

∞ C. THEOLOGY OF THE WORD OF GOD ∞

Before we are able share any message, we must know the truth about what we will be sharing with God's people. We need to know what the Bible actually is – it's inherent nature. Then we need to know that God has given His Word for specific reasons – there is something He wants to accomplish through His Word in this world and in the lives of His people.

I. THE NATURE OF THE WORD OF GOD

The late John Osteen (father of pastor Joel Osteen) started his sermons with these words that he would have the congregation recite before he started preaching (it has been adapted and expanded):

*“This is my Bible
- the incorruptible, inerrant word of God.
I am what it says I am
– a saint made holy by the blood of Jesus,
a child of God born again by the Spirit of God.
I have what it says I have.
Through Christ who gives me the strength,
I can do what it says I can do.
I depend on it for my life on earth
more than I depend on my daily bread.
Today I will be taught the word of God.
I boldly confess my mind is alert, my heart is receptive.
I will be transformed
as my mind is renewed by the truth of God’s Word.
It will keep me pure from sin
and it is my spiritual weapon against every lie of the enemy.
As I submit to God’s Word and put it into practice,
my steps will be firm
and my life will be as a house built upon a rock
which will weather every storm
and I shall not be shaken.
And I will bear fruit that will last
and honour my heavenly Father in every good work.
I’ll never be the same.
In Jesus name.*

A whole book can be written about the nature of the Word of God, i.e. what the Bible is. Below are some descriptions of the nature of the Word of God. By just these few examples we can already see that the Bible is no ordinary “religious book”:

1. It is Revealed Truth

- ❑ “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but **the things revealed** belong to us and our children for ever, that we follow all the words of this law” – Deuteronomy 29:29
- ❑ Dan 2:20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. Dan 2:21 And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings. **He gives wisdom** to the wise **and knowledge** to those who have understanding. Dan 2:22 **He reveals the deep and secret things**; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. NKJV

- ❑ 1Co 2:9 But as it is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard," nor has it entered into the heart of man, "the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1Co 2:10 **But God has revealed them to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.** NKJV
- ❑ Psa 147:19 **He has revealed his word** to Jacob, **his laws and decrees** to Israel. Psa 147:20 **He has done this for no other nation;** they do not know his laws. Praise the LORD.
- ❑ Deu 4:7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? Deu 4:8 **And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?**

2. It is Forever Settled in Heaven and Earth – It Contains Unchanging Spiritual Laws and Principles

- ❑ Mat 24:35 The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.
- ❑ Psa 119:89 Your word, O LORD, will last forever; it is eternal in heaven. GNB
- ❑ Psa 119:89 Forever, O Jehovah, Your Word is settled in the heavens. NKJV

3. God Honours His Word Above All Things

- ❑ Psa 138:2 I will give worship before your holy Temple, praising your name for your mercy and for your unchanging faith: for you have made your word greater than all your name.
- ❑ Psa 119:72 The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

4. God Binds Himself to Bringing it to Pass

- ❑ Jer 1:12 And Jehovah said to me, You have seen well; for I will watch over My Word to perform it. NKJV

5. It is an Instrument of God's Power

- ❑ Isa 55:8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways My ways, says Jehovah. Isa 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. Isa 55:10 For as the rain comes down, and the snow from the heavens, and does not return there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring out and bud, and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; Isa 55:11 so shall My Word be, which goes out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall certainly do what I sent it to do.
- ❑ Mat 8:8 The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ... Mat 8:10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ... Mat 8:13 Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour.

6. It Has a Power and Life of its Own

- ❑ Luk 8:11 Now this is the point of the story: The seed is the word of God... Luk 8:15 And those in the good earth are those who, having given ear to the word, keep it with a good and true heart, and in quiet strength give fruit.

Seeds contain life and have great potential.

7. It Will be the Standard by Which God Will Judge Us One Day

- ❑ Joh 12:48 Those who reject me and do not accept my message have one who will judge them. The words I have spoken will be their judge on the last day!

II. THE MINISTRY PURPOSES OF THE WORD OF GOD

God never speaks idle words. He cannot speak carelessly because His words have tremendous power.

- ❑ Isa 55:11 so shall My Word be, which goes out of My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall certainly do what I sent it to do.
- ❑ 2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 2Ti 3:17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible teaches us that God has designed His Word to be used for very specific purposes:

1. To Bring Revelation

- ❑ Hos 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the Law of your God, I will also forget your sons, even I. NKJV
- ❑ 2Pe 1:5 For this very reason do your best to add goodness to your faith; to your goodness add knowledge; 2Pe 1:6 to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add endurance; to your endurance add godliness; 2Pe 1:7 to your godliness add Christian affection; and to your Christian affection add love. 2Pe 1:8 These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance, they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. NKJV

2. To Convert Souls

- ❑ Psa 19:7 The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making the simple wise. NKJV
- ❑ Psa 19:7 The revelation of GOD is whole and pulls our lives together. The signposts of GOD are clear and point out the right road. Psa 19:8 The life-maps of GOD are right, showing the way to joy. The directions of GOD are plain and easy on the eyes. - The Message

3. To Bring People to Faith in Jesus and to Eternal Life

- ❑ "... these [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

4. To Show People How to Live a Holy Life

- ❑ Joh 15:2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. And every one that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bring forth more fruit. Joh 15:3 Now you are clean [literally "pruned"] through the Word which I have spoken to you. Joh 15:4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. NKJV
- ❑ "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word" – Psalm 119:9 NIV

*"I have read many books,
but the Bible is the only
book that reads me" –
Karl Barth*

- ❑ Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and full of power, and is sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting through and making a division even of the soul and the spirit, the bones and the muscles, and quick to see the thoughts and purposes of the heart. Search out a person's spirit – convict

5. To Teach People How to Apply Biblical Principles to Everyday Life

a. How to Grow in a Walk with God

- ❑ 2Ti 3:14 But as for you, continue in the truths that you were taught and firmly believe. You know who your teachers were, 2Ti 3:15 and you remember that ever since you were a child, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2Ti 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, 2Ti 3:17 so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.
- ❑ 1Pe 2:2 Be full of desire for the true milk of the word, as babies at their mothers' breasts, so that you may go on to salvation CEV

Whatever you'd like to "GROW" in your people's lives, you have to "SOW" into your people's lives. The seed is the Word of God

A well-read Bible is the sign of a well-fed soul.

b. How to Live a "Shalom" Life

Shalom: "Complete, whole, safe, well, happy, friendly; healthy, prosperous, peaceful, tranquil, favoured, successful"

- ❑ Psa 1:2 But whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and whose mind is on his law day and night. Psa 1:3 He will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which gives its fruit at the right time, whose leaves will ever be green; and he will do well in all his undertakings.
- ❑ Mat 7:24 "So then, anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock.
- ❑ Psa 19:11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

6. To Use Truth to Set People Free

- ❑ Joh 8:30 After Jesus said this, many of the people put their faith in him. Joh 8:31 Jesus told the people who had faith in him, "If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my disciples. Joh 8:32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

7. To Wage Spiritual Warfare

- ❑ Eph 6:13 For this reason take up all the arms of God, so that you may be able to be strong in the evil day, and, having done all, to keep your place. Eph 6:14 Take your place, then, having your body clothed with the true word, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness; Eph 6:15 Be ready with the good news of peace as shoes on your feet; Eph 6:16 And most of all, using faith as a cover to keep off all the flaming arrows of the Evil One. Eph 6:17 And take salvation for your head-dress and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:
- ❑ 2Co 10:3 For though walking about in flesh, we do not war according to flesh. 2Co 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, NKJV ... 2Co 10:5 We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of

God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. The Message

8. To Correct and Rebuke Errors and False Doctrines

- ❑ Tit 2:15 Speak these things, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. NKJV
- ❑ Tit 2:15 Teach these things, as you use your full authority to encourage and correct people. Make sure you earn everyone's respect. CEV

9. To Encourage & Stimulate Faith

- ❑ "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4)
- ❑ Rom 10:17 Then faith is of hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.
- ❑ Isa 50:4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, **to know the word that sustains the weary**. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

10. To Counsel and Give Guidance

- ❑ Psa 119:24 Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.
- ❑ Psa 119:105 Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
- ❑ Psa 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
- ❑ Pro 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: Pro 1:2 for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; Pro 1:3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; Pro 1:4 for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—Pro 1:5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—Pro 1:6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

11. They warn us about dangers to avoid, false doctrines to avoid and the Coming Judgement

- ❑ Psa 19:11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.
- ❑ Eze 3:17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. Eze 3:18 When I say to a wicked man, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to dissuade him from his evil ways in order to save his life, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. Eze 3:19 But if you do warn the wicked man and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his evil ways, he will die for his sin; but you will have saved yourself. Eze 3:20 "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before him, he will die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. The righteous things he did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. Eze 3:21 But if you do warn the righteous man not to sin and he does not sin, he will surely live because he took warning, and you will have saved yourself."
- ❑ Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Mat 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Mat 3:9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. Mat 3:10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
- ❑ 2Ti 2:14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

- ❑ Gal 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

III. PREACHING & TEACHING SHAPES A CHURCH'S CULTURE

Wise Christian leaders understand the great influence that good preaching has in the life of a congregation. They also use preaching and teaching purposefully to shape a congregation's "culture".

"Culture as a way of life, habits and customs (including laws and taboos) of a people is deeply rooted in what they think of their environment and their role in it" (Adeyemo 2009:15-16).

Finzel says, "An organization's corporate culture is the way insiders behave based on the values and group traditions they hold" (2000:135). Each organization "has a totally unique and distinct personality ... and that culture is built upon the values and belief systems that percolate up from the core of its leadership like molten lava bubbling out of a volcano" (Finzel 2000:136).

Wright mentions that: "Every organization has a hidden culture that has developed over the years that controls what is done regardless of the values we espouse ... Leaders create and sustain culture in everything they do" (Wright 2003:117, 122).

It is for this very reason that not everybody should be allowed to preach. Many churches regularly preach through the different points of their vision in order to keep the momentum behind their vision. When leaders want to introduce anything into a congregation's way of life – i.e. lifestyle, the most effective way is to begin to preach and teach about it.

"Without minimizing other elements of the worship service, the sermon is critical. For thirty or so minutes, God's gathered people focus on hearing and understanding his word. The way the preacher handles the Bible communicates the church's values and shapes the culture" - How the Sermon Can Shape a Church's Culture – Ryan Higginbottom, 25 January 2016.

"Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrines of grace create a culture of grace, a social environment of acceptance and hope and freedom and joy. Jesus himself touches us through his truths to create a new kind of community. Without the doctrines, the culture alone is fragile. Without the culture, the doctrines alone appear pointless." – Ray Orland.

"In order to change the observable artifacts or behavior of a church, the values of the church (what they care about) must be changed. But to change the values of the church, the presuppositional underlying beliefs of the church must be changed. The most effective way of addressing people's deeply held assumptions and beliefs is to teach God's Word. Many people will not change what they believe simply because the pastor believes it. They need to be shown from the Bible why such-and-such a proposal is being made, or why a particular objective in the church is being pursued. Demonstrate to the people that the particular change initiative you are proposing is rooted in Scripture and they will see recognize the need for change and attribute the kind of authority to that change that goes beyond the influence of the pastoral leadership" - How to Shape Your Church's Culture. Andrew Hebert, LifeWay Leadership. 16 October 2014

Notice how the way in which teaching shaped people lives in the following Scriptures:

Nehemiah 8:

- Neh 8:4 Ezra the scribe stood on a high wooden platform built for the occasion. ... Neh 8:5 Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Neh 8:6 Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Neh 8:7 The Levites — ...instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. Neh 8:8 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read. Neh 8:9 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Neh 8:10 Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. **This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**"
- Neh 8:13 On the second day of the month, the heads of all the families, along with the priests and the Levites, gathered around Ezra the scribe to give attention to the words of the Law. Neh 8:14 They found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded through Moses, that the Israelites were to live in booths during the feast of the seventh month Neh 8:15 and that they should proclaim this word and spread it throughout their towns and in Jerusalem: "Go out into the hill country and bring back branches from olive and wild olive trees, and from myrtles, palms and shade trees, to make booths"—as it is written. Neh 8:16 So the people went out and brought back branches and built themselves booths on their own roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the house of God and in the square by the Water Gate and the one by the Gate of Ephraim. Neh 8:17 The whole company that had returned from exile built booths and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great. Neh 8:18 Day after day, from the first day to the last, Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God. They celebrated the feast for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

The Church in Pergamum – Negative Example

- Rev 2:14 But there are a few things I have against you: there are some among you who follow the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak how to lead the people of Israel into sin by persuading them to eat food that had been offered to idols and to practice sexual immorality. Rev 2:15 In the same way you have people among you who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Rev 2:16 Now turn from your sins! If you don't, I will come to you soon and fight against those people with the sword that comes out of my mouth.

The Church in Thyatira – Negative Example

- Rev 2:20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

☒ APPENDIX 1: PREACHING EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Preaching Video Clips : write down 2-3 points or statements that stand out for you:

“Fishers of Men” - Youth Talk

Joyce Meyer - “Hello God. Can I talk to You”

Pastor Derek Prince – “The Power and Authority of God’s Word”

For next week:

Take notes of the sermon in your church on Sunday:

- (1) Write out the outline of the sermon, including the passage, the title (and/or the theme), and the main points.
- (2) Critique the sermon (comment on the theme, exegesis, explanation, illustrations and applications used during the sermon), and give your evaluation of what was good and what could be improved upon.
- (3) Comment on the delivery (how it was preached)

Your homework must be handed in on three separate A4 pages, each with your name on it. You may want first ask your pastor if it will be ok with him, and let him know which 3 areas you will be looking at. I.e. show him the assignment.