

# Leadership Equipping Thoughts



July 24, 2019

*2Timothy 2:15 Do your best to win full approval in God's sight, as a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God's truth (handling accurately the word of God).*

I was recently in a class covering some *common-sense* spiritual approaches to interpreting God's word. I couldn't help but contrast what was going on in that class with another gathering I had been in with leaders from all over the world. Both groups were considering the same important issues of interpretation, but it was a little more challenging with the leaders.

In that gathering, leaders were considering some current cultural issues that were controversial along with how we interpret scriptures in light of them. I have to say it became a little complicated and tense as people were bringing up different theories of interpretation. Finally, one of the leaders from India made a comment that took the air out of the confusion in the atmosphere,

*"We are making this too complicated! We will end up with an approach that thinks ordinary Christians who do not have advanced theological degrees will not be able to read and interpret God's word accurately. The Word is for everyone to read and live by, not just theologians!"*

It was a wonderful comment that brought some spiritual common-sense to all who were gathered in the room.

## Leaders handling the word of God accurately

One of the main callings on leadership in the house of God has to do with handling the word of God accurately. While we have to appreciate sound rules of interpretation and sometimes have to dig deeper to draw out the meaning of a passage in order to determine how it applies to us, we can become guilty of over-theorizing different approaches to God's word. These approaches offer little help when it comes to real spiritual warfare and real life.

God's word is the basis of our direction in helping God's people towards a path that glorifies Him. We are also helping them stand on His word amid the enemy's attempts to divert them from God's will. We are not just instructing, encouraging, and helping them discern God's will based on what seems good to us. We are giving direction based on His eternal word "which is forever settled in heaven" (Psalms 119:89, 152, 160, Mt 5:18, 24:34-35, 1 Peter 1:25).

I remember reading a story several years ago that highlights the problem we face today about over-theorizing different approaches regarding hearing, interpreting, and applying the word of God.

***Three chefs were working in a restaurant one day, when their kitchen supervisor approached them with an order and instructions on how to properly prepare it.***

***The first chef looked at the instructions and said "You can show a recipe to 100 different people, and each of them get a different meaning. You can't understand recipes, so why even read them?"***

***The second chef took a slightly different angle. He said "I don't believe this recipe to be the literal directions of our supervisor. I believe the ingredients all have hidden meanings. I think the meat represents one thing, the spices and other ingredients symbolize something else, and the time and cooking temperature are some sort of mysterious allegory."***

***While the other two were engaging in their debate, the third chef simply took the recipe, and prepared the dish according to instructions. The dish turned out to be delicious, and I'm sure you can guess what happened next. This chef was rewarded for following directions properly, while the other two were reprimanded and eventually fired.***

While this little story may seem somewhat silly, it sadly illustrates the attitude that some leaders take towards God and His Word, which is to be OUR instructions and RECIPE for how to live our lives and resist the attacks of the enemy.

## **Jesus' approach to God's word**

Jesus stood on the word of God as the foundation for how He lived and how He resisted the enemy. This was His posture in the temptation in the wilderness which presents a pattern of how we should resist the attacks of the enemy (Luke 4:1-18, Matthew 4:1-11).

Jesus didn't quote the word out of rote; He didn't over-spiritualize its interpretation; He didn't think of all the reasons why He must be cautious about literally believing what is written based on the changes in the current culture. No, it was in the fabric of His being and He stood on it.

### **What Jesus faced in that temptation is what all of God's people face in temptations.**

- **Satan challenged His identity** - *"If you are the Son of God command these stones to become bread."*
- **Satan challenged His trust in God** - *"Cast yourself from this temple because God said He would protect you."*
- **Satan challenged His Mission** - *"I will give you all the kingdoms of this world if you will worship me (In other words, I will help you fulfill your mission in a way that is easier than the path you are on)."*

How did Jesus respond to these challenges? "It is written!" He quoted and stood on the word of God. He didn't over-theorize, spiritualize, or allegorize it as many do today. He took it clearly and staked His life and future on it. He overcame by quoting and standing on the clear word of God.

It is challenging when I hear leaders who should be helping God's people learn, obey, and stand on His word overcomplicate it instead. They go into great speculative processes of why the word doesn't mean what it says today. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying we don't need to follow sound rules of interpretation etc., but an over-speculation based on the current culture mixed with the logic of men erodes God's design for the foundational nature of His word. It is to be clear and clearly stood upon as we live our lives and resist the enemy.

If you are a leader, make sure your first approach in helping people with God's word is to see it in a way that promotes unreserved clarity. Literally believe it and then stand on it. This should be our first approach. If it calls for a deeper interpretation of particular

passages, so be it, but when it comes to real life applications, warfare, and resisting the enemy, standing on the clear word of God is the approach Jesus took and should be our first instinct.

One of my spiritual fathers who was a great theologian and has gone on to be with the Lord used to express this desire for leaders by saying,

**“Get all the theological education you can but be careful that you don’t become an educated idiot.”**

*James 1:21 21...in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.*

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