

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Q & A on Preachers and Preaching, Part 2**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: GTY74

**2000**

DICK: Well, we're going complete, Lord willing, our four sessions on expository preaching that have pulled a little bit out of John's mind, the first two sessions as he's shared his heart in expository preaching. And we think we had a good warm up with our questions and answers. And we'll see if we can take about 20 minutes to complete some of the pre-prepared questions we've got that we know a lot of people are asking. And then Dr. Boosens(??) is going to be prepared to move out in the audience for the questions that you've brought, maybe the last 25 minutes or so.

Thank you for your encouragements of the session. A number of the faculty have come, a number of you of students have come and just said how helpful this has been to in short order crystalized in your mind exactly what expository preaching is and what the biblical mandate is and what it is that we here at the Master's Seminary are attempting to build into your life as a primacy and how every course in the curriculum plays into that to the ultimate point that you can be a courageous unabashed proclaimer of the truth of God's Word wherever He sends you in the world.

Well welcome back to our session...

JOHN: Thank you.

DICK: See if we can proceed a little bit further. You remember at our last session, I think there were really two...two very, very significant things that we talked about and number one was how to define expository preaching not in its delivery so much as the process that arrived at the message. And we talked a little bit about that and we really crystallized the idea...you crystallized the idea in the sense that exposition is defined more by our purposes and that is to give the people an understanding of what the text means by what it says, and God's mandate of obedience which is really the work of a herald, which is one of the great pictures, "Preach the Word" from kerusso and kerux the herald. But far more is defined by that and by the way you process the biblical text with the exegetical approach with a grammatiko, historico hermeneutic as you approach it than any kind of a homiletical force. As a matter of fact, you're kind of a maverick when it comes to homiletics and we'll talk a little bit about that. John MacArthur is not so much known for his homiletical style as he is for his expositional substance, and that's really the heart of it.

And the second thing is that the exposition of Scripture ought to result in it. It ought to always be our goal to put the glory and majesty of God on public display because it is His self-revelation of His very eternal being and His plans and His purposes.

Well that is in mind just as a little bit of a review. At least I thought those were two significant, very crystallized ideas we came with. Do you have anything you just want to say without a question, or should I....?

JOHN: No, I would just say that you when you talked about kerusso and you mentioned the idea of a herald. We didn't talk about that a lot but...

DICK: Well let's do so.

JOHN: Well it goes without saying that if this is the Word of God, it comes with authority. I think Titus 2:15 says, "These things teach and proclaim and exhort with all authority and don't let anyone kata phroneo, you know, think their way around it so that because it is the Word of God it comes with authority. And that's one of the reasons I use predominantly biblical illustrations rather than life illustrations because while illustrations from life may have interest, they don't have authority. So if you can find a biblical illustration, you not only can explain, you not only can elucidate the truth, but you can bring that elucidation with the same weight that the text that you're dealing with brings because it's the Word of God. So I think it goes without saying that it probably is another component in my ministry for which I suffer some slings and arrows that I do preach with authority. And that is not personal authority and that is not personal authority, that is not, I hope, the authority of a personal opinion, nor the authority of a defensive man who's cornered with a wrong view and he's trying to fight his way out. But it's the authority that comes from doctrinal definitiveness or doctrinal clarity so there will be in a ministry that is really explaining the text and really focusing on the glory of God, I think a great weight of authority. And against that authority, people who don't like what you say feel that pressure and there will be, very often, a hostile reaction to it among those who aren't willing to be obedient.

So it would be safe to say as Paul handed that mantle of authority off to Titus, he wasn't handing off apostolic succession but he was handing off...handing off proclamation(??) authority if the message is God's.

JOHN: Yes, since there is no such thing as apostolic succession...

DICK: And then to every succeeding generation...

JOHN: Right, the only authority we have is in the truth. I don't have any personal authority.

DICK: John, you're well known throughout the world. Some like it, some don't like it, but you're still known and characterized, a man who really has majored in the verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter, book-by-book exposition, although not all of your messages come out that way for various reasons. I think it was John Piper who called that sequential preaching. Could you talk just a little bit about the long-term benefits for a congregation as to why there is more fruit to be gained in the long run by that kind of exposition than maybe Spurgeon's type...that's not to criticize Spurgeon, but Spurgeon kind of a verse a day...or a verse a message and kind of bounced all over, spent a lot of time in the Old Testament, maybe more time than he did in the New. You spent almost all your time preaching in the New, at least up to Genesis.

JOHN: Yeah, I don't want to...you know, I don't want to be unkind or unfair to Spurgeon because the level of his genius far exceeds my own and most other normal human beings. But by no means would I call Spurgeon an expositor. He was essentially a topical preacher. He was controlled in his handling of topics by his theology which for the most part was a right theology, certainly from the standpoint of theology proper, bibliology, soteriology, Christology, Pneumatology, I don't know when we get to...and even ecclesiology. We get to eschatology, I don't know that he was as refined at that point as he could have been or might have been.

DICK: Should have been more futuristic than his ?? .....but we'll forgive him.

JOHN: Yeah, but...you know. But the bottom line is the man had a right theology and because he had a right theology, his...his topical preaching, or his textual preaching, I guess you could call it, stayed within the framework and was definitive in itself. But you couldn't...you know, he could preach on one phrase out of a verse, isolated out of the context of the verse and the passage around the verse, but I think what...what makes him so unforgettable is the genius of his own mind and creativity and the tremendous grasp of the language. He was absolutely prosaic beyond most people. And, all of that was controlled by a very right and sound and solid theology. And also he was a man of immense personal conviction. When he came to something that he believed was true, he would stick his neck on the block and that's why he has lasted so long because when...we don't even remember the people who aren't willing to take a stand. I mean, they just die off every generation, they just pass off the scene and nobody knows. But the people...the people that really are the milestones of history down the road, there's a milestone here, and a milestone there in the true path, the path of truth, and he's one of those remembered because he took a stand against the trends of his time. But I think over the long haul, what you do when you do sequential exposition is you create a whole...a whole biblical mind in the person. It's a comprehensive way of thinking. No one message makes it. No one message forms it. No one chapter forms it. But over the long haul, you literally cause people to begin to think differently about everything. I mean, you hear the word "world view" used, I really prefer "truth view." Their perspective on truth changes. It's not a world view to me, it's a truth view, it's the

perspective of truth. It's...I think over the long haul people see everything in the world and everything outside the world that would be in the material world or the immaterial world accurately so that it all comes together, it is comprehensive. That is the benefit not only of sequential exposition but of staying in the same place for the long haul because you cover everything. I mean, the temptation for anybody, I think, typically, if I had left Grace Church after ten years, the temptation would be to go somewhere else and get caught up in doing other things and been re-preached the same things I've preached here for ten years because it was true in southern California, and it might have been true in Indiana, or it might have been true in Maine, or it might have been true in Italy or wherever I went. The benefit of staying in the same place, you know, and I think my son, Matt, commented one time, long faithfulness in the same direction, the benefit of that is you cover everything and so you literally are over the long haul producing a body of work, you know, when you think about 4,000 sermons and I don't know how many books. And you produce a body of work that...that approaches some level of comprehensiveness in giving someone a truth view, that is a view of the material and the immaterial that embodies biblical truth and you have to get at it all.

For example, it was not until the last couple of years that I even got to the book of Genesis. And while I've always believed what I believe about Genesis, our people have never understood Genesis in the past the way they understand it now. And so there is a part of that truth view of the material world that I didn't even build into their thinking until just this recent time. So that's the benefit of the long haul, is that people aren't dependent on one sermon to jack them up for a week, they're not dependent upon one sermon to give them some little formula to get through a hump...or a bump in the road. You're really developing in their minds a world perspective, a truth perspective that embraces the world immaterial and material, and I don't think you can do that if you're bouncing around. In one spot you are forced to create a body of work that is by virtue of your being in the same place bigger than it would be if you were jumping around because then the tendency is going to be that you're going, you know, go do this and go do that, and go to this seminar and that conference and this deal and bounce around. And I'm tyrannized by the fact that I've got to keep producing something they don't already know. But in the end that's to my benefit and to theirs and in the day in which we live, think about it, men, basically Spurgeon, long time in the same place, or a long time in the same city if not in the same church, produced a body of material that went all over the globe and essentially didn't repeat himself. But today that happens in a far greater way through tape, radio, publication, so that you're able to produce a body of work if it has any value that extends far beyond the walls of your own locus.

DICK: I think it's the variation of that question. Periodically and maybe more so in your earlier days of preaching than in these latter days of preaching, you would be preaching through a book like 1 Corinthians, a longer book, and would all of a sudden take a little break in the sequential preaching and go to a theological topic like God, Satan and Angels is a...why did you do that and what benefit is that to the congregation and to the preacher?

JOHN: Well I think in the process of doing sequential exposition, you're going to come across categories of truth that need a further explanation. And if you're going to be fair with the people to help them to understand the big picture of what you're saying, then you need to branch out. That is essentially to me somewhat dictated by the nature of the text. For example, just in a brief way going into the little part of Luke 4 where Jesus cast the demon out of the man, I took some liberty to expand on that. I don't know how many messages I did on that, it could...the story could have been told in one message, I think I did four or five because I needed to get out of that context itself and get into the bigger context of who are demons, what do they do, how did Jesus deal with them, how do we deal with them, what role do they play in our lives? Because essentially that's not completely covered in that text but it's essential to understand that so that dictates for me to launch off a little bit.

DICK: So part of that is understanding the part that you're preaching on, in light of the whole that's not necessarily there.

JOHN: That...in most cases it is that which compels me to do the other. It is the something in the text that I feel needs a broader explanation that will sort of catapult me into a sort of interruption series. Now that also can occur because I get personally distracted into some other area, as you know through the years, if I go away I tend to be reading a lot when I go away and generally like when I came back from Italy, I've got some things on my mind that have been percolating there for a long time and I've crystallized them and I need to deliver them. So I just stop and do this little thing I'm doing that I did last Sunday and will do this Sunday on deliverance. I kind of warn people it was coming because it does tie to the Luke text because Jesus came to deliver. That's Luke...that's Luke 4, that's Isaiah 61, that He came to deliver. Deliverance is an essential in the gospel and we don't hear much about it and I said I was going to do it and when I got away I...I started to think about it. But even that was prompted by the text, and then sort of further energized by my getting away from the constant pressure and reading in an area that I already determined I was going to go in to and then deciding to stick it in at that point.

DICK: And the congregation always finds that as a little bit of a relief in the sense...

JOHN: Yeah..

DICK: that the steady stuff we could put on the shelf, take a little variation and then come back to it.

JOHN: Yeah, I think it works because you have to be interesting no matter what you're talking about. You don't want to interrupt a boring series with something interesting, you just don't want to ever preach a boring series. So...so I think our people are loving Luke. I get a tremendous amount of feedback that they enjoy it. But there's something kind of refreshing and energizing about...just kind of backing up...and the question's already been raised in their mind about this issue. If I'm going to do this, it's not going to be something obtuse, it's not going to be something marginal. It's going to be

something that I think has been raised in their minds and needs to be addressed.

DICK: We've tried to describe exposition as contextual preaching, exegetical preaching. We've implied it's theological preaching. And a series you just started on deliverance, you used the term "discriminating preaching." Maybe you could elaborate a little bit.

JOHN: Well I'm just always looking for synonyms and you know, I remember an article a few years ago that Dr. Thomas did and actually read the paper to our Board, I think it was a board meeting in the college in which he talked about precision. You know, precision is...doesn't seem to be a premium in preaching today. There are a lot of things you hear about in preaching, precision isn't one of them. I mean, it's just not a word used but it ought to be. And discriminating preaching is just another term like that. It is preaching that is definitive. To discriminate simply means to make distinction, right? And to me preaching, you're not preaching to make a distinction, you're preaching truth which is distinct. If you come to the truth, the truth immediately then by definition eliminates everything...every other view from consideration so in that sense it is very discriminating. And when I say discriminating preaching, I'm saying that it's amazing to me how people can do what they call exposition and never say anything discriminating and definitive or precise.

DICK: So it's taken 2 Timothy 2:15 seriously.

JOHN: Yeah. I mean, people can meander through a text and come out with stories and ideas and concepts and never say anything definitive...that is that says, "Wow, that's true and anything but that isn't true." So I'm always looking for definitive things, discriminating things that close open doors, you know, that where things just can fly back and forth. I want to shut a door and say this is it...this is definitive, you can bank on this one. This is true and anything that opposes this is not true. Well that is certainly not popular today.

DICK: Talking about interesting preaching, you would be known as an interesting preacher. I mean, there are people that

JOHN: Thank you...(Laughter)

DICK: Job security. There are people that come to Grace Church that say, "I haven't trusted Christ, but I just have to come and hear what you've got to say because you're interesting." Is that something you just do naturally, intuitively. Or are there things you think about or skills you've tried to acquire that help in that area?

JOHN: No, I don't...I don't...I don't really know, I've said this before, I don't know why I'm interesting. I don't know...I frankly don't know if I'm interesting. And I don't think I'm all the time interesting. But I don't know why that is, I really don't. I mean, it's...I suppose it's like asking somebody why are they

fast, you know, or why does their brain work in a certain way.

DICK: So it's all part of your giftedness.

JOHN: Yeah...I can't answer that. It's nothing that I do. We both remember a seminary over in Glendale that had a course on the proper use of the microphone, so you know, I haven't reduced...I haven't reduced myself to some kind of...that's true. Yeah, I mean...to me...

DICK: The Falk(???) Seminary.

JOHN: I don't know, I can't honestly answer that question.

DICK: Because the reason I asked that is in today's market, so to speak, in churches, pastors are making church interesting by focusing on any and everything but the Word of God because they've made it so disinteresting.

JOHN: I think the Word of God is very interesting and even if you don't have certain natural giftedness, if you will do the hard work to uncover what's in the text, it's interesting and more than that, it's authoritative and it's compelling because it's from God Himself. But I think there's no excuse for a preacher not to have interesting material. He may not necessarily be captivating in terms of his communication skills or whatever, but...I mean, look, we can go back to days when men like Jonathan Edwards read their manuscripts and somebody might have said he wasn't a very interesting speaker. I think that was one of the criticisms of the Apostle Paul, that he didn't follow the normal pattern of people who were interesting public speakers. And that's why they said his speech is unimpressive, his presence is contemptible. But his message was, frankly, overwhelmingly compelling and so I work on the message side, I really have to leave the personal element of it to whatever is normal for me, or whatever is normal plus the Holy Spirit's giftedness.

DICK: The other day we talked about your insatiable curiosity that helps drive you into the text. Are there a series of questions that you're always using to...to investigate the text, to ask of the text? And how does that then by way of outlet accomplish the fact that many texts that preacher would just kind of maybe consider throwaway texts, like the opening three verses or the closing five verses, "Hi to Harry, Goodbye to Mary, Stop by the 7-11 and bring a writing pad," or whatever. You almost seem to take extra time and extra effort to turn them into messages that people remember maybe more than some of the heart of... What's that dynamic? What drives you to do that?

JOHN: Desperation (Laughter). I mean, you come to that and you say, "What am I going to do with this?" And so...it's like, you know, the old deal, "Weak point, yell here," that the preacher wrote in the margin, you know. (Laughter) You...some of you can identify if you've... I think that when you come to a passage like this, at least I'm...first of all, compelled by the fact the Lord put it here for a reason.

And secondly, I have to dig a little deeper until I find some component there that can...can make this work, make this viable. So I think very often it is true to say I'll come to a passage that I think is really sparse and bare, doesn't have a lot...and there are those passages that have relatively less than other passages...that I work harder on it and dig deeper and maybe go a little wider and sometimes those become sort of stand-out things because there's a certain serendipitous character to them because the people are reading it and seeing nothing. And then by the time I'm done, they're sort of like, "Where did all that come from?" And that's good for the preacher to take the time to find things that can embellish and enrich a passage of Scripture that on the surface doesn't appear to have...

DICK: You know, that's really at the heart. If you go to the dictionary and look all the word groups for exposition expository and so on and forth, part of the dynamic in any ??? to the Bible or not is to help the listeners go farther...

JOHN: Oh yeah.

DICK: With your explanation than they will with their own explanation from whatever English text that they're reading. And that really does mark your preaching.

Let me go on to the actual dynamic of preaching, an element that maybe not a lot of people think about. Is there any connection to good health and good physical conditioning as it relates to sustaining a high energy level? In your case, you're preaching twice on Sunday morning for about an hour each, which is different than preaching once. And then you come back that night and not only are you going to preach again but you're going to preach a totally different message which has both emotional and physical...any thoughts on your physical conditioning as mundane as that might seem?

JOHN: No, I've done this long enough to know, Sunday is for many people might seem like a lot. There are very few pastors that are willing to prepare two different sermons and preach them on Sunday. There are very few churches that have a Sunday morning and a Sunday night service. I would venture to say there are lots of you who go to a church while you're in seminary, the pastor only preaches once...one sermon. He may preach it a couple of times but only one sermon. So there's a tremendous discipline in that.

I...I do that because I think that doubles my impact and it doubles my own learning, plus I think it creates the Lord's Day in a very special way because it's a morning and an evening in the Word and it brackets that day and that's part of one of my strong convictions about a day set apart unto the Lord. But that day...there's a certain routine that I follow. I try to keep myself in good shape. I walk a lot. I used to run, ride a stationary bike. My mechanical parts don't work as well as they do, I have knee problems from old football injuries and things. I've managed to get the surgeries, they almost killed me in the process, but my knees are better. But I try to eat well but I have a little routine on the weekends. I don't do anything on Saturday night unless there's something very compelling.



DICK: So you're not even studying on Sunday night.

JOHN: Oh yeah, I do some studying. Yeah. But not much. I'm done by Friday. I don't ever want to come into Saturday still trying to work on a Sunday message because I don't want to make a decision based upon a clock.

DICK: So you're reinforcing on Saturday night...

JOHN: And refining. But that's the last little thing I do on Saturday night. I go to bed early and then I like to...after I preach Sunday morning, I'm pretty spent. There's a lot of mental energy expended in preaching that's not necessarily the same as when you're teaching a class. You kind of interact, you kind of are at a different pace, but the energy of trying to keep your...your mind functioning at a high rate of speed to keep command of these people over this long period of time, you do that twice and you do run a lot of energy. So Sunday afternoon I don't want to do anything, frankly. I don't...I mean, I like to kind of be quiet and alone. I don't mind a little recreation or something, but I don't like people around me. I don't like busyness. I really like down time at this point in my life. When I was younger, I used to go out and play football sometimes on Sunday afternoons and get banged up and come back. I had a lot...you know, I'm a strong person constitutionally to start with and I could do that, but in these days, I really...I really like the down time to just sort of refresh. And then starting about four o'clock Sunday afternoon I start to gear up.

But that in the end though, Dick, that is really a piece of cake compared to flying from here across nine or ten time zones and preaching eight hours a day for six days in a row. That is a test of your stamina and that is just a grind. I mean, you just literally...you know, you've done it with me and you'll get off the plane, you fly all night 30 hours, or 20 hours or whatever, you get off the plane in a snow storm in Kiev. They put you in a car, they haul off to a church and the pastors have been waiting for you to arrive. You're an hour out of airplane, you haven't slept, you're in a totally...your ten, twelve, thirteen times ????and when you walk in the door, you start preaching. You change clothes in the back of the room. You start to preach and you stop six days later. That's a grind. And what you find in a situation like that is...it's like anything, it's like running...it's like playing the fourth quarter of a football game when you've played all sixty minutes. It's like running the last three miles of a marathon. You literally call on physical resources that you just hope are there. And the tough thing is concentration. It's not the physical part of standing up there and keeping your mouth moving, it's the mental part of still being interested in what you're saying. But through the years, I guess, I've learned to be able to do that and you have to be compelled by the truth and compelled by the needs of the people that are there. Sometimes when I'm done with that, I literally collapse. I mean, you walk out of that like a runner who finishes the...crosses the line and then can't take another step. You know, I get on an airplane, the next thing I wake up I'm in...I'm changing planes in London and the next time I wake up I'm landing in L.A. because you're just totally wiped out. But the human body has great

capacity. If you eat well and you stay healthy and strong and don't waste away your body and take care of yourself, you're going to have the energy that it takes...coupled with the self-discipline to be able to do those kind of things. And here I'm at this age, I still have that kind of energy.

DICK: Part of that is the athletic gene pool that you're getting, probably. Or you might warm your mike up, I've got one more question and I'm out of gas here, although I think we could go on. But we want to give the students a chance.

JOHN: There's no such thing as a chance, by the way.

DICK: That's what Calvin would say. Exactly. What's the best way in your opinion to teach...

JOHN: They're only opportunities....providence, let's go ahead.

DICK: What's a best way in your opinion to teach your congregation theology? Would it be by exposition alone, or perhaps taking times to take theological topics to do? Or a combination of both? Or...

JOHN: I think the best way to teach your people theology is by Bible exposition that relates the truths of a passage to the bigger scheme of theology, so that what you do in exposition is determine the truths that are there and then you build those truths into an appropriate larger theological framework. And that's what I try to do in my exposition. Every truth that flows out of a text somehow fits into a bigger context. And the first way you do that is by cross-referencing. If there is a theology...or since there is a theology in the Bible because there is one author and it is His revelation, the Scripture explains itself *analogia scriptura*, the Scripture is analogous to itself and theology is only the sum of the parts. Theology is simply coming to the conclusion that there are certain truths that are consistently taught in Scripture. So the way you teach that theology is by pointing the truth out in a given context. By then, cross-referencing, which I do a lot of, you build that truth into the larger biblical framework and you can even take time to fit it into the big theological context and occasionally, as I did on the God, Satan and Angels reference that you referred to, you can even give them the big scheme as a part of instructing them through that. But I think you start with the text itself, you take that text related to other text that begins to build the scheme and then you can have some discretion as to how far you want to go in framing that up. Sometimes you'll say I think they need to see the whole picture of this, and so you can launch off in some area that gives them a bigger picture.

DICK: And you find *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* one of the most helpful books, can you ??? that quickly?

JOHN: Yeah, early in my ministry *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* was the greatest...single greatest resource by far in terms of building a biblical theology because it cross referenced the concepts rather

than the words.

DICK: Good, well let's see what the students have.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you, how do you use your expository ministry to refresh your own soul? You were just talking about how you go from message to message and topic to topic and place to place constantly and you're always teaching and you're always I'm sure wrestling with...how do I...try to apply these things, I'm moving at a rapid pace? What kind of things do you use? How do you use your expository ministry to actually refresh your own soul spiritually?

JOHN: Well it does...it's automatically, it's just absolutely automatic. I mean, if I didn't do this, if I had ten suits and ten sermons and went on the road, I think it would shrivel up spiritually. I mean, I couldn't do that. I would feel like I was cheating myself. I would feel, as Dick continues to point out, I have a tremendous curiosity, mostly about divine truth. It's automatic, it's built in. I mean, basically all of my expository ministry is simply the overflow of my own personal life interaction with the Scripture. I mean, you don't know a tenth on a Sunday of what I know about that passage. But what I know about that passage is...that's the bene...that's one of the great, that may be the greatest benefit of being an expositor is what it does in your own life because there's so much more in me than I can communicate.

So, you get primarily the overflow of that whole process of bringing my own life and sort of dragging it kicking and screaming often through the text. So that's automatic and that's one of the great benefits. As I said, that's one of the compelling reasons why long-term sequential exposition over the long haul in the same place is a great safeguard for the man of God in the ministry because it...it's not necessarily going to guarantee you're going to be faithfulness...you're going to be faithful because you can...you can build into your life habits of ignoring the Word of God in this personal application. But for me, I think one of the hallmarks of my preaching, people sense that there's a real passion about this truth and that is because it is...that is the case, that's true because this is primarily for me and you just kind of get the overflow. So that's really built in to what I do.

DICK: Hey, you're often asked the questions in conferences...do you have a separate prayer time from preparation, separate than most...

JOHN: Yeah, my prayer times are...they're different kinds of times when you're involved in prayer, but my prayer time is linked with my study time. That's the primary time of just constant interaction.

DICK: It's a great question. Other questions.

QUESTION: With the understanding that all scripture is inspired by God and work to preach the whole counsel of God, are there...maybe two parts...what you really enjoy studying and then who you

really enjoy to communicate to most?

JOHN: Well, I really enjoy everything that I study. You know, people ask me...what's your favorite book? And it's always the one I'm preaching because it's fresh and it's captivating me and it's filling up my mind and my heart. So I...I like it all...I love it all. I particularly love, I guess if you push me, I particularly love preaching on Christ. I particularly love the gospels and those parts of the epistles that exalt Christ and even the book of Revelation, I love that because it's the revelation of Jesus Christ. So I...I...those some are the most compelling. It's not that I want to exalt Christ above God, it's that I...it's that God is most clearly manifested to me in Christ. And so I think that's the favorite thing.

I might explain at the beginning of my ministry I had to make a decision...I'm a kind of a person who likes some kind of closure, and I felt that because I would only have so many years in my life that I couldn't go through the whole Old Testament and the whole New Testament and do it the way I would like. I know people like W.A. Criswell preached through the whole Bible in x-number of years and do it a more rapid rate. But for me because of the approach I take, I could never do both. And since I believe we are ministers of the New Covenant, and that there is no where to fully understand the Old Testament apart from the New, and that the things in the Old were written for the example to those who come at this dispensation that I would go through the New and draw the Old in, or where it was applicable. And so that's what I decided that I would try to spend my life and go through the entire New Testament. And then if there was any time at the end of my life, I would maybe go back and do the Old, and I've started to do that with Genesis since I only have one more book really to do and that's Mark after I finish Luke. So that decision was a calculated decision, that I would spend my time in the New Testament. I didn't know how long that would take, but at the way it looks, if I have another ten years, I will have...that will be about what I need to do the New Testament.

DICK: Any voice called yourself a New Covenant.

JOHN: Right. And that...that is the mandate. And Paul's a minister of the New Covenant and that's what I am as well. And again, that's Christ. The New Testament is Christ. It's the exaltation of His person and His work.

QUESTION: In what ways do you think Christ's preaching examples recorded in the gospel have directly influenced your preaching style?

JOHN: I don't know that I could actually say that I sort of sat down and thought that through. I think it's in some ways hard to pattern your life after the preaching style of Christ. First of all, you're talking about God who has...who speaks and it's true. I think anything you learn from Jesus, the fact that He started with something He did know to move to something He didn't know, He started with the physical story, or a physical illustration called a parable and He moved to a spiritual truth. In the Sermon the Mount you can see a certain process, you can see a certain logical sequential process in

moving through to a final invitation. So I think there are things you can pick up in the pattern of Christ and I think...we have to also know that many of the sermons that Jesus preached, when we get them into the text of the new Testament, we get edited versions of them, we get condensed versions of them so that we don't necessarily get it all. I mean, even John said if all the things that Jesus said were written in books, the world couldn't contain the books. So I haven't really been the kind of person who wants to set Jesus as the model for my preaching. And somebody might ask the question...Well is Paul a model for your preaching? Well yes and no. You know, you could say the Apostles used Old Testament texts and they expounded Old Testament texts to some degree, and they did. But they had a freedom, you can call it a freedom, they had a power I don't have. They had a divine inspiration element again so that their interpretation of an Old Testament passage was directed by the Holy Spirit of God. And they were also saying things that were revelatory as well.

I think you can see in Jesus certain elements that you learn. He spoke with authority. He spoke the Word of God and that's what gave Him the authority. And that part I do see. You know, they kept saying about Jesus, He speaks like nobody ever speaks, He speaks with authority. Where does He get His authority? He's uneducated. He comes from Galilee. Where does He get the authority? And He said, "I only speak the things that the Father says." So I learn from Jesus to speak the Word of God. And you can learn from Jesus to start from the known and move to the unknown, start from the physical and move to the spiritual as He did. You can see a certain logical sequential flow. You can learn from Jesus that His preaching was very direct, it wasn't obscure, it wasn't obtuse. And yet by its nature it did hide certain things from the uninitiated and revealed them to those who believe. So you can pick up those kinds of things, but to say you can pattern your preaching after Jesus would be to go somewhere that I don't think I could go.

DICK: Yeah, you said that rediscovering expository preaching, you thought the New Testament the best example of exposition in its broadest form as we understand is the book of Hebrews by the very nature of them trying to explain...explain..

JOHN: Explain the Old Testament...yeah. I think you could pull it out of Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost. You see a sort of flow where he starts in the Psalms and goes out of that.

DICK: Stephen in Acts....(?)

JOHN: Yeah, that's not so much of any text of the Old Testament as it's a historical kind of running analysis of history. But again, I think when you're talking about Jesus and you're talking about the apostles, you're talking about a category of people, a category of preaching that is somewhat above us. So what we have is a written script and it's very simple to me to understand that when Paul said to Timothy "Preach the Word," that defined it. Okay...just take the Word and preach it.

DICK: Yeah probably the one other factor as we find the next question is the fact that when they were preaching, for the most part in the New Testament, while they referred back to the Old, the New hadn't been written...

JOHN: Right...

DICK: So they weren't expositing a given body of literature...

JOHN: They could use elements of the Old Testament but they were bringing in a new revelation.

DICK: Okay, next great question from our bright TMS students.

QUESTION: I'm a first-year student, so this may not be a very intelligent question, but I still wanted to ask it. Do you have anybody that you...that mentors you in the sense that you bring your sermons to or you run it by them and they look at it and they critique it? I do this with my wife, like on Saturday nights I chase her around the kitchen and if she gives up on me I go after the kids, you know, but is there anybody that you really...

JOHN: Well, in all honesty, I wouldn't do that with my wife because I would assume that I know more than she does about what I'm going to preach on. And I'm only concerned about an interpretation. If there are issues that I am either unsure about or think I need refining on, I would...I might talk with Dick, I might talk with Phil Johnson, I might talk with Tom Pennington.

DICK: And it goes back to you saying last time that you sometimes talk your way clear...and that's what you're attempting to do.

JOHN: Yeah...yeah, we've done that many times through the years. But that's not a normal thing. That would be the...that would be the...the rare occasion when I'm grappling with something...Dick would bring to me a breath of understanding, systematic theology. Phil understand historical theology. And so I...sometimes I will say things and unwittingly because I don't know historic theology that well, I'm boning up on it now trying to make up for lost time, I guess, I'm liable to say something that the language is not consistent with some battle fought somewhere in the past in history when they came up with a better way to say it or the terms that I'm using were associated with some less than adequate view, or something like that. So I...there was just a discussion the other day, I said something and Phil called me and he said, "You know, I don't know if you knew this but in 1643 there was this deal and they discussed this and they talked about this thing and the way you said it would make it appear to people who know about that that you're coming down on the other side of that controversy." And I'm saying okay. So, you know, what did I say and help me not to say it the way I think I shouldn't say it.

So there is some historical baggage and if I need to kind of get a handle on that, I'm concerned about how things have been stated or there's been some discussion about the historical theology, Phil's real good at that and I can usually...I can usually ask him about it. Occasionally I'll talk to one of the professors in the Seminary about some specific area if I feel like I need some help with that regard. Or I'll call the library downstairs and I'll say I'm dealing with this issue, I'll say to Dennis Swanson, "Shoot me some copies of journal articles that deal with this issue," so I make sure that I'm well enough read not to inadvertently say something that will open up a can of worms that I don't need to deal with. I want to make sure that I'm careful. But that would be the rare occasion. For the most part, at this point in my life, I did a lot more of that earlier in my life, at this point I rarely come across an area that I haven't some familiarity with. Although I do...I do read a lot of commentary material and a lot of journal material that deals with things as a regular approach. But as far as some individual that pass everything by, that's...that's pretty much an unusual thing for me to do at this point.

DICK: One more question.

QUESTION: Do you attempt to build hermeneutical lessons into your preaching so that you can teach your people how to feed themselves? And if so, how do you do that?

JOHN: That's a very good question. It's an excellent question. And the answer to it is yes. The goal in preaching is to give people the truth in such a fashion as that they can convincingly pass it on to somebody else. So what you have to do in your preaching, you cannot pontificate, you cannot say this is true because I say it's true. You have to show them that it's true. And if...I think you may not have noticed it, that's too bad if you haven't, but if you listen to me preach, you should be being convinced that what I'm saying is true, not because I said it but because it's the only reasonable way to explain what you're just looking at in the text. You know what I'm saying? Yeah...so it's absolutely critical that you do that, otherwise...I mean, this is what happened in Italy. The first session in Italy, people were absolutely shocked, they were just sitting there, their heads were just wobbling and their eyes were rolling around and they were saying, "I can't believe he's saying this. Who is this guy and do we believe this? And doesn't he know these people don't agree and these people don't agree? Doesn't he know that we're trying to all get together and these things divide?" You can just see them fighting.

By the end of the week they were just....they were all there, because there wasn't anywhere else to go. They're forced by the sheer clarity of Scripture. So as you make the passage clear and whatever usage of a Greek term, whatever usage of syntax, or lexicography, whatever particularly the logical sequence flow, throwing out a couple of alternatives that it can't mean and here's why...whatever it takes, you want them so convinced that with conviction they can pass it on.

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