachers, make sure to print enough blank Lab Worksheets to hand out the week before a Lab**). The following week will be a *Lab* where members of the class take turns teaching their lesson in 7-10 minutes. After each lesson, the instructor and other class members are encouraged to give constructive feedback.

The teacher of the class is encouraged to create a variety of teaching scenarios for the students. Perhaps one week, class members can prepare a lesson as an FCA devotional at a high school. Another week, they may prepare a lesson for a ladies' bible study of only two or three people. This will help class members get a feel for how teaching style should vary according to the setting.

May God bless you in your faithfulness to teach the Bible!

## *PART 1: Teaching*

### Week 1—Introduction and Syllabus

### Week 2—The Role of the Teacher

- Supremacy of Christ and his Word
- Imperative of discipleship
- Formal Teaching Roles: Pastors and Teachers
- The Gender Issue

### Week 3—The Character of the Teacher: The Five Bare Necessities

- Necessity of Regeneration and New Eyes to See
- Necessity of Sound Doctrine
- Necessity of Holy Living
- Necessity of Personal, Regular Bible Reading
- Necessity of Holy Spirit and Prayer

### Week 4—The Centrality of Christ

- Salvation History
- The Road to Emmaus
- Driving at the Cross
- Practice

### Week 5—The Necessity of Application

- Teaching to Observe
- Believe and Live
- Application Grid
- Practice

### Week 6—Rightly Dividing the Word

- Reading in Context
- Finding section breaks
- Summarizing
- Forming an outline

### Week 7—Using Helps

- How to Use a Study Bible
- How to Use a Commentary
- How to Use a Concordance

## *Intermission*

Week 8—Storytelling

- Good teaching stems from good reading
- Reading Children's books

## *PART 2: Observing*

Week 9—Lesson: Teaching Narrative

Week 10—Lab: OT Narrative

Week 11—Lab: NT Narrative

Week 12—Lesson: Teaching Epistles

Week 13—Lab: Epistles

Week 14—Lesson: Teaching Poetry

Week 15—Lab: Poetry

Week 16—Lesson: Teaching Discourse and Parables

Week 17—Lab: Discourse and Parables

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lab Worksheet*

Passage: \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of passage (genre)? \_\_\_\_\_

Where are you planning to teach? \_\_\_\_\_

### *Step 1: Notes*

Take notes below as you pray through and meditate on the passage:

What questions do you have?

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What words/phrases seem important?

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What is God revealing about himself?

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What is God revealing about mankind? What convicts you?

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What encourages you?

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How does this point us to the gospel of Jesus?

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On the next page, use your notes to help outline the passage in sections. Plan to teach from this outline. In each section:

1. Write the verse numbers
2. Summarize in one phrase or sentence
3. Explain how it relates to the rest of the context (the other verses, sections, chapter, etc.)
4. Note any important details, words, or phrases that communicate meaning
5. Write down at least one engaging question to ask your students



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- Unbeliever?
- Believer...
  - ...in their individual life?
  - ...in the local church?
  - ...in the public sphere?
  - ...in the home?
  - ...at work?
  - ...as men and women?

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# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 1:*

### The Role of the Teacher

#### The *What* of Teaching

- Obviously, the Sunday School answer is...the Bible. However, there are many pitfalls we can fall into, where we think we are teaching the Bible, but we are actually teaching...
  - My opinion—what I think about this or that topic (Mark 7:8-9)
  - My ministry—using the Bible to boost my credibility and popularity, making others dependent upon me (2 Cor. 4:5)
  - What people want to hear—teaching in order to please others by distorting or omitting parts of the Bible we know others will not like (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
- A good teacher will seek to teach his disciples CHRIST and HIS WORD (Matt. 7:24-27)
  - This is what it means to be a disciple
  - We are not merely reading a book; we are receiving the commands of our Savior.

#### The *Why* of Teaching

- To start, we are commanded to teach by Jesus himself. It is woven into the Great Commission—"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20)
- It is an expectation of maturing disciples that they will become teachers (Hebrews 5:12-13)
- The gospel depends in the faithful handing down of the testimony from one generation to the next (2 Timothy 2:2)
- Older generations are expected to teach younger generations and to model for them Christian living (Titus 2:3-5)

#### The *Who* of Teaching

- Moms and dads have a responsibility to teach their children in the home (Prov. 1:8-9; Deut. 6:6-7)
- Husbands have a duty to wash their wives with the Word (Ephesians 5:25-26)
- Both men and women have the joy of making disciples in our communities and in the mission field (Acts 8:34)
- Brothers and sisters in the church should be regularly encouraging and exhorting one another with the Scriptures (Col. 3:16)
- Older men and women in the church have a responsibility to teach younger men and women as spiritual fathers and mothers (Titus 2)
- Men who have been set apart as pastors and teachers are responsible to exercise teaching and preaching authority when the whole house of God is gathered (1 Timothy 2:7-3:7; 1 Corinthians 14:33-35)

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 2:*

### The Character of the Teacher (The 5 Bare Necessities)

#### NECESSITY #1: Regeneration

- We need new eyes to see, new ears to hear, and a new heart to believe (Deut. 29:2-4; Mark 13:10-17)
- Jesus opens our minds and hearts to the truth when we repent and believe (Acts 9:17-22; Luke 24:44-49)
- An unregenerate teacher can only bring condemnation on himself/herself and dishonor to God (Romans 2:17-24)
- An unregenerate teacher will destroy the church (Titus 1:10-16)

#### NECESSITY #2: Sound Doctrine

- We must follow the “pattern of sound words”, i.e., orthodoxy (2 Timothy 1:13-14)
- We are not in search of something new, but the faithful passing down of something very old (2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Corinthians 11:1-2; Titus 1:9; 2:1)
- False teaching will lead to false belief which will lead to false living and eternal destruction (2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 1:3-4)
- We are not rogue teachers, but we operate as members of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12)

#### NECESSITY #3: Holy Living

- Those who teach will be held to a higher standard (James 3:1)
- Our lives have the ability to either confirm or deny our teaching (1 Timothy 4:11-12; Titus 1:16)
- Conviction and repentance starts with me (Psalm 51:10-13; Luke 18:10-14)
- Our holy living defends the gospel (1 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:6)
- Teachers set an example (Phil. 3:16-17)

#### NECESSITY #4: Bible Reading

- We cannot teach what we do not understand ourselves (1 Timothy 1:6-7)
- We must be reading the Bible on a daily basis (Joshua 1:8; Deuteronomy 6:6-9)
- Good teaching of the Bible begins with good reading (Luke 24:25-27)

#### NECESSITY #5: Holy Spirit and Prayer

- The Holy Spirit inspired God’s Word, and he teaches us (John 14:25-26; 1 John 2:27)
- The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to teach with boldness when we pray (Acts 4:31)
- The Holy Spirit protects the gospel in us (2 Timothy 1:14)
- We pray that the Spirit would change hearts and lives (2 Thess. 3:1; Ezekiel 36:27)

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 3:*

### The Centrality of Christ

#### Salvation History

- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth to be saved, reconciled, renewed, and ruled by Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:19)
- Creation, Fall, Redemption, Re-Creation—at the center of this narrative stands Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:20; Colossians 1:15-18)
- Jesus proclaims, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 1:8; 22:13)
- KNOW THE GOSPEL!

#### The Road to Emmaus: All Scripture Points to Him

- Matthew’s genealogy demonstrates who is the purpose of salvation history. Matthew’s conclusion commands us to go and tell. Matthew 1; 28:18-20
- Luke’s introductory chapters are a demonstration of what Jesus reveals on the road to Emmaus—“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 1-3; 24:27)
- John introduces Jesus as “The Word”. He summarizes his gospel by saying all of the words contained in it are meant to compel us to believe in Jesus. (John 1; 20:30-31)

#### Driving at the Cross

- There must be a simplicity to our teaching; like Paul we should not cloud the waters with many words and fancy, religious language (1 Cor. 2:2)
- Ultimately, we must ask how any passage of Scripture calls us to believe and live in Jesus. (John 20:30-31)

#### Practice

- *Philippians 2:14-18*

- *Matthew 5:2-12*

- *Leviticus 14:1-7*

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 4:*

### The Necessity of Application

#### Disciple-making

- Application is foundational to the Great Commission. The fundamental activity of discipleship means helping followers of Jesus learn how to DO what he has commanded (Matthew 28:18-20)
- We have to realize that Church is not just an organization. The church is a people. And God is in the business of re-making us into a certain kind of people. We are being re-created in the image of Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-10)
- God has given the church teachers for the specific purpose to help the people of God reach maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:15-16)

#### Believe & Live

- "Follow me." This is the clear command of Jesus to his disciples. Following Jesus means not only believing in him but living as he lives (Mark 2:14)
- Faith without works is dead. As teachers, we have the responsibility to compel our listeners to put these things into practice (James 1:22)
- It is not the one who hears the words of Jesus who will stand firm on the last day but the one who hears...and does (Matthew 7:24-27)
- Paul continually calls his readers to walk out the faith they claim to believe (Colossians 2:6).

#### Live Lives Worthy for His Glory

- Application of Scripture is necessary because we have become the children of God in order to bring him glory (Matthew 5:16)
- The gospel's power is revealed in the transformation of our lives (1 Thess. 2:12; Phil. 1:27-28).

#### Application Grid

- Unbeliever?
- Believer...
  - ...in their individual life?
  - ...in the local church?
  - ...in the public sphere?
  - ...in the home?
  - ...at work?
  - ...as men and women?

*Practice: Philippians 2:12-18*

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 5:*

### Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

#### Every Text Has a Con-text

- Paul commands Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15—“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”
- As readers and teachers of God’s Word, we only rightly divide as we understand the context
- Every passage of Scripture falls into these concentric contexts:
  - VERSE → CHAPTER → BOOK → BIBLE
- Another important context for us: The People of God. God’s Word is given to us both individually and collectively. We read and teach the Bible best when we read and teach it within the context of the local church.

#### How Do We Find Section Breaks?

- In order to teach well, you have to first decide what passage to teach, and this requires discernment and attention to textual clues. The first step to a good lesson is choosing the passage properly, then being able to break it down into sections.
- Is it a narrative? Can you discern the different scenes in the story?
  - Every story has a setting, a conflict, a rising action, climax, and conclusion
  - What is *said* by the characters is always important.
  - Try 1 Samuel 3:1-21
- Is there an inclusio? Look for bookends that section off a passage like an introduction and conclusion.
  - Try James 1:2-12.
- Look for keywords: *therefore, now, behold, for, because, meanwhile, in order that, so then...* These words usually indicate a section break or the start of a new idea
  - For example: Romans 5:1; 5:12; 8:1.
- Once you have chosen a passage, use these same tools to determine the major sections of what you are trying to teach. Break it down into 3-5 parts.

#### Summarize. Summarize. Summarize.

- It’s important as a teacher that you are able to summarize the main sections of the passage in your own words. Read each section over and over again.
- Try to summarize in as few words as possible. **FEWER IS ALMOST ALWAYS BETTER!** The more succinctly you can summarize each section, the better you will communicate to your listeners, and the better they will understand.

#### Form a Replicable Outline.

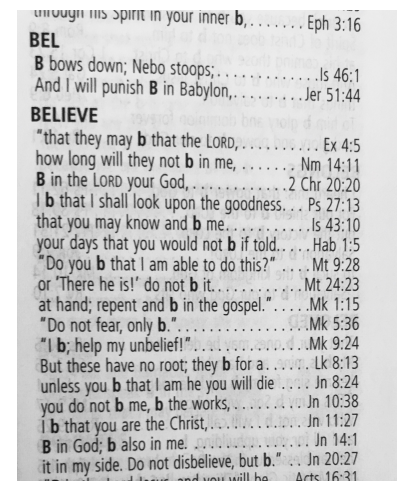
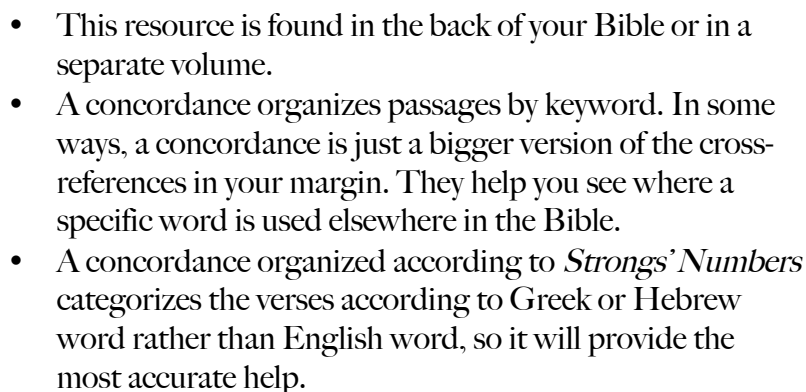
- Once you have summarized each of the sections, form an outline using those summaries. Can you give the main point of the entire passage?
- **REPLICABLE:** Try your best to follow the order of the passage, so that others who hear will be able to go back and reproduce the same outline on their own.

## The Proper Use and Priority of Teaching Helps

- NOT FIRST. (1 John 2:27)
- After:
  - You have read the verse many, many times
  - You have considered the context (chapter, book, and salvation history)
  - You have prayed to the Spirit for guidance
- The only way to better understand the Bible is to do the hard work of interpretation *yourself*.

These tools do not contribute any extra-biblical material. They simply help you find other helpful passages in the Bible that might illuminate the text. We turn to these tools before the extra-biblical reference tools because we believe in the *perspicuity* of Scripture: *the Bible is its own best interpreter*.

- Usually found in the side margin or between the columns of your Bible, these are other passages of Scripture that either quote, refer to, or use similar language to the verse in question.
- This tool will help you form a web of interconnected verses in your mind, as other verses in the Bible help provide greater context and clarity for your verse. Remember, Scripture is trustworthy and completely true. The Bible never contradicts itself.



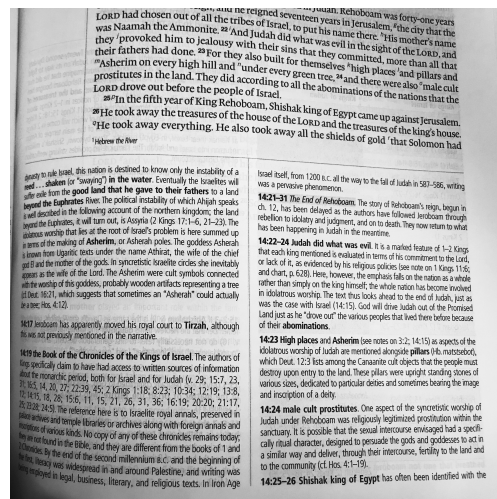
## Extra-Biblical Reference Tools

We call these *extra-biblical* because they provide content and information from some source outside of the Scriptures—whether archaeological information, theological reflection, or extra historical context.

These can be very helpful tools as you think through a verse or passage, especially those contributions from other believers and church figures. However, remember that these are not without error, and they can contain overt or unintended biases.

### 1) Study Notes

- These are found in the bottom margin of your Study Bible.
- Depending on your Study Bible, the notes may be more focused on the meaning of phrases, extra historical/archaeological background, interpretations from church figures, or application and practical thoughts.
- Try your best to resist immediately reading these notes. If you can't resist, do your main studying in a plain Bible—without study notes—and keep the study Bible for reference purposes.



### 2) Commentaries

- Scholars and pastors put together entire books, usually focused on individual books of the Bible.
- Commentaries come in all shapes and sizes:
  - Expository commentaries will focus on line-by-line explanation of the verses. If you have particular questions about how a passage has been understood in church history or how to properly translate a difficult verse, this is a good resource.
  - Pastoral/Application commentaries will read more like a sermon. They will often gloss over difficult questions in the passage, focusing on the outline and structure, while drawing out specific practical suggestions.
  - Critical Commentaries will focus on sources, authorship, and original community that received the book. These commentaries are not particularly helpful for teaching.
- It's very important to make sure you trust the author of the commentary you are reading. Often, a commentators comments and interpretation will vary according to their theological convictions.
- Recommended: Pillar Commentaries, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentaries, Preaching the Word, New International Commentaries
- Many free commentaries can be found online, especially from older church figures. In fact, many of them can be downloaded on apps on your phone.
- Apps: E-Sword, Olive Tree, John Calvin Commentary



# How to Teach the Bible

## Lesson 7:

### The Best Story Ever Told: Teaching Narrative

*Genre* refers to the style of literature

- Depending on the *genre* of a passage, we should have certain expectations and watch for different literary devices to communicate meaning to us.
- How does understanding genre affect the way we read, interpret, and teach?
- Could misunderstanding the style of literature lead you to misinterpret the Bible?

Some Things Never Change

- Regardless of our *genre*, every passage is perfectly true in every way and without error, because God is speaking his Word to us.
- Every passage points us to Jesus Christ, his person and perfect work, in some way.
- Every passage is profitable for life and godliness—it compels us to live in a certain way.

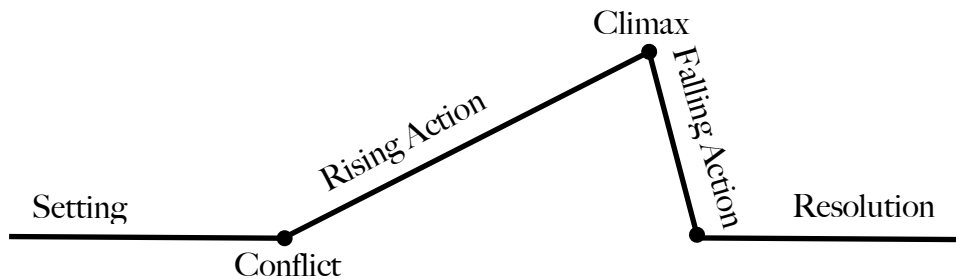
Unique Tools for Writing

- Each genre is characterized by the use of certain *literary devices*. A literary device is simply a tool that an author uses to communicate meaning.
- For example, a very familiar literary device in American poetry is *rhyme*. Can you think of other literary devices?
- As we learn about genres from week to week, we will highlight literary devices that appear often in that style of literature.

Literary Devices in Narrative:

*Storytelling*

- It may seem obvious, but a narrative tells a *story*. Stories have a particular shape:



- As the story begins, take note of any descriptions of characters or setting.
- Identify the major conflict and ask how each character contributes to the rising tension.
- The climax is the moment with the tension is broken, much like the peak of a rollercoaster hill. The main point of a story is often found in the climax.
- In the fallout of the story, ask how characters have changed or remained the same. How is the situation different than it was at the beginning? *And how has God acted in the story?*

*Characters*

- Ask which characters the author intends for us to identify with.
- Realize that God uses the lives of characters to communicate eternal truths about sin, virtue, his nature and plan, and Jesus Christ.
- The speech of the characters reveals what is in the heart (Luke 6:45). Often, the first words that a character says can shape the way we see them in the rest of the story.

### *Scene Changes*

- Good authors recognize the value of a well-placed commercial break, so to speak.
- Often a scene change is meant to build expectation or to add details that change the way we understand the events that have already taken place.
- Always ask why a scene change took place when it did. Does the new setting contribute to the story in any way?

### *Flashbacks*

- A flashback often adds new significance to the current story by reminding us of details from the past.
- In the Bible, flashbacks come in the specific details that might be included. For instance, in Esther 3, the villain is introduced in verse 1: “After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman *the Agagite*...” This detail “the Agagite” flashes us back to 1 Samuel 15:32-33, where Agag the King cheerfully walks into his own violent death.

### *Foreshadowing*

- Foreshadowing is when an author drops hints about what will take place later in the story. For instance, “Haman the Agagite” in Esther 3:1 foreshadows that Haman will be blind-sided by his violent demise just like his forefather Agag.
- When we read narratives in the context of the grand narrative of the Bible, we see how earlier narratives foreshadow later realities, especially Jesus Christ.

### *Asides*

- An aside is when the author breaks from telling the story to insert a detail.
- These are often marked by the word, “Now...” or “Behold...” Asides are always important!
  - Here’s an example from Genesis 29:16—“Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.” This detail breaks up the narrative, but proves to be very important!

### *Irony*

- There are three types of irony:
  - *Dramatic Irony*—this is when we, the readers, know something a character in the story doesn’t.
    - In the story of Haman and Esther, the author reveals to us something Haman doesn’t know: Esther is a Jew.
  - *Situational Irony*—this occurs when the events of the story are the opposite of what we expect.
    - The parable of the Good Samaritan is one of the best uses of situational irony (Luke 10:25-37).
  - *Verbal Irony*—when a character says something that means more than the characters realize.
    - A fantastic example is John 18:14—“It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.”

### *Repetition*

- This literary device sometimes gives the Bible a bad rap. But as we discovered, any kid’s story that’s worth its salt uses repetition.
- When a narrator repeats elements of the story, we are anticipating a *change*. The climax often comes in the change.
  - Genesis 1 is a perfect example. The repetition highlights the *change* on Day 6.

### *Old Testament Lab:*

Genesis 4:1-16 "Cain and Abel"

Genesis 11:1-9 "Tower of Babel"

Judges 3:12-30 "Ehud the Left-handed Man"

Judges 16:1-22 "Samson and Delilah"

Ruth 2:1-23 "Ruth and Boaz"

1 Samuel 1:1-20 "Hannah"

1 Kings 12:1-15 "Rehoboam's Folly"

1 Kings 12:25-33 "Jeroboam's Golden Calves"

2 Kings 6:8-23 "Elisha and the Chariots of Fire"

Esther 6:1-13 "The King Honors Mordecai"

Jonah 1:1-16 "Jonah Flees the Lord"

### *New Testament Lab:*

Matthew 2:1-12 "The Visit of the Wise Men"

Matthew 8:5-13 "The Faith of a Centurion"

Matthew 20:20-28 "A Mother's Request"

Mark 2:13-17 "Jesus Calls Levi"

Mark 4:35-41 "Jesus Calms a Storm"

Luke 18:15-17 "Let the Children Come to Me"

John 9 "Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind"

John 12:1-8 "Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany"

Acts 5:1-11 "Ananias and Sapphira"

Acts 6:1-7 "Seven Chosen to Serve"

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 8:*

### Following the Logic: Teaching Epistles

Why do we write letters?

- Letters are occasional. We send thank-you cards, birthday cards, Christmas cards. Usually, there is a specific purpose or occasion that spawned the letter.
- This is often the case with the *epistles*, which is just a fancy Bible word for “letter”. Epistles often address specific topics, issues, or questions. Just because something is left out of a letter doesn’t make it unimportant. Letters are for special occasions.

Who writes letters?

- This seems obvious, but letters are written **FROM** an individual or group and addressed **TO** an individual or group. In the New Testament, all of the books from Romans—Jude are epistles, written from Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude. But whom are they written to?
  - Example: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.”
  - These letters are addressed to believers and Christians
  - It’s clear that Paul and others intended for their letters to be shared among the churches: “And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea” (Colossians 4:16).
- We will misinterpret the contents of a letter if we do not take into account the **TO** and **FROM**.
  - Example: I write a love letter addressed to my wife. In it I declare my undying love for her. You pick up the letter, ignore who it’s written to, then assume my undying love is directed at you.

Literary Devices in the Epistles:

*Logic and Argumentation*

- Since epistles are often addressing specific issues, the writers will often reason for the truth using logical arguments.
- *If/then* statements appear all throughout the epistles. The writer will argue that since the first statement is true, then the second statement must follow.
  - For instance, Paul goes to great lengths to prove that we are no longer slaves under the law but sons under Christ, in order to reach this conclusion in Galatians 4:7—“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”
- When an author is engaged in an argument, ask, *What is the author trying to prove?*
  - Connecting words like “since”, “so that”, “because”, “therefore”, and “in order that” indicate how one sentence follows, contradictions, or connects from the previous one.
  - Consider Romans 5:1—“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If you had to guess, what do you think Paul was seeking to prove in chapters 1-4?

### *Appeal to Authority*

- Now, appeals to authority can be a logical fallacy when people try to prove that an argument is true just because someone powerful or famous said it.
- However, an appeal to authority can be used properly when everyone agrees it is a proper authority. This is why it's important for us to realize that the epistles are written to churches who all acknowledge the authority of Scriptures and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Often, a writer like Paul will appeal to his own authority as an apostle in order to establish his point.
  - Consider Galatians 1:1,11-12. How is Paul appealing to authority before the Galatian church?

### *Scripture Quotation*

- Technically, this could be considered an appeal to authority, but the epistle writers use Scripture quotation for many reasons.
- They might seek to illustrate a point.
  - Consider Romans 3:9-20. What point is Paul making?
- They might seek to remind their readers of something they already know.
  - Read 2 John 1:5. Now read John 13:34—"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."
- They might quote a passage of Scripture in order to explain its implications.
  - Look at Romans 4:3-12. Consider the quotation of Genesis 15:6 in verse 3—"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'"
- They might quote Scripture in order to show its fulfillment in Christ.
  - The book of Hebrews does this over and over again.
  - Consider Hebrews 5:5-10. How is the writer showing us the fulfillment in Christ?

### *Imperatives*

- These are commands that show us how to live in light of the Gospel.
- Example: Romans 12:9-13

### *Lab:*

Hebrews 8:1-13 "The Old and New Covenant"

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 "Stand Firm"

Romans 12:14-21 "Bless Those Who Persecute You"

1 Corinthians 1:18-30 "The Folly of the Cross"

Galatians 2:15-21 "Justified by Faith"

Ephesians 5:1-16 "Walking As Children of the Light"

Philippians 2:1-11 "Humility like Christ"

Colossians 3:1-17 "Putting Off the Old Self, Putting On the New"

# *How to Teach the Bible*

## *Lesson 9:*

### Poetry

*Prose* and *poetry* are not the same. But what makes them different?

- In your Bible, you might notice that certain chapters appear in paragraphs that fill the columns. Other parts appear in separate lines with lots of extra white space on the page. The editors of your Bible translation are trying to give you a hint: the first is *prose*, the second *poetry*.
- *Prose* is the word we use for normal writing. We use *prose* when we write a narrative, compose a letter, make an argument, or carry a conversation.
- What is *poetry*? Fundamentally, *poetry* is not *prose*. It is characterized by particular literary devices and is usually broken up into lines rather than written in paragraphs.
- While prose communicates facts, events, and arguments, poetry seeks to communicate emotions, feelings, and moods. This is a bit overly simplistic, but you might say that prose communicates to the *head*, poetry to the *heart*.

A poet invites us into his or her experience.

- Poems in the Bible can be very personal. Often, a poet communicates in broad terms and pictures to draw us into some common experience or emotion.
- We have successfully read and interpreted a poem when the lines of the poem have become our own; the song we have sung; the prayer we ourselves have prayed. The Spirit works in us to use these pieces of poetry to express our own emotions, prayers, and praise.

Literary Devices in the Poetry:

#### *Figurative language*

- Poets use words in ways that go beyond their basic meaning. For instance, “I’m as hungry as a horse,” though not literally true, communicates something figurative about my appetite. Figurative language comes in many shapes and forms:
  - *Simile/Metaphor*: these are both illustration through comparison. A simile uses “like” or “as”, while a metaphor does not.
    - *Simile*: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water  
That yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1:3)
    - *Metaphor*: “Wine is a mocker,  
Strong drink a brawler,  
And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” (Prov. 20:1)
  - *Personification*: A poet uses personification when he assigns human attributes to something that is non-human.
    - Example: “In them he has set a tent for the sun,  
Which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
And, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.” (Ps. 19:5)
  - *Extended Metaphor*: this occurs when a poet uses extended comparison to draw out many facets of experience and truth. Sometimes an entire chapter or section is an extended metaphor.
    - Examples: Hosea 2—Israel is an adulteress woman  
Ezekiel 19:10-14—Israel is a vine in a vineyard  
Proverbs 1:20-33—Wisdom is a woman calling in the street  
Psalm 23—the Lord is my shepherd

## Symbolism

- Often, a poet will include certain elements to symbol more than their literal meaning. For instance, a lion might symbolize royalty and power, a tree could symbolize flourishing, growth, and health, or water might symbolize chaos and destruction.
- Many of these symbols are used regularly throughout the Bible, both in poetry and prose.
  - *Circumcised hearts* symbolize responsiveness and tenderness to the Lord  
“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord;  
Remove the foreskin of your hearts,  
O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 4:4)
  - *Branch* symbolizes the Messiah  
“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.” (Isaiah 11:1)

## Couplet

- A couplet is when a poet uses two lines to communicate one idea. This is very common in Hebrew poetry. It's a similar effect to taking a profile and side-view photo of the same object.
  - Examples: “For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;  
Evil may not dwell with you.” (Psalm 5:5)

“The heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

## Chiasm

- In English, it is easy to recognize poetry because it often *rhymes*. Hebrew poetry doesn't use rhyme schemes; instead it uses *chiasm*.
- Chiasm is when the first and last line relate, the second and second to last line relate, the third and third to last line relate, and so on.
- Many chiasms are only three lines long. The first and last line relate, with a different middle line:
  - (A) “Bless the Lord, O my soul  
(B) And all that is within me,  
(A') Bless his holy name!” (Psalm 103:1)
- Other chiasms can be longer:
  - (A) “Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity  
(B) And I have trusted in the Lord without wavering,  
(C) Prove me, O LORD, and try me:  
(C') Test my heart and my mind.  
(B') For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
(A') And I walk in your faithfulness.” (Psalm 26:1-3)

## Lab:

Psalm 121—“My Help Comes from the Lord”  
Psalm 69:13-18—“Save Me, O God”  
Jonah 2:1-10—“Jonah's Prayer”  
Joel 2—“The Coming Day of the Lord”  
Jeremiah 18:13-17—“The People Have Forgotten Me”  
Isaiah 65:17-25—“New Heavens and New Earth”  
Proverbs 1:20-33—“Lady Wisdom”  
Deuteronomy 32:10-18—“The Song of Moses”

# How to Teach the Bible

## Lesson 10:

### Finding the Hidden Meaning in Parables

#### Why parables?

- I had a professor in college who spent the entire class telling stories. At the beginning of the course, he warned us that he would do most of his teaching this way: “Parables were good enough for Jesus. They are good enough for me.”
- But are parables merely illustrations? A **parable** is a word picture that provides meaning about a reality that is not readily apparent—often of spiritual nature.
- Why did Jesus teach in parables anyway?
  - Read Matthew 13:10-17.
  - Jesus taught parables for two reasons: To hide the truth. To reveal the truth.
- What determines whether you are meant to understand the parables or not?
  - Parables are the inside jokes of the Bible.

#### Parables are hard. Look for help!

- Often, Jesus’s disciples pull him aside and ask for an explanation. When you are interpreting a parable, look to see if Jesus himself has provided the interpretation.
  - Example: Look at the Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13:24-30. If you were not looking at the context, you might miss what happens a couple of sections later in Matthew 13:36-43.
- Make sure to consider the context. The Gospel writers often grouped together parables that deal with a similar subject or theme. Often, adjacent parables can provide help in understanding one another.
  - Example: Luke 15. What theme ties these three parables together?
- Even more, make sure to consider the narrative context that surrounds the parables. Often the audience or circumstances that inspired the parable or set of parables are important.
  - Example: In Matthew 21:28, Jesus begins a set of three parables. However, if you do not read the first half of chapter 21—the narrative context, you may miss the point.

#### Literary Devices in the Parables:

##### *Allegory*

- Technically, all parables are allegories more or less. An allegory is a fictional story or word picture where the elements of the story represent elements in reality.
  - Example: *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller is a play about the Salem Witch Trials. However, it is rendered as an allegory for the McCarthy era and the witch hunt for Communists in America.
  - Example: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell is a novel about animals who overthrew their farmers. It’s an allegory about the Bolshevik revolt in Soviet Russia.
  - Example: The most famous Christian allegory (outside the Bible) is *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan. The whole story is meant to illustrate the Christian walk fraught with peril and joys.
- When we are reading parables, we recognize that elements in the fictional word picture or story are pointing us to truth about real people, ideas, or realities. Ask: who or what is this really about?



### *Audience*

- A parable can have delicious irony when it allows a teacher to speak about members of his audience without their knowledge. Jesus often does this when the Pharisees are around.
  - Read Matthew 21:45. Parables are a way for Jesus to goad his antagonists in an indirect way—but every one of his punches lands a blow.
- Jesus often uses parables to illustrate what is going on in his audience—when they are receiving or rejecting his message—and why it is happening.
  - Example: Matthew 13:53-57

### *Storytelling*

- Many parables of Jesus are narratives. The difference is that the characters in a parable often represent people or categories of people in real life. The narrative is more than skin deep, so to speak.
  - Consider the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). This is a masterful piece of story-telling, with a setting, conflict, climax, and resolution. However, the two sons in the story also represent two types of people we meet in Luke's gospel: sinners and pharisees.

### *Repetition*

- There is a poetic nature to parables. They often feel like proverbs, and they are presented in language that sets them apart from mere prose. Repetition builds suspense.
- Repetition makes parables easy to remember.
- Repetition also helps the audience recognize the significance when the “chain” is broken.
  - Example: Luke 20:9-18

### *Lab:*

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 “The Parable of the Sower”

Matthew 13:44-52 “A Hidden Treasure, A Pearl, and a Net”

Matthew 20:1-16 “Laborers in the Vineyard”

Matthew 21:28-32 “The Parable of the Two Sons”

Mark 4:21-34 “A Lamp, A Seed, and a Mustard Seed”

Luke 14:12-24 “Parable of the Great Banquet”

Luke 15:1-7 “Parable of the Lost Sheep”

Luke 20:9-18 “Parable of the Wicked Tenants”