

How to Teach the Bible

The Systematic Approach of Teaching

I. GUIDELINES FOR TOPICAL TEACHING

A. Types of Topical Teaching

1. Topical or doctrinal
 - a. A word study—One might teach on a particular word, how it is used throughout scripture, and offer a practical or doctrinal reason why the word is crucial for one's greater understanding of the scripture.
 - b. A phrase study—Some phrases within scripture (a combination of two or more words) are significant enough in meaning to warrant a lesson or message thereon. Consideration of these phrases could offer insight into doctrinal or practical applications.
 - c. A study of a subject or doctrine—Focused studies on virtues, types of sins, or doctrines often serves as great resources in other types of studies. One might teach on faith, for example, to help make sense of particular verses in their context.
 - d. A study of an object—This type of a study or lesson is quite uncommon, but it is not without its usefulness. For example, one might take some time to teach on shields in the Bible for the purpose of further enlightening the audience on why God might speak of the shield of faith.
 - e. A study of a type—In a basic sense, typology is the study of how a person, place, thing, or event pictures some future person, place, thing, or event and it is one of the scripturally sound and enjoyable ways to study scripture. Teaching such lessons is generally for the purpose of shining a light on the person, place, thing, or event foreshadowed.
2. Geographical: a study of a place—Geographical studies and lessons might involve conversations around important events that took place there or important people that were associated therewith. Furthermore, one might teach on the location or topographical makeup.
3. Historical
 - a. A study of an event—This is a common focus but would likely be considered under the umbrella of a textual study. However, some events are covered across such a great span of passages that a textual study makes it difficult to consider the entirety of the event.
 - b. A study of a period of time—While this could be covered in a textual study, there are times where so many passages are required to cover any time in history that a textual study is not feasible.
4. Biographical: a study of a person—One might teach on a person for the sake of understanding some specific doctrinal truth or historical event, but more likely would be the goal of obtaining some practical truths that would prove applicable in the present.

B. Treatment of Topical Teaching

1. Topical or doctrinal

a. A word study

(1) Possessing the knowledge

a) Study the word.

- i) Look the word up in scripture. Read each of the passages to get a feel of the biblical usage. See what other forms of the word are found in the Bible. If you need to, include these words in your study.
- ii) Locate the foremost occurrence of the word—that is, the book, chapter, and/or verse where the word occurs the most.
- iii) How many times does this word occur in the Bible? (You may or may not want to include other forms of the word.) How many times does it occur in the Old Testament versus the New Testament?
- iv) What other words are often found with this word? Look for synonyms, antonyms, and modifiers. Why are these words found together?

b) Build your definition.

- i) In the English language, the meaning of a word is determined by how it is used in speech and writing. By application, the meaning of a Bible word should be determined by how that word is used in the Bible. The Bible often gives hints of meaning in parallel words and phrases located within the context.
- ii) Examine why this word would be of importance for students of the scripture to study and understand.

(2) Passing the knowledge

a) Develop your outline.

b) Pass the knowledge.

- i) Determine the importance of the word, whether it be practical, doctrinal, or both. In other words, why should we care about the meaning and application of the word? How it can bring glory to God and edify the people.
- ii) Be focused and purposeful in the communication of the truths of the word study.
- iii) Ignore things that do not directly relate to the subject at hand.
 - (a) Context should not be betrayed, but it cannot always be explained.
 - (b) Other topics cannot be allowed to distract.
 - (c) Something being true does not mean that it fits the study at hand.

- b. A phrase study
 - (1) Possessing the knowledge
 - a) Look the phrase up in the Bible. Read through the references in the Bible to get a feel of the usage.
 - b) The Bible often gives hints of meaning in parallel words and phrases located in context of the phrase studied.
 - c) Variations of the phrase will also give hints as to the meaning of the phrase you are studying.
 - (2) Passing the knowledge
 - a) Develop your outline.
 - b) Pass the knowledge.
 - i) Establish the importance of the phrase. Why would a lesson be useful or needful for you and others?
 - ii) Point out the words that work together to form the phrase and the significance they play in the phrase.
 - iii) Strive not to be distracted by things that do not directly relate to or support the study at hand.
 - iv) Again, context is always important and should never be betrayed, but it does not always have to be expressed in-depth.
- c. A study of a subject or doctrine
 - (1) Possessing the knowledge
 - a) To the best of your ability, find every occurrence of this subject or doctrine in scripture. Divide the occurrences by sections of the Bible. Is there a chapter in the Bible that focuses on this subject or doctrine?
 - b) Once you have read every occurrence of the subject or doctrine within its context, make a general definition. If possible, make a specific definition, but do not do so to the detriment of the scriptural use. Allow the scriptural connotation and the comparison or contrast of your subject to shape your definition. Does your definition match the standard teaching of this subject or doctrine? If not, what scriptures lead you to go against the standard teaching?
 - (2) Passing the knowledge
 - a) Develop your outline.
 - b) Pass the knowledge.
 - i) Identify the main points and main purpose in the study of the subject or doctrine.
 - ii) Organize the Bible emphasis and teaching of the study at hand. Identify the application to the audience.
 - iii) Certain aspects of context become more crucial as it pertains to doctrinal studies, but again much attention and effort should be given to stay on the subject at hand and minimize distractions.
 - iv) Be sure that the audience is able to understand the desired response to the teaching.

- d. A study of an object
 - (1) Possessing the knowledge
 - a) Find every occurrence of this object in scripture.
 - b) Divide the occurrences by sections of the Bible. Is this object emphasized in one section or chapter of the Bible over the others?
 - c) What is the connotation of the object being studied?
 - d) Are there any Bible teachings or customs associated with this object? What characteristics of this object can be seen in the scriptures? How does the Bible use this object to illustrate truth?
 - (2) Passing the knowledge
 - a) Develop your outline.
 - b) Pass the knowledge.
 - i) Establish what corresponding truths make the study of an object of importance. Is it because of its relation to a person or place? Is it because it is used to teach truth concerning doctrine or practice?
 - ii) Consider the use of props or visual aids.
 - iii) Work hard to stay on task and get to the point.
- e. A study of a type
 - (1) Possessing the knowledge
 - a) Determine if the type is:
 - i) Declared by **direct statement**
 - ii) Declared by **comparative terminology**
 - iii) **Not declared:** There are some great types in scripture that are never declared to be types, yet the overwhelming evidence is that one person/thing is a picture of another person/thing.
 - b) List the details of the original person or thing you are studying. List details of the person/thing being pictured that coincide with the original person/thing. Find the details that are alike between the type and the person/thing that is being pictured.
 - (2) Passing the knowledge
 - a) Develop your outline.
 - b) Pass the knowledge.
 - i) Be careful not to use the type to create doctrinal truths concerning that which is being pictured or foreshadowed. Typology is commonly and easily used to promote unbiblical teaching because of the focus on that which is figurative and in need of subjective interpretation.
 - ii) Strive to put more emphasis on the Bible passages of that which is being pictured than on that which is doing the foreshadowing. After all, the foreshadowed person, place, or thing is the focus of typology.