

Preparing a Biblical Message

These notes include much information from Randy Marshall, founder of Speakers College. I am indebted to Randy for his outstanding instruction and example.

I. Three Questions in the Minds of Listeners

- A. Can I trust you? (*ethos*)
- B. Do you care about me? (*pathos*)
- C. Do you know what you are talking about? (*logos*)

These questions are usually answered within the first few moments of standing up to speak by posture, mannerisms, confidence, poise, tone, etc. We will return to these later.

II. Definitions of Bible Study/Teaching Techniques

- A. Hermeneutics:
The science of biblical interpretation; the branch of theology which speaks of the principles of biblical exegesis.
- B. Homiletics:
The art of preaching; the skill of organizing and preaching a message.

Note: To master the first, and ignore the second, is to have content without the ability to communicate it. To master the second without the first is to have style without content. Both are essential, but are still lacking a vital component.

- C. Assimilation:
For lack of a better term, “to make like, to conform to, in the final state.” We could also use the word “metamorphosis” or something similar. What we mean by this is, “If I wish to have power in communicating any truth, that truth must show its power in the change it has made in me.” Put another way, “The power of the message is its impact on the messenger.”

Note: Accurate interpretation demands careful attention be given to the context. The immediate context has the greatest weight, because words are defined by their use in context. Then, diminishing weight is given to other passages as they are more and more removed. For example, in a N.T. passage, attention is given to immediate verses surrounding the text being studied. Then one should consider the aim of the chapter, the book, and finally, relationship with O.T. passages and principles.

III. Methodology

By combining the above three disciplines, we aim to study the Bible in such a way that our own lives are first transformed; then we are able to convey the truth verbally and confirm the power of it by the example of our lives. In both words and actions, our goal then is to:

- A. Explain the Passage:
Our concern here is to convey the meaning of the passage we are studying.
- B. Illustrate the Principle:
By the use of word pictures or story, make the central point clear.
- C. Apply the Practice:
How the truth presented can be utilized to improve daily life

IV. Some Biblical Examples

A. Preparing the Teacher:

Ezr 7:10, *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.”*

Joh 7:17, *“If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.”*

Act 1:1, *“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach ...”*

Summary: Study God’s Word, obey what you learn, instruct others by word and deed.

B. Preparing the Message:

Ecc 12:11, *“The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well driven nails, given by one Shepherd.”*

Three valuable insights to make your message effective:

1. It must have a point—something that probes the soul and prods the mind to want to move in the right direction.
2. It must be unforgettable—D.L. Moody used examples and illustrations he called “fiery arrows” that stuck in the minds of the audience.
3. It must point to Christ—it is not “my message,” but His. He must be seen as “the author and finisher” of the truths being presented. Thus He is the authority behind the command, and the power to make it real in our lives.

Mat 13:52, *“Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure new and old.”*

Summary: The skilled Bible teacher will always uphold the unity and harmony of the Scriptures. Both Old and New Testaments are all one “*treasure*,” but made up of the Old leading progressively into the New. In the Old, we have expectation; and in the New, fulfillment. The author of Hebrews speaks of the “shadows” versus the “*image*” that casts the shadows (Heb 10:1).

C. Communicating the Message:

Luk 24:27, “*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*”

Act 17:2–3, “*Then Paul, as was his custom, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.’*”

Summary: In these passages, we learn some important principles for teaching:

1. Tell the story. Consider the messages of Peter and Stephen (Acts 2 and Acts 7).
2. Keep Christ the central focus. He is the key to history and Scripture.
In Paul’s method, we see the importance in (a) presenting the truth, (b) explaining what it means, and (c) giving ample evidence of its value and trustworthiness.

D. Impacting the Audience:

Act 17:11, “*These [the Bereans] were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*”

2Ti 2:15, “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*”

Principle: Help people see the relevance and power of the Scriptures in relation to their own lives and needs.

V. How Do We Put it all Together?

Let’s go back to those three questions that form in the mind of every listener:

- A. Can I trust you?
- B. Do you care about me?
- C. Do you know what you’re talking about?

If we convey a message of biblical truth that has obviously impacted our lives, that is Christ-centered, and that answers these questions, we will have successfully presented God’s Word to men. How can we do that?

1. Be yourself, be authentic.
2Co 2:17, “*For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.*”
2. Love your neighbor, as Christ loves you.
Joh 13:34, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have love you, that you also love one another.*”

3. Do your homework; apply what you learn.

Phi 4:9, “*The things which you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.*”

VI. Presenting the Gospel

Today there is much confusion and controversy regarding the presentation of the Gospel message. What exactly is essential to the good news about Jesus Christ?

A. The Importance of Context

Compare Mat 4:23 and Mat 9:35 with Gal 1:11 and 1Co 15:1–4. Is there a difference in the content of “*gospel*” as preached by Jesus and by Paul? Who was Jesus trying to reach (see Mat 10:5–7)? To whom was Paul sent (Act 9:15)?

B. The Importance of Meaning

The word “*gospel*” is from *euaggelion*, which simply means “glad tidings, good news.” Consider Luk 1:19 and Luk 2:10, the earliest uses of the word in verb form in the N.T. What was the content of the “good news” brought by angels?

- C. Now consider Joh 3:15–16, Joh 11:25–26, Act 2:21, Act 2:38, and Act 16:31. What stands out as different in the message? What remains the same? Can we determine the cause of the difference based on the people being addressed? In the Acts 2 passage, who is being addressed (Act 2:5), what were they convicted of (Act 2:22–23, Act 2:36) and what had they, as a people, rejected (Act 2:38 with Mar 1:4 and Luk 3:3)?

- D. Now, look at Joh 20:30–31. What is John’s stated purpose for writing this Gospel? What is the content He wants us to believe? What is included in the term “*the Christ*” (consider Isa 7:14, Isa 9:6–7, Isa 53:1–12 with Mat–1:18–25)?

Note: In the Gospel of John, he employs eight “signs,” beginning with the turning of water into wine (John 2) and concluding with the resurrection (John 20–21). Throughout the book, 98–100 times, the one and only condition given for receiving eternal life is believing in Jesus as “*the Christ*,” the “*Savior of the world*” (Joh 4:42; 1Jo 4:14).

VII. Conclusion

When Jesus preached “*the gospel of the kingdom*” (Mat 4:23, Mat 9:35; Mar 1:14), He was offering to Israel their long-awaited kingdom, offering Himself as their King. His identity—the virgin-born, only begotten Son of God—was His credentials. No mention was made of His death, burial, or resurrection. He was calling on them to believe that He was the Messiah promised by the prophets.

In Act 2:38, Peter is addressing Jews, who knew of the coming and ministry of Jesus, but had still rejected Him. The beginning of their hardness of heart was their refusal to receive the baptism of John—the last prophet God sent to Israel. While Peter gives the clear and simple Gospel demand in Act 2:21, he includes the demand of John, that they

receive “the baptism of remission of sins,” which called on Jews to recognize that they—like the Gentiles they despised—were called to repentance, though they prided themselves that they were “Abraham’s seed.”

What Paul called “*my gospel*” (Rom 16:25), and “*the gospel which I preach*” (Gal 1:11, Gal 2:2), was not the offer of the King or the kingdom to Israel, but rather the message revealed to him by Jesus Christ (Gal 1:12) to proclaim to all the nations (Act 9:15). It is the simple message of salvation by grace through faith (Eph 2:8–9) in Jesus the Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again (1Co 15:3–4). No one says it better than John:

“He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given His Son. And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God.” 1Jo 5:10–13