

# Preaching the Gospel

A monthly magazine for preachers and those who want to preach.

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## A Response Concerning the ESV and the NASB

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In *Preaching the Gospel* (September 2007) brother Williams wrote of differences in the NASB and ESV translations. The article was very critical of the ESV, concluding that the ESV wasn't to be trusted as the NASB is. My goal here is to evaluate brother Paul's criticisms of the ESV.

The article begins by taking issue with the ESV's translation of Malachi 2:16 and Hebrews 4:2. Unfortunately, there is no discussion of original language or matters of translation to evaluate. Apparently, for Paul, if the ESV differs from the NASB that makes the ESV wrong. Is that really the way for us to settle translation problems? The article then charges the ESV with inconsistency in translation of "woman" and "wife" in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul says, "The ESV translators have imposed their interpretation on the text." Yet the NASB does precisely the same thing with its translation of "woman" as "wife" in 1 Corinthians 9:5 and Matthew 22:24!

Paul's greatest concern is with the ESV's handling of 1 Corinthians 7:36-38. The NASB translates the verses to mean a father should not forbid his daughter to marry. The ESV translates the verses to mean an engaged couple can go ahead and marry. The article chares: "The ESV has mistranslated in this case." Yet the Greek language issues surrounding 1 Corinthians 7:36ff are very complicated. I asked brother Ethan Longhenry, with an extensive background and degree in NT Greek, for his opinion. He writes. "1 Corinthians 7:36-38 has caused many problems in understanding . . . In my estimation the ESV renders the passage in a manner more consistent with what the Greek says. Overall, it is much closer to the Greek in 1 Corinthians 7:36-38."

Beyond even the translation difficulties is the question of fair criticism. The article is very concerned about the ESV's making decisions about "wife" or "woman" in 1 Cor 11 (as we saw above) However the NASB has done exactly the same thing in 1 Cor 7:36-38. The NASB has turned the word for "man" into "father" by adding "daughter" to the text: "But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter* . . ." The PTG article praises the NASV as being "careful to translate rather than to bend the meaning to a particular view which is not clearly stated in the text." Yet by adding the italicized word the NASB does "bend the meaning" to a "view not clearly stated in the text," doesn't it?

Whatever one makes of the difficult translation questions surrounding 1 Cor 7:36-38 does not alter the fact that the NASB and the ESV **both** smooth out a difficult text (the NASV doing so by adding an italicized word) so it will make sense to the English reader. Why is the ESV attacked while the NASB is praised when they are both doing the same thing?

Sometimes folks fall in love with their favorite translation and then feel duty bound to show it is the only "real" Bible. But what is the point of casting doubts on other reliable translations? Bible students should be thrilled that there is *another* conservative, word for word translation, now on the market. The NASB and ESV are both very conservative, very solid, very reliable translations. Why should we take shots at the ESV as if it is heretical or riddled with problems? Every translation will have passages we think could have been done better or differently. I am confident brother Williams doesn't use the NASB because he agrees 100% with every verse as translated there. He uses the NASB because he finds it generally quite reliable and helpful as he seeks to study the Word of God. The very same thing can be, and should be said, of the ESV.

In conclusion, I believe brother Paul would do well to consider his view of the ESV. Instead of accepting the NASB as the *de facto* standard and declaring any translation differing from it as wrong, and instead of being hypercritical of the ESV and leveling unfair charges against it, I hope he will continue to read the ESV for what it is: an excellent, conservative translation. The ESV is a genuine ally to the serious Bible student. Let us rejoice that another excellent translation has been produced that can help us in our quest for truth!

<sup>1</sup>Interested in more about how to translate 1 Corinthians 7:36-38? Brother Williams and I exchanged ideas about this on his pleonast blog: [www.pleonast.com/paulwilliams](http://www.pleonast.com/paulwilliams)



## Online With Joel

### **Giving to God What God Expects Us to Give to Others**

In Matthew 15, Jesus addressed a problem the Pharisees had in their traditions. *“And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? “For God said, ‘HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,’ and, ‘HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.’ “But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” (Matthew 15:3-5)*

This tradition shows a bad attitude the people had towards their parents. Instead of giving what they should to their parents, they would just declare it as a gift to God and then they would not have to give it to their parents. But sometimes, we can do the same thing without the bad attitude – giving things to God that we should have given to someone else. I believe it is just as sinful without the bad attitude as with the bad attitude. *“Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.” (Romans 13:7)*

God expects us to give some things to others. Look for instance at the Quakers. They refused to bow to those in authority because they only bowed to God. But God said to give honor to whom honor is due. He was not talking about Himself, He was talking about those in government.

I am afraid preachers with families sometimes fall into this trap. In Ephesians 6, in the same context that repeats the command Jesus was talking about, Paul talks about the responsibility of fathers to their children. *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:1-4)*

Fathers have a responsibility to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, yet many preachers have failed to do that, reasoning that they have a higher calling to give their time to the work of God in teaching others. But can you have a higher calling than the responsibility God has given you?

Preachers also have as much responsibility to their wives as do any other husbands. *“You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7)*

How many preachers forget to treat their wives as someone weaker? It seems that sometimes preachers’ wives are treated as the ones who can raise the family on their own, or do anything that needs to be done because the preacher is away doing work for the Lord. *“Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (1 Corinthians 7:5)*

Preachers have just as much responsibility to their wives as anyone else. Note that gospel meetings are not a reason given to deprive your mate of your time, body, or anything else in which you have a duty toward them. *“Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5)*

Paul never even hints at its being acceptable to leave your family behind when you go on preaching trips. He chose to remain single instead of taking on that responsibility.

When it comes to the responsibilities God has given us, I don’t think I want to stand guilty of saying, “Sorry, it is a gift to God,” instead of fulfilling my God-given responsibilities. It doesn’t matter if we have a good attitude about it. We must give to everyone what is due them. Honor to whom honor, time to whom time. God has given us responsibilities. We must try not to replace those with the work of preaching.

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A PREACHER?

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### Preaching is a life of teaching

If you don't like teaching others, then this work is not for you. Over and over again Paul instructs the young preachers Timothy and Titus to preach or teach. "These things command and teach" (I Tim. 4:11). "And the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing" (II Tim. 2:24). "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2Ti 4:2). "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1).

Whom shall we teach? Obviously we are to teach and encourage the saints. "*Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers*" (II Tim. 2:14). But what about those who are not saints? Some preachers seem content to "preach to the choir," and don't feel the need to heed the Lord's charge to "*Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled*" (Luke 14:23).

I never knew a preacher that did not wish the congregation to grow. (I take that back. A church in Jamaica had six members. The preacher said, "That's enough." If the church grew larger, it would be harder to control everything. Thankfully, he no longer preaches.)

How does a church grow? There are three ways to grow. (1) Members have babies and teach them to serve God. (2) Members move in from other areas. (3) Go out and win others for Christ. Now, having babies is great, but not everyone can have babies, such as older folks, singles and those who cannot afford more. Then the matter of growing through moving is not really a growth in the kingdom. That's just a shifting of the sheep.

The people in the prophet Haggai's day were lamenting "Is the seed still in the barn?" (Haggai 2:19). If the people were lamenting a lack of harvest, one possible cause is that not enough seed had been sown. That may well describe the problem in many congregations that are stagnant from a lack of growth. Most church buildings are full of Bibles. In the parable of the sower, Jesus said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Peter declares that we are "born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God" (I Pet. 1:23).

Preachers need to get out of the study and out in the field seeking the lost. After all, that's what it means to be a disciple of Christ. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). If we claim to be his disciples, then we must *act* like disciples. A disciple follows the example of his teacher. There *are* people out there who will listen. I find them all the time—in banks, restaurants, service stations, neighbors, grocery stores. For example, I have little accounts in multiple banks. I go from teller to teller until I find one who will talk to me, and then I seek to establish a relationship with that person. A few have been baptized as a result. What are *you* doing to find prospects? If you are not willing to go out and talk to people and seek to save their souls, then you need to find another line of work.

"And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

One thing is sure. If the preacher, who should have the time and knowledge, is not actively seeking the lost, you are not going to find many members fired up about doing it. The preacher's example is a great motivator in this area.

## Teacher Accountability

In dialogue about public education, you may hear this phrase, “teacher accountability.” The discussion that follows generally runs along the lines of continuing education, personal improvement, professional excellence and student results.

**Teaching is a challenge that is multi-leveled.** It is essential to (1) impart the right information, (2) maintain a well disciplined class room atmosphere, (3) demonstrate the practical value of the knowledge imparted, and (4) motivate the students to apply what they have learned, and (5) teach students how to learn for themselves. In order to accomplish these things, the aspiring teacher must pay the price of spending time learning the information, and discovering how to best present it.

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**You cannot teach people what you do not know, and you cannot effectively teach people what you do not live!** The Bible teacher must spend time with the text of Scripture, and live with the author of the text. The Bible teacher needs to teach people what the Scriptures teach, but also, teach them how to read and study for themselves. The Bible teacher must not only present facts, but present them so they will come alive in the hearts of good hearers. This carries the highest kind of accountability.

*Or as James said:* “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment,” (Jas. 3:1).

--Warren E. Berkley (Oct 8 2007 Monday Message)

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### Daily Bible Reading—

Christians must be people of the book. Many years ago members of the church of Christ were known for their Bible knowledge. Sermons were full of scripture. And Christians read their Bibles!

In order to be close to God, to understand Him and what He wants for us, and to teach the word of God accurately, all Christians should be reading their Bibles regularly—daily if possible. “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you” (Col. 3:16).

This advice certainly applies to preachers. In addition to studying in order to teach Bible classes and preach sermons, we should be reading the Bible daily—for ourselves. **READ YOUR BIBLE DAILY!**

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