

How to Preach/Teach on Controversial Topics

Apologetics Conference 2021

“The Internet in Your Pocket”



More Acceptance of Modern Translations



YouVersion

The Explosion of Christian Media





Disputed Authenticity

The Woman Caught in the Act of Adultery

John 7:53-8:11

- ▶ Does not appear in Greek manuscripts before the fifth century
- ▶ The early church fathers did not include this passage
- ▶ The flow from 7:52 to 8:12
- ▶ Style and vocabulary don't match John
- ▶ Placement in later manuscripts

“It is universally agreed by textual critics of the Greek NT that this passage was not part of the Fourth Gospel in its original form.” Beasley-Murray, G. R. (1999).

“The textual evidence makes it impossible to hold that this section is an authentic part of the Gospel.” Morris, L. (1995).

“The diversity of placement confirms the inauthenticity of the verses. Finally, even if someone should decide that the material is authentic, it would be very difficult to justify the view that the material is authentically Johannine...” Carson, D. A. (1991).

AUTHENTICITY

vs.

VERACITY

Four Options for Teaching/Preaching

Option 1: Refuse to teach on it with reasons why.

Option 2: Teach on it with no disclaimer.

Option 3: Teach on it with a disclaimer.

Option 4: Use it as an opportunity to teach on discernment, textual criticism, and the authenticity of the Bible.

“Some of your Bibles might have a statement saying this passage is not in the oldest manuscripts. This is a debate that largely has to do with Bible translation. Whether or not this passage is in certain manuscripts will not be part of our discussion today. I plan to teach this passage as being authentic. Even if I am wrong, this passage does not contradict God’s heart and it tells a story that many Christians over the years have found helpful.”



Disputed Interpretation

Type 1: Difficult because believers have a long history of interpreting it incorrectly

Matt. 18:20, John 14:2, Phil. 4:13

Type 2: Difficult because unbelievers have a long history of interpreting it incorrectly

Matt. 7:1, Phil. 4:13

Type 3: Difficult because it presents a truth that makes us uncomfortable

Deut. 28:63, Genocide passages like 1 Sam. 15:3, Josh 6:21, Deut. 20:16-17

Type 4: Difficult because we don't have a clue what they mean or because some people think they know what they mean

Certain prophecies including parts of Revelation and Daniel, Matt. 21:18-22, 1 Cor. 11:10

Type 5: Difficult because they present a black and white portrayal of something that experience tells us is quite gray

Prov. 22:6, Ps. 27:35, Mark 9:45

Type 6: Difficult because of the historical context

Much of the Law of Moses, Jer. 29:11, 1 Cor. 15:29, Revelation

Type 7: Difficult because the literal/plain reading is misleading

Matt. 5:29-30

Type 8: Difficult because of doctrinal differences

Rom. 9, Eph. 1:4-5

Type 9: Difficult because of varying English translations of the Bible

Ps. 10:5, 51:5

Ps. 51:5

And Original Sin

⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (KJV)

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (ESV)

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (NIV)

⁵ For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. (NLT)

I've been out of step with you for a long time, in the wrong since before I was born. (MSG)

Type 10: Difficult because of the KJV

John 14:2, 2 Thess. 2:7

Final Considerations

1. Avoid the expert trap
2. Develop a robust understanding of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy
3. Avoid defending a single Bible translation
4. Never forget the role of the Holy Spirit