



HOW TO PREPARE A BIBLICAL MESSAGE

INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

I. SELECT A PASSAGE

(Usually 1-10 verses dealing with the same topic) Why do you want to study this passage or topic?

- Are there any cause and effect connections?

- Are there any contrasts given?

II. OBSERVE THE PASSAGE ASKING QUESTIONS

Who are all the people in the text, and what is said about them?

- What are the repeated and/or key words and ideas? How are they related? Define them.

Where does this narrative, event or epistle take place? Describe the setting.

- What are the commands?

- What are the promises?

When does this take place (in relation to other biblical/historical events or epistles)?

- What is the broader context of this passage (What is taking place, or is written both before and after it? What is the epistle as a whole talking about?)

What is the passage about? Consider these questions:

- Is the passage about doctrine, behavior or is it an historical narrative?

- Is there a key verse that best summarizes the theme or main point of the passage?

- What is happening? What ideas are expressed?

Why does the author or speaker write/speak what he does? What concerns of the author caused this passage to be written? What is the purpose in writing this passage? What problems were the recipient(s) facing? What was their situation like? If narrative, why did this happen the way it did?

- What is accomplished? How is it accomplished?

- Are there any purpose/result clauses (with phrases like "in order to," or "so that")?

- Are there any causal/reason clauses (with phrases like "because," "for," or "since")?

Write out any additional observations, questions or insights from the passage. These may include connective words, comparisons and contrasts, lists, verb tenses, illustrations and quotes, etc.



III. PREPARE YOUR TALK FROM THE PASSAGE BY ANSWERING

1. What is the Fallen Condition Focus of this passage? While there may actually be several, on which will you focus on from this passage? The needs of your hearer will most often determine this question. The Fallen Condition Focus is the mutual human condition shared by the original recipients with contemporary believers that requires the grace of the passage. What do we share in common with those to whom/about whom the text was written? Every passage of Scripture has a Fallen Condition Focus - examples of areas of the Fallen Condition Focus could include different categories of sin such as attitudes (about God, self, others, etc.), beliefs or actions. An appropriate Fallen Condition Focus, however, does not always cover an area of sin but also other realities “true to life” of our fallen human condition such as grief over loss of loved ones, legitimate fears, or being victims of others’ sins.

2. What is going to be your Proposition from the passage? The Proposition consists of the two-part statement of the passage’s main theme that applies directly to your Fallen Condition Focus: a timeless, universal principle wedded to an application statement hitting your Fallen Condition focus. Your theme must be sufficiently covered throughout the entire passage, not just a few verses - it needs to be what the passage is about. That can most readily be identified from the commands and repeated/ key words and ideas. To write your Proposition you need two elements: (1) a timeless principle from the passage, and (2) an appropriate hortatory statement (application-focused statement) that hits upon the Fallen Condition Focus. Your principle clause will probably begin with “Because,” or “Since,” and your application clause will probably begin with “we must,” or “we can,” or “we should.”

For example, a proposition from 2 Cor. 4 may say, “Because a knowledge of and faith in the gospel is a valuable treasure that God has placed within the believer (timeless principle clause), you and I as believers must live in such a way so that others will perceive its value (application clause). The key verses here would be verses 6-7.

• What is a timeless, universal principle from the entire passage? “Because...,” or “Since...”

• What is an appropriate hortatory (application) statement that applies that principle to the Fallen Condition Focus?

• Now join the two clauses above, and this becomes your Proposition:

3. What are the natural divisions of the verses of the passage into Main Points that support/unfold either the application or the principle clauses of your Proposition? Every verse in the passage must appear under at least one Main Point in your outline. If you cannot cover the entire passage then shorten it.

If in our example above we were going to develop the main points of 2 Cor. 4 under our Proposition it might look something like the following: Proposition: Because a knowledge of and faith in the gospel is a valuable treasure that God has placed within the believer, you and I as believers must live in such a way so that others will perceive its value.

Main Point #1: Because a knowledge of and faith in the gospel is a valuable treasure that God has placed within the believer, you and I as believers must be genuine so that others will perceive its value (vv. 2,13).

Main Point #2: Because a knowledge of and faith in the gospel is a valuable treasure that God has placed within the believer, you and I as believers must be humble so that others will perceive its value (vv. 1, 3-6).

Main Point #3: Because a knowledge of and faith in the gospel is a valuable treasure that God has placed within the believer, you and I as believers must be renewed in our inner lives so that others will perceive its value (vv. 8-18).

All of your Main Points must consistently unfold either the Principle or the Application. If you decide to unfold the Principle clause, you will develop an Application-consistent outline (where each Main Point replaces the principle while the Application remains the same); if you decide to unfold the Application clause (as in the more-common example above), then you will develop a Principle-consistent outline and change the Application each time.

What is your first Main Point? What verses will it cover?

What is your second Main Point? What verses will it cover?



What is your third Main Point? What verses will it cover?

IV. ASK THE NATURAL QUESTIONS THAT ARISE FROM EACH OF YOUR MAIN POINTS

This will usually be “How,” “Why,” or “What.” You may experiment with many questions before finding the right one.

Main Point #1:

Main Point #2:

Main Point #3:

V. ANSWER THE QUESTIONS YOU HAVE RAISED UNDER EACH MAIN POINT FROM THE PASSAGE BEING STUDIED

Put your answers in the form of an outline (probably best on another piece of paper) to form the Sub-points under each of your Main Points. To develop each Main Point, use your Sub-points to do these three things:

Explain It (State the point, place the point by citing the verses supporting it in the passage and prove how the verses are making that point)

Illustrate It (From either Biblical examples, personal experience or human interest accounts of how this principle worked out positively and/or negatively)

Apply It (This is where you address the questions “So what?” and “What do you want me to do?” Tell your hearers what they should or can do to apply these points to their lives and where they can or should do it. Applications should always be relevant to your hearers’ lives, realistic and achievable. Always find and apply the grace of God in the passage. Never guide your hearers toward legalism, perfectionism or judgmentalism in your applications.)