

## Spot On

*Restoring the Hebraic foundational emphasis on the processes of how you live your life:*

- the responsive actions our Lord commands all of His followers,*
- and their responsibility to deferentially obey by grace the One they love.*



### Spot 5. Dialoguing vs Preaching: Who's Talking?

Whenever the “family of saints” — any local gathering of brothers and sisters in union with Christ Jesus — got together in the first century, it was a “family reunion” of those who freely participated with each other. Giftings from the Spirit was manifested through each one for the common good to edify and strengthen the entire “household” of God, His family (see Ephesians 2:18,19). No one individual was “in charge” at these family gatherings to deliver a “sermon” (**a word that's not found in Scripture**). And as with any household, there was always the opportunity for listeners to ask **questions** or make a comment when another “family member” was sharing counsel or instruction.

But today, and for the past 1700+ years, ecclesiastical domination has turned these family gatherings into a one-person show in which a hired clergy person “preaches” while the rest listen with their mouths closed. What's the difference between today's religious “preaching”, and “dialoguing” among gathered followers of Jesus? Let's check out “preaching” first.

- *“Immediately he preached [from *kerusso*] the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20, NKJV).*
- *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching [from *kerusso*] to them? And how can they preach [from *kerusso*] unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14,15, NIV).*
- *“And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel [from *euagglo*], not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation” (Romans 15:20, NKJV).*

The Greek word *kerusso* is used 32 times in the Newer Testament, and means to preach the gospel as a herald proclaiming a message. It's directly related to *presenting the gospel* — the good news of the kingdom of God and salvation in Christ to people who haven't heard it before, or who have just recently heard it and need a fuller picture of what it means to them. Most often, preaching was connected with *evangelizing unbelievers*. (The Greek word *euangello* — to evangelize by proclaiming the good news — is used 18 times in the same context as preaching the good news to those who aren't yet in the family of Christ.)

Jesus Himself “preached” the good news of the kingdom and “evangelized” those who had yet to trust in Him. He even preached in the synagogue to unbelieving Jews there. BUT, this preaching wasn't to people who had already trusted in Him as Lord and Messiah! The goal of preaching was to confront unbelievers with the claims of Jesus Christ. They were also confronted with their own need as sinners to repent and be born of the Spirit so that they might be reconciled with God the Father (Matthew

20:17-28). This method of preaching and evangelizing was an “initiation” dedicated, if you will, to a non-believer entering new birth by the Spirit.

Note this: **Scripture doesn't describe “preaching” to the called-out who already are indwelled by the Spirit to follow Jesus!**

When people discuss a matter or even argue about it, there's give and take — one side speaks, then the other. That's *dialogue*, not monologue. Among the household of God were brothers and sisters in Christ who *dialogued* — they had conversations back and forth when they gathered together! And in their service to one another, each one had some sort of oral contribution which could be discussed for application to their lives:

- “*How is it then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification*” (1Corinthians 14:26,NKJV).
- “*And they reasoned among themselves* [NIV - discussed it among themselves], *saying, ‘If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’*” (Matthew 21:25, NKJV).
- “*On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to* [literally, dialogued with] *the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight*” (Acts 20:7, NIV). [KJV says Paul “preached unto them”]

Various forms of the Greek word *dialogoma* are used in these verses, but all have similar meaning involving more than one person: to reason through interacting with others (see Mark 11:31); to discuss among yourselves or reason among yourselves (as in Matthew 16:7); to talk a matter over (as in Luke 20:14). This discussion can also have heated words, as when Jesus asked the disciples, “*What were you arguing about* [literally, dialoguing about] *on the road?*” (Mark 9:33).

In the Newer Testament, dialogue implies *interaction* between a hearer and a speaker, and assumes a verbal response on the part of the hearer. 1 Corinthians 14 encourages participation by multiple speakers, as does 1 Corinthians 12:7,14. In Ephesians 4:11-13, Christ bestows special abilities on some of His own to help prepare the rest for works of service — the essential goal of vv. 7-16 — and all of these involve discussion with one another. That's also why our Lord's plan for His family includes a *plurality of elders*, a body of the “gray-bearded” who oversee followers of Jesus. They “feed” His flock through discussion of putting God's Word into practice, and protect the spiritual family from wolves with compromising and deceitful words. These older men lead through wise experience and godly counsel based on God's Word as they apply it themselves (Hebrews 13:7). This interchange of shared wisdom is the “continuation” of growth in the less mature in their relationship with the Living Lord.

Consider too Acts 20:7-11. Paul wasn't engaging in a monologue. As he spoke to this gathering of family in Jesus, people responded and asked questions, which were then answered and discussed — back and forth! Literally, Paul “**dialogued with them**”, and as the honored guest, he was able to continue the discussion until everything that needed to be said was said — even if young Eutychus was overcome

by carbon monoxide from all the burning oil lamps! This same word indicating dialogue is also used in Acts 17:2; 18:4; 18:19; 19:8; 24:12,25. And in Jude 9, the archangel Michael contends with the devil through “argumentative dialogue” with him over Moses’ body.

**What to take away from this discussion:**

Nowhere in Scripture does one person speak to those gathered week after week as the “minister” to deliver monologue sermons — and certainly there’s no “ministerial professional” cited in the Newer Testament. When the household of our Father who are united in Christ through His indwelling Spirit come together as a faith family, each one is free and encouraged to bear witness to however the Spirit wants to speak through them or use them to serve one another. Verbal interchange — what we know as *conversation* — makes vivid the reality of how much each one in Christ *needs* that aspect of verbal one anothering.