

BOOK, CHAPTER, AND VERSE**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

In recent years, an increasingly popular sentiment has arisen which maintains that the explicit citation of Bible book, chapter, and verse in pulpit proclamation is somehow unsophisticated, ineffective, or inappropriate. With this emerging mentality has come a dramatic reduction in both the amount of scripture incorporated into the sermon and the extent to which the sermon's subject matter is derived directly from biblical texts. Many preachers now pad their sermons with appeals to modern "experts" in theology, psychology, and sociology. They pride themselves on staying abreast of the "latest thought" available from the academic community and draw freely from this body of information as source material. We have "set ourselves up" for an extremely dangerous and spiritually destructive circumstance, which historically has heralded the decline of God's spiritual nation (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Joshua 1:18; Psalm 1:2; Hosea 4:6).

Please consider why Gospel preachers ought to provide their listeners with direct Scriptural citations:

1. Such a practice helps hearers learn the Bible. Countless are the times that one's grasp of the content and structure of the Bible is facilitated by knowing precisely where a particular doctrine, principle, or truth is taught in Scripture. One learns and memorizes passages by reading and meditating for oneself (Acts 17:11; Luke 16:29; I Timothy 4:13). If the preacher does not use and identify Scripture in his sermon, he is at the very least failing to contribute to his hearers' acquisition of Bible knowledge. Perhaps he is even hampering this extremely vital process.
2. Quoting Scripture and requiring direct citation minimizes the tendency to make vague allusion to Scripture and, in so doing, to fail to take context into consideration. Error is often undetectable when disguised in the garb of a few familiar sounding words or phrases severed from their original context. Even when inspired writers refrained from giving specific Old Testament source, they were careful to quote the passage verbatim (cf. Hebrews 2:6ff; 4:4-7; 5:6). Doctrinal deceptions are constantly being foisted upon the simple and innocent (Romans 16:18) by the denominations and false brethren as they evade decisive and definitive contextual support for their erroneous religious views. Many disagreements and misconceptions would be settled and clarified if individuals did not justify their religious views by saying, "Somewhere in the Bible is says..."
3. Direct Scripture citation impresses upon the hearer that the preacher is not speaking "of himself" (cf. John 7:16; 8:28; 14:10), or asserting his own ideas (I Peter 4:11; II Peter 1:20-21), but rather permitting God to speak for Himself. Explicitly telling the audience where the words are found in Scripture emphasizes to them that they are accountable to God—not the preacher. It is His words (not the preacher's) that are "powerful" (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12) and able to save them (James 1:21). Additionally, even academia holds that it is only fair and ethical to give full documentation when alluding to the work of someone else.
4. Finally, giving hearers sufficient information for them to locate a passage is appro-

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

COMMON SENSE CHRISTIANITY:
TRUE WISDOM IS FROM ABOVE

Text: _____

I. True Wisdom's _____

Notes:

II. True Wisdom's _____

Notes:

III. True Wisdom's _____

Notes:

TIPS FOR THE CHRISTIAN'S
SPIRITUAL DIET

Text: _____

I. Eat _____ - Eat _____

Notes:

II. Start _____ and _____

Notes:

III. Ensure a _____

Notes:

prate because Jesus and others did essentially the same thing. Of course, chapter and verse divisions were unavailable in apostolic times; but faithful speakers gave sufficient indication by which their claims could be verified. Though occasionally a speaker would preface his Biblical quotation with a simple formula such as “it is written” (Matthew 4:4,7), he usually included more details, which enabled the listener to “zero in” on the specific text. Study carefully the following passages and notice how the inspired speaker provided clues to the specific source by identifying the Old Testament book, author, or canonical division (e.g., law, Psalms, or prophets—Matthew 3:3; 12:39; 13:14; 15:7; 24:15; Mark 7:6; Luke 20:42; 24:44; John 1:23; Acts 1:20; 2:16,25; 2:22; 13:33,35,40; 15:15; 28:25).

Christians living today are not addressing Jews who were so familiar with the old Testament that they needed to be reminded of a passage. We are addressing the denominations and the irreligious—both of whom are woefully ignorant of Scripture—all the more reason to specify our Scriptural source.

Why do some seem to reluctant to give book, chapter, and verse in their preaching? Perhaps some are threatened by the practice because their own knowledge of Scripture is inferior to that of those who are able to do so. Perhaps some have embraced false doctrines which cannot survive the straightforward scrutiny of scripture. Avoiding explicit scriptural citation facilitates religious seduction. Maybe to them, constantly quoting Scripture does not fit well with the modern, “sophisticated,” “educated,” “smooth” approach. Such “education” is akin to what Paul called “false knowledge” (I Timothy 6:20). Such “smoothness” sounds like the “smooth things” which Isaiah denounced (Isaiah 30:10).

Brethren, there will never come a time when culture or historical circumstances will warrant an abandonment of straightforward, Scripture quoting proclamation of God’s word. Let us not be ashamed (Romans 1:16) of the Bible. Let us present it faithfully to lost humanity and do all we can to encourage them to “check it out” (Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 5:21), as did the noble Bereans!

-Dave Miller

HOW MUCH IS “EVEN AS”?

Of the greatest covenantal bonds known to man, second only to the Christian’s relationship with God, is the marriage bond. God in His infinite and eternal wisdom looked at lowly Adam and immediately saw his loneliness as an insurmountable stumbling-block to his quality of life. And thus:

“...the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:21-24).

This constitutes the creation and institution of God joined marriage, and inherent in the process of “leaving and cleaving” is the necessity of loving affection. In fact, God consistently inspired the writers of the Bible to include love as foundational for marriage whenever they spoke and wrote of it (Song of Solomon 1-8; Matthew 19:1ff; Ephesians 5:22ff; Titus 2:4). Love, though, in the minds of many is a relative term. In the Bible it is not, because it represents love only in its fullness and perfection. However, in order to aid man in his understanding of God’s expectations, the Bible at times illustrates those expectations. This is the case in Ephesians 5:25 where Paul wrote, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” What the inspired writer does here is present a standard by which marital love is to be measured. Husbands are to love their wives “even as” Christ loves His church. “Even as” is translated from a single Greek term which literally means “just” or “inasmuch.” It carries with it the idea that our love is to be as equal as is possible to that of Christ. Therefore the love we reciprocate in marriage from husband to wife and wife to husband is to be “even as” great and glorious as the love Christ has for His church. But how much is “even as”?

“Even as” is greater than self-will. Man’s self-will is saturated with convenience, which inherently is not evil. If given the choice between convenience and inconvenience, void of iniquity, convenience is the obvious and opportunistic choice. However, when we enter the marriage bond, the convenience of self-will is not always an available choice. Common in wedding vows is the promise to abide with one another “for better or for worse, through sickness and in health, and for richer or for poorer.” I wonder how many recite these vows never believing the “worse, sickness, and poorer” will ever arise in their marriage. Many, seemingly, assume that health, wealth, and happiness will always prevail; thus when the inconveniences do occur they feel unprepared and overwhelmed and often forsake their partner.

If we are going to love our spouses “even as” Christ loved the church, then we are going to love void of self-will. Rather than a selfish love, we will have a selfless love. Legion are the examples of Christ’s selfless love seen in His earthly sojourn as He professed to be concerned solely with His Father’s will and the good of the lost souls of the world (Matthew 6:10; 12:50; 26:39; John 5:30,34; 6:39; Galatians 1:4). And it is further evident that there is little that Jesus did that could be called convenient and nothing that could be called selfish. Thus if we love “even as” Christ, our love will be greater than self-will.

“Even as” is greater than social demands. Husbands and wives, like anybody else, are members of society; and accompanying that membership come the demands of work, friends, co-workers, hobbies, etc. Each of these are good and important to the development of a well-rounded individual, but none of them can be a stumbling-block to the Divine bond of marriage. Because if we are going to love “even as” Christ, our spouses must be second to nothing and no one save God. Jesus allowed nothing and no one to detract Him from His affection-based mission for His bride, the church, even though society tried its best to knock Him off track (Hebrews 2:18). And if we are going to love “even as” Christ, our love will also be greater than social demands.

“Even as” is greater than life itself. The verses that portray the sacrificial nature of Christ’s love are countless (John 3:16; Ephesians 5:25; Hebrews 10:1-18; I John 3:16, et. al.). He considered nothing too great to suffer for the protective care of His bride because He viewed her safety as more precious than His own life. Such must be characteristic of the love that husbands have for their wives. In fact, to the oft asked question “how do I know if she is the one,” the question might be well asked, “would you die for her.” The answer to the latter answers the former. True love is sacrificial, even to the extent of life itself as illustrated by Christ. So if we are to love “even as” Christ, our love will be greater than life itself.

Can such a love “even as” that exhibited by Christ truly be felt and expressed today? Without a doubt! For if such were not possible, God could not demand such of all spouses throughout the world. “Husbands, love your wives, **even as** Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...” (Ephesians 5:25).