

Wisdom for Hard Topics

Proverbs 13:13

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Proverbs 13:13

Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself,
but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.

TV or movie ratings warnings....

The Bible's Frank Discussions

In Proverbs

The father's instruction to his son in regards to sex, prostitutes and John's...

The descriptions of venereal diseases and other consequences of sins...

In Song of Solomon

The delicate but clearly sexual language, particularly between the main characters...

Yet, there is restraint and the freedom in the marriage relationship...

The Bible's Awkward Topics

Sex

The Bible, in the wisdom literature and in 1 Corinthians 7, is frank but not explicit.

Violence

The Bible has a lot of almost graphic, violent scenes. Think, Debra driving a tent peg through Sisera's head.

And...

What other places or topics in the Bible make you uncomfortable particularly in public setting?

The Bible's Careful Language

One thing we observe is how the Bible is careful. It is direct, discreet and almost never graphic in the pornographic sense.

Cultural Metaphors

They are obscure to us but would have been familiar to the original audiences...

How then do we explain them without becoming too graphic? The purpose of the metaphors was to describe while not describing...

Discreetly Hidden

The Bible often tells you what is going on without describing it...

This is most often with sexual matters...

Clear Allusions

So how do we teach or preach texts that are like this?

How do we determine what is edifying to the congregation?

Do we effectively despise some texts because they do not confirm to our perceived spirituality?

Do you see the difficulty?

Direct Description

Most often with violence...

What are some graphically violent scenes in the Bible?

Why is violence treated differently?

The Christian's Biblical Ethics

What does the Bible say to us about our own speech?

Two New Covenant Texts

Colossians 3:5-11

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Ephesians 5:11-14

¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴ for anything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

Some Commands to Consider

No crude, crass, vulgar language...

Avoiding talking about details...

Careful use of Sensual language using metaphors...

Some questions to discuss:

Proverbs

How would you handle the next 2 chapters of Proverbs?

What age group(s) is this aimed at? Appropriate for?

Is this intended only for parents to teach? How do we preach/teach it?

Proverbs is easy, frankly. What about Song of Solomon, Canticles?

How would you teach it?

What do you do with the metaphors?

How do you keep the book from being merely a sec manual for newlyweds?

What Biblical guidelines should we follow in sensitive texts?

So as not to be legalistic?

So as not to be sinful?

So as to be edifying?

So as not to be tempting others to evil thoughts?

Conclusion

Here are some principles that guide me in these matters:

Never be more explicit than the text itself...

Treat the subject with the respect the text does...

Be sure that the text is actually understood before deciding how to communicate it...

Be mindful of the audience but do not remove the point of the text just because the audience may have different convictions or concerns...

Be guided by the point, aim, application of the text. Why is this text in our Bibles?

In what way does this text help us to see, understand, live out, be pleasing to Christ?

All of the Scriptures are profitable, to teach us, to admonish us, to correct us and to train us in the right way. Let's continue to grow in and under that truth.