

## Using Great Plainness of Speech

2 Corinthians 3:7-12

### I. INTRODUCTION: I

#### 1. **2** What does the typical politician do when asked a question?

- A. Almost 100% of them revert to a list of “talking points.”
- B. At worst, they talk about anything and everything except the question they were asked.
- C. At best, they nibble around the edges of the issue, but they will never directly answer the question with an answer that is clear and understandable.

“Politicians are people who learn not to blink, when they lie.” — Robert Black

“So, if we lie to the government it’s a felony. But if they lie to us its politics.” — Bill Murray

“How can you tell if a politician is lying? His/her lips are moving.” — Unknown

#### 2. **\*\*** But such is not the case with God!

- A. When God speaks we don’t have to worry he will prevaricate and equivocate! Perhaps those two words are not familiar to you, but you’ve certainly been on the receiving end of them!

(1) **\*\*** Def. prevaricate: “to speak falsely or misleadingly; deliberately misstate or create an incorrect impression; lie.” (Dictionary.com)

(2) **\*\*** Def. equivocate: “to use ambiguous or unclear expressions, usually to avoid commitment or in order to mislead; prevaricate or hedge: *When asked directly for his position on disarmament, the candidate only equivocated.*” (Dictionary.com)

- B. **3** Unlike man, God has always demanded that His will be made plain.

(1) Habakkuk: The Lord told him, “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Hab. 2:2).

(2) Apostles: The apostles of our Lord were “plain speakers”:

(a) Peter and John: **Acts 4:13**: “Now when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

(b) Paul: **Acts 9:29**: “And he spoke **boldly** in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.”; **2 Cor. 3:12**: “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use **great plainness** of speech:”

(3) **\*\*** In all three of these verses the words **boldness**, **boldly** and **plainness of speech** come from the Greek word *parrhesia* (par-rhay-see’-ah), which according to Vine means:

(a) “freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance,” (no beating around the bush, no nibbling on the edges!),

(b) “to speak without ambiguity, plainly,” (no prevarication or equivocation!).

#### 3. **4** God’s Book is full of examples where men of God made the message of God **plain**. Let’s look at a few of these men so we too can be emboldened to always “use great plainness of speech”!

### II. DISCUSSION:

#### 1. **5** Moses:

- A. You don’t have to be eloquent to speak plainly.

- B. Do you remember how Moses reacted when God appointed him His spokesman?
  - (1) *"I am not eloquent...but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"* (Ex. 4:10).
  - (2) But, Moses told it plainly ("Told it like it is.").
- C. Read the exhortations of Moses to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy and see if this is not the case: **Deut. 27:8**: *"And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law."*
- D. The message is well summed up in the words of **Deuteronomy 11:26-28**: *"Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God...And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord..."*
- E. Israel often disobeyed the Lord, but they couldn't say, "Moses, you didn't tell us plainly!"
- F. We must imitate Moses' plainness in our preaching and teaching, including when we share the gospel with others! (The person who taught me the gospel did so "plainly"!)

## 2. **6 Samuel:**

- A. Listen to Samuel's plain talk as King Saul disobeyed God:
 

**1 Sam. 15:22-23**: *"So Samuel said: 'Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king.'"*
- B. Do you think Saul said to Samuel, "I didn't get that, would you run that by me again, Samuel?"
- C. No! Saul understood Samuel totally! Note how Saul reacts to Samuel's clear, bold speech:
 

**1 Sam. 15:24-25**: *"Then Saul said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.'"*
- D. We must use the "great plainness of speech" that Samuel used so people cannot go away from our services wondering what was really said (Rom. 3:23). We must make it crystal clear!

## 3. **7 Nathan:**

- A. Some of the plainest talk in all of the Bible is found when Nathan told David a story about two men and a traveler, following David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba.
 

**2 Sam. 12:1-4**: *"Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: 'There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. 3 But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. 4 And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.'"*
- B. David responds to Nathan's story:
 

**2 Sam. 12:5-6**: *"So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! 6 And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.'"*
- C. If some gospel preachers had been in Nathan's shoes the lesson would have ended here.
  - (1) "Well, I've made the point the Lord wants me to make, so I can go on my merry way."

- (2) “After all, it’s up to David to make the proper application!”
- D. But Nathan used “*great plainness of speech*” and didn’t leave David to wonder who or what the point of his story was:
- 2 Sam. 12:7:** “*And Nathan said to David, ‘Thou art the man!’*”
- E. This plain talk convicted David in such a way that he was made to confess, “*I have sinned against the Lord*” (2 Sam. 12:13).
- (1) We must imitate the “*great plainness of speech*” used by Nathan.
- (2) Will our words be rejected when we speak as plainly as Nathan?
- (a) Yes, in most cases.
- (b) However, one type of person will always appreciate such “*great plainness of speech*.”
- (c) Recall in the parable of the sower and the seed: “*But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*” (Lk. 8:15)
- (d) David accepted what Nathan had to say, because David had a “*noble and good heart*.”
- (e) People with a “*noble and good heart*” respond positively to “*great plainness of speech*”!
- F. The trend today is to not say anything about sin or say anything that might give people the impression they are guilty of sin.
- (1) I need to know “*Thou art the man*” when I am a sinner!
- (2) You are my friend when you point out my sin!
- (3) Tact is ok to a certain extent, but we need to be crystal clear in warning others about the consequences of sin! Ezek. 33; Gal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 5:10-11a

#### 4. **8** Elijah:

- A. You probably remember the great contest on Mount Carmel (2 Kgs. 18):
- (1) Ahab was the wicked king of Israel along with his ultra-evil wife, Jezebel.
- (2) It appeared evil had the upper hand as the wicked Jezebel “*massacred the prophets of the Lord*” (1 Kgs. 18:4).
- (3) “*Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave*” (1 Kgs. 18:4).
- B. Only Elijah stood against Ahab and Jezebel’s wicked schemes. The people were on the side of Ahab and Jezebel; “*Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.*” (1 Kgs. 18:20)
- C. How would you have felt if you had been in Elijah’s shoes? “Uh, I forgot, I gotta go, I’m late for another appointment.”
- (1) Elijah didn’t waver, dodge, prevaricate or equivocate; he used “*great plainness of speech*”:
- (2) “*...Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’*” (1 Kgs. 18:21).
- (3) The response of the people would have sent many preachers packing: “*But the people answered him not a word.*” (1 Kgs. 18:21)
- (4) Elijah didn’t lose his courage! He didn’t leave despite being alone and without support!
- (a) Elijah faced down Ahab and Jezebel.

- (b) Elijah defeated the 450 prophets of Baal; “brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.” (1 Kgs. 18:40)
- (c) Elijah did all this despite having zero support from the people!
- D. Through the courageous action and plain talk of the prophet of God, the people of God were made to know who God is.
- E. The people fell on their faces and said, “The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God” (1 Kgs. 18:39).

## 5. **9** Ezra:

- A. You remember Ezra:
  - (1) He was a “a skilled scribe of the Law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given” (Ezra 7:6).
  - (2) Ezra was also a “priest” (Ezra 7:11) and led the second group of Babylonian captives back to Jerusalem (~459 B.C.).
- B. In the book of Nehemiah we find the leaders of Judah holding a “gospel meeting” “in front of the Water Gate” in Jerusalem.
  - (1) Ezra was “told to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel.” (Neh. 8:1)
  - (2) “So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women...Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate **from morning until midday...**” (Neh. 8:3)
  - (3) I’ve been criticized for using too much Scripture in my lessons! Can you imagine if I did what Ezra did?!
  - (4) Can you imagine a faithful Christian making such a complaint?!
- C. Not only did Ezra read from the “Book of the Law of Moses,” but notice **Neh. 8:8**: “So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.”
  - (1) I hope my preaching is “distinctly from the book, in the Law of God.”
  - (2) And, I certainly hope, like Ezra, that I give “the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.” Isn’t that the purpose of gospel preaching?! 2 Tim. 4:2
- D. Furthermore, Ezra wasn’t afraid to address some touchy issues among the children out of captivity, “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. I I Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.’” (Ezra 10:10-11).
- E. Do you think they had any difficulty understanding that they had transgressed, what their transgression was, or what they needed to do about it?

## 6. **10** Ezekiel:

- A. Ezekiel was God’s prophet:
  - (1) He was one of the Jews taken into exile by the Babylonians in the second wave of captives in 597 B.C.

- (2) His ministry lasted over 20 years and was a contemporary of the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah.
- B. In Ezekiel's time, the people of Judah and Jerusalem were wicked; so wicked that the Lord had given up on them.
- C. The Lord told Ezekiel, "*Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations*" (Ezek. 16:2).
- D. That is, tell it plainly! With "*great plainness of speech*," Ezekiel then spoke of Israel's history from the birth of the nation up to Ezekiel's day.
  - (1) He spoke of her birth (vv. 1-7), her marriage and adornment (vv. 8-14), her infidelity (vv. 15-34), and her punishment (vv. 35-43).
  - (2) A reading of Ezekiel 16 finds the messenger of God telling it like it is!
- E. One thing I've learned about preaching over the years is, that if like Ezekiel you tell it plainly, somebody won't like it!
  - (1) Recall my lessons on church history?
  - (2) But I've also learned not to take such criticism personally: "*Be ready in season and out of season.*" (2 Tim. 4:2)

## 7. **II** John the Baptist:

- A. I have to admit that I've never had to preach to as tough of an audience as did John the Baptist:
 

**Matt. 3:4-7:** "*Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him 6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'*"
- B. But the Pharisees and Sadducees were not the toughest crowd John ever preached to!
  - (1) Recall that he had a run in with Herod the tetrarch (Lk. 3:18-20).
  - (2) Recall that **Mark 6:22-24:** "*when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod...the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.' 23 He also swore to her, 'Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.' 24 So she went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask?' And she said, 'The head of John the Baptist!'*"
- C. Why did Herodias ask for John the Baptist's head? Because John preached with "*great plainness of speech*"!
 

**Lk. 3:18-19:** "*And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. 19 But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done...*"

**Matt. 14:3-4:** "*For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. 4 Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'*"
- D. Many preachers today won't preach on M-D-R; lest they offend someone (You can't throw a rock without hitting someone who's been divorced!).

- E. But John the Baptist boldly told the truth to someone with the power to take his head off! No wonder Jesus said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist”* (Matt. 11:11).
- F. How many preachers do you know today who would have put the truth to Herod as plainly as John when he said, *“It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife”* (Mk. 6:18)?
  - (1) Is teaching on MDR difficult to understand? No!
  - (2) Is teaching on MDR “hard teaching”?
  - (3) Yes! Absolutely! **Matt. 19:10:** *“His disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.’”*
  - (4) Some preachers won’t touch controversial subjects, but to withhold the truth, no matter how unpalatable, is wrong!
 

**Ezek. 33:8-9:** *“When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”*

## 8. **12** The Lord:

- A. **Jn. 10:23-24:** *“And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. 24 Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, ‘How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’”*
- B. Notice Jesus’ answers with “great plainness of speech”:
 

**Jn. 10:25-30:** *“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. 26 But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. 28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. 30 I and My Father are one.’”*
- C. How plain was Jesus’ teaching here?
 

**Jn. 10:31-33:** *“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. 32 Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?’ 33 The Jews answered Him, saying, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.’”*
- D. The teachings of Christ are clear; crystal clear!
- E. Do you think the Pharisees got the point when Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!...ye blind guides... Ye fools and blind...Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can escape the damnation of hell?”* (Matt. 23:13-33).
- F. **Luke 13:3** gets right to the point: *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*
- G. **John 14:6** is plain: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*
- H. Many would argue, but **Mark 16:16** is plain: *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”*
- I. And on and on that can go! **Jn. 12:48:** *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”*



9. **13** Peter:

- A. The first recorded gospel sermon, preached by Peter in Acts 2, is characterized by “great plainness of speech.”
- B. Peter plainly preached the death, burial, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ.
- C. Peter put several things to them plainly:
  - (1) Right out of the gate Peter tells them something that would not make him popular among the Jews, when he plainly said, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: 23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:” (Acts 2:22-23)
  - (2) Peter ends his sermon with another plain, but potentially very unpopular statement when he said, “...let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).
- D. Peter’s plain words paid dividends as the people “were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37)
- E. Peter wasn’t finished with his plain speech as he very plainly, simply, and directly answers them: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38).
- F. Preaching that tells it plainly is the kind of preaching that gets results as “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized;” (Acts 2:41).
- G. We must imitate Peter’s plainness in our preaching and teaching, including when we share the gospel with others!  
**Acts 5:29-30:** “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.’”
- H. So many today think we have to make people feel “good” about themselves in order to persuade them to obey the gospel.

**2 Cor. 2:15-17:** “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”

10. **14** Paul:

- A. Read Paul’s statements in Acts and letters written by him to observe his plain talk.
- B. When we studied 2 Corinthians we couldn’t have helped but to be impressed by Paul’s total transparency (**2 Cor. 1:12:** “For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.”).
- C. In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Paul gives the reason for his “great plainness of speech”:  
**1 Cor. 2:1-5:** “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know anything among you

*except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."*

- D. He wrote, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech" (2 Cor. 3:12).
- E. It is utter folly on our part than to use anything but "great plainness of speech" (Jn. 12:48; Ezek. 33).

### III. CONCLUSION: 15

- 1. Like these (and many others that could be mentioned), may we never get away from using "great plainness of speech" in our preaching and teaching.
- 2. Sometimes it is not enough to just draw a picture of a pig.
  - A. You have to say, "THIS IS A PIG."
  - B. And then you need also to say, "THIS IS NOT A DOG, etc."

"Speak properly, and in as few words as you can, but always plainly; for the end of speech is not ostentation, but to be understood." ~William Penn
- 3. You can't be too plain when people's souls are at stake!

Adapted from an article, *Some Who Told It Plainly* by John Isaac Edwards,  
*The Terre Haute Speaker*, Volume 5; Number 28 July 10, 2016