

Preaching and Teaching

Bringing God's Word to the People





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Lesson 1: The Centrality of God's Word in Ministry

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As you study the history of God's moving across the world, one thing stands out – **God moves through His word.** In fact, the Word of God is perhaps the primary building material the Holy Spirit uses today to make men and women who both live well with God and serve God with power and effectiveness.

In the New Testament alone, 'word,' 'word of God', or 'Scriptures' is used over 300 times. Jesus and the other New Testament writers point to the word of God & the Scriptures as the mighty tool in the hand of God and men to build men's lives!

John Calvin wrote that God, in giving us the Scriptures, has accommodated Himself to human language, that is, God has chosen to use human words to reveal Himself, His ways, and His plan to men. He chose real human words, by real human beings, in real human places, in real human events to give us the highest revelation of Himself. General revelation – God revealing Himself through nature and history is wonderful, but we only see limited glimpses of His glory, plan and power. Through the Scriptures, we have a magnificent, full revelation of God in human words.¹ Wow! Hadn't we better pay attention?

What do the Scriptures say about God's Word?

- ✓ All things were created by His word - ***By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.*** Heb 11:3
- ✓ All things are held together by His powerful word - ***And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. . . .*** Heb 1:3
- ✓ Man is born into God's kingdom by His word – ***for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is,} through the living and abiding word of God.*** 1 Pet 1:23
- ✓ Man lives daily by the power of the word - ***"It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"*** Matt 4:4
- ✓ Jesus Christ is the very embodiment of God's word - ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*** John 1:1, 14

Seven Benefits of the Word

- 1) Faith – divine energy – comes through the word: ***So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*** Rom 10:17 The hearing of God's

¹ D. Dockery & G. Guthrie, *The Holman Guide to Understanding the Bible*, Nashville, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004, p. 8, 9.



word becomes a mighty channel that God's own faith is instilled into the human heart and then faith becomes power and energy to interact with God and obtain His blessings.

2) Self – Defense against the Enemy: ***And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Eph 6:17***

3) God's word is a life source to men's souls: ***But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" Matt 4:4*** God's word is the very fountain of life itself. For His word connects us to Him so that we might live a different kind of life.

4) We are sanctified by the power of the word: ***"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" John 17:17*** Through the word of God, we grow in grace, we are changed from glory to glory, we increase in the wisdom and knowledge of God, and become mature sons.

5) The word of God brings discernment into a believer's life: ***For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, . . . able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Heb 4:12*** The discerning of the word of God reveals the depths of our own life to ourselves.

6) The word of God releases creative power: ***By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. Heb 11:3*** Has God stopped creating? NO WAY! As we interact with His word, we come into contact once again with the creative power of God and this creative power begins to work through us.

7) The word of God is profitable for instruction and correction: ***All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17*** Lastly, the word of God teaches us the How To's of the Christian life: ***How to Worship, How to walk, and How to work!***

Making God's Word Central to Our Ministry

Many people have time for everything but God's word. The devil knows that if he can stop the flow of the word of God into our lives, He has stopped the flow of life itself in many ways. We have time for music, congregational meetings, small group life, work, play and entertainment, but do we have time for the Word of God?

Paul's first exhortation about the Word - 2 Timothy 2:15

In one of Paul's final letters, a letter from a spiritual father to his son, Timothy, whom he wanted to finish the work God had entrusted to them, Paul's exhortation reads: ***'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.'***

We must know how to 'rightly divide' or 'correctly handle' the Word of truth. It is essential not only for our own lives, but also for the lives of those God gives to us



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to minister to that we be men and women who are skilled and powerful in the Scriptures.

Paul says to Timothy, *“Timothy, give your self so completely to God’s word that you can handle it rightly or rightly divide it out to others.”*

The Greek term for ‘handle rightly’ *orthotomeo* was used by the Greeks for driving a straight road, ploughing a straight furrow, and for the cutting and squaring a stone so that it fit into its correct place. We must seriously study the Word of God as skilled workmen, and honestly use our minds and judgment with the help of the Holy Spirit in its application to our lives and those we minister to.

Paul’s second exhortation to Timothy – 2 Tim 4.1-2

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus . . . 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season”

After telling this young minister to study and become very skilled in the knowledge of God’s word, he goes on and tells him to preach the word at all times. Paul knew that the communication of the word of God to believers and unbelievers alike was the primary tool the Holy Spirit used to change men’s lives.

- 1) How has God’s word worked in your life?***
- 2) Do you see these benefits of the word of God in your life?***
- 3) How committed have you been to the study and application of God’s word to your life? Do you carefully handle it in your ministry to others?***
- 4) Are you obeying God’s commandment given through Paul: Preach the word at all times?***

Write out a prayer to the Lord about your desire to know and handle His word in your life and ministry below:

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Lesson 2: Bringing the Word of God to the People

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The Word of God is communicated primarily through three channels:

1. Information – What I know, I give to you.

Content is very important. We must do our best to prepare and present the content with integrity and clarity. Helping the people to become familiar with scripture and how to apply it is one of the most sacred tasks of the preacher.

2. Impartation – What God has given me, I give to you.

As we grow in the Lord, we are given a measure of spiritual grace, authority and anointing. As such, it is our responsibility and privilege to share or impart some of what we have to others. This is not done simply through giving out information; there is a spiritual transfer that occurs when we seek to implant our anointing into the students we teach.

3. Revelation – What God has shown me, He will show you.

Anything we know of God we know because He has REVEALED it to us. The only way we can discover the Kingdom of God is to have it revealed to us. Everything spiritual that is from God must come by revelation. Mere information will not bring salvation, only the revelation of Jesus Christ. He uses scripture and he uses us to bring this revelation.

Preaching and Teaching are important tools for bringing information, impartation and revelation to people.

- The fact is; God uses *us* to deliver his message, his heart, his revelation, his WORD.

Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Rom 10:15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!

- Both the privilege and responsibility of preaching and teaching are not to be taken lightly.

Matthew 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

James 3:1 Be not many *of you* teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment.

- Our goal must be to learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as we preach and teach.



1Thessalonians 1:5 how that our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and *in* much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake.

Distinguishing between Preaching and Teaching

There are many interchangeable attributes of both preaching and teaching, yet there are a few characteristics that separate them. Perhaps the most obvious differences between the two are time and detail. Teaching takes more time and covers more detail, while preaching usually condenses information to fit a shorter time-frame. Let's take a look at other characteristics that distinguish Preaching from Teaching:

Teaching

- Focuses on process and longer term growth.
- Information that leads to impartation.
- Depth of understanding and application.
- Tends to be informative rather than persuasive.
- Can include many themes and core ideas.
- Delivery styles tend to be more conversational.

Preaching

- Each sermon tends to stand on its own.
- Focuses on bringing life-changing revelation.
- Designed to capture the heart within a short period of time.
- Tends to be persuasive rather than informative.
- Focuses on one primary theme or core idea.
- Delivery styles tend to be more assertive and, at times, theatrical.



Lesson 3: Preaching

Fresh Revelation vs. Systematic Revelation

Many pastors concentrate on either Fresh Revelation or Systematic Revelation, but it is important to use both if the congregation is to receive a balanced “diet” from the pulpit.

- Systematic Revelatory preaching illuminates God’s unchanging word and releases the life inherent within the scriptures.
- Fresh Revelatory preaching brings specific direction in a “chrematismos” way. chrematismos is a Greek word. It can be translated as “a moment of epiphany” or a “divine realization”.

Χρηματισμός chrēmatismos *khray-mat-is-mos'*

From Strong's Dictionary G5537; a divine *response* or *revelation*: - answer of God.

Whether delivering Systematic or Revelatory preaching, each sermon should be prepared as a stand-alone presentation. In other words, if a visitor comes to church, the sermon should make sense even if they missed last week and will not return next week.

Styles of Preaching

Everyone has strengths and weaknesses when it comes to preaching. It is important to take of advantage of your strengths, and at the same time, stretch to improve in the weak areas. Paying attention to the different styles of preaching can help to provide a good balance of both fresh and systematic revelation to your church.

Topical Preaching:

This style takes a topic that you feel is important and develops it into a sermon. The topic may be directly from scripture, such as, “God is knocking at the door of your heart”, taken from Revelation, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. . .”. The topic may also be taken from the circumstances surrounding your people or your culture, i.e. “Abortion is one of the great tragedies of our time”. Topical Preaching has the advantage of directing attention at current, relevant issues that face your people.

Topical Preaching presents a disadvantage as well. There is not an automatic connection between topic and scripture, unless carefully established by the preacher. It is very easy to rely on your own observations and opinions in an effort to emphasize your main points. Topical preaching, as a steady diet, tends to produce a lopsided doctrinal foundation in the congregation. Very few topical preachers analyze their preaching topics to ensure that, over a year’s time, they are adequately covering important foundational doctrines.

Expository Preaching:

This style takes a passage of scripture and “illuminates” the scripture for the congregation. This style takes on more of a line-upon-line form. It goes beyond Bible study, but still has a Bible study flavor. The preacher may take the

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congregation through the book of Ephesians, for example, looking for primary teachings and fresh revelation.

Expository Preaching can take on topical themes as well. For instance, my topic might be “Becoming an Antioch Church”. I could deal with this topic in expository fashion by taking the congregation through the book of Acts identifying the characteristics and activities of the Antioch Church.

Narrative Preaching:

Narrative preaching is an effective way to communicate key ideas, principles, and the way God works with man. The narrative portion of the Bible is the story lines. These would include Genesis through Nehemiah in the Old Testament and Matthew through Acts in the New. 40% of the OT and over 50% of the NT is narrative, and if we are to preach the word, we must learn to study these stories well and utilize them in revealing God and His ways to people.

Narratives are written history. Stories are powerful learning tools. They evoke images in our minds and we often will remember stories while we struggle to learn individual verses. Within the pages of the narratives, we get to know what God is like, how He deals with people, how people respond to Him in both positive and negative ways, and the consequences of their responses. In the stories we learn what He likes and hates, what man’s true nature is really like, and what God can do to remedy man’s evil nature. Narratives are a great way to learn!

In preaching a narrative, you simply choose a story, find the clear principles, commands, promises or ways of God and then preach using the story as the illustration. Stories touch the heart while principles renew the mind. (For more on narratives, see the appendix)

Preparation for Preaching

‘At first one tends to think that the great thing is to prepare the sermon
– and the sermon does need most careful preparation. Altogether more important is the preparation of the preacher himself’ (Martin Lloyd-Jones).

General Preparation

- *Personal preparation involves consecration.* We must ‘Offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God’ (Rom. 12:1). The preacher must be a consecrated vessel that the Master can use (2 Cor. 4:7). This will involve keeping close to the Lord. A preacher’s study should be a place of communion with God. The preacher’s inner life holy calling demands a holy life. According to H. Ford, ‘The spiritual dynamic of preaching is not on the lips, but in the consecrated life of the preacher’.² The must be moulded here.

² H. Ford, *The Art of Preaching*, London, Herbert Jenkins, 1926, p. 68.



James S. Stewart says the preacher must be a person of utter dedication, prayer, humility and authority. He must be a man on fire for God.³

- *Preparation also includes meditation.* W. E. Sangster says general preparation involves daily living, the devotional life, biblical and theological study, meditation and deep thinking. Reading is important for a preacher's life and ministry. Read the Scriptures; read them devotionally, that is, for your own benefit, and read them as you search for your sermons. Illustrate your sermons with biblical stories and illustrations. Read widely. There is a world of knowledge available in any library. Read history, philosophy, literature, biography and psychology. Keep up with the news; read newspapers and journals. Read sermons. Read critically. Buy books and build up your library. Mark your books in a way that will help you to recall helpful points and illustrations in them. Keep a notebook of ideas that you glean from your reading. Read systematically. Have a plan; read through the Bible on a regular basis; read different kinds of literature. Listen to literature being read on the radio or TV. Listen to sermons on cassette. Read avariciously. Browsing through a library can be a stimulating exercise. If a book captivates you read it through, and if a theme grips you follow it through in other books.
- *Preparation implies observation.* Walk through life with your eyes open. Observe people; listen to their conversations; note their reactions. An hour spent in a shopping centre can be very eye-opening. Peoples' problems will be met by preaching that relates the Word to everyday living. Listen to other preachers, and learn from them. Copy their good points; learn from their bad ones. Take notes. Be aware of newspaper headlines, TV news and views, topics of interest in various magazines. Be in touch with today's world.⁴

Decide on one theme or core idea.

- It is difficult to effectively communicate more than one central idea within a limited time frame.
- Since your audience (congregation) may be different the next time (some people added, some people missing), it makes it difficult to effectively create an environment for life changing revelation if you have to stop in the middle of your topic and continue one at a later time.
- Decide what you believe God wants the people to know and to do when you have finished preaching. This is your core idea. If you cannot communicate it effectively within the given time constraints, then you probably have more than one core idea.

Write A Thesis Statement

- Turn your core idea into a sentence. You should be able to fit it into one sentence.
- This sentence should usually be made up of two parts:
 - The core idea, and
 - Either why it is so, or how it is to be accomplished (depending on the context of your thesis).

³ J. S. Stewart, *Preaching*, Teach Yourself Books, London, English Universities Press, 1958, ch. 5.

⁴ This section adapted from "Homiletics: Preach the Word" by Vernon Ralphs (Matersey Hall)



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- Language syntax and grammar differences may require that you use two sentences, but do your best to limit it to one or two sentences.
 - Example: We experience freedom and inner healing when we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the lies we have believed and then allow the truth of God to break the power of the lie.
 - Example: Faith is demonstrated powerfully when we remain in God's growth process, even when it is difficult and painful.
- Once your thesis statement is completed to your satisfaction, it will make the rest of the preparation process much easier.

Gather Your Supporting Material

- Scripture: What does scripture have to say on the subject? How many scriptures are relevant to your topic? How often does scripture speak about this topic?
- Research: Has there been any studies or surveys conducted? Any scientific experiments? What does the research suggest about the subject matter.
- "Experts": Who has written on the subject? What do they have to say? Do you agree or disagree with their position?
- Experience: What experiences have you had that give insight into the topic? Are there other testimonies that can add to your point?
- Illustrations: Are there any stories, analogies or metaphors that can help the people visualize what you are trying to say? Are there any visual aids that can help the people understand your topic?

To The Best of Your Ability, Know Your Audience

- Find out as much as you can about the people you will be speaking to.
 - Demographic information
 - Socioeconomic range represented (how many wealthy and how many poor)
 - Variety of religious backgrounds. i.e. how many grew up in a non-charismatic church? How many are Pentecostal? How many are from Catholic backgrounds? How many non-believers?
- Adapt your presentation to reach the kind of people you will be addressing.
- Ask the Lord for sensitivity to your audience; the ability to connect with them.

Prepare Your Outline

Choose the Form of Your Sermon

- Manuscript: Written word for word. When wording is critical, this can be a good way to guarantee what will be said.
- Memory Script: A written speech that is memorized and delivered from memory.

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- Extemporaneous: A speech prepared in content and form but not written out word for word. The preacher uses an outline that identifies his points and sub-points, but speaks freely from his knowledge and inspiration. The extemporaneous preacher may use a full sentence outline or a key-word outline.
 - Full sentence outline: Uses “subordination”. Full sentences to represent each point ensures that you are communicating complete thoughts.
 - Key word/Key phrase outline: can use subordination or bullet style of organization. This form uses words and phrases instead of full sentences. The words/phrases are used to quickly trigger the key points in the mind of the speaker so he/she can find his or her place in the sermon.
- Transitions: You need to carefully plan what you say to move from one main point to the next. This never seems important to the preacher until he gets stuck two or three times in his sermons. If your only means of transitioning between points is by saying “My first point is . . .”, “My second point is . . .” etc., you will soon lose the interest of your people. Learn to be creative and natural in how you move from point to point. (Illustration)

Main Components of your Speech Outline⁵

When preparing your outline, you should try and limit yourself to between 3 and 5 main points. It becomes difficult to deliver more than 5 points in a sermon and still hold the people's attention.

The Introduction

The opening moments in any human event can be important. Napoleon Bonaparte is reported to have said that the first five minutes of a battle are the decisive ones. A manual on public speaking advises: ‘If you don't strike oil in the first few minutes stop boring!’.

Introductions are important as quite often a congregation is settling down from some kind of congregational activity. This is especially the case in modern Pentecostal and charismatic meetings when people are turning from worship to the Word (or a chatty walk-around!).

Introductions are also important due to the fact that the congregation is just getting to know the preacher. People need to be given time to tune into a preacher's personality, accent, sermon style and subject.

Rules For Preparing Your Introduction

W. E. Sangster advises that the sermon introduction should be brief, interesting and arresting.

Introductions should be simple. Your opening words and thoughts should be simple in matter and manner. Do not shout in your opening remarks. If you start by shouting you will find you will have nothing to shout about later on! As J. Fleming says, ‘Begin low, speak slow, take fire, rise higher!’.⁶

⁵ This section adapted from “Homiletics: Preach the Word” by Vernon Ralphs (Matersey Hall)

⁶ J. Fleming, *The Art of Reading and Speaking*, London, Edward Arnold, 1914.



Introductions should be short. If your introduction is long the congregation will expect a long sermon. You can be so long laying the cloth that the congregation despairs of the meal! If an introduction is to take a tenth of the sermon time then for a thirty-minute sermon it should last three minutes.

Introductions should be suitable. An introduction should have a positive connection with the main subject – it should not involve the congregation in mental gymnastics.

Introductions should also fit the character of a sermon. An amusing story is hardly the way to introduce a sermon on eternal condemnation!

Recommended Introductions

Preaching should be an inspiring event, and the sermon can be an inspired art form. Try and vary your introductions. Experiment – make preaching an adventure. Learn from other preachers. Introductions may take various shapes and some are more attractive than others. Sometimes an event or a congregation will dictate the kind of opening we can give to our preaching. Here are a few suggestions.

A biblical introduction will feature the announcement of a text or subject. Be warned – this is not an easy one! You can disengage a congregation instantly by saying, 'The title of my sermon is. . . !' Titles normally need a lead in.

An anecdotal introduction makes use of a story, illustration or quotation. Stories that contain human interest attract the mind straight away. Newspapers and tabloids sell on lead stories. But do not tell a good story unless it relates to your message, and resist the temptation to build a sermon around a good story.

A topical introduction refers to a recent item of news. This is another good way of relating to your congregation and gaining their immediate attention. News that involves crime, children and animals needs to be handled carefully.

A referential introduction reminds people of a previous message. If you are the local pastor, or a visiting preacher taking a series of messages or studies, this kind of introduction will serve you well. It will also act as a means of revision.

A pastoral introduction acknowledges some special event or circumstance. Sometimes the word the Lord gives you in his wisdom and grace will meet a sudden domestic or community event. In this case the introduction is natural. At other times, however, a sudden event such as sin, death or disaster may hit the church – or even your own family. As a pastor you have to address it and weave it into your message.

A seasonal introduction acknowledges a season or a significant time of the year. Spring, summer, autumn and winter all offer illustrations. New Year, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest and Christmas are some of the events the preacher can use in his sermon starters.

A devotional introduction may include a short prayer or the singing of a song. If you are nervous, offering a prayer may be a good way to start (but not if someone has just prayed for you and the message). In this event do not pray a nervous prayer which states your weakness and inability. As an ambassador for Christ pray an ambassador's prayer. Sing a song? I was disappointed when an important preacher spent fifteen minutes leading a worship session before he preached. I received the distinct impression that he was trying to work the meeting up into some kind of spiritual state. Surely the preaching of the Word of God is supposed to do this?



A personal introduction will include a word of personal testimony. Sometimes a word of personal testimony can introduce you to the congregation and the congregation to the Word. I say this with a sense of unease. I can still hear that pre-sermonic prayer being prayed: 'Lord, hide the preacher behind the cross'.

The Continuation after the Introduction

Some messages fail because they have a bad start; others fail because the sermon becomes an anticlimax to the introduction. Charles H. Spurgeon agrees that we must gain the attention of our congregation at the very start of the sermon. He says we need a word like 'Attention' over all our sermons. He goes on to say that it is important that we learn *how to gain and retain the attention of our hearers*. 'We need,' he says, 'the earnest, candid, wakeful, continued attention of all those who are in the congregation. If men's minds are wandering far away they cannot receive the truth, and it is much the same if they are inactive'.⁷ A mind-grabbing introduction should lead on to some heart-challenging thoughts.

Some Tips

Writing your introduction out in full (at least at first) may give your message a positive start. Use *one side* of a sheet of paper so that it may be slid over your other notes with minimum amount of distraction.

The Sermon Body

The body of your sermon will include the main points you are trying to make and the transitions that help you move from one point to another. Your main points must prove and illustrate your main concept or thesis statement.

Let's choose a thesis statement to take as an example. "The Kingdom of God is here now, and we don't have to wait until we die to enter it." The body of this sermon must serve to convince the congregation of the truth in this statement. As such, one possible way to organize this sermon is with the following points:

- I. The Kingdom of God is at hand (imminent). Mark 1:14, 15
- II. The Kingdom of God is within you. Luke 17:21
- III. The Kingdom of God is the rule and reign of Christ.
 - a. Christ is king NOW.
 - b. When we make Christ our king, we enter His kingdom.
- IV. God wants us to enter the kingdom of God today.
 - a. The parable of the treasure in the field. Matt. 13:44
 - b. The parable of the pearl Matt. 13:45

These "points" are offered as proof of the thesis statement. Point number IV also illustrates the thesis by using New Testament stories that Jesus used to illustrate the Kingdom. Your body should be designed to answer the question, "why should I accept your main thesis?" Your supporting material is used here to back up and illustrate your points. Scripture, quotations, statistics, observation and personal experience become your body of evidence.

It is also important to organize your points in a sequence that will make natural sense to the congregation. There is a logical flow that people can follow easily.

⁷ Lectures to my Students, p. 127.



You want people to think, “I can understand how you reached that conclusion,” but sometimes we get our material mixed up and our points tend to confuse the congregation rather than enlighten them. I always recommend that, until you have developed experience and skill at organizing your sermon, you should try your points on someone that can give you valuable feedback and help you see the gaps in your speech organization. Let’s take a look at another outline for the thesis statement, “The Kingdom of God is here now, and we don’t have to wait until we die to enter it.”

- I. The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who sowed seed in the field. Matt. 13:3-9
- II. Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Mark 1:14,15
- III. We can enter the Kingdom of God today.

If you will notice, all of these points are valid points. The problem presents itself when we ask, “How do these points, in this order, lead us to the thesis?” The answer is; they don’t. Every point should “point” directly to the thesis of the sermon.

It takes practice, but you will soon learn how to create a successful mental progression that your audience will appreciate and understand.

Sermon Conclusion

‘With the material sketched and ordered and linked, you come to the most important thing of all, *how to sit down*’ (James Black). We must be clear about a sermon’s aim as we are preparing it. John R. W. Stott, in *I Believe in Preaching*, supports this point by suggesting that the preacher should first attend to the body of the sermon – then the introduction and conclusion are added to lead into our sermon and then apply it.

Resolving a Sermon

Sermons, like music, need to be resolved. But, as Stott comments, ‘Some preachers seem to be constitutionally incapable of concluding anything, let alone their sermons. They circle round and round, like a plane on a foggy day without instruments, unable to land’.⁸

The exegesis of a text or portion of Scripture should lead us to an application or sermon conclusion. However, our thinking can be thrown into reverse if our sense of what God wants us to say first takes shape in the form of an application. In this case thinking about the conclusion of a sermon may cause us to amend its main form by shuffling points or cutting material out. Rather like some authors, we can start with the final chapter and work backwards. Asking questions sometimes clarifies the purpose of a message. Ask yourself, What does the Lord want me to say? And then, What is the aim of my sermon? What are our aims? Bob Gordon says, in an exegesis of Acts 3:37-38, that sermons involve words, but that they should be words to an end. He finds four aims for preaching in William Temple’s book on worship, namely, to quicken the conscience, to feed the mind, to open the heart, and to devote the will.⁹ We may view these as progressive aims. When we preach we must appeal to the conscience, mind and heart, but in the end we must call for an act of the will. Charles Simeon preached

⁸ J. R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1982, p. 245.

⁹ Bob Gordon, *Heralds of God: An Essential Guide to Preaching the Word of God*, video book, volume one, Kerygma International Christian Ministries, 1993/94.



for results. He said he wanted his sermons to humble the sinner, exalt the Saviour and promote holiness. We must preach Christ and apply his doctrine to men.

Concluding a Sermon

'Well, that's it.' Believe it or not that is how I once heard a sermon concluded. Hardly an ideal conclusion! The fact is on the day the preacher just did not know how to end his message. We need some suggestions to help us. Here are some approaches that may be used by themselves or in a combination of ways.

Conclude by *recapitulation*. Remind people of what you have said. A sermon generally takes this form: tell people what you are going to say (introduction); say it (the main body); and remind them of what you have said (conclusion). Recapitulation has its place (see Phil. 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:12, 13). Martin Luther, the German Reformer, talked about 'dinning the truth into people's heads'. Sometimes we need to hammer the truth home. But we must do more than this – we must personalize truth – the message must have a personal application.

Conclude by *application*. End by applying the sermon. We need to do this as we go along, but there must be a sense of climax in the conclusion. John Stott advises the preacher to keep something up his sleeve, to cultivate a sense of expectation. In his *Orator* Cicero says that 'an eloquent man must so speak as to teach (*docere*), to please (*delectare*) and to persuade (*flectere* or *movere*)'. The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, 'Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them' (Jn. 13:17). Practical James tells us that the Word is like a mirror – it is revealing. He makes the point that we should not just listen to the word, but do what it says (Jam. 1:22-25). Apply the Word.

Conclude by *illustration*. You can show how others have lived the truth out by relating a true story. Bible stories can often be used with effect here. Let the Bible explain itself. This is where your biographical reading can give you useful examples. Conclude by *demonstration*. Show how a sermon may be applied to everyday living. Again true life stories can be used here. Jesus used this method when he explained to the scribe what the law meant by one's neighbour – the Parable of the Good Samaritan was used with great effect (Lk. 10:29-37).

Conclude by *peroration*. By peroration I do not mean an emotional last spasm, but a mixture of passion and reason that sums up – and enforces – your argument. John Wesley's *Forty-Four Sermons* is a standard textbook for those preparing for the Methodist lay ministry. Wesley's sermon style is too heavy and mechanical for today's pulpit, but his art of leading to, and applying a conclusion is worth studying.

Applying a Sermon

Conclusions should apply the message. Sermons need to be directed or aimed. If Jesus wants us to be fishers of men, then we must know how and where to cast our nets (Mt. 4:19). A different analogy, disliked by some, pictures the preacher as a marksman. Jonathan Edwards was said to position his guns in his sermons and then fire them in his applications. Charles H. Spurgeon said it was no use firing at the sky when we had to pierce men's hearts. Whatever analogy we use, we need to see that a sermon must appeal to the mind, heart and will.

Sermons must have an appeal. So, *appeal to the mind*. We can aim to get through the head to the heart. Sermons must make people think, and this means they must have doctrinal content. In his *Journals* John Wesley refers to head-work and heart-work.

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Sermons must *appeal to the heart*. M. Lloyd-Jones stresses this part of man's nature for the preacher's sermon, its application and conclusion, by quoting Paul's words: 'But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted' (Rom. 6:17).

Sermons should address the whole person – so *appeal to the will*. In his excellent book *A Faith to Proclaim* James S. Stewart states that an appeal to the will is important in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. G. Campbell Morgan almost takes a page out of John Bunyan's *Mansoul* when he says:

The avenues of approach should be the intellect and the emotions. We are storming the citadel of the will. At the close there should be recapitulation and personal application and elaboration of the truth, intellectually presented. As to emotion, let feelings and brain work together, sometimes by pathos, just as the theme itself is moving us. Never forget that we are storming the central will.¹⁰

Evaluating Sermon Appeals

The preacher's (and writer's) success according to Peter White, the Jungle Doctor, rests on this formula: 'Hook 'em, hold 'em, hang on to 'em, humour 'em and hit 'em!'. In other words sermons need to be pressed home. This brings us to the question of appeals and the so-called altar call.

Altar calls are part of the evangelical tradition. Typically at the end of an evangelistic service the preacher makes an appeal, which is followed by a hymn and the benediction. M. Lloyd-Jones criticises this kind of appeal on the grounds that, in his opinion, they tend to produce a superficial conviction of sin. Appeals, he maintains further, can imply that sinners have an inherent power of decision and self-conversion, that the evangelist is in a position to manipulate the Holy Spirit and his work, and that going forward in a meeting saves people.¹¹ Lloyd-Jones represents the view of reformed theologians – a view that needs to be criticised. The immediate response must be based on Acts 2:37-41, where Peter's cutting sermon resulted in the question, 'What shall we do?', and was followed by the instruction, 'Repent and be baptised' and with *many pleading words* (v. 40). There is room, for the preacher who has preached in the power of the Spirit (and is conscious that the Spirit has applied the Word), to call for a response.

Having said this, however, if a preacher's altar call means the application of emotional and psychological pressure we must condemn it. The appeals in the Acts of the Apostles were made in the atmosphere of 'God moving'. Sometimes, as in Acts 2 and 10, a sermon was interrupted because the Spirit of God applied the message. We must condemn the man-inspired, high-powered appeal.

In recent years the altar call in charismatic meetings has changed. For a start, in many quarters the evangelistic meeting has been abandoned, so that the call to repentance and faith is sometimes lost. Now at the end of the preaching people are often called out for 'ministry' and hands are laid on them and prayer is made, sometimes by many members of the congregation. 'Prophetic words' sometimes replace counselling. It is sad to report that sometimes repentant sinners are no longer counselled at the time of their commitment with an open Bible, but are

¹⁰ *Preaching*, p. 86.

¹¹ See *Preaching and Preachers*, ch. 14.



given instead a hug and a 'God bless you'. If that sounds critical, it is meant to be. Woe to the church because of subjective trends! There is a good side to the post-sermonic 'ministry' or 'waiting on God' – it recognizes the need to let the Lord apply or confirm his word with signs following. There has also been a reaction against the sermon-hymn-benediction ending to a meeting or service.

During the last twenty years new meaning has been given to the words, 'Preach the good news ... And these signs will accompany those who believe' (Mk. 16:15,17). Let me end this chapter with a positive exhortation. Be positive in your preaching. *Preach for results*. Charles H. Spurgeon says we must not be content with letting fireworks off. We must load our guns and fire at the target. Then, *believe for results*. Exercise faith as you prepare your message – and as you deliver it. Expect God's grace and power to be ministered as you preach.

Delivering Your Sermon

Practice

If you want to feel confident in knowing how the sermon will "come out" of you, then you must practice. Not just once, unless you are confident and satisfied with your ability to deliver your sermon in the desired manner. Until you have enough experience to develop a consistent and effective style of delivery, you should plan on practicing your sermon between 2 and 5 times. This gives you the advantage of identifying weak areas and working on them before actually delivering the sermon. The more confident you become in your message, the easier it is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to be relatively sure how much time you will need to deliver your sermon. This is another reason to practice before actually delivering the sermon. It is important to properly steward the time that the congregation has given to you.

Do Not Take Yourself Too Seriously

Most of us are convinced that if we make a mistake in front of other people, our lives could be ruined forever. The truth is, if you are willing to laugh at yourself; if you are willing to accept embarrassing moments with grace and good humor, you will find that it increases your credibility.

Remember, God is responsible for your anointing. You are His vessel, but you are a human vessel. You WILL make mistakes, because we all do. It is better if you decide to enjoy it.

Styles of Delivery

There are many styles of preaching. Each of us, because of our spiritual heritage, has a style that appeals to us more than others. Some of us react negatively to certain styles. You will need to choose a style that comes naturally to you and will connect positively with your audience.

- **Theatrical/Larger-than-life:** Characteristics of this style can include rhythmic sounding of sentences, large gestures, non-conversational, larger-than-life tone, diction and pronunciation. This style is common in Pentecostal traditions. Some Baptist traditions also employ this style. This style of



preacher generally maintains a healthy distance from the people while preaching.

- **Assertive/Passionate:** This style is common in many charismatic churches and post-modern environments. The preacher speaks with common pronunciations and inflections but speaks with an overt passion and intensity. Preachers tend to physically approach the audience, lean forward and express emotion and passion toward the topic. Joy, anger, awe, and urgency are common emotions that are expressed.
- **Conversational/Interactive:** This style evokes a laid-back environment. The speaker speaks more softly, does not move around as much and in fact may pull up a stool and sit down while speaking. The preacher gives the impression that he is having a discussion with you and tries to produce a sense of trust and friendship.

Addressing the Congregation

There comes a time when the preacher, having prepared well, faces the congregation to preach. This is the moment when a preacher suddenly recognizes his or her responsibility. We now address that moment in terms of the preacher's appearance, attitude and reception.

Remember that first appearances tend to be lasting. Be aware of your appearance. Dress for the occasion. This may seem a trivial point, but a congregation may be put off by a preacher's appearance. Some modern preachers seem to want to make a kind of statement by dressing for the pulpit as if they had just left a sports field. I fail to recognize what they are trying to say. My personal conviction is that a preacher should dress as an ambassador of Christ (2 Cor. 5:18). Avoid dressing to bring attention to yourself.

Dress to be comfortable. This will enable you to concentrate on the task in hand. Dress to the expectation of the people so that they can concentrate on the word. Some churches expect preachers to wear a suit or smart dress (as the case may be); others expect smart casual attire. Sometimes it depends on the congregation or type of meeting. A three-piece suit may not be suitable for a youth meeting or a camp celebration!

Enter the pulpit with a sense of conviction. It is the responsibility of the preacher to know the will of God. We must have a sense of conviction about our message. It must be God's word for the moment. Indecision and last minute changes should be avoided. You may ask if we can preach a sermon more than once. I would say, yes – as long as it carries a sense of conviction – as long as it burns! Sometimes sermons grow and mature.

Preach without looking for congregational response or appreciation. Sometimes you may have to preach with a significant person in your congregation. Do not be intimidated by their presence – remember the injunction: 'If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, *he should do it with the strength God provides*' (1 Pet. 4:11). Preach to the best of your God-given ability.

Be warned that you will have good and bad days. Sometimes you will preach with a sense of failure. But learn from your mistakes. Failure should lead to examination of the sermon, reconsecration of your life and a determination to do better next time – by the grace of God.

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Delivering the Sermon

A preacher's personality will be involved in preaching, including the voice, use of words, body language and habits.

The preacher's chief instrument of communication is the voice. But the use of the voice involves more than the articulation of words, as someone has said: 'The voice conveys ideas and feelings apart from words'. Haddon Robinson gives some good advice on the use of the voice in his *Expository Preaching*, which is worth expanding on here.¹²

First, *learn to use your voice*. Speak out – project your voice. Aim to reach the back row in the building. Do not depend on the public address system to carry your voice – speak up. Then modulate your voice. Vary the speed of your delivery and so avoid being monotonous. Recognize that variety in rate communicates different meanings and emotions. You can accentuate your voice. Alter the softness and loudness of your voice. Raising the voice can achieve interest and emphasis. It can also call people to attention. A shout can keep sleepy people awake! You must inflect your voice – that is, vary your vocal range. A droning delivery is in danger of rendering a congregation docile. Using the musical range of a voice adds interest.

Learn to punctuate your sentences. Pauses can be used with great effect. You can vary their length. A 'pregnant pause' before a significant or important statement will highlight it. (You may have to be brave to use a long pause for the first time.)

Then, *learn to articulate your words*. Watch your aitches. Use the T-sounds and the ING-sounds at the beginning and ending of words – these are the sounds that make language musical. This leads to the need to pronounce words. Use your lips, tongue and teeth. Do not apologise for your accent (accents are acceptable), but do be concerned with being heard and understood.

A number of preachers I know have damaged their voices or vocal cords through preaching, which leads me to say use your voice correctly. The voice is a delicate instrument that can be damaged by incorrect use. You may want to seek advice in this area from an elocution specialist.

Here are some basic tips on using the voice wisely. First, use your voice before you speak. Join in the congregational worship ('saving the voice' or sucking a sweet is not the answer). Secondly, learn to breathe correctly, using the diaphragm. Thirdly, do not raise your voice or shout with your neck and throat taut. Professional singers exercise their voices – why not try preaching in the bath?

Use gestures. J. Black says that gesture is a kind of illustration. We communicate with more than our voices. Be aware of body language and the importance of eye contact. Use your hands. Avoid the modern trend of taking the microphone off its stand and becoming a lollipop-preacher. The habit may suit the large stadium, but it limits a preacher's gestures. A recent *Everyman* program, which honored Billy Graham as the greatest preacher of modern times, commented on the effective use of his hands. The evangelist uses both of his hands. If you want to hold something in your hand hold a Bible. Avoid showmanship.

Learn to express yourself – but be aware of dangers. Here are some negatives:

¹² H. W. Robinson, *Expository Preaching*, Leicester, Inter-Varsity, 1989, pp. 202-208.



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- Don't half face a congregation – it shuts half the congregation off
- Don't lean on the pulpit all the time – it gives a bad impression
- Don't use offensive gestures. Be aware that a V-sign can mean different things according to which side of the hand is facing the congregation!
- Don't keep your hands in your pockets
- Don't rattle coins or keys in your pocket
- Don't keep looking at your watch or the clock on the wall
- Don't point directly at your congregation. If you point cock your finger at forty-five degrees. Strong confrontation may lose your congregation
- Don't continually wave your arms like a windmill – start slow, continue and then glow!
- Don't overuse phrases like 'you know' or 'and you know'
- Don't be afraid of showing your emotions
- And finally – be angry about sin and injustice. But be excited about the Lord and his salvation.

Applying your Knowledge

Now is the time to put your homiletic theory into practice. So: *Be descriptive*. Use colorful nouns together with adjectives, and active verbs together with adverbs. Paint verbal pictures. Aim at simplicity. 'To obtain simplicity in preaching is of the utmost importance' (J. C. Ryle). Avoid displaying your scholarship in the pulpit by using obscure words or Greek and Hebrew terms that do not enhance a point. As words are the basic tools of your calling enlarge your vocabulary by using a good dictionary and a thesaurus.

Be acceptable. Avoid any words that may be taken to be swear words. Do not set out to be offensive. Remember 2 Corinthians 5:20! Be aware that words can have different meanings in different counties or countries. Do not be patronizing. Avoid clichés like, 'Dear friends' and 'Dear sinner friend'. Donald Gee used to tell the story of a lady who addressed coal miners and drunkards in the open air with the words 'Dear ones'. She got nowhere fast! Avoid religious jargon.

Use quotations. Use quotations in your sermons: 'These can light up the sermon and drive home its striking message, provided they are used sparingly and that they are clear, striking and moving in their content'.¹³ But avoid the over use of quotations; a sermon should be more than a cut-and-paste work.

Be an opportunist. The occasion may dictate the kind of sermon required. Easter, Harvest and Christmas are times when people often attend a place of worship for one of the few times in a year. Have a well-prepared and prayerful word ready for these occasions. The Lord Jesus was an opportunist (see Jn. 6:35 and 8:12 and their context).

Be spontaneous. Be yourself – let your emotions show. Spontaneity may involve the use of ejaculations like, 'Praise the Lord!', 'Hallelujah', and 'Amen'. But avoid using them like punctuation marks. A spiritual word should not be judged by its use of praise words. Do not rely on a congregation's enthusiasm and praise to inspire you.

¹³ J. Murray, *How Shall they Hear?* London, Independent Press, 1962, p. 36.

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Be watchful. Watch your spirit. Be keen – ‘Nothing great was accomplished without enthusiasm’ (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Be bright, without being light; be reverent and natural. Deliver in the key of B natural! Begin low, but let your feelings show. Be humble.

Be Spirit-filled. G. Campbell Morgan calls for truth, clarity and passion in sermons. We must preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notes



Dealing with Yourself

Fear is the enemy of the preacher, especially the fear of man and the fear of failure (Prov. 29:25). The preachers must place their trust in God and die to themselves. Relax in God in the following ways:

Be yourself. Do not imitate the style or adopt the mannerisms of great preachers. We will serve God best and be a blessing to others by being natural and unaffected. Some gestures may be idiosyncratic, that is, part of you. Be prepared to keep some and change others. Do not adopt a false or ecclesiastical voice. The rich experience of preaching involves the preacher and their personality – be yourself.

Forget yourself. Forget yourself by getting lost in your message. This will bring you into liberty of expression and make for extempore preaching and true eloquence.

Express yourself. Do not be a mere echo of other minds. Think for yourself. Voice your convictions in your own way. This will ensure that your ministry is vital and fresh. Having said this, avoid being controversial for the sake of it.

Notes



Lesson 4: Teaching

Teaching has traditionally been an intellectual exercise. Information is organized and delivered in order to increase the knowledge of the student. Large amounts of content are often assimilated by the student. For the purposes of this course, however, we must reject this traditional definition of teaching. It has no place in the Kingdom of God. Information that reaches the mind but fails to affect the heart or change behavior is useless to God and to his people. As a result, we must approach teaching from a *training* perspective. Training seeks to give information, motivate, and increase skills in order to change behavior and improve results. Another way of saying this is we must teach in such a way that our heads are informed, our hearts are transformed and our hands are equipped for action.

Venues for Teaching

Teaching can happen effectively in both formal and informal settings. You can teach a crowd of 1000 people and you can teach one other person.

- **Public settings:** Formal classroom or large seminar settings allow the teacher to touch a large group of people at one time. Generally, a speaking environment is considered “public” when there are more than 12 people present. Public settings can include:
 - Classrooms
 - Seminars
 - Workshops
 - Conventions
 - Worship Assemblies
- **Small Group settings:** Can be informal or formal. These are ideal settings to allow for interactive study and personal impartation. A small group usually consists of 2 to 12 people. Small group settings can include:
 - **Bible Study:** In this format, the teacher is able to help the group focus on learning certain truths from scripture. The teacher is able to highlight points and then facilitate discussion around the implications and applications of God’s Word. This environment provides an opportunity for a balanced exchange between the teachers lesson and the groups involvement through discussion, questions, and application.
 - **Workshops:** This format takes specific teaching or truth and trains participants how to put it into action. Practical topics are ideal for this setting. “Healthy Relationships”, “Finances”, “How to share your Faith”.
 - **Discussion groups:** This format is very useful if the topic is troublesome or difficult to accept. Discussion groups are designed to allow the participants to take most of the time in discussing, processing, questioning and challenging the topic. The teacher can introduce the topic and present the issues within the first few minutes and then open the discussion. These

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settings can be lively and controversial, but if handled well, they can be very healthy and useful.

- Skill development (practicing behaviors that reinforce the teaching): This format is effective for specific skill development, such as worship training, or welcoming visitors.
- **One-on-One settings:** These are almost always informal settings for discipleship and tutoring. These settings are, by nature, more intimate and therefore can be intimidating for many people. It is also the most powerful setting for imparting faith and encouraging life changes. Everyone should seek the opportunity to teach in one-on-one settings because it gives the student a sense of importance and ownership of the material. One-on-One settings can include:
 - Sharing prepared material.
 - Practicum, or supervision of assigned activities.
 - Tutoring: Helping the student come to a deep understanding of the material.
 - Accountability: Taking responsibility to see that the student fulfills assignments.
 - Building Friendship

Preparing to Teach

Teaching Prepared Materials

Often you will have the opportunity to teach using prepared materials that others have written. If this is the case then you should take the time to carefully go through the material and be sure that when you teach it, you will be able to teach it as if it were your own. If there is material that you do not agree with, you should reconcile the issues and make whatever changes are needed before you teach the material.

We will spend the rest of our time learning to prepare for teaching with no pre-written materials.

Designing Your Own Materials

Here is a guideline for consistently preparing quality materials for teaching.

- Research your topic.
- Set Learning Goals.
- Set Motivational Goals.
- Set Skill goals.
- Organize materials to flow in a natural progression.
- Design activities that will help accomplish your goals.

Next you need to decide on the written format for the student materials.

- Fill in the Blanks

Notes



- Short Outline Form
- Short Narrative/Outline
- Narrative

Principles to Follow when Preparing Your Materials

1. You can never cover as much material as you think you can.
2. You should have the students involved in some kind of activity every 20-30 minutes.
 - a. Discussion between the teacher and the class
 - b. Break into small groups
 - c. Bible Study
 - d. Game that illustrates the point.

Delivering Your Course

It is essential to remember, when teaching, that it is not all about the material you've prepared. This is a common mistake that teachers make. Their focus is only on delivering the "content" of the class, and they miss the real opportunity to connect with the students and impart something of the Kingdom of God into them.

Your goal is to instill deep and lasting change in your students. This can only be done by touching their heads AND their hearts. Then you have an opportunity to develop their skills so they can act on what you have taught.

Delivery Styles

Choosing your style of teaching should be relatively easy. There will be a style that fits you naturally, but many teachers try to emulate someone they admire. It can be valuable to stretch yourself and learn new things, but don't get stuck in a certain style that does not fit you. It won't be as effective and you'll be miserable.

Delivery styles are essentially the same as for preaching. Teachers tend to use Passionate or Conversational styles over Theatrical styles. Theatrical style does not lend itself to interaction and discussion with the students and most teachers try to create an interactive environment.

Choosing an Effective Teaching Format

There are several techniques you can use to create an effective teaching environment. A format is a way of arranging the teaching session to get the greatest benefit. Take a look at the following questions:

1. How should we arrange the chairs for maximum learning?
 - a. How many people will be in the room?
 - b. Do we need tables to write on?
 - c. Do we need discussion groups?



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2. How often should we take a break?
 - a. How long is the teaching session?
 - b. You should take a break no less than once every 1 to 1 ½ hours.
3. How many activities should we do?
 - a. How much emphasis on skills does this course have.
 - b. The more skill needed, the more you should practice the skills.
 - c. The class should have at least one activity per hour (if the teacher is using a translator), and two every hour if no translator is needed.

Notes



Lesson 5: Valuable Lessons in Preaching / Teaching

Notes

There are many practical things we must learn when we begin to preach and teach God's Word. It is a skill to be developed over many years of practice. God does not just desire us to gain in His anointing, He also desires us to gain in skill as a communicator of His Message. There were many great communicators in the New Testament days, but the Scriptures speak of one, Apollos, as a master communicator. Listen to the record of Apollos in Acts 18:24-25

Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus,

He was Mighty in the Scriptures – The implication was that Apollos had spent much time in study and preparation of His life to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not just depend on the Holy Spirit, He had prepared himself well in the Word. Probably he had spent thousands of hours memorizing, digesting, writing ideas and understandings about the Scriptures until the Scriptures themselves became a part of him and he was able to use them well.

By the time Jesus began His ministry at age 30, He had spent so much time in the Word, that He had memorized the entire Bible of His day, the Old Testament. Can you imagine that, memorizing the entire Bible so that you could pull any verse and any topic at once as the Holy Spirit began to lead you.

Most people today want to serve God without any hidden training in the Word. It is those hundreds of hours of preparation and training that makes a person ***Mighty in the Scriptures*** and the Scriptures are the primary building tools of the Holy Spirit in changing lives. Someone once asked Watchman Nee, the great Chinese apostle, "How long should I prepare a sermon?" To the young minister's surprise, Nee responded, "20 Years." It is all of the hidden preparation that gives one the chance to be useful to God.

An Eloquent Man – This is an interesting Greek phrase. The word eloquent is the Greek word ***logios***. It means he had much knowledge and could use it quite convincingly. Apollos had not just prepared his mind, he had developed a great ability to communicate effectively what he knew. He could put thoughts together well, he knew how to illustrate what he said to drive home his point, he understood that he must be an effective communicator to be a good instrument in the hand of God.

Many people do not pay any attention to how effectively they can communicate God's truth. The key is not "DID I SAY IT", but rather, "DID THEY GET IT AND IS THEIR LIFE GOING TO CHANGE!" We must pay great attention to effectively communicating God's word. We should give our attention to practical rules of communication that will better us as servants of the Lord.

Being Fervent in Spirit – A third thing we learn about Apollos is that he was fervent in spirit as he preached and taught the word. The word fervent is the Greek word ***zeo***, which means to be hot and to boil. This man didn't just recite a few thoughts about God in a boring and apathetic way, rather he was on fire with the passion of God and he communicated his message with passion and fire.



When we stand to communicate God's word, it should come forth in a passionate, but well prepared form. We should literally be boiling on the inside with His message and when it comes out it is red hot with God's own life and fire. This passion will express itself differently with different people and different personality types, but God is looking for servants who will communicate with genuine fire and passion His message to the world.

Six Lessons for Preaching and Teaching

#1 Preach or Teach to the Whole Man – To be successful in the ministry of the Word, we must not just aim at one part of a person's life, we must learn to communicate to the whole man. As we preach, we must prepare to and then deliver the message to a man's: 1) Heart 2) Mind 3) Hands and Feet.

Heart – The heart is the core of man where his emotion and will sit. Jesus always sought to move men's hearts not just instruct their minds. We must first go to the heart of a man and his mind will usually follow. We must communicate in such a way that a man's decision making capacities are deeply affected and he chooses to do something with what he has heard. We must also move the emotion of men into activity before the Lord.

Several things communicate to the heart, but none so much as pictures and feelings. With principles, we can communicate to a man's head but never get to his heart. The heart thinks on the picture level.

- ✓ A powerful story or illustration that helps a person 'feel' the message within them
- ✓ A story or illustration which helps them 'see' what you are saying
- ✓ Pointed questions which probe deep into a person's life causing them to look at the Word, look within and make a decision

Head – The head thinks in terms of definitions, principles, and abstract ideas. The purpose of preaching to a person's head is for the renewing of the mind so that they might begin to think like God thinks and so that they may begin to work together with God.

Hands and Feet—Communicating to the hands and feet means to make sure there is practical application in every teaching. There must be something in the Word that I can take hold of and do. The feet represent people's *walk with Christ* and the hands represent people's *service to Christ*. Too often, people preach high ideals but give no practical guidance on how to alter the way we walk and serve. We must avoid this and make sure in most every message there is a clear application to our walk and service to Him.

Every good sermon or teaching should. . .

- Move the heart to decision
- Renew the mind to clearer Christ-like thinking
- Give clear application for daily life and service

#2 The Power of a Picture – As stated above, we must move men to decision and activity with our words and this can only be done if we get to the heart level. We move into a man's heart by the use of pictures. Never underestimate the power of a picture. Jesus didn't. We find Him constantly using parables, picture stories, to illustrate the principles He taught of the Kingdom.

Why is over 40% of the Old Testament stories and over 50% of the New? Stories are pictures and pictures move men's hearts. Stories reveal to us what



God is like, how He interacts with people, how people interact with Him, etc. When we teach a principle, we can instruct the mind but when we illustrate the principle with a well-timed story, we can touch the heart, and the old story is true, **“A picture is worth a thousand words!”**

We can use pictures in our teaching through telling a story, giving an illustration, using a parable, doing a short skit or sketch, showing a brief video clip or even having a certain song sung at just the right time. Jesus was the master of this.

A good model to follow would be:

- Teach the principle
- Explain the principle
- Tell a story (if they will remember the story, they will usually remember the principle)
- Drive home the application of the principle through asking appropriate questions

#3 Proper Preparation – It is essential to properly prepare to preach or teach as discussed in several sections above, but there are some other ideas you must have as you prepare yourself.

- Prayer in the preparation phase is critical – time spent waiting upon the Lord for guidance and clarity in preparation, praying the message into your own soul so that it comes out of your heart and not just your head, praying over the people you will be ministering to in preparation for their hearing the word.
- As you prepare your teaching, you must listen and begin to sense in the Holy Spirit what is the attitude you are to speak in as you teach the Message. We were created in God’s image and just as we have different emotions and attitudes in our lives, so does the Lord. It is critical that we do not just share the **right message**, but that we share it in the **right spirit and attitude**.

Sometimes, we may be delivering a very corrective, difficult message but the Lord wants us to share it very tenderly and with much love and grace. At other times, we may feel such a burning fire in our souls as we share even a simple, small teaching that it must come forth that way.

Too many servants of the Lord never learn to discern the proper attitude they are to share God’s Word in and it either comes across very hard and almost legalistic and condemning or it comes across so weak that it has no fire in it. We must discern the attitude of the Lord in our messages.

#4 Managing our Time Well As We Speak – One mistake many communicators make is that they never learn to manage their time well and waste much time in front of the people or spend too much time on some minor point and never really get the message across.

People will only give you an allotted amount of time to speak to them. They may not get up and walk out, but they certainly might turn you off and not hear anything you are saying. You probably only have 30-45 minutes with most audiences and must learn to say much in a short amount of time.

Think of your time in front of the group like filling up an empty jar. The first thing you must do is take off the lid, then fill the jar (30-45 minutes worth of



communication) and then close the lid on the contents so that it is not lost. Here are some keys on managing your time as you speak:

- **Taking off the lid** - Your first three to five minutes are critical. You must **connect** with your audience and **draw them in** to your message. If you don't, they will sit there and hear you but never really listen to you. You want to tell a story, use a personal illustration or ask a pertinent question that will so spark their interest that they sit up in their chair and say, "*I have to hear what this person is going to say!*" If you try to pour something into a jar with the lid or top still on, it just runs down the sides and is lost. You must say something which causes them to open up and listen to you.
- **Filling the Jar** – Remember, you only have about 30 minutes and if you are not a seasoned speaker, you probably only have 15 or 20 that they will really listen. Do not waste your time on unimportant matters. Think of it like you have three big rocks you want to place in the jar (these are your main thoughts or principles). To secure them in the jar, you want to pour a little sand all around them – this is your illustrations, stories, etc. Make sure you manage your time well to properly get each rock into that jar, giving an appropriate story to move it into the heart. If you see your time is running out, don't just run through your points. It is better to say a little bit well, than to say a lot poorly.
- **Closing the Jar** – The last role you must fulfill in your sermon is to close the jar, that is, to somehow cause the person to take the Word for themselves and interact with it and apply it to their lives. Make sure you have a practical life application to every truth you teach. A short review of the major thoughts followed by pointed questions is a good method to cause people to think about what they will now do with the Word. A story of how this principle changed someone's life is a great closer before you pray with the people.

#5 Call People to Respond to the Word – James 1:21-25

"in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. . .but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."

Often, we must call men to receive the Word and do it. There are many ways to call for responses to the preaching of God's Word and you should spend time in the preparation phase in prayer and careful thought on just how you should end, and what would be an appropriate immediate and long-term response to the message given.

#6 Be Yourself as you Preach or Teach – A last word of practical advice, BE YOURSELF. God has created us in so many various ways that He desires His Word to come forth with many different personality types and in many different styles.

Some people are very funny and it is so refreshing to hear them break open the Word of God. You laugh, you cry, you enjoy it very much. Others are very serious; some are very passionate by nature; others are more of a line upon line teacher, but whatever your God given style is, develop it, become comfortable with who YOU are in Him and be that.

Activities for Preaching and Teaching

The following pages include activities to help you think through and develop your preaching and teaching materials. Give your best to the Lord as you proclaim the Word of God boldly.

What's the Big Idea?

Discerning the theme of the sermon.

Every sermon ought to have a point - at least one. This is the message that we seek to discover in exegesis, but there only ought to be one message per sermon. Haddon Robinson reminds us that rhetoricians and experts on public speaking have been unanimous on the issue, public messages ought to focus on a single idea. "A sermon should be a bullet, not buckshot," Robinson says (35). If a preacher cannot articulate the big idea of a sermon in a single concise statement, there will likely be confusion in the pulpit. Careful construction of a theme statement will help to discipline the preacher's thought and the sermon itself so that the listener will have no trouble discerning the central truth of the sermon and of the biblical text.

The big idea of the sermon ought to match closely with the big idea of the text. Steven Matthewson, counsels a progression in thinking about the big idea, beginning with the exegetical idea, building toward a theological idea, and ultimately a preaching or homiletic idea.

Text: *Exodus 33:12-34:17*

Exegetical Idea: *Although God is so powerful that Moses cannot handle a look at his presence, God is driven by compassion, grace, patience, love, and forgiveness.*

Theological Idea: *Although God is so powerful that a human being cannot handle a look at his presence, God is driven by compassion, grace, patience, love, and forgiveness!*

Homiletical Idea: *The God who has the power to fry you is incredibly good!*

Or how about this one...

Text: *Genesis 22:1-19*

Exegetical Idea: *Abraham put obedience to God first even though he faced the prospect of sacrificing his son Isaac.*

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Theological Idea: *Faithful worshipers of God will put obedience to God first even when there is great cost involved.*

Homiletic Idea: *The greatest thing you can do for your kids is to worship God, not your kids!*

You will notice that the "homiletic idea" is shorter and has some punch to it. I would suggest that the big idea of the sermon (the "theme statement") ought to have the following components...

*It ought to be a *complete declarative sentence* so that it is something we can actually say in the sermon.

*It ought to be stated in *twelve words or less*, not that twelve is a magic number. It simply serves to keep the idea concise.

**No conjunctions* (ands, ifs, buts, ...) ought to be in the statement if we are trying to say one thing well.

*It ought to be *image rich* (visual) and suggestive to the listeners.

Some examples, then...

1 Kings 17: *God stands behind his Word.*

Matthew 16:24-26: *In this life only the losers win.*

James 2: *Faith has no favorites.*

1 John 1:5-7: *God doesn't hide in the dark.*

Of course, some texts have multiple ideas. There might be a big idea, a bigger idea, and a biggest idea. One doesn't have to preach the biggest idea every time, as long as what is preached remains faithful to the intent of the biblical passage. Try the following texts as an exercise...

Text	Big Idea
The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight. <i>Proverbs 11:1</i>	
No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. <i>Luke 6:43-45</i>	

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As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow. *John 18:25-27*

Now check your responses. Have you given complete declarative sentences? Are there twelve words (preferably less)? Are there any conjunctions in the sentence? Is the statement image rich? Most of all, does it declare God's intention from this text, for these people at this time (the message)? If so, you've probably got the big idea.

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Subject and Complement

Haddon Robinson defines the subject as "what the text is talking about" and the complement as "what the text is saying about what it is talking about." The following examples are taken from his book, *Biblical Preaching*. Consider the examples and then try the unfinished examples yourself.

Text	Subject	Complement
A good sermon leaves you wondering how the preacher knew all about you.	The test of a good sermon.	It reveals what you are.
Today's pulpit has lost its authority because it has largely ignored the Bible as the source of its message.	Why the modern pulpit is weak.	It has ignored the Bible.
A good name is more desirable than great wealth; the respect of others is better than silver or gold. <i>Proverbs 22:1</i>	The value of a good reputation.	It is worth more than material things.
Praise the Lord, all nations; Extol him, all you people! For his love is strong, his faithfulness eternal. <i>Psalms 117</i>	Why everyone should praise God.	We should praise Him for His strong love and eternal faithfulness.
Do not speak harshly to a man older than yourself, but advise him as you would your own father; treat the younger man as brothers and older women as you would your mother. Always treat younger women with propriety, as if they were your sisters.	How we should treat others.	We should treat them with the respect one gives to members of one's family.
The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? <i>Jeremiah 17:9</i>		
Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. <i>Matthew 7:13, 14</i>		
Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But		

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<p>we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. <i>1 John 3:2,3</i></p>		
<p>But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. <i>Genesis 50:19-21</i></p>		
<p>Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. <i>Lamentations 3:23,24</i></p>		

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The Image Grid

Do sermons need illustration?

Traditionally, sermon illustration has been understood as adding raisins to one's oatmeal. The theory is that the oatmeal is the nutritious part of the meal, but it isn't all that tasty. If we want people to be able to choke it down we need to add some tasty little raisins.

There are two problems with this approach. First, who says oatmeal can't taste good? If the significant content of the sermon is well prepared, it can be as tasty and palatable as anything else. Second, who says story and image is only supplemental? It would seem that Jesus showed us that narrative or image can be as powerful a carrier of content as anything else. It may be well to understand that at many points in the preaching process, the story is the thing, not just the illustration of the thing.

To illustrate a sermon would be to color it in, to add the imagery that gives the content life and energy. One could argue, that content without color is of little use. It is the life relevance of the truth that gives it meaning in space and time. Without the "illustration" the idea is only abstract and not particularly useful.

Sermons need imagery, story, and metaphor if they will speak with power into people's lives. The best images, of course, are organically developed. It is rare that an internet site or a book of "5000 Sermon Illustrations" can offer the connection that comes between preacher and listener when the image comes from the text of Scripture and the text of the listener's lives (to use [Ian Pitt-Watson's](#) language). The best place to look for imagery for the sermon is from the text itself (see the examples below). From there the preacher can brainstorm, extrapolating all kinds of related pictures, stories, and points of connection through oral imagery. It is best, of course, if the text/sermon itself allows for the development of the imagery. If we lead with the illustration, we might find that the story shapes the thought of the sermon instead of the text.

[David Buttrick](#) has written of what he calls, "The Image Grid." "We are not merely trying to gather a bunch of "impact" illustrations, we are designing a grid of interrelating images to serve a particular structure of thought" (157). These images, stories, metaphors, and analogies weave together to form an underlying image grid for an entire sermon, much like what you would find in a well constructed poem. Forming such a grid may require the preacher to jettison some excellent material in the pursuit of a tightly woven grid, but then some of that material might suit another sermon better. Images work best when they fit together.

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Try the following examples:

Text	Image	Brainstorming
1 John 1:5-7 - God is light. In him there is no darkness at all. (See the full manuscript of this sermon.)	light and darkness	Dark candlelit churches; my friend who commanded light at the basketball game; the speed of light; my friend burning his name into the bench at school with a magnifying glass and the rays of the sun; Annie Proulx's "Ivar" and his fear of light; putting Vitamin D in our milk so that we don't have to go out into the sunlight ...
Ephesians 3:17b,18 - And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge...	well rooted tree	The giant tree in our front yard that almost blew down in a storm; the tree in Guacari, Colombia (on the Colombian 5 peso coin) that looked beautiful on the outside but which was riddled with rot on the inside; my daughter, Katey, planting her very own apple tree; counting the rings on an old growth tree; checking the soil around the base of a tree...
James 5:7 - Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop.	the farmer	
Matthew 22:1-14 - The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son (v.2).		
Jeremiah 31:31-34 - This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, "declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" (33).		

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Live the Sermon

I recently heard a preacher apply his teaching of the ten commandments, particularly the prohibition against stealing. He did a good job with his explanation of the text. His presentation was engaging. The piece that got my attention, however, was his application.

He described how earlier on the weekend he had gone out to his garden shed and gathered up all the tools that he had "borrowed" from neighbors. He then returned each of the tools along with his apology for keeping what didn't belong to him. Next, he went to his study and gathered up all of the books that he had borrowed but never returned. He put those books in envelopes and mailed them back to those they belonged to along with a note of apology.

I was impressed. Not only was this man willing to preach on the subject, but he had intentionally found ways to apply the message of the text in his own life before he preached it. Now, it may not be that this was pivotal for many listeners in terms of their willingness to be obedient to God. It may be that this was a minor aspect of the sermon for many. Yet, there was integrity in it. This is the kind of thing that shows listeners, not only how to apply the text, but that their pastor is willing to himself, submit to the implications of the message. It shows that the preacher, himself, had heard from God.

I don't imagine it is necessary for us to tell people about the things we have done in response to the Word every time we preach. I do think it is necessary that we do something if we want our preaching to be more than abstract. In some cases, we may need to reach into our past to find times when these issues were on the "front burner" of our lives. In other cases, we might need to set the sermon aside until we are personally willing to do something with it. The point is that if the sermon will be real, the preacher

Reality Preaching

Keeping it real in the pulpit.

The hottest trend in television over the last two years has been reality-based programming. Sparked by the success of the *Survivor* series and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, program clones such as *Chains of Love* and *Blind Date* have overtaken the airwaves. The most recent and perhaps most obnoxious entry is *The Weakest Link*, which merges the pseudo-intellectual gaming of *Millionaire* with the darwinian cruelty of *Survivor*. Apparently, we are attracted to the idea that ordinary people placed in extraordinary circumstances are capable of just about anything.

I will admit, there is a freshness to these programs. Scripted television stales after a while. Even contrived scenarios masquerading as *real* can seem invigorating after a few too many episodes of *Just Shoot Me* or *Spin City*. It is hard to engage with overpaid actors sleepwalking through uninspired scripts.

Yet sermons can stupify just as well as television scripts. Many scripted sermons come off as packaged and canned, bearing no resemblance to the real life stories of the pew-sitting listener. So often we are offered disembodied

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needs to live it.		<p>propositions, sanitized and unbloodied, when what the listener is really looking for is something that strikes him or her as part of his/her life. The listener wants to recognize the pain and the passion of all that is human in the words of the Word of the preacher.</p> <p>I heard a sermon last night that was well written, tightly packaged, and thoroughly uninspiring - for the first half at least. Part way through the sermon, however, everything changed. The speaker took off her glasses and looked at the audience. Her lower lip began to quiver and she began to tell us a story from out of her life. The story was appropriate. It effectively illustrated the message from the text. But mostly, it gave us access to the preacher's heart. We were instantly riveted. We wanted to hear from her because what she was saying was real.</p> <p>I find <i>Survivor</i> to be depressing. It may be real, but I've got enough of that kind of reality in the normal living of my life. Preacher's have an advantage. The message of the gospel is the ultimate in reality programming. The difference is, no one has to get voted out of the sanctuary. God's grace is real and it is for everyone.</p> <p>Kenton C. Anderson, Ph.D.</p> <p>June 2001</p>
<p>Discussion Exercise:</p> <p>From the following texts, identify concrete ways in which the preacher could personally live the <u>message</u> before preaching it.</p>		
Exodus 20:15: "Do not steal."	Return books that have been borrowed and forgotten; Be more respectful of other people's time; Consider carefully one's tax return before filing it; ...	
Luke 10:38-41: the story of Mary and Martha	Do a personal time audit to see how much time has been spent in communion with God; Blow off the day's schedule in favor of a long prayer walk or to spend some unscheduled time serving someone in need; ...	
Romans 13:1-7: "Everyone must submit to the governing authorities."		
Proverbs 12:1 : "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid."		
I John 2:6: "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did ."		
<p>Further Questions: What would it take for the preacher to find the commitment necessary to see this kind of thing through? Would you be willing to set a sermon aside if you were not sure that you had actually lived the message in any meaningful way prior to preaching it? Is it possible to preach someone else's experience with any kind of real integrity?</p>		

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Appendix 1

Narrative Writing

The single most common form of writing in the Bible is narrative writing or narrative history. These are the books which contain the story or the story line of the Bible. Biblical narrative stories compose 40 % of the Old Testament and a large part of the New. The narrative based books would include: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Jonah, Haggai, some of the Prophetic writings, the Gospels, Acts

“Narratives are stories—purposeful stories retelling the historical events of the past that are intended to give meaning and direction for a given people in the present.¹⁴” These stories are inspired by the Holy Spirit and absolutely true, and to appreciate and learn from them, we must know some basic truths about narratives, that is, what they are and how they work.

There are three different sets of narrative stories in the Scriptures and we will look briefly at all three. These include Old Testament narratives, Gospel narratives, and the Book of Acts.

Why so much Narrative in the Bible: Narratives are written history and He desperately wants us to know His story! Stories are powerful learning tools. They evoke images in our minds and we often will remember stories while we struggle to learn individual verses. Within the pages of the narratives, we get to know what God is like, how He deals with people, how people respond to Him in both positive and negative ways, and the consequences of their responses. In the stories we learn what He likes and hates, what man’s true nature is really like, and what God can do to remedy man’s evil nature. Narratives are a great way to learn!

Parts of a Narrative: Most Bible narratives will have the following elements that you should look for. . .

1) A Narrator: The biblical narrator of a story (Moses for example in the book of Genesis) is the one who chooses what to write and what to leave out. They are telling the story looking back and are the ones responsible for the point of view and main points.

2) A Scene: Biblical narrative stories are made up of many miniature scenes much like a modern movie. Very few scenes are long, but each scene gives us a glimpse into God, the character’s lives, and the overall plot. While reading the narrative, it is important to remember that each scene can be a stand alone incident to learn from, but above all, it is a small part of a larger story God is trying to tell us. We must read each scene in light of the other scenes before and after to see God’s major points He is trying to make.

3) A Plot: Every story has a beginning, a middle and an end, but the Hebrew plot is usually very fast moving and reaches its climax very quickly. It is critical to discover the major plot of each scene in a narrative (these would be sub-plots) and how they fit into the overall plot of what God is saying through the narrative as a whole.

¹⁴ Fee & Stuart, p. 90.

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4) Major and Minor Characters: The central part of all Hebrew stories are the characters. God is the central character in every story and He must be discovered there. If we miss Him, we have missed the point. After the Lord Himself, usually there are two kinds of characters in the stories, those who are making wise and godly decisions and those who are the contrast to this. It is critical that we see these characters and learn from their lives God's ways! These characters are almost always the centerpiece of the story.

These different elements should be noted as you read and you should ask yourself questions about each of these.

Principles for learning from Old Testament Narratives

- 1) Old Testament narratives usually don't teach a doctrine directly.
- 2) Old Testament narratives usually illustrate a doctrine or principle taught directly in another part of the Bible.
- 3) What people do in a narrative is not necessarily a good example for us. In fact it is often just the opposite.
- 4) We are often not told in the narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to make that judgment ourselves based upon the rest of the teaching of God's word.
- 5) God allows both the good and the bad of the characters in the stories to be seen so that we might learn from their obedience and mistakes.
- 6) Stories may either teach us explicitly (by clearly stating something) or implicitly (by implying something without clearly stating it).
- 7) God's dealings with man is the central theme of all biblical narratives.¹⁵
- 8) Roman's 15.4 and 2 Tim. 3.16-17 tell us that these Old Testament narratives were written for our instruction and training in righteousness. It is critical that we see three things in them: their direct or explicit teachings, their indirect or implicit teachings, and their illustrations of clear New Testament principles.

Take time to learn from the stories of the Bible. They are one of God's greatest teaching tools for our lives and ministries. Here are some of the key things you can learn from the narratives of the Bible:

- a) Abraham – the life of faith – how God takes a man with little or no faith and walks him along a journey to make him a great man of faith. There are many illustrations in the life of Abraham of principles of faith that are clearly taught in the New Testament.
- b) Moses and the Exodus – the story clearly illustrates NT principles of taking a city or region for God. It also gives us clues into the deeper issues of men's hearts as they are saved and begin a walk with God.
- c) David & the Kingdom – Here is perhaps the clearest illustration of Jesus' own teaching on the kingdom of God in this age. We also learn great lessons on good and bad leadership.
- d) The Kings Stories – lessons on leadership and how national sin and national obedience affects every area of people's lives.

Learning from Acts

When people study the book of Acts, it usually has at the root of their study a desire to see how the Holy Spirit interacted with men and how the early church lived and operated. This is a great desire, but many have misinterpreted the book and which has led to major error in teaching and in the church. The key question when you study and interpret Acts is:

¹⁵ Fee & Stuart, p. 106.

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Was their lives and their practices in the church to be the norm for our lives and our practices today? Should we form basic doctrinal practices from the history of the early church?

This has been done for centuries, often to the detriment of the church.

Luke's Original Intention: The key to learning from Acts lies in discovering Luke's original intention in what he included in the story of the early church.

Luke's apparent intension was twofold:

- 1) The movement of the Gospel and the church constantly forward into new territory, new lives, and new regions. This is the primary message of the book. God is a God of mission and desires to constantly move forward into new hearts, lives, regions, etc. and nothing can stop Him.
- 2) The powerful working of the Holy Spirit through normal men to accomplish this mission. The Holy Spirit is truly the "Star" of the book as He guides, speaks, converts, transforms, empowers and does signs and wonders as men turn to Jesus Christ.

Principles for Learning from the Story of Acts

- 1) We cannot form a normal way of Christian living or ministry from a single story in Acts. This is the record of how the Holy Spirit worked in these days and in these cultures, but does not necessarily mean it is the only way He will move today.
- 2) These stories should serve more as guides for our life and ministry than definite norms. We should NOT form firm rules for how church should operate or how daily Christian life should be led based upon these stories. It does not tell us how to have church, how to minister in every situation.
- 3) If things are repeated within the book, it could be assumed that we can learn basic patterns of life and ministry.
- 4) We gain a good understanding of how man relates to Jesus through the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts. One of the overriding purposes of the book is to convince men that the Holy Spirit wants to flow through them with power to the world. Even in this, we cannot limit the Spirit to just what we see in Acts for in these stories, He was moving in new and living ways that they had never seen or heard of before.
- 5) We must be aware of who is the main character of the story – was it an apostle, a teacher, a prophet, or a member in the church. Each of these gifts have different abilities and responsibilities. To say that we should be like all is not biblically correct.
- 6) We cannot conclude that our church should be structured or built like the Acts churches because it is never stated that they should be. These churches were set into particular cultural settings of the day and so should ours. For example, the Jerusalem and Antioch churches were very different because of their cultural setting. Just as they build city taking churches by the leading of the Spirit that fit within their cultural framework, so should we.
- 7) We should seek to emulate their: doctrine, teaching & preaching, power, love, and results in a culturally relevant church of today.

The Gospels

To correctly study and interpret the Gospels, we must understand that they are one story with many dimensions. Each of the writers was writing to a different audience with a different perspective of the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus. Within the Gospels we can

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find two basic elements: ***the stories about Jesus (narrative)*** and ***the sayings of Jesus (direct teachings and parables.)***

It is critical for us to discover a few things to understand the four gospels:

- 1) What was Jesus historical setting like?
- 2) Who were the target audiences of each gospel?
- 3) Why was it written differently?
- 4) What was the historical situation it was written in to?

Jesus Historical setting was Aramaic speaking Israel. It was agricultural, small villages, and very rural. He often taught in parables, hyperbole, similes and metaphors, questions and He used poetry and proverbs often in His teaching style. This was ***very common*** to great rabbinical teachers of His day. It would serve you well to discover a good book about the cultural setting of Jesus day and immerse yourself with an understanding of His day.

The Historical Setting of the Gospels differ from one to the other. They each had different target groups, cultural assumptions, and purposes in writing their rendition of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. These are very important for us to understand for us to properly learn from the Gospels. You can discover the Author's audience, the purpose of writing and the nature of each Gospel from a good commentary, Bible Dictionary, or the introduction of a good study Bible to the Gospel account.

Understanding the Narratives: The narratives of the Gospel tend to function in more than one way. They often have many more dimensions to them than do the other biblical narratives.

- a) The miracle stories function to show us the power of God and His kingdom breaking into people's lives then (and hopefully today). They often illustrate the operation of faith in the lives of people.
- b) Other stories such as the rich young ruler and the request to sit at the right hand of Jesus in His Kingdom serve to illustrate major teaching points of Jesus and many, if not most, of these are set in the middle of His teaching. The stories illustrate the teaching and the teaching explains the stories.
- c) The third function of these stories is that they reveal to us Jesus Christ Himself. No other place in the Scriptures can we gaze upon the Lord and come to know Him as in the Gospel narratives. To be a true follower of Jesus, we should immerse ourselves in these stories to get to know the Master.
- d) These can serve as examples for us to follow in many cases. Any one story as a single event is probably not going to be a pattern for us to follow, but His life looked at as a whole should be our basic pattern or living. Only in these stories will we discover how He lived and how we therefore ought to live.

Appendix 2

The Use of Illustration

Every preacher should read Charles H. Spurgeon's *Lectures to my Students*. He spends his last five chapters on sermon illustration and its importance. Spurgeon likens illustrations to windows in a house and says that every room (each main sermon division) should have one. He gives seven reasons why a preacher should use anecdotes and illustrations which are simply listed here for reflection:

- illustrations interest the mind and secure attention
- they render preaching life-like and vivid
- they may explain either doctrine or duties
- there is a kind of reasoning in anecdotes and illustrations
- they may help the memory to grasp the truth
- they frequently arouse the feelings
- they catch the ear of the utterly careless.

W. E. Sangster was the minister of Westminster Central Hall, London, for many years. People used to queue to hear him preach. His book on preaching entitled *The Craft of the Sermon* combines two earlier works, *The Craft of Sermon Construction* and *The Craft of Sermon Illustration*. We recall his comments on sermon illustration.

First, *they make the message clear*. Illustrations should give light on dark points; they can illuminate the sermon and enlighten the mind.

Secondly, *they ease the congregation*. As Aaron Linford said in an article to preachers: 'In a prolonged argument an illustration may serve the useful purpose of mental relaxation for the congregation without taking their minds from the subject under discussion'.¹

Thirdly, *they make the truth impressive*. You can gain the interest of all ages by illustration. Pastorally this is an important point. As children who believe are part of the church of today they must hear and understand the Word of God.

Fourthly, *they make preaching interesting*. Illustrations give life to a sermon.

Fifthly, *they make sermons remembered*. Any method that helps the mind to grasp and retain the truth is worth using.

Sixthly, *they help to persuade people*. Stories can be used effectively in appeal. They may be used to clarify thought, touch the emotions and challenge the will.

¹ *Redemption Tidings*, February 1970, p. 12.

Seventhly, *they make repetition possible without weariness*. As recapitulation is important this is a helpful point to bear in mind. An illustration can be very meaningful in a conclusion.

The Types of Illustration

Modern psychologists tell us that we think in pictures. The truth is, as MacNeile Dixon says, 'Imagination rules our lives'. Philosophy is very interested in language and the use of words. Linguistic philosophy is aware that words can paint pictures in our minds and help us to grasp all kinds of concepts. A preacher should be aware of the power of words.¹

Preaching and Teaching

Use words. Words are the preacher's tools. This is why a preacher's library should include a good English dictionary and thesaurus. Use words to create pictures. In his book on public speaking, George Jehan says, 'Pictures are more impressive than the most high sounding words'. Be a graphic narrator – use adjectives, active verbs, adverbs, simile and metaphor. Even a simple sentence can paint a picture. 'Jane went to school' is a simple – and monotonous – sentence. Transform it by adding descriptive words: 'Red-headed Jane walked slowly to school, dragging her satchel behind her'. Did Jane want to go to school? Bible knowledge can add meaning and colour to a statement. Take 'John the Baptist was in the desert'. Add some descriptive words: 'The rugged prophet, John the Baptist, was in the dry deserts of Judea'. Now give the verb some meaning: 'The rugged prophet, John the Baptist, meditated in the dry deserts of Judea'. Obviously this kind of treatment should be left to main sentences and leading statements.

Words can even suggest sounds. Read what Jude says about heretics: These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm – shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without

fruit and uprooted – twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 12-13). Can you sense the poetry of the words – and hear the waves of the sea?

Use figures of speech. Most languages are rich in words that have shades of meaning, similes, synonyms, and musical sounds. Look at the verse from Jude again. John Stott illustrates this point by saying, 'We can talk of God 'breaking through our defences' or of the Holy Spirit 'prising open' our closed minds to new truth'.²

Use anecdotes. An anecdote is a short story that may be drawn from observation or experience – either your own or other people's. The preacher's notebook we mentioned earlier should catch and catalogue these.

Use allegory. An allegory is a story describing one thing in order to explain or teach something else. John Bunyan used allegory to great effect in his two works *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*. In the first work the Christian life is likened to a journey; in the second the Christian is likened to a city, Mansoul.

1 Recommended reading on language and sermon style is W. H. Kooienga, *Elements of Style for Preaching*,

Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1989.

2 See J. R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching*, p. 242.

Use analogy. When Jesus spoke of himself as the true vine he was using analogy (Jn. 15:1). Nature and life may offer lots of analogies. The parables of Jesus illustrates this well (see Mt. 13 and Lk. 15).

Use parables. Mark reminds us of the important place parables held in the Lord's ministry (Mk. 4:34). Without a doubt this is one reason why people liked to listen to him – his language was vivacious and his stories were interesting. A story or comparison may teach or illustrate some point.

Use fables. Illustrations can be taken from nature. Fables about animals, birds and trees can be used with some effect. The Old Testament prophets made use of the various elements in nature. Jotham's word, shouted from the slopes of Mount Gerizim to the citizens of Shechem, pictured trees looking for a king (see Judges 9:6-15).

The Source of Illustration

As a young preacher I went through a very difficult stage. It was a time when I could not find illustrative material for my messages. I knew the adage, 'One picture is worth ten thousand words' – and I believed it. But I struggled. I tried to use stories and illustrations from books like *A Thousand Sermon Illustrations* but somehow they did not work for me. Then I learnt the secret – to be aware of what is going on around you – and use your own illustrations.

Preaching and Teaching

The Word of God is a tremendous sourcebook for illustrations. The Bible is an unknown book today so use Bible stories to illustrate biblical truths. Use Scripture's stories, concepts, similes, proverbs and parables. Remember to use the words and the example of the Lord Jesus.

Be observant. Keep your eyes open for illustrative material. W. E. Sangster advises the preacher to go through life with a trawling eye, gathering illustrations into the net. Write things down as they come to you. You may need to carry a notebook in order to do this. A card index is useful for filing material. A PC database file can be tailored to keep and index your illustrations. Draw on your own experience. But use personal illustrations with discretion – keep yourself hidden. You can talk about yourself without naming yourself, rather like Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, 'I know a man in Christ. . . ' (2 Cor. 12:2).

Use your imagination. Preaching should be an adventure – an activity involved in a verbal art form. You can use your imagination by prefixing your story with words like, 'Let's suppose' or 'Let's pretend'. Jesus did this when he said, 'A certain man'.

Use conversations. Talking with people is a very pastoral activity. Conversation will keep you in touch with the reality of life and supply you with many colourful anecdotes. People's expressions are quite often quotable quotes.

Use material from your reading. Reading opens up a whole world of illustrations. Reading the Bible, books (fiction and non-fiction), magazines and newspapers will enrich your store of illustrations. Be advised to keep a notebook or scrapbook. File your material under various headings. Invest in good books. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* will serve you, and your family, for life.

Keep your ears and eyes open with the media. Personalities and topics from the television dominate everyday conversation. Use illustrations from TV and radio. But a word of advice here: be aware of moral thresholds and do not give people the impression that you are a telly addict!

The Wrong Use of Illustration

Preachers can use too many illustrations. A house that is made up entirely of windows is a greenhouse – a fragile structure. An address that is composed of a string of stories cannot be described as a sermon. Illustrations should never outshine the truth they are meant to promote.

Preachers can use illustrations ostentatiously. A story-teller can easily draw attention to himself. Selfish illustrations can get in the way of truth. It is about time we complained about preachers who produce an assortment of personal testimonies when they are invited to preach the Word. Paul said, 'We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord' (2 Cor. 4:5). Watch your use of the first personal singular ('I'). Preachers need to be told what not to do. So here are some meaningful Don'ts.

- Don't be monotonous.
- Don't use mixed metaphors.
- Don't use illustrations that may require an explanation.
- Don't be dishonest with facts.
- Don't build a sermon around illustrations.
- Don't use questionable language or jokes.
- Don't forget: 'Illustrations, like precious stones, need the right setting'.