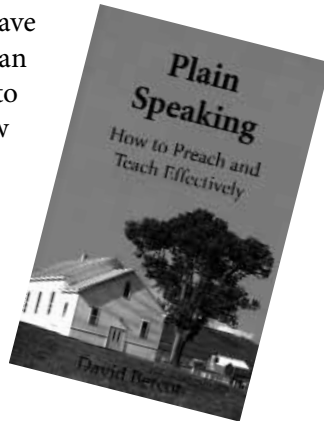




Plain Speaking

Most professing Christians today have the mistaken notion that a man needs to go to seminary in order to be an effective preacher. However, the New Testament Christians had no seminaries. Yet, they raised up effective preachers and teachers all the same. As David Bercot argues in his most recent book, *Plain Speaking*, the Holy Spirit can use ordinary Christian men today to preach and teach—just as He did back in the first century.



Bercot attends a church that has no seminary-trained ministers, just as do many of our readers. Yet Bercot believes that the quality of preaching in churches like ours should not be one bit inferior to that of conventional churches with professionally trained ministers. If anything, it should be better.

However, if we are honest, I think we would all have to admit that too often this isn't the case. We've all heard many excellent sermons and devotionals in our churches. But, we have also heard many rambling messages with no clear theme or goal, delivered in unenthusiastic, monotone voices.

Bercot argues that only three things are needed for a man to be an effective preacher:

- ❶ The anointing of the Holy Spirit
- ❷ The *desire* to learn to preach
- ❸ Some basic teaching in how to prepare and deliver an effective message.

The purpose of *Plain Speaking* is to help provide that requisite basic teaching in how to prepare and deliver effective sermons and devotionals.

Bercot's book primarily focuses on the *practical* aspects of preaching and teaching. But Bercot makes it clear that the functional steps to becoming an effective speaker are secondary to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life as a Christian and as a speaker. You can master

the practical aspects of public speaking, but without the power of God, you won't be an effective preacher.

Bercot encourages the reader to make preaching a constant subject of heartfelt prayer. He calls on men everywhere to fall on their faces before God and implore Him to enable us to master each of the basic components of preaching.

Is It “Unspiritual” to Train?

Bercot discusses the fact that some Christians have the notion that it is somehow “unspiritual” to train as preachers and teachers. They imagine that reliance on the Holy Spirit means we don't need any further training to become effective preachers.

But was that the approach Jesus took? Not at all. He selected his twelve apostles near the beginning of His ministry and personally taught and trained them for years before He turned the leadership of the church over to them. He sent them out on preaching trips so that they could gain experience. He gave them lengthy, specific instructions when He sent them out, and He received their feedback when they returned (Matt. 10). His apostles had *both* the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the needed training.

Dependence on God does not mean that we Christians do nothing ourselves. We depend upon God for our food and sustenance. But that doesn't mean we don't have to work for our needs. Nor does it mean that we refuse to receive training in our various trades. Likewise, dependence on the Holy Spirit for our preaching doesn't negate the need for training.

It's similar to David's combat with Goliath. David was a man of valor who was mighty in the Spirit of God. When he went out in faith to fight Goliath, he was depending upon the power of God, not his own strength. Yet, he didn't just rush out to confront Goliath unarmed, hoping maybe that God would strike Goliath dead with a lightning bolt or something. Rather, he armed himself

with a sling, a weapon that he had mastered through years of practice.

As soldiers of God, we are often confronted with the giants of our age. We must depend upon the power of the Spirit to vanquish these giants. But like David, we should never fight the enemy unarmed. One of our primary weapons is our preaching. Let's be sure that we master this weapon as well as David mastered the use of his sling.

The Basics of Preaching

Much of *Plain Speaking* sets forth the nuts and bolts of preaching and teaching. Bercot divides his time almost equally between the mechanics of *preparing* a mes-

sage and the mechanics of *delivering* a message. There are review questions at the end of each chapter, making the book ideal to use in a church school or home school setting. Some of the topics he covers are:

- Having a goal
- How to find illustrations
- Organizing your material
- Learning to speak from an outline
- Maintaining eye contact with your listeners
- Speaking with enthusiasm
- Handling speaker's fright
- Prophetic preaching
- Listeners' pet peeves



***Plain Speaking* is available from:**

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