

## How to Teach God's Word

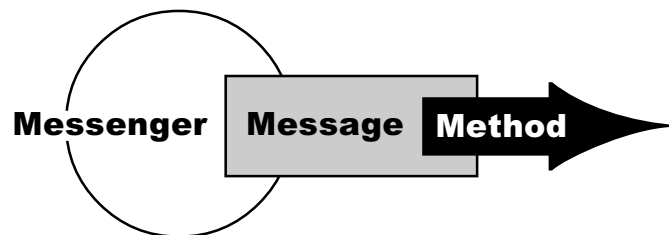
# 1

# Becoming a Teacher of God's Word

Today we start on **Module 103** – “How to Teach God's Word.” The aim of this module is to help train you to teach the Word of God with maximum impact on people's lives. It is also laying the groundwork for **Modules 104-106**, where we study the essential truths of God's Word. As with all things taught at the Online Bible College, our purpose is not simply to *teach* you God's Word, but to *equip* you to teach that Word to others.

There are three parts to the communication of any truth from God's Word, whether it be in witnessing, discipling or teaching. These three parts are:

- The Messenger
- The Message
- The Method



There is often great emphasis placed on developing methods, or techniques\*, for the effective delivery of God's Word. But while methodology is important, far more important are the first two elements: the messenger and the message. God always focuses on the messenger first, and so in this first lesson, we will be focusing on *you*, as a messenger and as a teacher of God's Word.

\* One subject that is usually mandatory in Bible seminaries and Bible colleges is the study of “homiletics.” Homiletics is defined as “the art of preparing and delivering a sermon” or “the art of preaching.” You will note that at the Online Bible College we will not be studying homiletics, for a reason which hopefully will become apparent as you progress through this module. We will, however, be looking at the three important parts of preaching the Gospel: the messenger, the message and the method.

## You are Called to Teach

As a person begins growing in the knowledge of God, a desire to know God's personal call for their life begins to develop. "What is my call?" is often asked. "How does God want to use my life?"

These questions are healthy, for they are a sign that a Christian is growing up into Christ, a sign that the believer is beginning to understand that to "participate in the divine nature" also means to participate in the ministry of Christ. We are ready to move beyond the *blessing* of God to the *purpose* of God.

Every believer in Christ has two parts to their call from God:

- A *general* call of ministry
- A *special* call of ministry

God will not reveal his *special* call upon your life until you have begun operating in the *general* call that goes out to every believer. That general calling is common to every Christian, without exception. This general expression of ministry includes:

- Being a witness for Christ
- Being a servant for Christ
- Being a teacher of the Word of Christ

This may surprise some Christians. "Me?" they might say. "Me, called to teach? No way! I'm not gifted in that area!" But the Bible reveals that God expects each and every believer to teach God's Word.

### Read Colossians 3:16

Let's see how different versions of the Bible render this verse:

**New International Version:** "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

**New King James Version:** "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

**New Century Version:** "Let the teaching of Christ live in you richly. Use all wisdom to teach and instruct each other by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

**New Living Translation:** "Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts."

**The Living Bible:** "Remember what Christ taught, and let his words enrich

your lives and make you wise; teach them to each other and sing them out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord with thankful hearts.”

**The New Revised Standard Version:** “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

**The New Testament in Modern English:** “Let Christ’s teaching live in your hearts, making you rich in the true wisdom. Teach and help one another along the right road with your psalms and hymns and Christian songs, singing God’s praises with joyful hearts.”

**The Amplified Bible:** “Let the word [spoken by] the Christ, the Messiah, have its home (in your hearts and minds) and dwell in you in [all its] richness, as you teach and admonish and train one another in all insight and intelligence and wisdom [in spiritual things, and sing] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody to God with [His] grace in your hearts.”

The result of God’s Word “dwell[ing] in you richly” *must* be the sharing of that Word with others. This is part of the overflow experience in studying his Word.

Now, let’s take a look at two more verses.

### Read Hebrews 5:12

### Read James 3:1

Does it seem like these two verses are contradicting each other? In the first, the Lord seems to expect everyone to be a teacher of his Word, yet, in the second, the Lord is warning *against* aspiring to be a teacher!

There is, of course, no contradiction. These two passages are talking about two different *types* of teacher.

- **The general call to teach** – *every believer* as a teacher
- **The special call to teach** – the special ministry gift of “teacher”

Let’s look briefly at both these types of teaching.

### ***The general call to teach***

Every believer is called to teach God’s Word. We are all called to impart God’s truth to one another. In fact, teaching is a vital part of the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**).

The general guideline for every-believer teaching is found in **1 Corinthians 14:3**. Although referring specifically to prophesying, the principle contained in this verse also applies to teaching:

“But everyone who [teaches] speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”

When a rank-and-file believer teaches, their teaching should be limited to these three emphases:

- Strengthening
- Encouragement
- Comfort

The general call of teaching has fairly strict parameters. Note that it does *not* include rebuke or major correction, as described in **2 Timothy 3:16**. Rebuke and correction of doctrine is a responsibility delegated by Christ to church leadership (note Paul’s instruction to Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:2** and to Titus in **Titus 2:15**). On the other hand, the teaching of one believer to another is designed to focus on encouragement and the building up of one another in the Lord.

**Read Hebrews 3:13**

**Read Hebrews 10:25**

### ***The special call to teach***

**Read Ephesians 4:11**

In **Ephesians 4:7**, Paul says, “But to *each one of us* grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” Then, in **verse 11**, he goes on to say that Christ “gave *some* to be...teachers.” The ministry of the teacher, as one of the five-fold ministry, is a special apportioning of Christ’s grace to “some” in the Body of Christ. Not every Christian will become a “teacher” in the sense of **Ephesians 4:11**.

**Read Romans 12:6-7**

The special ministry gift of the teacher is different from the general calling of every believer to teach. This ministry involves a special gift and anointing from the Holy Spirit to impart God’s Word to the Body of Christ.

**Read 1 Timothy 5:17**

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:28-29**

It is the first type of teaching – the general call on every believer – that we will be examining throughout this module. This level of teaching can be expressed in one or more of four settings:

- Discipling – one-on-one teaching
- Family bible studies – bible study with spouse and children
- Bible study groups – home groups, cells, house churches, and the like
- Larger church meetings – more formal teaching settings\*

The teaching style of each setting is different, and we will be examining how this works in a later lesson.

\* Note that the fourth setting – larger teaching groups – may occasionally be opened up for an ordinary believer to teach, although this is usually reserved for those with a recognized ministry of teaching. Sometimes the fourth setting can be opened up to provide a believer who has some experience in teaching in the first three settings with an opportunity to develop his or her teaching gift to another level.

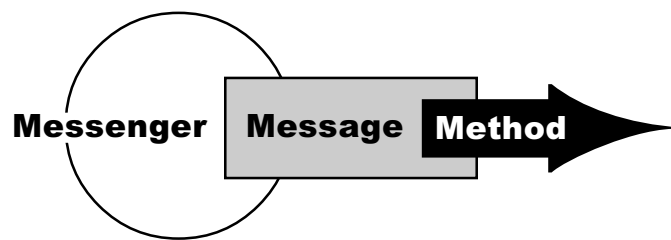
## The Impact of God's Word

God's aim is to see the truth of his Word impact and change people's lives, but he uses *people* to do this – real people just like you. This does not mean that God cannot speak directly to a person's heart as they read God's Word. There are countless testimonies of people who committed their life to Christ because they picked up a Gideon's Bible in a hotel room, and God's plan is for every believer to hear from God in the personal study of his Word each day.

Just as God did not simply speak his Word from a distance, but came down to earth in the form of Jesus – the Word become flesh (**John 1:1-2,14**) – so God continues to speaking his people using human vessels.

And just as we saw in Module 101 that you cannot divide God from his Word, so in this module we will establish that you cannot divide the messenger from his message. God intends for the two – messenger and message, character and ministry – to be locked in sync.

We've already seen that there are three parts to the teaching of God's Word:



Now let's look at these three aspects from a different angle.

Back in the 4th century BC, the Greek philosopher Aristotle articulated three distinct parts to effective communication. The three Greek words he used have been absorbed in today's English language and they are worth learning:

- **Logos** – The *words* of the message. This is the same Greek word that John uses for the name of Christ as “the Word” (**John 1:1,14**), and this term is often used in the Greek New Testament for the Bible as God's “Word” (for example, **Ephesians 6:17**).
- **Pathos** – The *emotion* of the message. This is the passion behind the words, the feeling that the speaker conveys, and the identification that the hearers have with the speaker.
- **Ethos** – The *character* of the speaker. This is the background lifestyle behind the message. Interestingly, Aristotle considered *ethos* to be the most important of the three.<sup>1</sup>

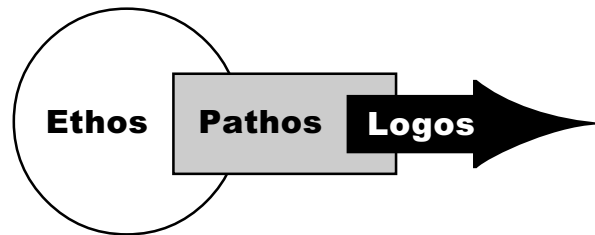
The lifestyle or *ethos* of the teacher holds no greater priority with God. There is a modern saying that goes: “Actions speak louder than words.” The 19th century

thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson once interrupted someone who was spousing his personal philosophy and said, “I’m sorry, I can’t hear you. You’re life is too loud.”

There is nothing louder than your life. This is why Peter talks about winning over unsaved husbands to the Lord “without words by the behavior of their wives” (1 Peter 3:1). As Joseph Wilson, father of Woodrow Wilson, said:

“Become what you preach, and then preach Christ in you.”<sup>2</sup>

When *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* are in sync, then the result is effective communication of God’s Word.



These three aspects of communicating God’s Word can be summarized thus:

- **Ethos** – *living* God’s Word
- **Pathos** – *loving* God’s Word
- **Logos** – *speaking* God’s Word

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5

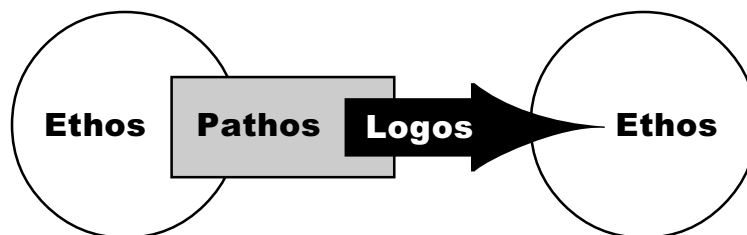
The *New International Version* translates this verse in this way:

“...because our gospel came to you *not simply with words* [**logos**], but also *with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction* [**pathos**]. You know *how we lived among you for your sake* [**ethos**].”

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6

The result of effective *communication* of God’s Word to others is an active response of *imitation*. The whole discipling process initiated by Jesus is a process of imitation and duplication of God’s life, passed from one believer to another. Paul was able to say to the Thessalonians:

“You became *imitators* of us and of the Lord...”



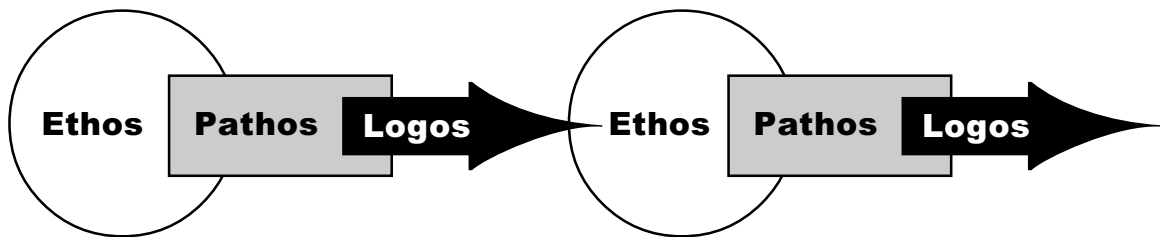
The process of imitation.

This imitation was not just of the *words* of Paul but of the lifestyle *behind* those words (note **1 Corinthians 4:17; 11:1; Philippians 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; 2 Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 13:7**). This imitation of Paul's lifestyle resulted in a *multiplication* of God's Word in the lives of others.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10

The Word of God is designed to have a multiplication effect. As Paul said concerning the Thessalonian Christians:

“The Lord's message *rang out from you...*”



The pattern of the multiplication of God's Word.

This characteristic of the Word of God – to be not just taught but multiplied in the lives of others – is the basis for the Online Bible College's motto, which can be found in **Acts 12:24**:

“But the word of God grew and multiplied.”

God measures the success of the teaching of his Word according to three vital steps:

- ➔ Communication
- ➔ Imitation
- ➔ Multiplication

We established in **Module 101** that the goal of studying the Bible is not *information* but *intimacy*. This is now the same goal in your teaching of the Bible. What you are after, whenever you teach God's Word, is not just the passing of information but the passing of lifestyle of intimacy with God in his Word.

### Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

At the very best, swollen heads produce swollen heads. If information is all that you have received, then information is all you can give. It takes changed lives to produce changed lives.

## The Starting Point

The starting point for teaching is always the messenger – the *ethos* of the teacher. We often talk about preparing the *message*, but rarely thinking about preparing the *messenger*. This is God's absolute priority. His focus is upon the messenger

long before he focuses upon the message.

### Read Isaiah 49:2

This verse is both a description of Isaiah himself, as well as a prophetic depiction of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is also a picture of how God prepares you for ministry. Note there are two aspects of his preparation:

- ☞ **“He made my mouth like a sharpened sword...”** – The preparation of your *tongue* to speak the words of God (note **Isaiah 50:4**; **1 Peter 4:11**).
- ☞ **“He made me into a polished arrow...”** – The preparation of your *life* so that you can be an effective vessel of ministry (**2 Timothy 2:20-21**).

Just as Jesus was the Word become flesh – the Message embodied – so God intends you too to become his message embodied. You can only ever truly minister out of what you are. Words are nothing more than the package which the message comes in. The real message is rooted in the life of the messenger.

### Read 1 Corinthians 15:10

Paul describes the grace of God having effect in his life on two levels:

- ☞ **In transforming his life to be like Christ** – “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.”
- ☞ **In empowering his life to do the ministry of Christ** – “No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

As we saw in **Module 102**, the character of Christ and the ministry of Christ go hand in hand. So it is with the teaching of God’s Word. It is in constant exposure to the grace of God – both its *life-transforming* and its *ministry-empowering* aspects – that a person is prepared by God for teaching his Word.

Do you remember what we read in **Colossians 3:16**? The biblical imperative is:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...”

This is the starting point. It is out of the *richness* of God’s Word dwelling within you that you are able to share that same Word with others (**John 15:7**). It is out of the *overflow* that you teach.

### Read Luke 6:45

There is a storing up of the Word of God. This is not a storing up for yourself, although there are personal benefits (note **Psalms 119:11**). This is a storing up for God to use in the ministry of his Word through you. God desires to build a storehouse of his Word in your heart, out of which you can draw “new treasures as well as old.”

### Read Matthew 13:52

It’s not about *education* in God’s Word as much as it’s about the *assimilation* of



God's Word. You can get a degree in theology but you cannot get a degree in God's Word. There is no academic process which can translate the Word of God from the pages of the Bible to the pages of your heart, and then from there to be written on the pages of the hearts of those who listen to you.

You can only truly minister what you yourself have received from God. When Peter and James faced the need of a crippled by the Gate Beautiful, their response, in **Acts 3:6**, was:

“Silver and gold I not have, but *what I have* I give you...”

Just a few verses later, in **Acts 4:13**, the Sanhedrin took note of two outstanding characteristics of Peter and John:

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that *they were unschooled, ordinary men*, they were astonished and they took note that *these men had been with Jesus*.”

These are the two outstanding characteristics that make you an effective teacher of God's Word:

- You are ordinary
- You have been with Jesus

What counts is not Christology\* but knowing Christ! (**Philippians 3:10**). No theological training can equip you to actually speak the words of God. There is only one thing that can equip you for such ministry – and that is being with Jesus.

As a teacher of God's Word, in the general calling that God has placed on every believer, don't be worried about what you don't yet know. It is out of what you have that you teach. What you have received from God and absorbed into your heart and personalized into your life is now yours to share with others!

## Under Authority

The teaching of God's Word involves the exercising of the authority of God's Word. Jesus spoke his Father's Word with authority (**Matthew 7:28-29**), and he has delegated this authority to us in the teaching of his word (**Matthew 28:18-20**).

### Read Matthew 8:9

This verse provides us with the basic biblical framework for the exercising of any kind of authority. To *exercise* authority, you must be *under* authority. This applies equally to the teaching of the Word of God.

### Read 1 Peter 4:11

In order to have the authority speak “as one speaking the very words of God,” you need to be hearing the very words of God. This takes place in the “closet” of

\* Christology is the academic study of Christ as he is revealed in the Old and New Testaments. It is usually a mandatory subject for a theological degree.

your hidden time in prayer with God (**Matthew 6:6**, KJV). As that great preacher and writer Charles Spurgeon once commented:

“The closet is the best study. The commentators are good instructors but the author himself is far better...”<sup>3</sup>

Even Jesus, the Son of God himself, was under the authority of his Father and it was from this position of submission that the authority of his teaching flowed. In **John 5:30**, Jesus declared:

“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”

The ministry of Jesus sets the pace for your ministry. When you are submitted to the *process* of God’s Word, then you will be delegated the *authority* of God’s Word. It is in the hidden place that God reveals himself to you. There he crafts you and molds you as his messenger, preparing the message *in* you long before he speaks the message *through* you.

<sup>1</sup> The concept of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* is drawn from Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994), p.25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ruggles Wilson, quoted by Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994), p.31.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, quoted by Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994), p.68.