

## Essential Truths III: Working With God

## 12

## Speaking the Word of God

In **1 Peter 4:11**, Peter makes a remarkable statement:

“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God...so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ...”

A Christian who speaks (in the sense of ministry to others) should, according to Peter, speak “as one speaking the very words of God.” The context of this statement makes Peter’s meaning very clear:

- ➔ **Verse 7** – “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”
- ➔ **Verse 8** – “Above all, love each other deeply...”
- ➔ **Verse 9** – “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”
- ➔ **Verse 10** – “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

The context of **1 Peter 4:11** emphasizes two things: time is short and in the light of this we need to minister to one other through the gifts that God has given us. Once we understand these two things, Peter instructs us:

“If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God...”

**Read Colossians 3:16**

The Birthright  
Taking the Baton  
The Great Commission  
The Body of Christ  
The Ministry of Every Believer  
Joining the Work of God  
The Tree of Life  
The Ministry of Reconciliation  
Filled with the Spirit  
Ministry to the Body  
Sent into the Harvest

▶ **Speaking the Word of God** ◀

A Lifestyle Gospel  
Salt of the Earth  
Enforcing the Victory  
Signs and Wonders  
A New Kind of Leadership  
Establishing a Daily Church  
Making Disciples  
The New Wine  
The Goal of Ministry

God wants you to absorb his Word so that it dwells “richly” in your heart. In this way, not only does the Bible itself contain rich seams of revelation and wisdom, but so does your heart. It is out of this hidden deposit of his Word in your heart that God has called you to speak into the need of others.

### Read 1 Corinthians 1:5-6

*This* is the purpose of all Bible study. Not just to *learn* the Word but to *speak* that Word. You have been “enriched” not just in your knowledge of God but also in your speaking of that knowledge. This is why **Colossians 3:16** says:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly *as you teach and admonish* one another with all wisdom.”

In order for you to speak “as one speaking the very words of God,” three things need to happen:

- You need to *digest* the Word
- You need to *translate* the Word
- You need to *impart* the Word

We’ll be looking at these three aspects in the rest of this study.

## Digesting the Word

Time and again, the Bible describes God’s Word as being like food. It gives strength to your inner man and causes you to grow up in Christ.

### Read Matthew 4:4

One of the most remarkable things about the Word of God is how it can meet the need of people on every level – from those who have just come to know the Lord right through to those who have known the Lord all their lives. The Word has great depth, and how much of it you absorb depends upon your maturity in Christ. And your maturity, in turn, comes from how much of the Word you put into practice. Thus your capacity to absorb God’s Word increases in direct proportion to your exposure to God’s Word.

The Bible describes God’s Word in terms to two types of food.

### ***Milk***

#### Read 1 Peter 2:2-3

The simple truths of God’s Word are like milk. These truths deal with the foundations of the Gospel and the nature of our relationship with God.

### ***Solid food***

Solid food is an understanding of the nature of God himself – his thinking, his heart and his plans – so that you can join the Lord in his purposes. In **Hebrews 5:12-14**, the writer exclaims, in a somewhat exasperated tone:

“In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, *who by constant use* have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

### Read Psalm 119:11

Throughout the Biblical Studies Course, we have emphasized that the Word of God has no effect on you unless you receive it and respond to it. It is not just in *hearing* the Word of God that you are changed. It is in *doing* the Word of God (**James 1:22**).

The first step in learning to speak the Word of God involves making that Word an integrated part of your own life. God desires for you to grow up in your experience in him so that you can impart to others the Word of life you have received.

### Read John 15:7

## Translating the Word

Many Christians think that speaking the Word of God is just about memorizing Bible verses and quoting them, hopefully in an appropriate way. But this is simply not the case. Speaking God’s Word is all about *translating* the Word of God into a form that the hearer can understand and apply.

In **Matthew 7:28**, we find that the crowds, after hearing Jesus teach, were “amazed at his teaching, *because he taught as one who had authority*, and not as their teachers of the law.”

Jesus didn’t just quote from the Old Testament, as did the teachers of the law. He didn’t quibble over the meaning of a phrase or the origin of a word. He spoke God’s Word directly into the lives of people. He translated the immutable Word of God into a real world setting.

There are two ways that a phrase can be translated from one language to another. The first method is called “literal translation.” This is a word-by-word approach (with allowance for differences in grammar). But while accurate, this method can lose some of the impact of the original meaning.

The second method is called “dynamic equivalence.” The emphasis is on the meaning of the entire phrase, not just of the individual words. Instead of translating word-by-word, those who use dynamic equivalence translate sentence by sentence, searching for units of meaning that will convey the full impact of the original language to the hearer.

What does this mean for you? Well, you can approach the speaking of God’s Word in *both* these ways. Whenever you quote directly from the Bible, you are drawing on the authority of the Scripture itself, which can have great impact. But unless that Word is translated, using dynamic equivalence, into language that the hearer

can understand, the meaning is largely lost.

God desires for you to absorb his Word into your heart so that its meaning is translated into your own day-to-day life. We call this the “Word become flesh” principle. Unless the Word of God becomes flesh in your life (in other words, becomes a part of who you are), you will never be able to speak that Word with authority to others. Just as Jesus was *the* Word become flesh, so God wants you to be *his* Word become flesh.

### Read 1 John 2:14

When you share God’s Word with others, the Holy Spirit can help you translate that Word into everyday language that the hearer can understand. Remember: simply memorizing Bible verses and quoting them at people is not what God is after. It is the *living* Word, not the quoted Word, that changes people’s lives.

## The Living Word

Let’s take a look at this from a slightly different angle. The Word of God comes in two distinct forms:

### ***The general Word***

The whole Word of God is the general Word. The general Word of God is like water, and as you read and meditate on the general Word, you bathe in the Word of God (**John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26**). It is the general Word that trains you to think and speak like the Lord himself (**Isaiah 50:4**).

The general Word of God provides the context for everything God speaks into your life. As we have emphasized many times, it is important to read every verse in context – what comes before and what comes after. If we do not, we run the danger of twisting God’s Word to match our own ideas, distorting it to fit into our preconceived notions (note **2 Corinthians 4:2**). The general Word of God is vital, because it is in the context of God’s general Word that the Holy Spirit will speak specifically into your life.

### ***The specific Word***

#### Read Hebrews 4:12

We read here that the Word of God is “living and active.” In the midst of the general Word of God, the Holy Spirit will hone in on a specific Word – a Word tailored for that time and that place.

When God speaks to a person’s heart, he brings a specific Word out of his general Word. This is the living Word of God, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to meet the need of a person’s life. It is the living Word that brings revelation and change. It is the living Word that will not return to God empty.

#### Read Isaiah 55:10-11

## Imparting the Word

### Read 1 Corinthians 2:13

We are called to speak “a message of wisdom” (1 **Corinthians 2:6**). And **verse 13** tells us how that message of wisdom is taught to us.

“This is what we speak, *not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit*, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.”

*The Message* phrases 1 **Corinthians 2:13** in this way:

“We don’t rely on the world’s guesses and opinions. We didn’t learn this [wisdom] by reading books or going to school; we learned it from God, who taught us person-to-person through Jesus, and we’re passing it on to you in the same firsthand, personal way.”

As has already been emphasized in **Module 101**, revelation in God’s Word is a process of discovery, orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. When you speak the Word of God to others, you are leading them down the same road of discovery. But it is now no longer your discovery; it’s their own personal discovery. Just as you learned from the Holy Spirit in “a firsthand, personal way,” so now your hearers are receiving God’s Word in the same way.

And for this to happen, one important ingredient must be added. We studied that ingredient in **Module 103**. Do you remember what it is?

### Read 2 Corinthians 4:13

Faith is the indispensable ingredient in the mix. Faith is what unlocks a revelation of God’s Word for you personally, and it is also what unlocks that revelation for your hearers (see 1 **Thessalonians 2:13**). **Hebrews 4:2** tells us:

“For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was *of no value to them*, because those who heard *did not combine it with faith*.”

The message of God’s Word has no effect on people’s lives unless it is combined with faith. Only the Holy Spirit can give faith. But when we speak with faith and conviction, the Holy Spirit anoints our words to penetrate our hearer’s heart (1 **Thessalonians 1:5**). In this way, the imparting of God’s Word to another is, in its essence, the imparting of faith, through the action of the Holy Spirit, teaching us to “express...spiritual truths with spiritual words.”

## Becoming an Approved Workman

### Read 2 Timothy 2:15

Paul’s encouragement to Timothy is also God’s encouragement to you:

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who

does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

The only way you can correctly handle “the word of truth” is by aligning your life with that Word, by allowing that Word to saturate your heart.

In the previous lessons of this module, we’ve seen how ministry is defined as being a ministry of encouragement (to the church) and a ministry of reconciliation (to the world). But both these ministries are expressed through the speaking of God’s Word – the word of encouragement and the word of reconciliation.

**Philippians 2:15-16** describes your ministry with these words:

“...that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life...”