

Lesson 2: How to Prepare a Bible Message

1. Why should we know how to prepare a Bible message?⁶

- a. We are all called to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20, 2 Tim. 2:2, Titus 2:4-5).
 - i. Teaching not-yet believers so that they would trust in Christ. We are called to “proclaim [Christ’s] excellencies.”
 - ii. Teaching believers so that they would grow in Christ.
- b. To teach our families (Eph. 6:4).
- c. There are needs around us which require effective communication of God’s word (1 Cor. 12:7).
 - i. Sunday School & other children’s ministries
 - ii. Bible Studies
 - iii. Informal venues
 - iv. Evangelism
- d. The joy of being used and stretched for Christ and others.

Philippians 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith
- e. Why not? The more godly and united people in a local church who are equipped to accurately teach God’s word, the more Christ and His transforming power can be passed on and disciples made.

2. What should we do to prepare ourselves for message preparation and delivery?

- a. Choose a passage
 - i. Studying through a book of the Bible

⁶ We are indebted to Crossroads Ministry, of Grace Community Church, for their course, “Cutting it Straight.”

- ii. A passage which addresses a particular need
 - b. Discern the logical transitions/breaks for a passage
 - i. Transitional words (i.e. “therefore,” “but,” “for”)
 - ii. Change of topic
 - iii. Do not rely on chapter breaks alone
 - iv. Check reliable commentaries & study Bibles
 - c. Determine the meaning of the text through correct methods of Bible interpretation (Lesson 1).
 - i. *Observation*

What does the text say? What has God put there? What does it not say?
 - ii. *Interpretation*

What does the text mean? What is being explained? What is the authorial intent?
 - iii. *Application*

What bearing does this have on the audience? What are the implications for the contemporary audience? What should we do in light of the meaning?
- Process of study, interpret, prepare, deliver, and transform:
- 1) Carefully discern and gather the correct ingredients to make a cake (observation and interpretation)
 - 2) Carefully put the ingredients together to bake the cake (message preparation)
 - 3) With the goal to effectively serve the cake to people (message delivery)

- 4) In order that the people present would be well-fed (edification/disciple-making: salvation and sanctification for God's glory)
 - Being well-fed necessitates the correct ingredients carefully put together and baked, effectively served to the people, and a willingness of the people to eat. People may hear the message, experience a level of emotional movement, but if the text was not correctly interpreted, edification will be hindered.

d. Prayer.

The goal of teaching God's word is more than dispensing data. The intended end of this teaching a text is that we would be transformed into knowing, loving, and resembling Christ (cf. Col. 1:28).

We might pray (for example):

- i. To impact my heart, convict me of sin, transform me
- ii. To strengthen me against Satan, my sin, and anything else that would hinder my accurate understanding of and transformation from the text
- iii. To be surrendered to the text
- iv. For a love and care for my audience
- v. To be a "worker for their joy" (cf. 2 Cor 1:24)
- vi. For pure motives when I study and teach. That I would do so, not for self-promotion or self-exaltation, but God-glorification and others' transformation
- vii. For the Holy Spirit to save the lost and sanctify the saved; to be doers of the word and not merely hearers
- viii. To prevent Satan, the flesh, and anything else from hindering the word
- ix. To give people physical strength, attentiveness, and eagerness for the word
- x. For the Holy Spirit to comfort, encourage, motivate, strengthen, give hope to, and transform, through His power by the word, everyone present
- xi. To further equip every person for joyful disciple-making

Michael Fabarez: "The enemy would...cheerfully pass out warm feelings about the message, as long as people aren't changed. Surely he would settle for anything short of the biblical sermon affecting permanent transformation in the peoples' lives."

We cannot cause salvation and sanctification. Therefore, we must pray, asking God to do so in his strength. Message preparation and delivery without prayer is presumption.

- e. A heart absorbed in the text
- f. A heart which desires good for the audience
- g. Unity

We have humbled ourselves to check with local church leadership to ensure that our content is correct and in unity with our statement of faith so as to promote God's desire for unity (Eph. 4:3).

3. What should we do to prepare the message?

- a. Determine the main idea of your message from the text

Jay Adams: "Until you can capsulize the purpose of the sermon in one crisp sentence, you probably do not yet have it clearly enough fixed in your own mind."

- i. This is not possible to do until you have accurately observed and interpreted the text.
- ii. The main idea of your message will come from the main idea of the passage.
- iii. The main idea of the passage is a clear sentence, which is accurate to the text, while focusing on the original hearers.
- iv. To determine the main idea of the **passage**:
 - 1. Answer the questions: Why does it seem God breathed this passage in the Bible and this book of the Bible? Why is this in the Bible?
 - 2. Keep refining. This may take several "tries," writing it out multiple times and refining the statement until it captures the text as accurate as possible.

3. Test the statement. Is the statement consistent with each verse you will be teaching? If not, keep refining until it is.

Examples:

- 1) Philippians 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Main idea of Phil 2:12-13: ?

- One example: The Philippians are to put sincere and serious effort into spiritual growth, trusting God to change them.
- 2) Galatians 1:6-10 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! ¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Main idea of Gal 1:6-10: In an effort to please God, Paul gives warnings both to the false teachers and the congregation to embrace the one true gospel of Christ.

- b. Once you have discerned the main idea of the **passage**, you are ready to bridge the gap and determine the main idea of the **message**.
 - To determine the main idea of your **message**:
 1. Produce a statement which is: accurate (capturing the intent of the text), single (says one main thing, without many conjunctions if any), clear (easily understandable by hearers), and makes a claim upon the listener (God is addressing the people).
 2. Ensure that it is bridged from the main idea of the passage.

- Test the statement. Is the statement consistent with each verse you will be teaching? If not, keep refining until it is.

Examples:

1) Philippians 2:12-13

Main idea of **passage**: In light of Christ's saving work in them, the Philippians are to put sincere and serious effort into spiritual growth, trusting God to change them.

Main idea of the **message**: In light of Christ's saving work in us, we are to put sincere and serious effort into spiritual growth, trusting God to change us.

2) Galatians 1:6-10

Main idea of the **passage**: In an effort to please God, Paul gives warnings both to the false teachers and the congregation to embrace the one true gospel of Christ.

Main idea of the **message**: Faithfulness to God means embracing and teaching the one true gospel of Jesus Christ.

c. Craft the outline of your message

i. An accurate, clear outline is helpful for many reasons:

1. It will serve as a guide for you and your audience and avoid wandering through the text.
 - John MacArthur: "The thing that kills people in what is sometimes called expository preaching is randomly meandering through a passage."
 - If they do not know where you are taking them, they will likely stop paying attention.
2. It will help you and your audience stick to the flow of the text and avoid losing them due to unclear direction.

- Teaching is like a guide taking a group on a wilderness journey. You need to know where you are taking them and they need to see direction and progress as you escort them.
 - 3. A clear, text-based outline will ensure you are teaching the message of the text.
 - 4. A clear, text-based outline will enable your audience to learn from the text.
 - 5. A clear, text-based outline will enable your audience to apply the text.
 - 6. An outline is like hooks for people to hang their thoughts on
 - 7. Outline points are like the various landmarks or transition points in a big hike. At one point in a hike, you are on gradual single-track. At another, you are on switch-backs. At another, you are boulder-hopping. At still another, you may be scrambling. Outline points serve to stop and transition to new terrain in the text; to also describe what that terrain will feature and prepare those you guide.
- ii. To accurately represent the text, the outline must flow out of the text.

To do so:

1. Determine the outline of the passage. This is called the **exegetical outline**. Exegetical, because it derives from and exits from the text itself without human imposition.
 - a. The exegetical outline is **fixed** by the text. We do not make up the exegetical outline, but work to see what the Holy Spirit already set in place.
 - i. Capture everything in the text. Whatever the Holy Spirit said there is important. Determine how it fits and flows in the passage and include it in the outline.
 - ii. If possible, do not copy verbatim outlines in the commentaries.
2. Develop the outline for your passage from the exegetical outline. This is called the **homiletical outline**.

This flows out of the text. We formulate the homiletical outline from what is already there. As your exegetical outline goes, so goes the message.

Examples:

Philippians 2:12-13 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Exegetical Outline:

1. Paul exhorts the Philippians to exert diligent effort in their sanctification (v. 12)
 - a. He gives affectionate affirmation of past obedience (12a) - "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed,"
 - b. He gives confident encouragement towards future obedience with pure motives (12b) - "not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence,"
 - c. He gives an urgent command towards exertion in sanctification (12c) - "work out your salvation with fear and trembling"
 2. Paul encourages the Philippians that divine energy is working in them (v. 13)
 - a. God is the one working in them (13a) - "for it is God who is at work in you"
 - b. God is the one giving them the desire to work (13b) - "both to will"
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 - c. God is the one producing in them the working (13c) - "and to work"
 - d. God works in them for his own joy (13d) - "for *His* good pleasure"
- The advantage to preparing our messages in this way is that we need not "come up with" what we will teach.

- We follow the Holy Spirit's lead by teaching what he has said in the text. God remains the authority in what we teach.
- The message we prepare flows out of what is in the text.
- It does not come from human ingenuity, but divine inspiration.
- From the **exegetical** outline, we can formulate the **homiletical** outline of the message.
 - If we were to leave the outline as is when we teach our audience, though truth would be communicated, we would fail to do the work of bringing the full implications on the contemporary audience.
 - Scripture is profitable for all people, not just the original hearers (2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:3).

Homiletical Outline:

- Bridge the **exegetical** outline to fit our audience without compromising the meaning. In other words, express the timeless truth while bringing it to bear on your audience:
 1. Because of the Person and finished work of Christ, sanctification means exerting diligent effort (v. 12) **OR** Because of salvation, sanctification means exerting diligent effort (v. 12) **OR** Sanctification means exerting diligent effort (v. 12).
 - a. Be encouraged by past obedience (12a)
 - b. Live before God (12b)
 - c. Exert great effort (12c)
 2. Because of the Person and finished work of Christ, sanctification means trusting in divine energy (v. 13) **OR** Because of our salvation, sanctification means trusting in divine energy (v. 13) **OR** Sanctification means trusting in divine energy (v. 13)
 - a. God is the one working in us (13a)
 - b. God gives us the desire to work (13b)
 - c. God causes the growth (13c)
 - d. God works in us for his own joy (13d)

- Once you have determined the outline, you may state the main idea in the form of a plural noun proposition statement in order to clearly express the outline.
- This serves to further care for your audience by showing them exactly what is in the text and clarifying where you will be taking them as you teach.
- Craft the plural noun proposition out of the main idea of the message:

Phil 2:12-13

Main idea of the message: In light of Christ's saving work in us, we are to put sincere and serious effort into spiritual growth, trusting God to change us.

From Philippians 2:12-13, we see:

- 2 essential truths for sanctification in light of the believer's salvation
- 2 principles for believers to grow in Christ
 1. Because of salvation, sanctification means exerting diligent effort (v. 12)
 2. Because of our salvation, sanctification means trusting in divine energy (v. 13)

- Try to choose a word other than "things."
- Be sure that the plural noun proposition is consistent with the outline points.
 - It would be **inconsistent** if I said, "2 commands essential for sanctification," and my outline was:
 1. Exert diligent effort (v. 12)
 2. Sanctification means trusting in divine energy (v. 13)

- Additional example:

Galatians 1:6-10 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;⁷ which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!⁹ As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!¹⁰ For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

Main idea of the **message** (from above): Faithfulness to God means embracing and teaching the one true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Determine the exegetical outline from the text:

1. Paul is amazed by their desertion of God, evidenced by embracing a different gospel – the problem (v. 6a)
2. Paul defines desertion of God by embracing a different gospel, which is no gospel (vv. 6b-7)
3. Paul firmly warns advocates of the different gospel (vv. 8-9)
4. Paul gives his motives for the warning – to please God, not man (v. 10)

*Double check to ensure that the exegetical outline points correspond to the text as best as possible. Ensure that the division of points is based upon the text.

Determine the **homiletical** outline from the **exegetical** outline:

- Bridge the exegetical outline to fit our audience without compromising the meaning. In this passage, Paul gives no specific command, per se. However, the timeless truth of faithfulness to the gospel, as well as the warning therewith, has strong implications for all people. One example of a homiletical outline could be:
 1. What we do with the gospel determines our stance towards God (v. 6)
 2. Though appearing similar, all differing gospels are complete distortions (v. 7)
 3. We will be judged by the gospel we embrace (vv. 8-9)
 4. Embracing the true gospel is pleasing to God (v. 10)

Plural noun proposition: “4 checkpoints to ensure we embrace the true gospel”.
Is the plural noun proposition consistent with the outline points?

4. What do we do after we determine the outline?

- a. Refine and further develop the body of your message
 - i. The body of your message will consist of the **points** from your homiletical outline and the **meat** necessary to teach each point.
 - ii. “Flesh out the skeleton” – the skeleton is the outline and the meat is the content under each point.
 - iii. To flesh out the skeleton, explain, illustrate, and apply each point.
 1. **Explain** each point (explanation): clearly states the meaning of the text captured by the particular outline point.
 - a. Read the text
 - b. Make observations of the text – you must prove that what you are saying derives from the text, not you.
 - c. Give word definitions
 - d. Restate key points with synonyms or parallel phrases
 - e. Provide clarity by contrast (what it does not mean)
 - f. Don’t merely recite commentaries.
 - g. Don’t give a data dump (Be sure the information you give is tied to the main idea, the outline points, and helps the audience along in the forward movement of the journey through the text).
 2. **Illustrate** each point (illustration): clearly pictures the meaning in various ways.
 - a. Illustrations serve two purposes:
 - i. They make abstract concepts easy to understand
 - ii. They make key truths easy to remember

- Illustrations are not for the sake of illustrating. They must be servants of the text.

- b. Illustrations can be gleaned from:
 - i. Personal experiences (don't be the hero and be appropriate)
 - ii. Ways in which particular words from the text were used in other contexts (i.e. The Greek word for "meek" was used of taming a wild horse)
 - iii. Scripture (i.e. "Like the time Joseph...")
 - iv. Historical accounts (i.e. The story of the 16th century martyr, William Tyndale to illustrate faithfulness to God and His word)
 - v. Current events (i.e. Personal identification technology and biometric identification as a parallel to spiritual identification as believers)
 - vi. Your imagination
 - vii. Word pictures (i.e. Jesus calling himself the "door" into the pasture)

- Don't overdo it with illustrations. Be purposeful, not clever.

- 3. **Apply** each point (application): clearly brings the truth to bear on the audience.
 - a. Application answers the "So what?" of the text you explained and illustrated.

 - b. Application necessitates:
 - i. Showing how God desires that people respond to the text; how they must change (cf. Col. 1:28-29)

 - ii. Exhorting them to respond

- c. Application can be determined by asking questions such as:
 - i. Is there a truth to believe about God?
 - ii. Is there a truth/doctrine to embrace?
 - iii. Is there a promise to embrace?
 - iv. Is there a command to obey?
 - v. Is there a sin to avoid?
 - vi. Is there a principle of wisdom to follow?
- d. Application serves to bring the audience to a point where they must act/decide/believe/respond one way or another.

More than a response of, "That was a nice message, teacher!" you want people to think, "God is a great God, and by the grace of God, I must respond by embracing/obeying/changing/repenting/etc."

- iv. Be sure that everything you say in the content of each point:
 - 1. Supports that particular outline point
 - 2. Is consistent with the main idea of the message

5. How should we introduce and conclude the message?

a. Introduction

- i. The introduction serves to escort the audience towards the journey of the passage.
- ii. It builds a framework for the body of what you will teach.
- iii. It answers the question, "Why should I listen to what is about to be said?" (The main idea statement will also help answer this question).
 - 1. Let them know your goal

2. Let them know where you are going
 - iv. It should serve the same function as a patio/porch does to the house: a helpful entrance way into the main thing.
 1. It should be as brief as possible.
 2. It should be as long as necessary.
 - v. The introduction can consist of things like:
 1. Popular myths
 2. Historical accounts
 3. Current events
 4. Stories
 5. Biblical stories
 6. Background information of the passage
 - vi. Be sure the introduction serves the main idea of the message.
- b. Conclusion
- i. The conclusion serves to “land the plane” after the journey.
 - ii. The conclusion has two main goals:
 1. Briefly summarize the content of the message
 2. Clearly exhort the hearers to respond in pertinent ways (i.e. to be saved, to apply the truth)

Dr. Alex Montoya: “The conclusion must solicit a verdict from the hearers. They must be forced to choose for themselves whether or not they will conform their lives to the truth of the message.”
 - iii. The conclusion, as the entire message, must capture your love for the souls you teach.

- iv. The conclusion, as the entire message, must capture the urgency that eternity is on the line.

Richard Baxter: "I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men."