

## **IX 9Marks**

# **How Can I Begin to Teach the Bible?**



**David  
Helm**

**Church Questions**

## **Endorsements for the Church Questions Series**

“Christians are pressed by very real questions. How does Scripture structure a church, order worship, organize ministry, and define biblical leadership? Those are just examples of the questions that are answered clearly, carefully, and winsomely in this new series from 9Marks. I am so thankful for this ministry and for its incredibly healthy and hopeful influence in so many faithful churches. I eagerly commend this series.”

**R. Albert Mohler Jr.**, President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Sincere questions deserve thoughtful answers. If you’re not sure where to start in answering these questions, let this series serve as a diving board into the pool. These minibooks are winsomely to-the-point and great to read together with one friend or one hundred friends.”

**Gloria Furman**, author, *Missional Motherhood* and *The Pastor’s Wife*

“As a pastor, I get asked lots of questions. I’m approached by unbelievers seeking to understand the gospel, new believers unsure about next steps, and maturing believers wanting help answering questions from their Christian family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers. It’s in these moments that I wish I had a book to give them that was brief, answered their questions, and pointed them in the right direction for further study. Church Questions is a series that provides just that. Each booklet tackles one question in a biblical, brief, and practical manner. The series may be called Church Questions, but it could be called ‘Church Answers.’ I intend to pick these up by the dozens and give them away regularly. You should too.”

**Juan R. Sanchez**, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

“Where can we Christians find reliable answers to our common questions about life together at church—without having to plow through long, expensive books? The Church Questions booklets meet our need with answers that are biblical, thoughtful, and practical. For pastors, this series will prove a trustworthy resource for guiding church members toward deeper wisdom and stronger unity.”

**Ray Ortlund**, President, Renewal Ministries

How Can I Begin to  
Teach the Bible?

## Church Questions

*Can Women Be Pastors?*, Greg Gilbert

*Does It Matter What I Believe?*, Samuel James

*Does the Gospel Promise Health and Prosperity?*, Sean DeMars

*Does the Old Testament Really Point to Jesus?*, David M. King

*How Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?*, Jeremy Pierre

*How Can I Begin to Teach the Bible?*, David Helm

*How Can I Encourage My Pastors?*, Carmyn Zamora

*How Can I Get More Out of My Bible Reading?*, Jeremy Kimble

*How Can I Grow in Hospitality?*, Keri Folmar

*How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?*, Jonathan Leeman and Andy Naselli

*How Can I Serve My Church?*, Matthew Emadi

*How Can Women Thrive in the Local Church?*, Keri Folmar

*How Do I Fight Sin and Temptation?*, J. Garret Kell

*How Do I Get Started in Evangelism?*, Mack Stiles

*Is God Really Sovereign?*, Conrad Mbewe

*Is Hell Real?*, Dane Ortlund

*Should I Be a Missionary?*, Andy Johnson

*What Do Deacons Do?*, Juan Sanchez

*What If I'm Discouraged in My Evangelism?*, Isaac Adams

*What If I've been Hurt by My Church?*, Daniel P. Miller

*What Is a Church?*, Matthew Emadi

*What Is the Church's Mission?*, Jonathan Leeman

*What Should I Do Now That I'm a Christian?*, Sam Emadi

*What Should I Look for in a Church?*, Alex Duke

*Who's in Charge of the Church?*, Sam Emadi

*Why Should I Be Baptized?*, Bobby Jamieson

*Why Should I Give to My Church?*, Jamie Dunlop

*Why Should I Join a Church?*, Mark Dever

# How Can I Begin to Teach the Bible?

David Helm

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

# How Can I Begin to Teach the Bible?

© 2024 by 9Marks

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Cover image and design: Jordan Singer

First printing 2024

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated in whole or in part into any other language.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-9147-1

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-9149-5

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-9148-8

---

## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Helm, David R., 1961- author.

Title: How can I begin to teach the Bible? / David Helm.

Description: Wheaton, IL : Crossway, 2024. | Series: Church questions | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023052768 (print) | LCCN 2023052769 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433591471 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781433591488 (pdf) | ISBN 9781433591495 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Bible--Study and teaching.

Classification: LCC BS600.3 .H453 2024 (print) | LCC BS600.3 (ebook) | DDC 220.076--dc23/eng/20240213

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023052768>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023052769>

---

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

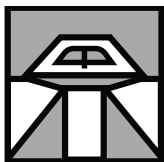
BP	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24				
15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Do your best to present yourself to God as  
one approved, a worker who has no need to be  
ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15







This book is for anyone who wants to teach the Bible but doesn't know how to begin. It's also for those who are already teaching the Bible but don't know if they are doing it well.

If either of those statements describes you, you're not alone. Those of us who teach the Bible vocationally have all had to start somewhere. I began teaching the Bible long before I had any thoughts of giving my life to teaching it. I simply fell in love with Jesus and found myself telling others about what I was learning from God's word. But I had no idea if my preparation process or teaching was any good. I just began

teaching and preaching—driven along by my desire to put the truth of God’s word before the people I knew and loved.

What’s your story?

Has a desire to teach the Bible suddenly taken hold of your mind and heart? Did your pastor ask you to consider leading a Bible study? Are you about to give a one-off talk to some youth or campus ministry? One man in my church began teaching the Bible in prison after coming to Christ while being incarcerated!

Whatever has you currently leaning into the task of teaching the Bible, I’m glad you picked up this little book. I want to point you to a well-worn path of wisdom that can guide you on the road to giving Bible talks that are based on (1) sound *principles*, (2) good *preparation*, and (3) pleasing *presentation*.

So let’s get started.

---

## **Part 1: Principles**

### *You Need Confidence*

Let me tell you about the first time I prepared a talk from the Bible for a relatively large group of people.

I was eighteen; it had been a year since I had submitted my life to the gospel and fallen in love with Jesus. My public high school of roughly twelve hundred students had recently voted to select two graduating students to speak at commencement. Somehow, I was selected (clearly the criteria had not been being the class valedictorian).

When word got out that I had been selected to speak not everyone was pleased. A few faculty members and classmates even tried to have me removed from the schedule. Why the opposition? Well, I had spent my entire senior year telling just about anyone who would listen about Jesus. And now, a few individuals feared that I would take this opportunity—at commencement of all places—to do it again.

Still, I knew I wanted to say something meaningful to our class from the Bible. A lot was at stake. About three hundred of us were graduating, many of whom were not Christians and another seven hundred or more family members and friends would be in attendance. Given the situation, I knew I needed to speak with sensitivity, so I made it a point to spend time in prayer as I prepared my talk (and my mom was praying too!).

But as commencement drew near I was thrown for a loop. I heard through the grapevine that if I even so much as mentioned the Bible or spoke about Jesus some of my classmates were going to walk out in protest. That gave me pause, not to mention a dose of anxiety. I needed *confidence*—confidence that God would accomplish his purposes through my talk and that the Holy Spirit would overcome my fears.

In the end, I decided to follow through on my desire to say something meaningful to my class from the Bible. I made my way to the lectern—full of fear, yet full of assurance—and

encouraged my class to consider three phrases that I hoped would define the student body as we stepped into the future: “Doing justice. Loving kindness. And walking humbly.” If you’re a student of the Bible, you’ll recognize that those three phrases come right out of Micah 6:8.

As I approached my conclusion, no one had given any signs of objecting to my “Bible talk” on justice, kindness, and humility. I closed by mentioning that these words appeared together in the Bible. I then explained that doing justice, loving kindness, and walking with humility were all things that the prophet Micah instructs us to do “with your God.” At that point, I pivoted to Jesus as the one we all need if we’re going to have any hope of fulfilling God’s understanding of justice, kindness, and humility.

As I talked about Jesus, I began to hear the loud sounds of footsteps falling on the wooden bleachers. Some family members and friends of our class were walking out. I still have the cassette recording that captures the stomping of those who exited the gymnasium.

That said, not a single one of my classmates left. In that tension-filled moment, my classmates were all decidedly kind to me, just as I had tried to do my best to be sensitive but loving toward them. I still feel today as I did then: that to truly love people we must tell them about Jesus.

As I reflect on that experience now, over forty years later, I'm deeply aware that whatever faithfulness I may have expressed in those moments was rooted in *confidence*—not confidence in myself, confidence in God's word.

If you're just getting started teaching the Bible, that's the first thing I want to put in your mind: beginning preachers and teachers (and experienced ones too!) need confidence in God's word.

Anyone who is going to teach the Bible needs real conviction that God acts through the proclamation of his word. Additionally, you need confidence in the Holy Spirit. You need to trust that the Spirit can overcome any opposition to his word in the hearts of your hearers and you need to trust that he can em-

power you to overcome any fear you may have in proclaiming his word.

### *You Need Right Convictions*

Teaching the Bible well starts with confidence in God's word. But you also need a set of godly *convictions*. Three particular convictions are a good start: (1) the Bible is God's word, (2) prayer is a must, and (3) the local church is one of God's greatest gifts.

*Conviction 1: The Bible is God's word.* Having right convictions about the Bible is essential to teaching it faithfully.

To illustrate what I mean let's take a look at some *ART*:

A (author)

R (reader)

T (text)

If you're going to teach the Bible faithfully you need to understand *ART*, that is, you need to understand how the authors (A) of the text



(T) of Scripture relate to the readers (R) of Scripture.

Some Bible teachers mistakenly believe that the text (T) of Scripture is nothing more than a collection of human writings. They think the Bible only provides us with a centuries-old “history of God.” Other teachers believe that God had a hand in writing the Bible, but that over time human hands corrupted it. As a result readers (R) must discover God’s message for us in Scripture by separating the wheat of truth from the chaff of error. In other words, it’s up to the readers (R) to establish what the Bible really says.

But do you see the problem with that line of reasoning? If you treat the Bible as a mixed bag of truth and error, then you’re really not submitting to its authority because *you* can always discount or ignore any parts that challenge or trouble you. Unless you’re convinced that the Bible is God’s word, then the reader (R) of the text (T) is the final authority on what the Bible says and what the author (A) has to teach us.

In contrast, the Bible asserts that it is nothing less than the authoritative, inerrant word of God: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Faithful Bible teachers should believe what Scripture says about itself:

- God is Scripture’s ultimate author (A).
- Therefore, the original text (T) is inerrant, authoritative, and infallible.
- Therefore, we the readers (R) are never free to ignore any part of Scripture or find meanings in Scripture which simply aren’t there.

To put it differently, your conviction needs to be that the authors (A) were carried along by the Spirit of God (2 Pet. 1:21), that the text (T) has not been corrupted, and that the reader (R) must only teach what accords with the sound doctrine of the author’s intention.

By way of encouragement, let me suggest to you that in my experience those who share these

beliefs become the types of people God uses to win men and women to faith in Jesus and to build up the body of Christ.

If you're going to teach Scripture well, you need to hold the conviction that you're teaching nothing less than God's authoritative, inerrant word.

*Conviction 2: Prayer is a must.* Faithful Bible teachers not only believe that the Bible is God's word, they believe in the necessity of prayer—both for their *preparation* and their *presentation*.

Certainly, ordinary reading strategies will help you understand God's word. But spiritual things are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). We must depend on the ministry of the Holy Spirit to properly understand the Bible. If the Spirit does not give us understanding, even the best presentation will never be able to make up for our ignorance.

If anything good comes out of our teaching ministry, it's not because we're so gifted and clever. God's word and Spirit are producing the spiritual fruit. In fact, I have seen God do wonderful things even when my own exegesis