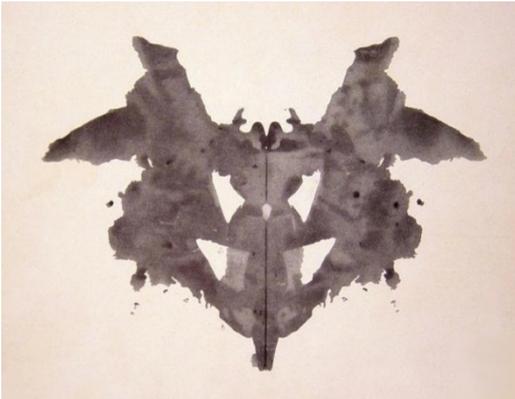


Preaching God's Word, Not Our Own: How To Know the Difference Section 1 – The Basics of Belief: How People Think

To communicate in any age, it helps to know how people think. So, in this session we want to help you understand some of the challenges Christians face in proclaiming the Gospel by analyzing how contemporary people think.

Rorschach Ink Blot



This is an Ink Blot used by Mental Health Specialists to help determine a patient's well-being, personality, emotions, etc.

A patient is supposed look at the inkblot, talk about what they INDIVIDUALLY, subjectively, see and feel. Yet, different people see different things...in the same picture.

Point: Reality & meaning in the picture are determined by the individual.

THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL MISTAKE WHEN READING THE BIBLE IS BELIEVING THAT WE BRING MEANING TO THE BIBLE.

We often hear phrases such as → “To me, this verse means _____.”

1. This is an unbiblical and unhealthy.

2. The Bible means what it means.

3. What we should say is:

- “The Bible text conveys a specific context & meaning for the original hearers & authors, which is the meaning God has intended for all people in all times and all places. According to the meaning of the passage, I am going to make a related application in my life which looks like _____.”
- Our applications MUST be related to the text's Spirit-inspired meaning.
- This leaves us broad room for applications, specific to our circumstance, while honoring scripture and the God who inspired meaning.

IF APPLICATION DRIFTS AWAY FROM THE CLEAR MEANING OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT, then ...

1. Seek to make a more appropriate text centered application. ... or ...
2. Seek to find a Scripture which is more appropriate to the issue which the Spirit is surfacing in your life, ministry, message, etc.

ALSO: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

WHY IS IT DANGEROUS TO BRING OUR OWN MEANING TO THE BIBLE ?

1. Because MEANING resides in GOD and in the truth which GOD wanted to communicate.
2. Human Beings are not arbiters of truth, but from Eden until New Creation, we are susceptible to deception. **We can be sincere, but sincerely wrong.**

Q: How much sense does it make for different generations, eras of history, different cultures, centuries & countries apart – to each determine “what the Bible means” for themselves? *It does not make sense!*

- **NOTE:** There are times when a verse, rightly studied with all the best tools, can still seem to support multiple meanings ... this is when we operate in charity, admitting what we do not know, relying upon the best scholarship, keeping good attitudes, and trusting God that He will make all things clear in eternity.

If a Bible verse can mean anything and everything ... it means nothing, it has become a Rorschach Ink Blot.

The age in which we live champions phrases such as:

- “What is true for me is not true for you!”
- “Live your truth!”
- “Truth is relative.” *Relative means truth is not fixed, truth changes.
- Truth residing within the subjective individual rather than in an outside objective standard is characteristic of Postmodernism.

POSTMODERNISM

- Postmodernism simply means after modernism.
- Modernism is a broad category but can be characterized as breaking with older traditional or classical thinking.
- Modernism is highly focused on human progress, potential, achievement.
- Postmodernism is less focused on progress or achievement, and more focused on human experience and narrative/story.
- The truth or power is not in progress, not in facts, rather truth lies in how you interpret experience.
- Postmodernism would say that NO STORY (worldview, truth claims) – Christian, Atheist, Gay, Straight, Buddhist, Islam, American – is better or more true than any other.
- Contemporary people, both inside and outside the church, are largely influenced by Postmodernism.

ALSON: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

Postmodernism is characterized by:

1. **Radical Deconstruction** of traditionally held truth claims, moral claims.
2. **Rejection of Absolutes:**
 - Specifically. absolute religious claims.
 - From where do Christians get claims for morality & truth? Religion.
3. **Radical Individualism** – all truths are determined by the individual, not by any traditional institution – especially not religion.
 - Mindsets such as: “Truth is determined BY the individual.”
4. **Rejection of Traditional Institutions in society:**
 - Ex: The Church ... which has been a center of:
 - i. Truth Claims
 - ii. Moral Demands
 - iii. Classical Worldviews, Christian Worldviews:
 1. About marriage, human sexuality, abortion, family, etc.
 2. Society has moved beyond Christian views which might be called: unenlightened, intolerant, oppressive, primitive, bigoted, etc → this is **Post-Christian**.

LET THE READER UNDERSTAND

Even the most faithful, well disciplined Christians (including ministers), have been immersed in the culture we have just described.

It is only by immersing ourselves in the rightly understood, rightly read, rightly taught Word of God, and applying it consistently, that our minds can be cured from the infection!

ANALYSIS:

1. **Post-Modernism actually leads to Post-Christian thinking.**
2. **This leads to a rejection of classical societal norms, which in Western Civilization come from Judeo-Christian background.**
3. **This presents a radical challenge to the preacher/teacher of God's Word!**

**How good of a student of God's Word are you committed to be?
How determined are you to let it both cut & heal you?**

Postmodernism is concerned with feelings and story, it is less concerned with facts, truth, etc., and asserts that truth resides within the experience of the individual and how we experience things around us.

ALSO: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

PROFILE OF A CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE:

- If they do not exhibit strong postmodern tendencies, they have been influenced by postmodernism.
- Post-Modernism treats everything like a Rorschach InkBlot.
 - Truth: is what you want it to be.
 - And so that follows for all morality: Sexual Immorality, Sexual Orientation, Lying, Abusive Behavior, Unethical Business Practices, Abortion, etc.

**PRINCIPLE TO REMEMBER:
THE MOUNTAINS MAY
FALL INTO THE SEA, BUT
THE WORD OF THE LORD
STANDS FOREVER.**

**PRESCRIPTION: Preaching
grounded in and driven by
the Biblical Text.
The best example of which
is expository preaching**

Postmodern people reject:

- Absolute truth claims: "How can you say Jesus is the Only Way?!"
- Absolute moral claims: "How can you say that my sexuality is perverted?!"
- Traditional Worldviews & Stories.

**The postmodern person NEEDS to hear an unchanging immovable Word
– THE WORD OF GOD, and its truth claims.**

**Each of us are very capable of reading things INTO the Bible, rather than letting
the Bible speak with its OWN INSPIRED VOICE & MEANING.**

- Now it is true that we can all correctly read the same passage, and the Holy Spirit can make different **APPLICATIONS** for us depending on what we're going through...but the Bible doesn't "**MEAN**" something different for each of us. **It means what it means when it was written.**

If we don't READ it RIGHTLY, it is difficult to PREACH it RIGHTLY.

Note: Some of what we cover, you will have been taught before. WHY?

- Good scholars and students continuously revisit the grounding principles of their specific field.
- Physicists, Chemists, Biologists, Engineers, Builders, Carpenters – operate by specific principles which govern their fields. It is the same with Biblical Studies! **These hermeneutical principles MUST govern your Biblical studies!**
- it is EASY to forget these lessons, these Holy Principles.

THE RIGHT APPROACH: The Biblical Text in Modern Times Section 2

We will work in 2 related arenas:

1. Concepts – How to **read** the Bible faithfully.
 - a. Good reading = Good Preaching.
2. Practics – How to **preach/teach** the Bible faithfully.
 - a. By “faithfully” we mean **correctly**, as in correctly interpreting/understanding the Bible as God intended.

GUIDING VERSE

2 Timothy 2:15 *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.*

“DO” – is an imperative in the Greek. An Imperative is a **COMMAND**

- The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to make this a command, **not** a request.
- “Correctly” means to use it how **God intended** according to its design.
- **SO, those who CORRECTLY handle God’s Word are qualified to be CONSIDERED for “Approval” by God and God’s Leaders.**
- **God expects every member of the church to be disciplined to the point that each member can rightly read & apply the Bible. Some may be considered for leadership positions in preaching/teaching ministry.**

THE JOB OF THE PREACHER IS TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT THEY TRULY CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE. → BUT what if the preacher/teacher doesn’t understand it ??

I. CHALLENGES TO OUR READING & PREACHING – What are they?

1 – Distance:

- **Of Time** – at its youngest the Bible is almost 2000 yrs old.
- **Of Language** – Biblical Hebrew & Greek aren’t spoken today.
- **From Culture & Literature**– we live in the in 21st Century America, the Bible was written in the Ancient Near East in THEIR forms of literature, NOT OURS. Radically different cultures.

2 – Media: (Text message, Instagram, Facebook)

- By 2006, Text Messaging was an \$81 billion industry.

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- This new form of communication replaces the art of conversation and telling a story. *Relational power of speech/story is reduced to sound bites.*

3 – The Spotlight: Who is in the spotlight at centerstage?

- **The Bible is the story of who God is and how God** is going to set the world right. The spotlight is on Him. I am never the lead actor.
 - **The Bible is not about “finding myself,” but about Jesus finding me.**
 - **Postmodernism puts the spotlight ON ME, tells ME everything is about ME, and should be catered to ME.**

4 – The Consumer Mindset:

- **We live in a consumer society. People buy & sell products. Each product is marketed as the best this or that. Marketing appeals to people’s desires – which are not always bad but can often be selfish. Add to that ideas such as**
 - **“Do whatever it takes to get the customer in the door!”**
 - **“Tell the customer whatever they want to hear to make them happy!”**
 - **“The customer is always right!”**
 - **“Take Customers from other stores!”**
- **We are the Church of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ.**
 - *We do not do whatever it takes to get someone in the door.*
 - *We do not do anything which compromises God’s Word, makes light of the Word of God, is campy, shallow, etc.*
- **We must not view people coming in our doors as customers.**
 - *Our agenda is driven by the Word of God and the Leading of the Spirit.*
 - *We do not cater to every passing fad of how to do church.*
 - *We do not cater to people like customers, their whims, the carnality, or their untrained ideas, because we are not selling anything. **God condemns this approach as “selling God’s word for profit” 2 Cor 2:17.***
 - *We are preaching Christ crucified, resurrected, and coming again - and he is not a product.*
 - *The people coming in our doors are not customers, they are PEOPLE - they are either Saints in need of encouragement, or sinners in need of grace.*
 - *People need the MINISTER to RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD ... BECAUSE they are trained to do so.*
- **We do not try to steal people from other churches the way stores compete for customers in the marketplace. Churches, ministries, and ministers who do that should be ashamed of themselves. God may do some work thru them, but they are operating in unbiblical methods and God is not pleased.**

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WHAT IS THE OVERALL EFFECT OF OUR CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES?

- **DISTANCE** – *We read thru modern eyes and therefore misread the ancient text.*
- **MEDIA INFLUENCE** – *We lose the ability to pay attention, think deeply.*
 - Short data messages & abbreviated words often lack THOUGHT & HEART. Are our sermons the same?
- **THE SPOTLIGHT** – *Rather than the BIBLE'S BIG STORY, our individual stories are the lenses thru which we see the world – this is wrong.*
- **CONSUMER MENTALITY**
 - *We preach messages detached from the Bible's true meaning, devoid of deep truth, and devolving into self-centeredness trying to please people like customers.*

Following are 2 great TOOLS/CONCEPTS to READ and therefore PREACH the Bible correctly. The best preachers have used these methods for centuries to Stay in the Story and read the Bible in the context in which it was written.

The Bible Bulls-eye

The Bible as a Library

THE BIBLE BULLSEYE → THE INTERPRETIVE SPIRAL

illustration: Have you ever used Google Earth? Google Maps?

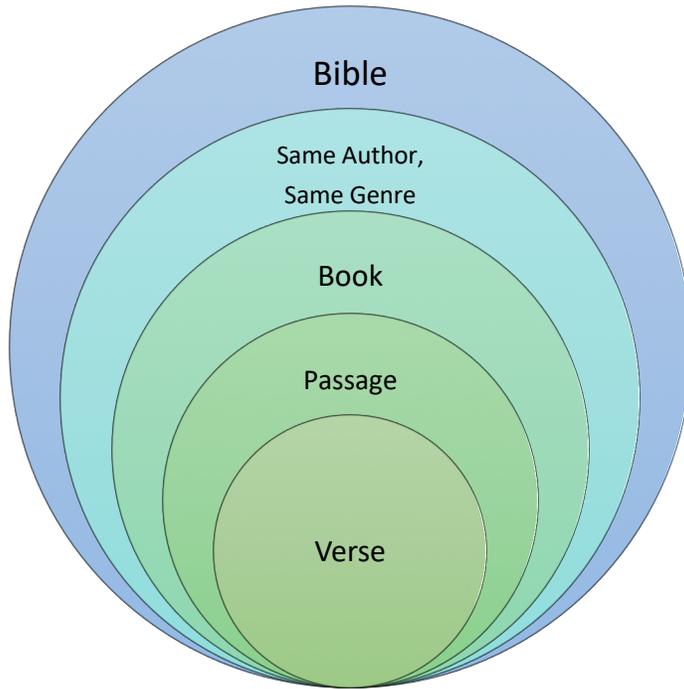
- Using Google Earth, zoom in on your current location, city, etc.
- Zoom out...you see your city is in Alabama.
- Zoom out again you see Alabama...is in the South, the South is in America, and America is on Planet Earth.
- That's our geographical **context**.
- You can't FULLY understand your city unless you understand Alabama.
- You can't FULLY understand Alabama unless you understand the South.
- You can't FULLY understand the South unless you understand America.
- And so on...each gives meaning & a MORE FULL understanding & picture.

Likewise, every Bible verse has a city, state, country, and planet.

1. *It has citizenship and that citizenship is its context.*
2. *Context is how we correctly read & understand a verse, passage, book.*
3. *Lift anything out of context and you will likely misread the Bible.*
4. *You do not bring meaning to the text; the text brings meaning to you.*

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The Bible Bullseye is a great method for keeping things in context.



Note: Chapter numbers didn't exist until the 13th century. Verse numbers didn't exist until the 15-16th century. Neither is inspired, but both are helpful to navigate the text. Yet, *one serious negative consequence of chapter and verse divisions is we lift verses out of context.*

Question: How do we correctly use the Bulls-eye?

EXAMPLE: If you're preaching on the TOPIC of HOPE, and using a verse from Paul:

1. **Begin with the verse.**
2. **Next, read the entire passage to understand immediate context for what PAUL is saying IN THAT PASSAGE.**
3. **Next determine the historical cultural context of the book.**
 - *WHY is Paul talking about hope?*
 - *Is Paul writing to a church to combat false teachers who say there is no resurrection?*
 - *Is Paul writing to individuals who are suffering?*
4. **Next observe what Paul says about hope in his other books.**
 - *Paul paints a big picture of hope, sketch it out.*
5. **GENRE ! (We will address the type of literature in the next section)**

WHY the systematic effort? The Bible will often mirror the context of your listener!

- When you share the context, you share a STORY, and [your listeners connect to the biblical context](#).
- Your listeners will realize they are not alone; someone has been in their shoes, so they will see the Bible, Paul, King David, etc., as a friend.

C.S. Lewis - "Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another: What! You too? I thought I was the only one."

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6. Finally, get a grasp on the OVERALL BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF HOPE.

- **Genesis – Revelation**
 - **Example:** Israel **hoped** God would deliver them from:
 - Slavery in Egypt
 - Exile in Babylon
 - And in the 1st century deliver them from Roman oppression.
 - **YET! JESUS delivers us from something much darker and more sinister than Egypt, Babylon or Rome;**
 - Jesus delivers us FROM ourselves, from our sin, from Satan, death, and hell.
 - Jesus delivers us TO new life and he promises to never FORSAKE US, he promises to RETURN and RENEW this present world. This fills us with **hope!**
 - HE IS THE GOD OF ALL **HOPE!**

You are learning to see Scripture through both a:

- **Microscope** - the small immediate picture
- **Telescope** - the BIG Picture
- **This is how Christians & Ministers have been taught to read & teach Scripture throughout history.**
- **If this seems intimidating, it is because we have become used to an inferior way of reading Scripture that is shallow.**

II. THE BIBLE AS A LIBRARY

The Bible is not a book; rather, the Bible is a **LIBRARY** containing 66 books.

- Different authors, backgrounds, languages, over 1000's of years.
- There are many Genres, which were common in the ancient world.

Genre is the type of literature: Poetry, Personal Letter, Apocalyptic, Hero Stories, Theological History, and more.

- You don't watch (interpret) STAR WARS in the same way you do watch (interpret) a documentary on the Civil War. You don't watch a Science Fiction movie the same way you watch Historical Western, Romance, etc.
- **GENRE determines how we are supposed to interpret a book, passage, verse, phrase, etc.**

Different Genres use different literary devices, we read them differently.

- **Example:** Song of Solomon vs. Ephesians



**Ugly
Sermon!**

What a picture! The humorous sketch of an artist interpreting the Song of Solomon in a literalistic fashion.

Why is this picture ugly?

- Because it was interpreted wrongly, and the communicated wrongly.
- Are we preaching ugly sermons because we have interpreted Scripture poorly and therefore preached wrongly?

The Song of Solomon is poetry using imagery NOT to be read literally.
If we read it literally, we SEE (then preach) SOMETHING GOD DID NOT INTEND.

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Rather, we must interpret is LITERARILY – according to the literary type – which is the genre.

- *Song of Solomon is about the sexual relationship in marriage.*
- *There is nothing theological in SoS having to do with you & Jesus, or with Christ & the church.*
- *You instinctually DO NOT read/preach this in the same manner you read Ephesians or vice versa. Because they are different genres.*

This is an easy example, but what if we are doing this with other texts?

Question: What if it appears that a pastor/ministry is having success, yet it is also apparent that the preaching/teaching is subpar, breaks classic rules of biblical interpretation, caters to consumer mindset, etc.?

Answer:

1. *We must neither affirm error, nor excuse bad preaching/teaching.*
2. *We must not use this as an excuse for ourselves.*
3. *We admit that just because God can use anyone or anything (Balaam & his donkey), that does **not** mean He approves of the way things are being done in such a situation.*
4. *We admit that there is a good possibility much false fruit exists.*

Our listeners live with a Post-modern, Post-Christian, Consumer mindset. Only the Word of God rightly preached, in the power of the Spirit can break thru the blindness.

- *When we read correctly, we understand correctly, and we preach well.*
- *We equip our people to live well and to understand God's Word.*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We do not want to preach an ugly sermon by preaching God's Word out of context.
- We want to preach an artful sermon ... by honoring the text.
- I cannot improve on God's Word ... I can improve my understanding of it, and my ability to communicate it well, and that is the JOB of the minister, but we CANNOT improve the text. God's Word is God's Word.
- If God's Word cannot get the job done, then problem isn't with the Word, the problem is not with the preacher, the problem is with the listener.

ALSO: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

- **Jesus is Cornerstone, Jesus builds the church, the Spirit lives within.**



EPHESIANS

For example → Ephesians is a public letter. One of its themes is about how the Church is built upon the foundation of Apostolic teaching, that Jesus is the Cornerstone who sets the plumbline for everything, and the Spirit indwells the Church.

- **Now Ephesians uses imagery as well, but the purpose is theological, to help us understand HOW the Spirit Dwells in us, understand HOW TIGHT KNIT the Church is supposed to be.**
- **Biblical Imagery must always be interpreted according to Genre. Failing to do this produces confusion, poor doctrine, etc.**

The biblical writers wrote using literary categories with which they were familiar.

- *The Holy Spirit inspired them to do so.*
- *It made the most sense to both them and their hearers/readers.*

REDEMPTIVE RELEVANCY

1. *We want to communicate in ways that our audience is familiar with, but never in a way which compromises the message of Scripture.*
2. *Scripture sets the agenda, we do not.*
3. *What we CAN do is look for Landing Zones.*
 - *Areas of culture, areas in the lives of our listeners – where we see a connecting point with Scripture – and we say “SEE! Scripture speaks directly to this, in this way!”*
 - *We actively look for LZs to demonstrate that the Bible IS relevant:*
 - *Abortion, Marriage, Sexuality, How to have a godly family, how to have peace, how to deal with tragedy, how to be a good*

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steward of money, a godly work ethic, but we never leave things topically, we always bring things back to ... the fact that:

- God designed us to live in a certain way
 - We cannot do without the help of Jesus
4. Jesus forgives our sin, heals our dysfunction, makes us more like him, it is all about JESUS.
- Are we painting the right picture for our listeners?
 - Scripture is not about self-help, it is about being made new by the Holy Spirit, because of what Christ has done.

Question: If this is how God inspired & intended the Bible to be read & taught:

1. What does it say when we think we hear the Holy Spirit “leading” us to preach something from a passage other than what **He** inspired & intended?
2. How should we respond when people wrongly and arrogantly say: “Well, that type of teaching / preaching does not work any longer!”?

- Using modern examples, illustrations, technology, is appropriate and fine.
- Nevertheless, humans are much the same as they have ever been, we struggle with similar issues, sinful natures, want the same good things.
- **The Gospel is timeless.**

One of the best books ever written on how to read the Bible is authored by ordained Assemblies of God minister Dr. Gordon Fee.

“How to Read the Bible Book by Book.”

- Dr. Fee is widely recognized and celebrated as one of the best biblical scholars of the 20th Century.
- He is world famous, loved, and highly respected outside of our fellowship. Many young ministers from outside the A/G have really fallen in love with Dr. Fee, his work, and this book.

The FIRST step of preaching good sermons is reading the Bible well.

- We can all do better.
- The better you read, the more clearly you communicate.

CRAFTING THE SERMON – Create a Message, Not a Mess.

1. **STAY IN PRAYER, READ YOUR TEXT.**
2. **USE GOOD COMMENTARIES & RESOURCES! (Bible dictionaries, Maps, etc.)**
 - a. THESE WILL HELP YOU IDENTIFY THE GENRE YOU ARE READING.

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- i. Many books use a variety of literary devices, as well as transitioning into multiple genres. Genesis and Revelation are both examples of this.
 - b. Scholars will bridge the distance of time, language, culture, and genre for you.
 - c. ALL COMMENTARIES ARE NOT EQUAL.
 - i. Contact the ALSOM office for recommendations. We can keep you from wasting good money on bad books!
 - ii. People want expert care when it comes to their healthcare, vehicles, investments, etc. We should want the best books.
3. **RE-READ YOUR TEXT SIDE BY SIDE WITH YOUR RESOURCES.**
4. **WRITE DOWN THE MAIN IDEA/CONCEPT. → “The One Thing”**
 - a. **Expository Sermon** – The main idea of a passage, verse by verse.
 - b. **Narrative Sermon** – What does this story say about each character including God (who is always the main character)? What is the BIG IDEA and how does this fit in the Bible?
 - c. **Topical** – What does the Bible generally say about the topic?

***NOTE: Expository Preaching is the highest form. Resources on how to blend styles are abundant → Narrative Exposition, Topical Exposition, etc. Exposition must be the foundation of authentic teaching/preaching if it is to be most biblical.**

5. **ALLOW THE TEXT ITSELF TO DEVELOP / OUTLINE / STRUCTURE THE MAIN IDEA.**
 - a. **Transitions** – Use the natural transitions in the text as your message transitions. Construct a simple organizing framework from the text.
 - b. **Sub-points** – How does the passage organize sub-points?
 - i. **TIP:** Limit sub-points to 5 or less, if more then do a short series.
 - c. **Internal Thought of the Passage** – let the author speak, don't feel that you have to explain everything all the time.
6. **SHOW THE BIBLE IS RELEVANT & WHY WHAT YOU ARE SAYING MATTERS.**
 - a. How?
 - i. Observe church needs, show exactly how God speaks to the issues thru the Bible; do not try to tame Scripture.
 - b. Make a connection with the modern world
 - c. Make a connection with the listeners.
7. **MAKE THE MOVE TO JESUS.**
 - a. Demonstrate the relation of every passage to Christ's Redemptive work.
 - b. “THIS IS HOW JESUS DEALS WITH _____.”

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- c. "THIS is what the Holy Spirit says thru Paul, and Paul always points to Jesus."
 - d. Every small story fits into the BIG STORY.
 - i. **Example: Jonah & Jesus**
 1. God sent Jonah to preach forgiveness of sins to Nineveh, but Jonah was reluctant & ran from God's Work.
 2. God sent Jesus to preach forgiveness of sins to us; Jesus was ready for this and ran to God's Work.
 3. Jonah resented when people responded (Nineveh).
 4. Jesus rejoiced when people responded (us).
 - 5. Jesus is a new & better Jonah.**
 6. When God speaks, will you run away or run to? Will you be reluctant or ready? Will you resent or rejoice?
 7. Jonah is dead, Jesus is alive. Whom do you resemble?
- 8. CONDENSE YOUR MESSAGE SO IT CAN BE STATED IN ONE SENTENCE.**
- a. Similar to your main idea, but more brief. The "One Thing."
 - i. Concise – short, to the point, brief, not lengthy.
 - ii. Precise – accurate, exact, extremely clear.
- 9. ANSWER THEIR QUESTION: "WHAT SHOULD I REMEMBER?"**
- a. Be Specific. (This may or may not be your "One Thing.")
 - i. Re-iterate your points if you wish, don't overdo it.
- 10. ANSWER THEIR QUESTION: "WHAT CAN I DO?"**
- b. Give your listeners an opportunity to act.
 - i. Get them committed to re-read the passage this week.
 - ii. Ask them to think of a situation in which the message applies.
 - iii. A creative activity to re-enact, act out, the message.

GUIDING VERSE

2 Timothy 2:15 *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.*

- "DO"** – is a command, the strongest possible way to say something in the Greek.
- The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to make this a command, not a request.
 - **"Correctly"** is to use it how God intended according to its design.
 - Those who correctly handle God's Word are qualified to be **"Approved"** by God and God's Leaders.

**Read well, Preach well,
Stay in the Story,
become a craftsman for Christ.**

Preaching the Gospel Whenever We Preach 66 GOSPELS Section 3

It is often said of the Bible's two Testaments:

The New is CONCEALED in the Old, and the Old is REVEALED in the New.

As those who speak on behalf of GOD, we often feel the tension in this Holy Text. Paul describes this pull:

Paul describes The Gospel in [Col. 1:26](#)

*...the mystery that has been kept hidden
for ages and generations, but is now disclosed*

Preaching the Gospel from the New Testament is not too difficult, for that is when the Gospel is unveiled, the Gospel gave birth to the New Testament.

- Paul says in [Gal. 4:4](#) *...But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son.*

Preaching Christ Crucified, Risen, & Returning is instinctual in the N.T.

BUT ... what about those days before “the time had fully come”? (In the O.T.?)

HOW do we preach The Gospel from Old Testament texts without damaging either, but remaining faithful to both? If you violate either the OT text or the Gospel when you make your move from the OT to Christ, you have misrepresented God's Word in some way!

1. [Biblical Theology](#)
2. [Fallen Condition Focus \(FCF\)](#)
3. [Christ-Centered Preaching](#)

Let's use a few of our most beloved stories of Kid's Church:

*Noah & the Ark, Joseph and His Colorful Coat,
Samson the Strongman, David & Goliath, Jonah & the Whale*

Classic Stories! There's no one here who could not get up right now, and tell these stories with intrigue, suspense, and accuracy.

BUT, CAN YOU MAKE THE MOVE TO JESUS? ... Correctly!?

ALSO: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

CAN YOU PREACH:

- *The Gospel from Noah & the Ark ...without going adrift?*
- *The Gospel from Jonah & the Whale ... without it becoming a fish story?*
- *Without stretching the story too much? Being sloppy or pushing it too far?*
- *It takes patience, study, prayer, practice. BUT IT IS FUN, you will love it.*

What about other stories, other people? *Abel, Abraham, Job, Moses & Joshua, Hannah & Samuel, Ruth & Obed, Esther.*

Old Testament stories reveal glimpses of the Gospel, but never give us a full picture. BUT ... they LEAN towards the Gospel.

Every Old Testament story remains UNFINISHED without Jesus.

First, we must look at how to make the move to Jesus from one of these stories.

Second, we will observe HOW we accomplish the task.

Third, we will observe another method.

Preaching the Gospel from the Old Testament:

- *Does not depend on human cleverness.*
- *Does depend on the right approach of which there are several.*

METHOD #1 – WHAT GOD DOES

EX: JONAH! Think of the story of Jonah in terms of **what God does**.

Before reading further, study these guidelines:

- 1. DO NOT look for a moral lesson about a human character.**
 - a. It makes the story a “me” centered selfie, drifts into “just be good.”*
 - b. The point of The Gospel is that we ARE NOT and CANNOT be good under our own power.*
- 2. God is always the main character, even if behind the scenes.**
 - a. Look for HIS worth and HIS working.*
- 3. Learn the context of the story, what comes before & after.**
 - a. What is GOD doing in the lives of people, in the narrative flow of Scripture and history AT THAT POINT?*

ALSON: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

Let's ask the 3 questions of METHOD #1 with JONAH in mind: WHAT GOD DOES

1. What is GOD doing for his people in this story?

- i. *God is showing grace and compassion to all manner of people, including:*
 - 1. *A rebellious, uncompassionate, unwilling prophet.*
 - 2. *To enemies in Nineveh.*

2. How does GOD do the same for us – only better – in Jesus?

- ii. *In Jesus, God has:*
 - 1. *An obedient, compassionate, and willing messenger who offers salvation to the entire world (friends and enemies), both those who claim to know him and those who have not heard about him.*

3. How does believing this good news change the way we live?

- iii. *We rejoice both in what God has done for us, but what also what God has done for those unlike us.*
- iv. *We do not deserve salvation, but God is compassionate.*
- v. *He saves us by grace, we now live in obedience gratitude, and we are faithful messengers even to our enemies because Jesus was to us.*

- **NOTE:**

- 1. *This did not devolve into a morality lesson.*
- 2. *GOD is the main character.*
- 3. *IT IS FAITHFUL to the narrative sweep of the Old Testament.*
 - o *As Israel is called to be a “light to the nations” but most often is selfish and fails, so GOD has to show up.*
- 4. *God did show up in an ultimate sense in the person of Jesus who **is** the light of the world, and as his disciples – we are his light in this dark world.*

This is one easy method IF you FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES & stick to the QUESTIONS.

We will talk about one more method, but first let's talk about how we get there.

IF YOU TRULY WANT TO SEE THE BEAUTY OF THE GOSPEL, PEEKING OUT FROM THE CURTAINS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, THEN YOU MUST BECOME A STUDENT OF ...

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY → THE BIG STORY OF THE BIBLE

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY is study devoted to understanding how all the individual stories of Scripture **FIT TOGETHER** to display **ONE EPIC STORY** from Genesis to Revelation.

Every little story serves a specific role in THE BIG STORY OF THE BIBLE.

Biblical Theology helps us see Scripture through a TELESCOPE.

- We see the *BIG PICTURE, AT A DISTANCE, ALL HORIZONS, an AERIAL PHOTO.*
- *WHAT God is doing and HOW he is doing it on a grand scale.*

An Individual Biblical Text/Story helps us see Scripture through a MICROSCOPE.

- We see the *SMALL DETAILS, CLOSE UP, FOR SPECIFIC STUDY.*
- *What God is doing in a particular moment, context, etc.*

Biblical Theology enables you to look at an INDIVIDUAL TEXT, seeing how it SERVES, GOD'S SWEEPING PLAN at that precise point in the story and in the BIG STORY.

- *No biblical text lives in complete isolation from other texts or the BIG STORY.*
- *Seeing the flow of all these stories, and the TYPES of people in them, prepares you to see the ONE who is the fulfillment of these stories ... **Jesus Christ**.*
- *You see that the people God used were flawed, but often portray some aspect of the Person or Work of JESUS, it is as if we see a shadow of him.*

Ex: JONAH

- *As part of Israel, Jonah is called to be a "light to the nations."*
- *Because GOD'S PLAN is not to play favorites, but to draw all nations to know, love, and serve him.*
- ***Jesus is the true and better Jonah.***

FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS (FCF)

NOTE: Bryan Chapell shares the concept in his book "Christ Centered Preaching."

**This section relies heavily upon Chapell.*

What is the FCF? The condition each human shares: Fallenness & a desperate need for the grace of God.

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“The Fallen Condition Focus is the human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the biblical text was written that REQUIRES the GRACE of the passage for God’s people to glory and enjoy him.” - Chapell

- What were the struggles or frailties of the persons to whom the text was originally addressed?
- What picture of human sin, fallen nature., etc. is being shown?
- What concerns do listeners share in common with those to (or about) whom the text was written?

Chapell tells us clearly:

- 1. The FCF demonstrates human inability to “fix” the problem.**
- 2. The FCF demonstrates God alone can provide a solution.**

Ex: APPLY THIS TO JONAH

- **The Problem?** The people of Nineveh are wicked and need to repent in order to avoid the wrath of God and receive the grace of God.
 - Pagan People cannot receive grace unless they repent.
- **The Struggle?** Jonah did not believe that his GOD should extend grace to Nineveh, therefore he refused to tell them of God's Love.
 - People cannot repent unless they hear a Message of God's Love & Holiness. Pride prevents Jonah from preaching to those not like him.
- **The Result?** Wrath fell on Jonah until he obeyed the LORD.
 - When he obeyed, Grace fell on Jonah and on Nineveh.

Therefore, you can put questions to your people:

Q: What fruit does prejudice (of race or religion) produce in our lives?

- Consider the possibility that by harboring hatred, you consider others unworthy to hear the Gospel.
 - You may SAY “Oh I am not racist at all!” And you may behave with dignity, respect, & treat others likewise. You may NOT be racist whatsoever.
 - BUT ... have we ever NOT shared the Gospel with someone because they were in some way “too different” than us?

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- Are we more likely to share the Gospel with men & women of our same skin color? Our same economic status? The truly poor?
- People are often most comfortable with people of their own ethnicity ... BUT ... Paul says that on the cross, Jesus put to death the enmity & hate between races. Maybe you do live that out.

What Scripture would say is this: “Do not ever let someone’s race determine whether or not you decide to share the Gospel.”

- The same goes for people of other religions ...
 - Lost people need to be found.
 - IN the ancient world, the early Christians were VERY familiar with pagan people of other religions.
 - There are many people trapped in false belief today:
 - Atheist, Agnostic.
 - Muslim, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, Hindu, etc.
 - People who just put together a buffet of their own beliefs.
 - Sometimes, we have to build relationships with people in order to be a good messenger, but other times, God just opens a door.
 - Expect to be rejected at times, Jesus said we would.
- By not holding out the Gospel
- You MAY remove yourself from God’s Blessing
- And allow others to remain under God’s Wrath.
- Are you a reluctant messenger like Jonah?
- Consider the celebration you could have with new brothers and sisters in Christ, you were once lost without God and without hope.

What is the solution?

1. GOD NEEDS ONE FAITHFUL ISRAELITE TO BE A FAITHFUL LIGHT.

a. (Jonah wasn’t enough)

2. GOD NEEDS ONE OBEDIENT MESSENGER FOR THE NATIONS.

a. (The Nation of Israel failed)

3. GOD SENDS HIS SON ...

a. (And then the Son sends us)

(We are God’s light to the nations, a city set on a hill.)

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

CHRIST-CENTERED PREACHING

NOTE: Bryan Chapell shares the concept in his book "Christ Centered Preaching."
*This section relies heavily upon Chapell.

1. Does not seek to discover Christ mentioned in every text.

- a. It is inappropriate for us to attempt to "read Jesus into" any and every passage. Or "shoehorn" him in.
- b. **Ex:** JESUS is not in the Song of Solomon.

2. Does seek to disclose where every text stands in relation to Christ.

- o Does this story parallel events of Christ's life in any way?
- o What situation needs redeeming? Who is the redemptive figure?
- o **Ex:** The Parallel of Various Infancy stories to Christ's Infancy.
 - Isaac, Samson, Moses, Samuel, etc. Several clear parallel.

Jesus says in Matthew's Gospel:

Matt. 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

On the Emmaus Road, after his resurrection, Jesus is walking with disciples:

"beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

POINT: The N.T. Apostles were not trying to **SHOVE** Jesus into every O.T. passage.

The Apostles use the O.T. very responsibly:

- They apply O.T. prophecy to Jesus (*having been taught by Jesus to do so*).
 - o It is wise for us to be satisfied with their Spirit-inspired efforts, and not believe we can add anything substantive that "those guys missed."

With Jonah, how do we begin a move to Christ?

- In some ways, Jonah is similar to Jesus.
- In some ways, Jonah is so different, that it is his difference that makes us think of Jesus.
- **Jonah would not speak a word to Nineveh.**
- **Jesus came as THE WORD to all Nations.**

TYPOLOGY → “TYPES OF CHRIST”

NOTE: Bryan Chapell shares the concept in his book “Christ Centered Preaching.”
*This section relies heavily upon Chapell.

Typology finds correspondences between people, events, and institutions which first appear in the Old Testament, the full expression of which is revealed in the New Testament. - Chapell

A “type” often bears similarities to the ROLES, WORKS, or REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE which Jesus reveals in full.

Ex: Prophet, Priest, King, Sacrifice, Healing, Kinsmen Redeemer, etc.

Ex: The Passover Lamb of Exodus – Jesus is the True and Better Lamb
Moses was a “type” of Christ.

- His infancy narrative parallels Christ's.
- **Moses** delivered God's People out of Egyptian Slavery.
 - **Jesus** delivers people out of something darker than slavery, SIN & DEATH!
- **Moses** went up a mountain to receive Law.
 - **Jesus** went up a mountain to GIVE LAW. (Sermon on the Mount)
- **Moses** led God's People towards New Life in a New Land.
 - **Jesus** lead's God's People towards Eternal Life in a New Creation.
- **JESUS IS A TRUE AND BETTER MOSES.**

SYNTHESIS OF WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED → Using all the tools together

Note: You will hear Biblical Theology, Fallen Condition Focus, and Christ-Centeredness.

- These will be used in a way that does not damage to the original Old Testament story but brings it to its intended fullness in Jesus.
- You will also observe contemporary issues being addressed.

NOTE: Pastor Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Manhattan, has done tremendous work in the area of typology. He coined a phrase which captures the concept of typology

→ “Jesus is the true and better _____.”

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We will use his phrase to help synthesize the disciplines we've learned.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL FROM JONAH:

- Jonah rejected God's work.
 - Jesus fully embraced God's work. **Jesus is the better prophet**
- Jonah ran from God.
 - Jesus ran to all God had for him. **Jesus is a new & better Jonah**
- Jonah begrudgingly preached to sinful people.
 - Jesus gladly preached to sinful people. **Jesus is a better mediator**
- Jonah was angry when the people responded.
 - Jesus rejoiced when the people believed, because he came to seek and save those who were lost. **Jesus is a true & better Jonah**
- Jonah was cast out into a dangerous storm to save those on the ship.
 - o Jesus was cast out into the storm of danger, to bring us in to safety.
- Jonah spent 3 days in the belly of a whale, and was then spit out of the whale, in pretty bad shape, and reluctantly did God's work.
 - o Jesus spent 3 days in the belly of the earth (tomb), but he wasn't spit out, he walked out under his own power, to new life...to continue doing God's work of setting the world right.
Jesus is a true & better Jonah.
- Jonah preached salvation.
 - o Jesus **is** salvation.
- Jonah means "dove."
 - o Jesus is the one upon whom the Spirit rests.
- Jonah died for no one.
 - o Jesus died for us all.
- Jonah is still dead.
 - o Jesus is alive. **Jesus is a true & better Jonah.**
- WE share Jesus with anyone who will listen.
- WE never run away from opportunities, we run towards them.
- WE rejoice when people believe in Jesus.

JESUS is God's Grace for Nations

PREACHING THE GOSPEL FROM THE STORY OF JOSEPH

- **Joseph**
 - o *Is his father's favorite son.*
 - o *His father, Jacob (Israel) he blesses him with a robe.*

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- His brothers bow before him.
- **Jesus**
 - Father God's ONLY SON
 - The Father blesses Jesus with a Victor's Crown
 - Every knee shall bow & tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.
 - His brothers & sisters - those whom he has "saved."
 - His enemies - those who reject him will bow as well.
- **Jesus is the true & better beloved Son.**
- **Joseph** was betrayed by his brothers
 - **Jesus** was betrayed by people he wanted to turn into his brothers.
- **Joseph** was sent into prison under wrong, false, unjust charges.
 - **Jesus** was sent to a Roman Cross under wrong, false, unjust charges.
- **Joseph** was delivered from bondage, raised to a new life with new power by a pagan king, & given the power to save by providing from his storehouses food & drink to his brothers suffering famine.
 - **Jesus** was delivered from the bondage of death, raised to resurrection life and CROWNED King.
 - Jesus has the power to save by providing HIMSELF to those spiritually hungry & thirsty and he's left us a table at which to dine.
- **Joseph** was God's instrument of physical salvation for a season.
 - **Jesus** is God AND GOD'S Instrument of TOTAL salvation forever.

JESUS IS THE NEW & BETTER JOSEPH...ON EVERY COUNT.

A FEW ONE SHORT ONES from Pastor Tim Keller:

Again you see all the disciplines in action, as well as answers to the questions of Method #1.

- **Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us.**
- **Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood now that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for acquittal.**
- **Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.**
- **Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends.**

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- *Jesus is the true and better Esther* who didn't just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one, who didn't just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people.
- *Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He's the true temple, the true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread.*

"The Bible's really not about you – it's about Jesus." – Tim Keller

- *Compare the richness of what has just been presented, with shallow self-help sermons, and you will see a vast superiority what we have demonstrated, which in simplest terms is Redemptive Historical Preaching.*
- *Messages simply giving us a "good example" or a "moral to learn" are far inferior in comparison.*

Every Old Testament story remains UNFINISHED without Jesus.

JESUS IS...the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed

MAY WE NOT SETTLE FOR LESS.

LET'S PREACH THE GOSPEL WHENEVER WE PREACH.

It is a matter of preaching messages characterized by...

ANTHROPOCENTRISM VS. THEOCENTRISM

ANTHROPOCENTRIC MEANS MAN-CENTERED.

THEOCENTRIC MEANS GOD IS AT THE CENTER.

Sermons are about GOD, not about us.

Yes, they address our felt needs, but our needs are never the center of the sermon – Jesus is. Even in our pain we need to know, the Bible is about God, not about us. Ultimately, this is Good News!

ALSO: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

We are conditioned in our culture to be self-centered, man-centered, thinking things revolve around US. THIS mirrors the TENSION of the Text.

→ This is the root cause of all rebellion, all sin, it is why hell was created.

→ Beginning with a felt need can easily make us rip the Bible from its OTHERNESS, HOLINESS, AUTHORITY, and reduce it, make it about US, rather than God.

→ **Hasn't that happened before with God's Word...in a Garden.**

- **An apple offered to Eve**
- **A serpent's words that seduced HER to satisfy her felt needs & desires, instead of GOD's.**

The Bible sweeps us up into something MUCH bigger than ourselves.

You don't have to SQUEEZE felt needs out of the Bible, they're everywhere, in every story. BUT GOD IS ALWAYS the main character, main hero of every story, even when He's in the background.

In a manner of speaking, the 66 books of the Bible give us 66 GOSPELS, we just have to apply the best principles of interpretation & communication.

RESOURCES FOR YOUR LIBRARY:

Vaughn Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*

Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*

Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*

Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*

FOLLOW ^{the} LEADER: Discipling Your Congregation Thru Preaching Section 4

For the past 50 years discipleship at the local church has been dis-integrated, it is true of every fellowship. Including the Assemblies of God.

HERE IS WHAT WE HAVE DISCOVERED

- **Pastors have ideas about:**

- What we want our churches to look like.
 - What we want to see happen in the lives of our individual people, and then in the life of the corporate church.
 - We want our people to know, internalize, & live out Scripture.
 - We want to BUILD/EQUIP them for Jesus, His Kingdom, & the World.
 - What I am saying is this:

We know what kind of **disciples** we want to make.

- We pray, we preach message after message, we use media, we have small groups, we have programs, etc.
- **BUT DO WE HAVE AN ARTICULATED PLAN TO MAKE DISCIPLES?**
- Making disciples begins with the Pastor, and the biggest opportunity we have on a weekly basis is our SERMONS.
- Our sermons can have great media, great illustrations, our sermons can have great content, but that doesn't always mean we are preaching in a way that most effectively makes disciples. You may say "well that is what I depend on small groups to do."
- **Hear us clearly:** Having Sermons, Modern Media, and Small Groups...doesn't mean we have a discipleship plan...*it just means we have activity.*

REMEMBER → Activity does not always equal **Productivity.**

Q: What is the problem? Our activities are **DIS-INTEGRATED.**

The problem is that our activities are not working together as ONE PROCESS to disciple our congregations.

dis in te gra tion /dis, intə'grā SHən

Noun:

1. The process of losing cohesion.
2. The process of coming to pieces.

Disintegration manifests as a result of, or in the form of:

1. Excessively large amounts of information.
 2. The different trajectories of the information.
 3. An individual of any age can get 3-4 different messages per week.
 - a. To Eat, Digest, Review, Apply.
 4. We don't GET DEEP DOWN into the Bible (and the Bible doesn't get deep down into us).
- COVERING TOO MUCH unrelated information usually means we have a surface understanding of numerous things, but we have deep knowledge of very little because we don't have time & let it sink in.
 - When we don't have meditation, we don't have application.
 - Our minds, our formation into Christ's Image...gets dis-integrated.

The Result is: Application becomes Frustration because there is no Transformation. All because of Dis-integration

Q: Do you ever feel dis-integrated?

Q: Have you ever felt that your sermons lacked cohesion, from week to week, or that they didn't get traction in the life of your church?

Many of our people feel likewise, that the Bible is not getting the traction in their lives that it needs to. They hear our sermons, take notes, complement us, but they desire more transformation.

They hear one subject on Sunday, another on Wednesday, are talking about totally different things in their small group or bible study, not to mention their personal devotions, then something totally unrelated the next Sunday....and they don't have time or energy to apply much or apply what you want them to apply at a DEEP LEVEL.

This is a formula for exasperation, not transformation.

Lots of activity, but not much productivity in discipleship, learning, transformation!

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People want to grow, we want them to grow, but at times, the system we employ can make it more difficult than it has to be. **The solution is simple...INTEGRATION!**

in te gra tion / ,inti'grā SHən

Noun:

1. To form into one whole; to make entire; to complete; to renew; to restore; to perfect.
2. The coordination of processes in the nervous system, including diverse sensory information.

Synonyms: *assimilation, union, alliance*

THE SOLUTION is to have our activities working together, like horses pulling in harness, in ONE DIRECTION, to arrive at a PLANNED LOCATION.

Q: What is that location?

- *That idea, that dream, that vision that God has given you of the kind of disciples you can visualize in your local church.*
- *GIVE THEM ONE MESSAGE AND TAKE THEM DEEP!*
- *Wouldn't it be great if these words described our Discipleship Process?*

Below is a list of ministries that you may have at your church.

Question: Are they delivering a unified message or competing messages?

Some of these are specifically led by the Pastor; some may not be. However, the Pastor can utilize them for Integrated Discipleship,

Circle a few of the ministries, which are directly led by the Pastor.

Come back later and circle:

- Ministries that do not presently exist but would be easily doable.
- Ministries that do exist, and which the Pastor could integrate with his Sunday sermons.

Sunday AM Sermon

Sunday PM Sermon

Bulletin Content

Small Groups

Midweek Sermon

Bible Studies

Church Facebook Page

Weekly Breakfasts

Devotions

Sunday School

Website Message Boards

Prayer Meetings

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We will give you an example of how to integrate 4 of these, the cornerstone of which is the Sunday AM Sermon.

***WHY?** The Sunday Morning Sermon is the most attended event of the week, you reach the widest range of people, and you can get more people on board the process.*

SUNDAY MORNING SERMONS

SERMONS ARE THE FOUNDATION, the Catalyst, the Launch pad for Each Week.

The Lead Shepherd has the privilege to lead the health of his church & nurture the staff ministries. He/She has the duty to assess challenges a church may face.

Now the process we are about to unpack will work very well for individual sermons, but it works even better for series.

2 Things for Maximum Impact

1. **“The One”** – Each series needs ONE THEME. Within that, each sermon needs “One Thing” (summary sentence) that serves the theme & that people can take home.
 - a. *Needs to be both concise & precise.*
 - i. *Concise – brief, flows well, easy to remember.*
 - ii. *Precise – accurate, exact, impossible to misinterpret.*
2. **LifeNotes** – Bulletin insert emphasizing, & unpacking the main points, fill in blanks, etc.

God’s Word has been proclaimed...but are the following the leader?

- *People forget very easily.*
- *Our goal is to get them in the word & prayer.*
- **Devotions** *are the next component to Preaching for Discipleship.*

DEVOTIONS

What kind of devotional lives do you think your people have?

- *Is it healthy? Have we taught people how to do devotions?*
- *Are they just choosing the best seller at the bookstore? (Which could be dangerous).*
- *Do they play Bible Roulette? Just flipping the pages everyday & stopping?*

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- *Perhaps, they have a good balanced devotional life.*
 - *If so, they will have no problem engaging 2 weekly devotions centered on your sermon text.*
 - *If not, the devotions you provide will help correct bad practice & bad information they may be reading.*
 - *In both cases, you will get people on the same trajectory as your sermons, which is great!*

Which do you think is more effective?

- *A 40min message ?*
- *A 25 min message, with 2 Devotions, which serve the sermon ?*
 - *There are multiple ways to do these, find what is best.*

Cut your sermon content by 10-15 minutes and turn that content into 2 Devotions for your people.

- *Print it as a bulletin insert.*
- *Deliver it by email, Facebook, etc.*
- *Give the 1st devotion on Sunday, the 2nd devotion comes later.*

Q: What is in the devotion?

- *Have them re-read the primary biblical text.*
- *Reemphasize “The One Thing” and sub points.*
- *Edit your sermon content to fit this delivery system.*
- *Unpack more depth. Explore historical, cultural, theological depth.*
- *Ask a piercing question or two.*
- *Issue a challenge.*
- *Write a prayer for them to pray.*
- *Ask them to complete it before Wednesday. This gives them 3 days (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) to complete the devotion.*
- *You have reinforced your trajectory, your message is sinking deeper, discipleship is happening more strategically.*
- *People are following the leader...to your planned location.*

MIDWEEK SERVICE

- 1. The Deep End** – A deeper exploration of Sunday's message. Possibly more technical, exploring more biblical language, culture, theology, responding to emails, etc. You could even have tables set up & snacks.
- 2. Handouts** – Matching the media presentation.
- 3. Devotion** – Give out your 2nd devotion to keep people centered in “The One Theme/Thing.” Ask them to complete it before Sunday.

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Wherever you have an adult class service, Sunday School, or if the pastor teaches all adults, we suggest you consider that the Weds night teaching is more in depth teaching of the Sunday morning session:

- *Let people ask questions, send emails.*
- It gives the Pastor another opportunity and allows them to not overload the Sunday sermon feeling as if he has to pack everything in it.
- People are following the leader to a planned location.

SmallGroup, Bible Study, Discussion Guide – Sermon Highpoint & Apply.

1. **Facilitate a Journey.** Groups shouldn't just re-read the message. Pose engaging questions, activities, for application, etc. **Limit guide to 1 page.**
2. **Helps answer:** *What's Next? & How?*
3. **Parameters:** Set healthy time limits for discussion. Lead pastor should visit various groups if possible.

***This could be used for Bible Studies, Breakfasts, Luncheons, Prayer Meetings, etc. These events often turn into "Bible Roulette" which isn't strategic & doesn't serve to disciple people; it doesn't bring application of the sermon, etc.**

- Read the Sermon's Bible Text.
- Emphasize "The One Thing."
- Discuss.
- People are following the leader to a planned location.

INTERNET

- Create a Facebook page for the Church.
 - Pastor be the administrator or have someone you trust.
 - Post key thoughts from the sermon and ask for feedback.
 - Post the devotions and take a roll call for everyone who completes it.
 - Ask folks to upload pics of where they are having their devotion (work desk, Starbucks, McDonalds, Lunch Break, Dinner Table, School, etc.)
- Message Board
 - On your church website.
 - Other servers.
- Create a video of yourself briefly teaching out an interesting truth that you didn't bring out in the Sunday or Midweek Sermon.
 - Most laptops & smartphones have cameras more than adequate for this function.
 - Keep it short, this should probably never go longer than 5-6 minutes.
- Internet helps people → follow the leader to his/her planned location.

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If you merely do:

SUNDAY SERMON – DEVO – WEDNESDAY SERVICE – DEVO – GROUP GUIDE

- You have delivered **ONE MESSAGE 5x's** in different ways.
- You are matching people's normal rhythm of life, fitting this into already existing activities.
- You haven't created a lot of work for yourself because the devotions are derived from material you cut from your sermon.
- You are not losing ANY Biblical content but spacing it out in creative ways.
- People are following the leader to a planned location.

Our activities working together, like horses pulling in harness, in **ONE DIRECTION**, to arrive at a **PLANNED LOCATION**.

What is that location?

That idea, that dream, that vision that God has given you of the kind of disciples you can visualize in your local church.

**DO YOU SEE HOW MUCH EASIER THIS IS THAN DOING
4 DIFFERENT, DIS-INTEGRATED THINGS?**

**DO YOU SEE HOW MUCH MORE EFFICIENT THIS IS THAN DOING
4 DIS-INTEGRATED THINGS?**

**DO YOU SEE HOW THIS IS A DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS,
AND THAT IT BEGINS WITH CONTEMPORARY PREACHING?**

PEOPLE GROW - IN their relationship with God.
IN their relationships in the church.

It is also a good idea to give people periodic checkups:

- Asking about the biblical truths from Sermon Series, Comprehension of Scripture, Internalization of Scripture, Personal Hunger for God, Personal Growth, Healthy Theological Concepts Embedded in the Sermons & Devo's.

Our Alabama District Secretary Treasurer, Dr. Michael Sharp, developed a similar strategy, measured the results, and the entire process became his doctoral dissertation. Participants were of a wide age range, background, different genders, etc.

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These are reports from the field.

Not from a conference, not from a church of 10,000, not from a church in a totally different cultural environment with people quite different from your own. This happened at a medium sized A/G Church just outside Birmingham, Alabama.

What was discovered?

APPLICATION brought COOPERATION, MATURATION, APPRECIATION, due to TRANSFORMATION!

The individuals who completed the devotions showed marked growth in the following:

- *Ability to Rightly Read & Apply Scripture.*
- *Christ-like Character & Fruits of the Spirit.*
- *Hunger for the Presence of God.*
- *Recognition & Repentance of Personal Sins.*
- *Better Decision Making Abilities & Better Home Lives.*
- *Personal Commitment to the Bible & to the Church.*
- *More Enjoyment of Sermons, Bible Teaching, Church Attendance.*

These individuals:

- *Were less dysfunctional, required less counseling.*
- *Became low maintenance, high output Christians.*
- *More committed to the Pastor's Vision & Values in the Local Church.*
- *THEY FOLLOWED THE LEADER.*
- *And the new pastor follows much of the same format but has expanded it beyond a test group into the entire church.*

The Result is: Application brought Cooperation, Maturation, Appreciation because people experienced Transformation. All because of Integration.

Every single one of us desires to make disciples.

BUT DO WE HAVE AN ARTICULATED, DO-ABLE PLAN?

- **You may be in a position to do radical things, this is a way to transform, align, & strengthen the DNA of your church.**
- **You may not be in a position to make huge leaps at the moment, this is a way to seed your congregation, let the Word do the work over time.**

ALSO: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

- This can work for any topic, any book of the Bible, any series, any controversial issue, etc.
- You may just want to take your people deeper in the Word.

***Note, if you have further questions, please contact:**

Dr. Michael Sharp at the District Office – 334-279-7172.

Rev. Shaylon Sharp at The Crossing - 205-277-1287

***This is also great to align all the age-specific ministries of the church: Adult, Youth, Kids. It can be done for any length of time.**

RESOURCES

What or who do I need to be listening to?

***NOTE:** We may have theological disagreements with some of these ministers. Nevertheless, they are on this list because they are known for holding the Bible in extremely high esteem, approaching God's Word with humility, and using proper tools of biblical exposition. Unfortunately, in today's Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, there is more poor preaching than proper preaching.

Simply put, too many ministers and laity mistake style for substance.

- *Pentecostal/Charismatics have a reputation (much of it deserved) for playing fast & loose with God's Word.*
- *It is time we be known as good & godly students of the Word, rightly dividing it for God's glory!*
- *Alistair Begg, Tim Keller, John Piper, Kevin DeYoung, Bishop Fulton Sheen, Phil Ryken, Matt Chandler, Rick Warren.*

1) Commentaries – Not all are created equal. Work with people smarter than you! Men & women dedicate their life to learning so they can unpack the Bible for us. Contact

a. 2 Best for you

- NT Wright "New Testament for Everyone" – entire set is \$135*
- NIV Application Commentaries. (Bible Dictionaries also good)*
- Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*
- Preaching the Word Series*
- Reformed Expositors Commentary*

ALSON: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

2) Culture – Headlines, Current Events & Issues, Music/Media.

Know what is influencing your hearers for good or bad on ...

- LGBT Issues
- Abortion Issues
- Racial Issues
- Know the worldviews which produce the headlines, the cultural, carnal ways of thinking, and then **offer what the Bible says.**

3) Calendar – **A Sermon Calendar is one of the best things you can ever do.**

- Establish Group Goals.
- What do you want them to know?
- How do you want them to live?
- Map out your sermon series
- 3 months in advance.
- Preach for the transformation you want.

Note: Preaching the Christian Year is one of the best things you can do because the calendar is already established for the most part and follows the normal rhythm of seasons. We will return to this concept.

Keep in mind, books of the Bible were MEANT TO BE PREACHED THROUGH.

- IN the Ancient World, when Paul wrote a letter to the Church, that letter was often read in one sitting. Then they would work their way back through the teaching of doctrine, lifestyle, etc.
- Books contain the logical thought of the author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. **PREACH THROUGH BOOKS of the BIBLE!!** **REGULARLY!!**
- **Too many pastors rely on topical series.**
 - Topical series can be good: such as about hope, fear, peace,
 - Topical series rarely give you a feel for the STORY behind the Scripture, the intent of the biblical author.
 - Topical Series can at times unfortunately, turn into nothing more than a Google search for whatever you are dealing with, clichés and platitudes, etc.
 - **This is not how the Ancient Jews memorized Scripture, taught Scripture, and it was not the pattern of the Early Church.**
 - **PREACH WITH A PLAN!**
 - **Too many pastors have no real preaching, nor teaching, nor discipleship plan for the local church.**
 - **Plan the type of growth you'd like to see and then preach to accomplish that growth.**

ALSON: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

4) Community – Ask capable people to read/listen to your message and evaluate both the content and delivery.

- Was it faithful to Scripture?
- Was it easy to follow? Did your points work well together?
- Was your introduction or conclusion weak?
- Ask other ministers. Ask those who are good students of the Word.

THE LECTIONARY & CHRISTIAN YEAR

In the Early Church, a systematic way of teaching developed.

- Partially out of Judaism.
- Partially out of the desire to have a balanced biblical diet.
- As it has proven a timeless method, many Pentecostal ministers are structuring the preaching ministries of their churches around what is called “The Lectionary” or “The Christian Year.”

For example, each Sunday, there is an:

1. OT Reading
2. Psalm
3. Gospel Reading
4. Epistle

- **They are designed to be integrated, address the same basic idea or topic, so you can see the wisdom in the whole Bible.**
- **It is fine to choose one text and offer the others as weekly devotions to take your people deeper into Scripture.**

Here is a pattern to give your church a healthy diet of Scripture each year:

- Preach thru an OT Book
- Preach thru a selection of Psalms
- Preach thru a specific section of a specific Gospel – or an entire Gospel.
- Preach thru an Epistle.

When you cannot preach through a Gospel, do a series such as:

- Sermon on the Mount, The Parables of Jesus, The Miracles of Jesus, etc.
- The 7 signs in John, The Passion Week of Jesus, etc.

The Christian Year follows a basic “Cycle”

- It follows the high points of scripture as they would naturally occur during the calendar year. (This will be explained below)
- Cycles operate for 3 years (Year A, Year B, Year C), offering different scriptures on the same “high point” or “pivotal” events every year for three years. After this, a new 3 year cycle is written. Keep in mind, these cycles are free resources.
- The Christian Year is easy to follow, easy to adapt to your needs, etc. It supplies you with multiple weekly texts in order to produce high biblical literacy.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR - The Best Plan for Teaching Core Doctrine

Preaching these two cycles every year guarantees that your congregation will hear the core doctrines of the Christian faith - that you MUST believe in order to be a Christian - preached EVERY year. There are so many aspects to these salvation Scriptures, so much meaning, so many applications, that you will never exhaust the possibilities. **You will walk through the year, every year, walking with God's KEY REDEMPTIVE EVENTS in the life of Jesus.**

THE CYCLE of LIGHT ...

1. Advent – the 4 Sundays before Christmas. (December)

- a. “Advent” comes from the Latin word “adventus” which means “coming” or “arrival.”
- b. The idea during the 4 weeks of Advent is to place yourself in the shoes of people longing, waiting, hoping, for the arrival of the Messiah.
- c. Old Testament passages are the sermon texts. Often the famous Messianic Prophecies about the birth of Christ, the root of Jesse, etc.
- d. New Testament passages such as Mary’s Song are also chosen.
- e. Consider those throughout the world who are still walking in darkness without the light of Christ.

2. Christmas. (2 Sundays)

- a. The Christmas Season lasts for 12 days. You examine the Incarnation.
- b. You have opportunities to preach multiple infancy narratives.

3. Epiphany. (Begins in January, ends on Sunday before Lent)

- a. “Epiphany” comes from a Greek word meaning:
 - i. “The striking appearance or manifestation of a god.”
- b. This season is about the revelation of Christ, Light to the Gentiles.
- c. Common passages are the stories of wise men, Herod's rage, flight to Egypt, return to Israel, the Baptism of Jesus as he begins ministry.

THE CYCLE of LIFE ...

4. Lent. (Usually begins in March, ends on Thursday of Holy Week)

- a. Lent is a period of 40 days (excluding Sundays) between Epiphany and Passion Week.
- b. Lent comes from an old English word which means "spring season."
- c. Lent is a season of prayer, fasting, repentance, and sacrifice modeled on Jesus' 40 day wilderness testing.
- d. The fasting of Lent makes Easter feasting all the more joyous!

5. Holy Week or Passion Week of Christ,

- a. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and walks through the events of the week Jesus was crucified. This includes: The Last Supper, The Trial of Jesus, Crucifixion, Burial.

6. Easter

- a. Easter has always been God's plan.
- b. Jesus is the 1st born of a New Creation.
- c. Easter is directly linked to the New Creation in Revelation.
- d. Eastertide is the season from Resurrection Sunday until Pentecost.
 - i. It is a season of great celebration of the Victory of God, marked by celebrations and feasting.
 - ii. It is a time to focus on the many aspects of Christ's atoning death and resurrection.
 - iii. Ascension Thursday occurs 40 days after Resurrection Sunday. Ascension Sunday follows, and is the time to celebrate the exaltation and reign of Jesus Christ.

7. Pentecost

- a. "Pentecost" means "50." The Day of Pentecost occurred 50 days after the Resurrection of Jesus.
- b. Theologically, it is the fulfillment of:
 - i. Moses receiving the Law on Mount Sinai.
 - ii. Old Testament prophecies about God pouring out His Spirit on all flesh, writing His Law on our hearts, etc.

8. Trinity Sunday

- a. The first Sunday after Pentecost (could be celebrated on another Sunday coming soon after Pentecost).
- b. A focus on the progressive revelation of the 3 members of the Trinity.
- c. The goal here is to show the quickly unfolding plan of God from Easter to Pentecost.
- d. This is a tremendous opportunity to teach on the doctrine of the Trinity and all that this reality means for the life of the Church.

9. Ordinary Time

- a. From “ordinal” or ordered, numbered ... Sunday 1 after Pentecost, Sunday 2, etc.
- b. Ordinary Time: the weeks between Pentecost and Advent, and between Epiphany and Holy Week is the best way to count it.
- c. While passages are commended during this part of the Christian Year, it is also a great chance to go “off calendar” and develop your own series according to the discipleship goals of a local church.
- d. AND, this is a perfect time to preach through books of the Bible.

TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE DELIVERY

- **Do not be afraid to read Scripture in service! (Be familiar with it already)**
 - Do not paraphrase it, don't just repeat its principles, let it speak!
 - Get listeners to read for you. Arrange ahead of time when possible.
- **Never talk down to people.**
 - Deliver the sermon as if you were sharing the Scriptures with and speaking to a loved one. Intensity does not mean angry or shouting.
- **Do not chase the rabbit!**
 - Your content will not make the same impact. You lose focus.
- **Avoid verbal pauses, but do not fear silence. Record yourself, Improve**
 - Silence gives our listeners an opportunity to think about what we have said. Silence is also a good tool to make a transition between points.
- **Body Language** – Use upper & lower body strategically. When you have a point to emphasize do it physically and not just verbally.
- **Eye Contact** – Make it often, but do not be creepy or stare people down.
- **Multimedia & Branding** – Imagery can help tremendously, however, studies suggest that 15 slides (whether images or text) or less are most effective.
- **Give media team a detailed copy of the sermon with any necessary cues.**
- **Time yourself** - Often a 40min message can be turned into 2 messages, and supplemental devotions to reinforce the message, etc.
- **Audience Participation** – Ask them questions and give them time to think. Make it a safe environment to answer & get them invested.
- **Message Resolution** – Do not always resolve the tension of the Biblical Text. Leave your listeners wanting to hear MORE of what the Bible says.
- **Know Your Audience** – Find out what resonates with them: type of humor, cultural references, type of illustrations or stories, etc.