

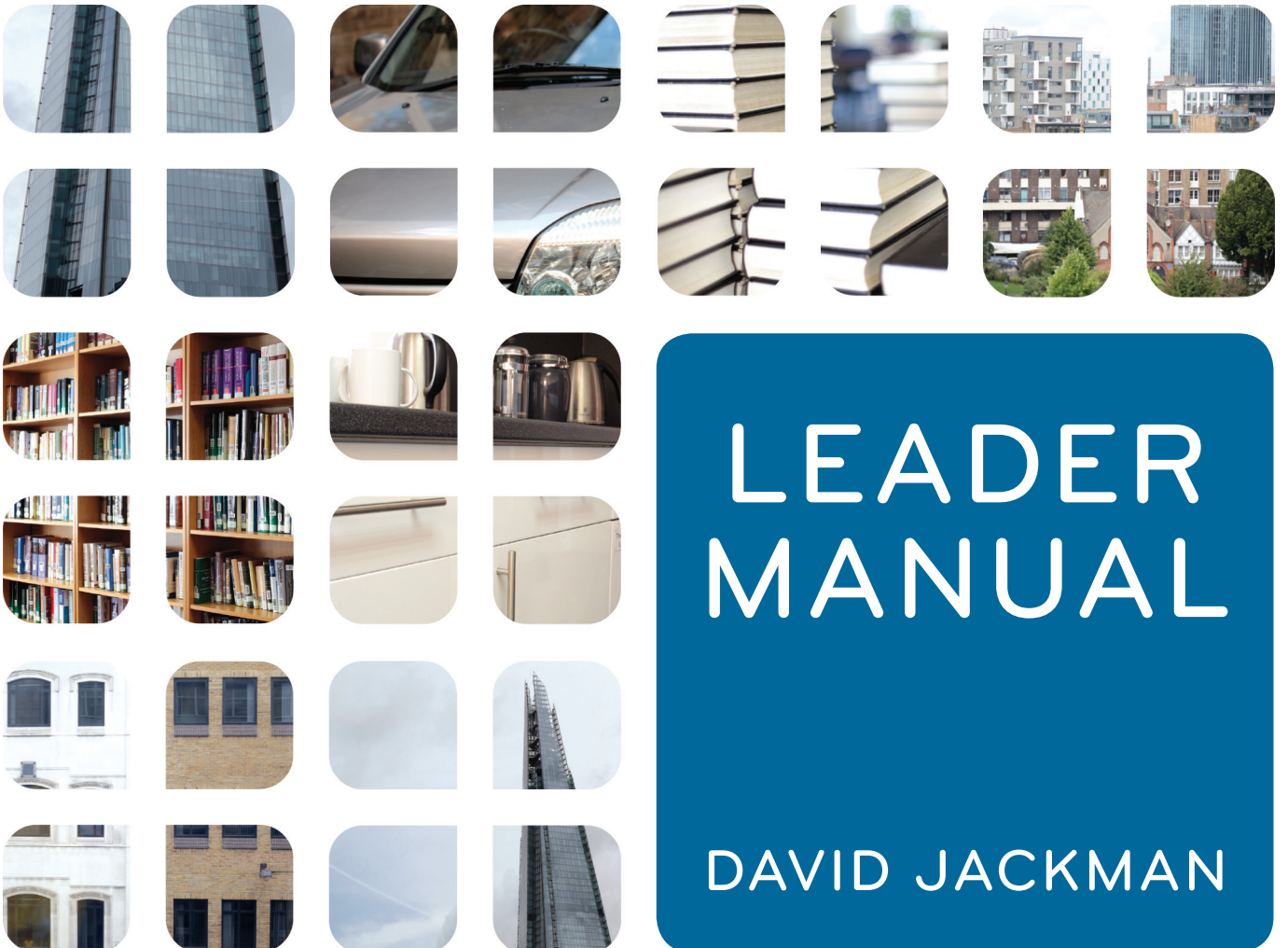


Equipped

TO PREACH THE WORD

MODULE 1

EQUIPPED BY THE LORD



















LEADER
MANUAL

DAVID JACKMAN

MODULE 1

EQUIPPED BY THE LORD

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual comprises eight training Units. Each Unit consists of:

5 minutes	INTRODUCTION
20 minutes	VIDEO TEACHING BY REV. DAVID JACKMAN
30–60 minutes	DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES
5 minutes	HOME STUDY AND PRAYER

This manual contains notes and instructions to help you lead your trainees. You will need to read through the notes and instructions for each Unit in advance to be prepared for the training.

It may be helpful to review the questions beforehand and highlight the ones that will be of most value to your trainees. Having said that, do not spend your entire time allocation on any single question. Try to keep the discussions on topic and moving through the questions and exercises.

The Home Studies consist of exercises in exegesis, readings, quotations, and videos to help delve deeper into the topic of the Unit. It will take about an hour to complete each Home Study. Briefly describe the purpose of the Home Study to your trainees at the end of each Unit. Emphasise the importance of this home preparation. (If you decide to run this Module over an intensive 2 day workshop you will need to leave out the Home Study sections. You may want, however, to point them out to your trainees and encourage them to complete them at a later date.)

Throughout this manual, instructions are in *italics*.

Please note that the page numbers in this *Leader Manual* do not correspond to those in the *Trainee Manual*. Please therefore ask trainees to turn to the Unit number, rather than the page number.

This manual uses the English Standard Version (ESV) translation of the Bible.

All videos can be found at www.proctrust.org.uk/equipped

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

The preacher can be sure that in the text of Scripture he has the God-given tools to accomplish God's work in the power of God's Spirit. Hence this Module is entitled: *Equipped by the Lord*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to: John Lumgair and Sim Lumgair of Quirky Motion for the production of the videos; Sam Shammass for developmental editing of the curriculum; Diane Warnes for the manual design; all who took part in filming at EMA 2015; everyone at The Proclamation Trust, especially Adrian Reynolds, Jonathan Griffiths, Mike Clarkson, and Rachel Olajide; the church family of St Simon Zelotes, especially Mike Neville, Rupert Bickersteth, Anando Mukerjee, Mikey Williams, Anne Bealey, Sam Ashton, and Nicolas Dunhill. My special thanks go to Nancy Olsen whose typing skills were invaluable.



UNIT 1

WHY DOES PREACHING MATTER?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Introduce yourself, welcome the trainees, and pray as you begin this course that God will give you and your trainees a deep confidence in the preaching of his Word and equip you to become skilled workers who handle it accurately and faithfully.

Hand each trainee a copy of the Trainee Manual or alternatively they can download it from: www.proctrust.org.uk/equipped.

Introduce the course by saying:

*Welcome to *Equipped to Preach the Word*. This first Module, as you can see from your manual, is entitled *Equipped by the Lord*. The Module consists of 8 Units. Please open your manual to Unit 1: *Why Does Preaching Matter?**

Ask the trainees to share aloud their answers to the following questions (which also appear in the Trainee Manual):

What words come to mind when people hear the word “preaching”?

What do you think the average person experiences when they hear preaching today?

Ask trainees to call out their answers. There is no need to respond or comment. Spend about 1 minute on this introductory exercise.

Introduce the video by saying:

*Even the word “preaching” can generate a whole range of comments and reactions. Throughout this course we are going to explore various aspects of preaching. For each Unit we will watch a teaching video presented by Rev. David Jackman and then discuss and delve into the teaching together. The topic for this first video: *Why Does Preaching Matter?**

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 1

The video provides some foundational reasons as to why preaching is still vitally important in both the contemporary church and the world. Cultural pressures work against this, making preaching seem less and less strategic, even in the view of many ministers. But the role of biblical preachers and their preaching is a crucial one, under God, for the fulfilment of his purposes and the extension of his kingdom. The conviction of this course is that the Spirit of God takes the Word of God to accomplish the work of God, and that there is no plan B.

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. We heard in the video that:

Preaching matters because the God of the Bible is a speaking God.

Preaching matters because Christ himself is its supreme focus.

Preaching matters because everyone everywhere needs to hear.

Do you agree? Why or why not? Why do you think preaching matters?

Be ready to deal with a variety of responses to these rather general opening questions. Do not be surprised if there is some scepticism about preaching, but welcome the trainees' comments and say that you are glad they have chosen the course. All that is needed is an open mind to consider the teaching and a willingness to experiment with its practice.

Typical responses may include:

- ❑ If we have good study groups, or one-to-one mentoring, we don't really need preaching. Its only advantage would be reaching more people at one time, but the methodology may be less effective.
- ❑ Preaching matters because you can influence a large number of people to launch out with God and trust the Spirit to lead them.
- ❑ Preaching matters because it confirms the pastor as the church leader. He is able to set the agenda for the church in his preaching and to steer its course from the pulpit.
- ❑ Preaching is monologue, which is too boring for the younger generation who are in the interactive culture of social media.

Don't feel you have to answer any of these or other suggestions. The course will try to do that. But this opening question will provide you with a useful guide as to where your trainees are coming from and will help you in leading them more effectively through the Units.

2. Paul charges us to “preach the Word”, to “proclaim” Christ, to “preach Christ crucified”. What do you think these phrases mean for the content and style of our preaching?

Draw out the following:

- ❑ The verbs all imply authoritative verbal communication, by a messenger sent by his superior to communicate accurately the message he has been given. In the 3 quotes in the question: “preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2) is *kerusso*; “proclaim Christ” (Col. 1:28) is *katangelo* (announce); and “preach Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 1:23) is again *kerusso* of which the noun form *kerugma* (preaching) is used in 1 Cor. 1:21. This is the most common New Testament verb for preaching.
- ❑ The authority lies not in the messenger, but in the message because of its origin.
- ❑ The message is God's Word, it is about his Son Jesus Christ, and it centres on Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

So our preaching has to be Word-centred and Christ-centred if it is to be faithful to the original revelation as given in the inspired and inerrant Word of God. The content is not decided by us but by God in his work of self-revelation.

This does not mean that we have to bolt references to Jesus on to every point of our sermons, whatever the content or context. We shall be dealing with this issue in later Units, but encourage the trainees at this point to realise that there will always be a way in which each part of Scripture will ultimately point to Jesus, because the primary focus of Scripture is God's revelation of himself, and in the Lord Jesus Christ we see the fulness and completion of that revelation.

The manner of our preaching is therefore to be assured, yet humble. Because we are commissioned with God's Word, as his ambassadors and heralds, we are not to be hesitant or overly compliant in our approach. "This is what the Lord is saying" should be the description of all preaching and therefore its content has to be thoroughly biblical. Our conviction is that when God's Word is faithfully preached, God's voice is authentically heard.

3. If our preaching is "to mediate meetings with God"¹, what factors should we bear in mind both in the preparation and delivery of the sermon?

Look for the following points:

- Above all we want to commend our Lord Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine, to those we address, as the only Saviour, Lord, and God.
- We shall often need to make an introduction to God for our hearers, many of whom may not know him as yet.
- We would need to be sure that what we say is accurate to both the content and the tone of the original Bible passage we are preaching.
- We would have to take sufficient time to ensure that we have more than a superficial acquaintance with the text. We shall need to listen hard, to read and re-read, if we are to represent God's Word faithfully. Otherwise, we may lead our hearers astray.
- We shall be dependent on God the Holy Spirit to grant illumination and understanding to ourselves and our hearers, which means we shall be praying all through our preparation that the preaching of God's Word will bring light and life. Equally we shall be dependent on the Spirit's enabling to give us clear thinking and effective delivery in the process of preaching, that the wind of God may be in the sails of our sermon.

Note that the idea of God meeting the "felt needs" of the people may emerge as an answer to this question. We will be dealing with this issue in later Units. But encourage the trainees to see that felt needs, while totally real, are not necessarily our greatest needs. Our "meetings with God" through preaching will provide God's perspective on what our deepest needs really are and how he alone can meet them.

4. Ask someone to read aloud Colossians 1:24–29. This passage is a valuable window into the mind and heart of the great missionary apostle to the Gentiles. How does this text help us to identify the content, method, and aim of Paul's preaching?

Try to draw out the following emphases:

Verse 24 introduces us to a Paul who is very upbeat about his ministry, although he is in prison. Paul is following in Christ's footsteps of suffering, but the focus is the benefit that it will bring to Christ's body, the church. To fulfil what Christ asks of us and to build up the church will energise our ministry also.

Verse 25 makes it clear that the content of Paul's preaching is "to make the word of God fully known", which does not mean to preach through the whole Bible (though that would be no bad thing) but to proclaim the fulness or completeness of God's revelation.

Verses 26–27 explore the implications of this. What Paul preaches was a "mystery", something that human ability could never have discerned. This message had to be revealed, and the preacher's task is to pass it on with clarity. There are 3 elements to "the riches of the glory of this mystery", now an open secret, namely that the Gentiles are included, that the Christ has come and now dwells within his people, and that the future is bright with the hope of glory.

Verse 28 is the climax. "Him" is in the emphatic position. We are preachers of Christ, as he is revealed in all the Scriptures. Paul's method of preaching includes indicating where ideas and actions are wrong; it involves warning. But it is also positive in its teaching of the truth, for as 2:9 makes clear "in Christ the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily". (Note that the term "proclaim Christ" is often equated with evangelism, but it is wider than that narrow definition.)

¹ J.I. Packer, *Truth and Power* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 120.

Verse 29 shows us that this is hard work. “Toil” and “struggle” are both verbs of demanding physical activity, requiring strength and energy. But the source of the energy for the preacher, as for his message content, is supernatural; it is divine. Preaching is God’s idea—his divinely endowed means by which his revelation is passed from generation to generation.

Note that a question may arise as to whether this is unique to Paul. It might be worth mentioning that the apostles were given by God as teachers of the church and therefore their priorities should also be ours.

Dick Lucas writes on this passage:

What is the word of God that Paul proclaimed? What is the open secret? What are the gloriously rich treasures which the apostle gives his life to preach? His answer is extraordinary in its conciseness, yet so characteristic of this letter. The whole matter can be put in a word, or rather a name; *him we proclaim*.²

5. Ask someone to read aloud Romans 10:11–17. Split into small groups of two or three to answer this question together: “What is the apostle’s concern in this text, where does his confidence lie, and do you personally share his concern and confidence?” Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

It is worth pointing out the context: Paul wants his fellow Israelites to come to salvation through faith in Jesus as the Messiah (v. 1). Since Christ has come, the way to salvation is now the same for everyone, Jew or Gentile (v. 12).

Do not allow the trainees to use commentaries (including those available online) at this stage. They need to do the thinking for themselves, as far as they can.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

The stress is on “everyone” (vv. 11–13), so all people throughout the world need to hear the good news. Paul’s prelude prepares the way for the reader to recognise how vitally important preaching is. For anyone to call on God, they need to believe in him. But they cannot believe if they have not heard; someone must be sent to preach to them (vv. 14–16). The process is clearly spelt out in verse 17: “So faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ”.

As John Stott puts it:

There could be no hearers without heralds... The essence of Paul’s argument is seen if we put his six verbs in the opposite order: Christ sends heralds; heralds preach; people hear; hearers believe; believers call; and those who call are saved. And the relentless logic of Paul’s case...is felt most forcibly when the stages are stated negatively and each is seen to be essential to the next. Thus, unless some people are commissioned for the task, there will be no gospel preachers; unless the gospel is preached, sinners will not hear Christ’s message and voice; unless they hear him, they will not believe the truths of his death and resurrection; unless they believe these truths, they will not call on him; and unless they call on his name, they will not be saved.³

Paul’s confidence lies in the preaching of Christ. This is God’s appointed means for anyone to hear, understand and put their faith in him. The word of Christ is the content which generates saving faith, and so Paul’s concern is that as many as possible should hear the preached Word and have the opportunity to respond in faith.

HOME STUDY AND PRAYER NOTES FOR LEADERS

The Home Studies consist of exercises in exegesis, readings, quotations, and videos to help delve deeper into the topic of the Unit. It will take about an hour to complete each Home Study.

Ask the trainees to turn to the Home Study in their Trainee Manual (as in your Leader Manual the Home Study is identified by being in its own separate window). Briefly describe the purpose of the Home Study to your trainees. Emphasise the importance of this home preparation.

Pray at the end of your time together.

² R.C. Lucas, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Colossians and Philemon* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 1980), 73.

³ John Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Romans* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1994), 286–287.

1. Read and think through the words of Jesus in John 5:39–47. Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders in Jerusalem, whose hostility has grown to such a degree that they are now “seeking all the more to kill him” (5:18). Notice especially what he says keeps people from believing his words, with regard to the Scriptures and also with regard to their own motivation. How does this teaching develop your understanding of why preaching matters?
2. Reflect on the following extracts from different foundational statements of Christian faith, both historical and contemporary. What do they affirm about the nature of Scripture and how does this help you to be committed to preach the Word?

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.⁴

1562, Article 6 of the 39 Articles of the Church of England

The Bible, as originally given, is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behaviour.⁵

Contemporary statement of faith, UCCF

Of the Holy Scriptures ...it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his Church; and afterwards...to commit the same wholly unto writing; which maketh the holy Scripture to be most necessary... The authority of the holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God... The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.⁶

1647, The Westminster Confession of Faith

Revelation God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.⁷

Contemporary confessional statement, The Gospel Coalition

3. Write down 3 things you want to think and pray about with regard to your preaching at the start of this Module.

⁴ source: <http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/articles-of-religion.aspx>

⁵ source: <http://www.uccf.org.uk/about/doctrinal-basis.htm>

⁶ G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2004), 1, 7, 24.

⁷ source: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/confessional-statement>



UNIT 2

WHAT IS EXPOSITORY PREACHING?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that God will give each of you a deeper confidence in his authoritative, divinely inspired, eternally significant Word.

Ask the trainees to write down their answer to the following question (which also appears in the Trainee Manual):

How would you define preaching?

Give them only 60 seconds to do this. Explain that they will get a chance to revise and enhance the definition later in the Unit, and then introduce the video by saying:

Our topic for this Unit—What is Expository Preaching?—will help us to begin to define what preaching is and how we should think about it.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 2 Talk 1

At this point we are laying essential foundations on which later Units will build regarding practical methodologies. Therefore, in the questions and discussion which follow the video, you will want to encourage your trainees to focus on these major principles. Challenge them as to how convinced they are personally about the main points made in the video, which define expository preaching.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. We heard in the video that:

Expository preaching is preaching that is driven by the Bible; that recognises that the Bible drives the content, structure, and scope of the preaching; and it is also preaching that conveys God's unchanging truth through the preacher's individual personality.

What are the likely effects for preachers and churches when the Bible is not in the driving seat?

Some of the effects include:

- ❖ Other authorities will take over. This may be the approval of the congregation, so that the preacher becomes too concerned about being accepted and popular and therefore does not preach the warnings and corrections of Scripture because they seem too "negative". But the church that is weak on teaching about sin and repentance can quickly degenerate into a religious social club, or an ingrown therapeutic community. This can downgrade the cross, the assurance of justification by faith and the transforming dynamic of Christ's resurrection life.

- ❑ Instead of submitting to the Bible as God’s Word, congregations will tend to elevate their own understanding and reasoning, or their own experiences, according to the norms of their culture, above the authority of what the Scriptures teach. They will pay greater attention to the current patterns and priorities of their denomination and its leaders than to God and his Word.
- ❑ There will be a growing tendency towards division, because the focal point of all true unity—Christ revealed in the Scriptures—has been sidelined in favour of human substituted authority and practice. This will tend to become either dictatorial and overbearing, or to degenerate into everyone being their own authority and doing what is right in their own eyes. Both are disastrous for a church’s unity of heart and purpose. Where the Bible does not drive the preaching, it will not govern the church.

2. Sometimes it is claimed that having the Bible in the driving seat and allowing it to govern and direct everything that is said during the preaching is equivalent to Bibliolatry, worshipping the Bible, even displacing Christ from his proper headship in his church. How would you answer this claim?

Ask: “How does God govern his church?” Answer: “He mediates his authority by his Holy Spirit through his Word.”

Jesus himself taught his disciples to look to the Holy Spirit to enable them to recall his teaching and to enable their proclamation of it, both in content and purpose. Christ was committed to his Word as the means by which he would govern the apostles, and through them the church. Consider the testimony of Christ himself:

- ❑ John 6:63: “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh (i.e. the preacher unaided by the Spirit) is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”
- ❑ John 14:26: “The Holy Spirit...will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” This is the promise given to the apostles by which their authorship of the New Testament is established.

So the written Scripture effectively becomes the Word through which Jesus governs his people. The church is founded on the apostles and prophets (both revelatory ministries; see Eph. 2:20, 3:5 and 4:11). Note that they are called “ministers of the Word” in Luke 1:2, interestingly not of the Lord (which is what we would have said!). Later in Luke 8:21 and 11:28 Jesus defines the relationship of others towards him in terms of their reaction to the Word of God.

There are many claims in the churches today to have received a word or a picture from the Lord, but there is only one dependable source of Christ’s Word, which is the same for everybody everywhere—the living and enduring Word of the Scriptures. We can only be sure of hearing Christ’s Word through the apostolic testimony. We do not worship the Bible, but it is the divinely appointed means by which we come to worship the true Christ (as revealed in Scripture) and not a figment of our own imagination.

J.I. Packer writes on this subject:

Others tell us the final authority for Christians is not Scripture, but Christ, whom we must regard as standing apart from Scripture and above it. He is its Judge; and we, as His disciples, must judge Scripture by Him, receiving only what is in harmony with His life and teaching and rejecting all that is not. But who is this Christ, the Judge of Scripture? Not the Christ of the New Testament and of history. That Christ does not judge Scripture; He obeys it and fulfils it. By word and deed He endorses the authority of the whole of it. Certainly, He is the final authority for Christians; that is precisely why Christians are bound to acknowledge the authority of Scripture. Christ teaches them to do so... It is sometimes said that to treat the Bible as the infallible word of God is idolatry. If Christ was an idolater, and if following His teaching is idolatry, the accusation may stand; not, however, otherwise. But to worship a Christ who did not receive Scripture as God’s unerring word, nor require His followers to do so, would seem to be idolatry in the strictest sense.¹

¹ J.I. Packer, “Fundamentalism” and the Word of God (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1958), 61–62.

3. We heard in the video that:

The Spirit of God takes the Word of God to do the work of God.

What does this mean for us as preachers?

Look for the following points:

- We can have confidence that the Spirit who inspired the original writers can also illuminate the Word to the readers and impact the hearers. So we should pray that the Spirit would be with us and with those who hear.
- Since the Spirit takes the “*Word of God*” to do his work—we want to preach the living and enduring Word and place the Word of God firmly in the driving seat.
- We should expect things to happen through our preaching. As God’s voice is heard through our proclamation of what the Bible text says, the Holy Spirit will challenge us and enable change in all our lives, in response to God’s revelation. The preacher’s task is hugely demanding, since he stands as God’s representative before the congregation. But because the Word gives the content and the Spirit the enabling for our preaching, it is also very motivating. We work hard and pray fervently trusting that God will always do his work in human lives when the Bible is faithfully preached.
- Trusting in the Word and the Spirit liberates us from any idea that we have to do God’s work for him, through our own abilities or performance. We are set free to be agents whom God may use, rather than being overly concerned about the impression we are making or what others are thinking about us.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Introduce the video by saying:

In the second video for this Unit our focus moves from the preaching to the preacher: from *What is Expository Preaching?* to *Who is the Expository Preacher?*

Watch Unit 2 Talk 2

Make sure that your trainees see the personal, practical challenges of the Unit, especially in terms of what it means to be a servant of Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

4. What will it mean for you to be “content to be nothing more than a servant of Jesus”? What does it mean practically and for our preaching to be “servants of Christ”?

Look for the following points:

- We do not seek to elevate ourselves or our ministries, but are content to be messengers. Our task is to draw attention to Christ. So we are not to become overlords of the flock, but to follow the example of the Good Shepherd in his servant role of love and compassion.
- We use the resources which God has given us (Scripture) to do the work he tells us to do (preaching) in the way he has instructed us (dependent on his Spirit). We are not to imagine that we are self-employed and so drift into becoming self-reliant in any of these areas.
- We recognise that only God gives the growth. We each have different contexts of service, but our common task is to be fellow workers, not isolated operators, yet all under the same authority of the one Lord. We need constantly to remind ourselves that a servant is not greater than his master.
- We have an account to give to our master for our stewardship of the time, gifts and resources which he grants to us. We can be confident in both the message and our own servant role if we humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand. We remember that he judges not by what the world calls “success”, but by faithfulness.

5. Recognising that we are all different personalities, how do you feel the principles we have discovered in this Unit should relate to a preacher who has a very confident personality and who finds it easy to speak in public, and, by contrast, one who is by nature shy and retiring?

Phillips Brooks' phrase applies to both: "Preaching is the bringing of truth through personality."²

Each preacher is uniquely shaped and equipped by the Lord for the particular task and context he has for us. Thinking of preaching as truth through personality is so helpful because it guarantees a unique place for each individual preacher, yet always under the absolute control of the biblical text—in the driving seat.

The danger for the confident man is to imagine that he is more important than he is and so to set about building an "empire" with his ministry revolving around himself and his personal charisma, rather than around God and his Word. He can easily forget that the gifts he has are just that—gifts, for which he is entirely dependent upon God. So he needs to make faithfulness to Christ and his Word the touchstone of his ministry, not human approval or outward success ratings.

The danger for the shy man is that he will retire into his shell and not trust the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word to enable him to be bold. He will need to continually pray to the Lord for the courage to rebuke what is wrong and set standards according to the priorities of the Bible, because his personality may easily be overridden, which will result in the authority of God's Word, through this messenger, being downgraded in the minds of his hearers.

6. Watch Clip 2A: "How would you define preaching?" Discuss the definitions in the clip and having done so look again at your definition from the start of this Unit and revise or enhance it accordingly. You may want to share your definition aloud.

Discuss the clip with your trainees and then allow them a minute to revise their definition from the start of this Unit.

7. Ask someone to read aloud 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5. Split into small groups of two or three to answer this question together: "If we only had this passage in the whole Bible about the role of the Scriptures, what would we learn about their nature and purpose?" Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Do not allow the trainees to use commentaries (including those available online) at this stage. They need to do the thinking for themselves, as far as they can.

Allow 5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback. You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

Draw out the following:

- What Timothy learned as a boy is still true for Timothy the man. The Scriptures are unchanging and trustworthy, whatever the outward changes may be in our cultural contexts. This is how the Bible gives unique stability to our thought and practice.
- They are the "sacred" writings. This is the root OT idea of otherness, separateness, eventually holiness (as in Holy Bible). It means that the Scriptures are set apart as God's unique possession, to do his will and serve his glory. By definition, no other literature has this origin or content. The Scriptures are unique among all the literature of the world, at every time and in every culture, because they alone are the living and enduring Word of God.

² Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1907), 5.

- ⚡ Through them we discover that salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.
- ⚡ They have the power to lead one to salvation.
- ⚡ They are “breathed out” by God, who articulates his divine thoughts in human words. Scripture comes from God himself. This gives it a unique authority. In fact, every text of Scripture has divine authority.
- ⚡ They are useful for teaching—they convict of sin, correct, train in righteousness. They change us and help us to grow in godliness.
- ⚡ They provide all the necessary training and equipment for the pastor-teacher to be thoroughly competent to do his work. Scripture is sufficient for understanding God’s truth and how it is to be worked out in our lives.
- ⚡ They must be preached always and everywhere, whether it seems to be an appropriate time or not.
- ⚡ Their message will be rejected by many who refuse its rebukes and challenges, preferring their own thoughts to God’s truth. But the faithful expositor must keep doing this good work, whatever the personal cost may be.

HOME STUDY AND PRAYER NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use the question below to discuss the previous Home Study.

In the previous Home Study we read in the confessional statement of the Gospel Coalition on the subject of revelation:

This God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words... The Bible is to be believed, as God’s instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God’s command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God’s pledge, in all that it promises.³

What does this statement affirm about the nature of Scripture and what our response should be?

We need to recognise the multipurpose nature of the Scriptures. Because every word is breathed out by God, we have a text, as originally given in its inspiration, which is inerrant. (Note that this does not automatically apply to any and every translation.) The consistency of the earliest biblical manuscripts and the fact that the text has been remarkably well preserved give us strong reason for belief in the sufficiency of Scripture. The revelation is complete, with everything we need for life and godliness. With the completion of the sixty-six books, the canon or rule of Scripture was sealed and finished.

Remind your trainees to complete the Home Study and pray at the end of your time together.

³ The Gospel Coalition Confessional Statement, source: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/confessional-statement>

1. Read Psalm 19:7–11 several times, noting the different descriptions of God’s Word. What does each of these add to our understanding of the value of the Scriptures? What benefits flow from God’s Word and how does this knowledge motivate you in your preaching?

2. In his chapter on the sufficiency of Scripture, Wayne Grudem writes:

We can define the sufficiency of Scripture as follows: *The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.*

This definition emphasizes that it is in Scripture alone that we are to search for God’s words to us. It also reminds us that God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us, and that we should rejoice in the great revelation that he has given us and be content with it.⁴

The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture has several practical applications to our Christian lives. The following list is intended to be helpful but not exhaustive.

1. The sufficiency of Scripture should encourage us as we try to discover what God would have us to *think* (about a particular doctrinal issue) or to *do* (in a particular situation). We should be encouraged that *everything* God wants to tell us about that question is to be found in Scripture. This does not mean that the Bible answers all the questions that we might think up, for “The secret things belong to the LORD our God” (Deut. 29:29). But it does mean that when we are facing a problem of genuine importance to our Christian life, we can approach Scripture with the confidence that from it God will provide us with guidance for that problem...
2. The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture and that we are to consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture...
3. The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that God does not require us to believe anything about himself or his redemptive work that is not found in Scripture...
4. The sufficiency of Scripture shows us that no modern revelations from God are to be placed on a level equal to Scripture in authority...
5. With regard to living the Christian life, the sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that nothing is sin that is not forbidden by Scripture either explicitly or by implication...
6. The sufficiency of Scripture also tells us that nothing is required of us by God that is not commanded in Scripture either explicitly or by implication...
7. The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that in our doctrinal and ethical teaching we should emphasize what Scripture emphasizes and be content with what God has told us in Scripture.⁵

Read through this definition and practical applications carefully (if possible please read the entire chapter from Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology* entitled “The Four Characteristics of Scripture: (4) Sufficiency”). Underline anything you find helpful and write down anything that you need to change or think about further in relation to your preaching.

3. Watch Clip 2B: “How would you define preaching?” Think about the definitions in the clip and having done so look again at your definition from the start of this Unit and revise or enhance it accordingly.

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), 127. ⁵ Ibid., 131–134.



UNIT 3

WHAT ARE THE BIBLICAL PATTERNS?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that God would grant you and your trainees a deeper understanding of the Bible and how to proclaim it.

Ask someone to read aloud Acts 2:14–41. (As this is a longer reading, you may want to split the text up between several trainees to read aloud.)

As the passage is read, ask the trainees to focus on how the text introduces Jesus.

Introduce the video by saying:

We'll be looking at that passage in the second of the videos for this Unit. Both our videos today seek to explore the consistent pattern of God's revelation in the Scriptures.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 3 Talk 1

This Unit consists of 2 videos that teach about the consistent pattern of God's revelation in the Scriptures beginning with the Old Testament and climaxing with Jesus in the first video, and then showing the same patterns in the apostolic ministry of the New Testament in the second video.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

Note that there are 6 passages to work through in the following 2 questions, which will take some time, but it will be well spent in reinforcing the teaching of the principles in this Unit. Set aside a restricted amount of time for each example and don't allow your trainees to become diverted by peripheral questions or speculation about the details involved in the selected passages.

1. We heard in the video that:

The Bible is God's book about God before it is his book about us. So, we look first for God's activity in every passage we preach and then for his explanation, which will feed into the application of the text to the contemporary world. This means that our proclamation focuses eyes on what God is doing and opens ears to what he is saying, in the text, rather than putting ourselves and our concerns at the centre of the picture.

In other words the pattern is: Revelation = Event + Explanation. Split into small groups of two or three. Look together at 1 Corinthians 15:3, Mark 1:9–11 and Luke 5:17–26 and work through how the pattern (Revelation = Event + Explanation) applies to each text. Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Allow 5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups.

Tackle these texts with your trainees one by one. For each text, prompt them by asking:

“What is the event?”

“What is the explanation?”

“When we put the two together (event and explanation) what do they reveal about God?”

1 Corinthians 15:3

“Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures.” “Christ died” is a real **event** in space-time history. But the verse also **explains** the purpose (“for our sins”) without which the death could appear either as a pointless self-martyrdom, or a huge mistake (but since it happened “in accordance with the Scriptures”, it was planned long before). Both these elements (event and explanation) are needed for the **revelation** of the cross to be made clear. The cross of Christ is central to the Bible’s story and to our faith.

Mark 1:9–11

Again there is a real **event**: Jesus is baptized by John, the heavens open and the Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove. But the meaning of the event requires a direct word of **explanation**, in this case from heaven itself: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased”. The joining of two Old Testament quotations about “my Son” who is God’s conquering King of all (see Psalm 2:6–9) and “my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights” who is God’s agent of salvation through suffering (see Isaiah 42:1) gives the divine explanation that Old Testament Messianic prophecy is now being fulfilled in Jesus. The event and its explanation together constitute the **revelation**—that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

Luke 5:17–26

This is an **event**, with two parts: the first is visible—the paralytic walks; the second is invisible—his sins are forgiven. The event requires the explanation, which dominates the passage. “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” is a proper inference. But how can a paralysed man be made to walk except by divine power. What is seen (the healing) is evidence of the divine power, which can also do what is not seen (the forgiveness of sins). And both can only be **explained** by the identity of the man who heals—that he is “the Son of Man”, the figure in Daniel 7:13–14 to whom is given everlasting power and dominion. So the event together with its explanation leads to the **revelation** of the true identity of Jesus.

2. Moving to the Old Testament, how can we identify the same pattern in some of the main events of Old Testament history: the conquest of the land in Joshua 21:43–45, the start of the monarchy in 1 Samuel 8:7–11, and after the return from exile in Nehemiah 9:30–31. Again, split into small groups of two or three to work through how the pattern (Revelation = Event + Explanation) applies to each text. Choose a different spokesperson to contribute comments and ideas to the larger group when we come back together.

Allow 5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

Again, tackle these examples with your trainees one by one. For each text, prompt them by asking:

“What is the event?”

“What is the explanation?”

“When we put the two together (event and explanation) what do they reveal about God?”

Joshua 21:43–45

God gave Israel the land (the **event**) as he had promised (the **explanation**). Now the people are to live in the land in the light of God’s **revealed** power and faithfulness. They were to respond by being committed to faith in God’s promises and obedience to his instruction.

1 Samuel 8:7–11

“So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king”, and these words **explained** to them exactly what their request entailed and meant for them as God’s people, and the potential abuses, the tyranny and corruption, which God foresaw and warned them about, even as he granted them their desire for a king (the **event**). The **revelation** is that because God is good and gracious in his kingly rule, to substitute a

human ruler in his place will always bring about disastrous results. God's warnings about the future dangers of the monarchy should have led to a response of turning back to God as their King, in repentance and renewed faith. But, in fact, God's Word was rejected and they refused to obey (see 8:19–20).

Nehemiah 9:30–31

After the return from exile, the people of Jerusalem are being led in a prayer of repentance, which reveals to them the character of their gracious and powerful Lord. Much of the language is taken from earlier parts of the Old Testament. In this part of the prayer the **events** are the exile to Babylon and the preceding forbearance of God, through the prophetic warnings (v. 30). The **explanation** (vv. 30b–31) is that the exile was God's judgment on their sin and rebellion, though in his mercy he did not destroy them. The **revelation** is that he is gracious and merciful (v. 31b), to which the people are rightly responding in repentance, seeking God's mercy and worshipping him as their Lord.

This frequently repeated pattern is what marks out Israel as the unique people of God in the Old Testament. They hear explanation and instruction through the words of the Lord, as he unfolds the events by which he reveals himself, and they are called to respond to the revelation and to live in faith and obedience, in the light of what God reveals. And for us as the New Testament church the same pattern applies. Everyone who hears the words of Jesus and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on the rock (Matthew 7:24). Because the Bible is God's book about God, first and foremost, our preaching must be God-centred, not just in content but in method too.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Before watching the video, ask someone to read aloud Acts 13:16–41 and Acts 17:22–31. (As these are longer readings you may want to split the text up between several trainees to read aloud.) Remind the trainees that in Acts 13 Paul is speaking in the synagogue in Antioch, and in Acts 17 to the Gentiles in Athens. As the passages are read, encourage the trainees to focus especially on how the texts introduce Jesus.

Watch Unit 3 Talk 2

The second video highlights three passages from Acts, in which we see the apostles putting into practice the proclamation pattern (Revelation = Event + Explanation) which the Old Testament established and which comes to its finest fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

3. In the video we followed the pattern of the apostolic God-centred preaching, majoring on what God has done and said, as the ground for how the hearers are to respond. We heard in the video that the pattern is:

- Recounting the Events
- Relating the Explanation
- Responding to the Revelation

Ask someone to read aloud Acts 17:1–4. Trace the pattern in this passage.

Prompt them by asking:

“What are the events which Paul recounts?”

“How does Paul explain the events?”

“What is the revelation to which the Thessalonians are asked to respond?”

When Paul arrives in Thessalonica, he goes first to the Jewish synagogue as was his custom. Paul's proclamation of the gospel follows the pattern we observed throughout the video. The **events** on which Paul concentrates are those by which he seeks to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, especially focusing on his death and resurrection. As he did before in Antioch, he begins by explaining, reasoning and arguing from the Scriptures which they accepted as authoritative. Paul is not expecting to use a "one off, hit-and-run" approach. He is prepared to take time to explain and leave his hearers time to be persuaded. What is so helpful to us are the verbs which Luke uses to describe how Paul handled those Scriptures in his **explanation**—he tells us that Paul "reasoned" from the Old Testament, "explaining and proving" what Jesus had done, which was the content of his proclamation and concluding with the **revelation** to which they were to respond: "This Jesus...is the Christ".

It is possible, of course, to teach the contents and events of the Bible much as one might any academic text, conveying its contents as information and events as historical realities, but going no further, or deeper. Preaching must have Bible teaching at its heart, but we can never be content with an explanation and a response which is merely information. Preaching is always designed to bring about change in the hearers, an alignment of our values and behaviour to what God requires. This is what we observe Paul doing throughout the book of Acts. Responding to God's truth in Christ by repentance and faith is not only the way in to the Christian life; it is also the way on.

4. In describing Paul's ministry of proclamation, Acts 17–19 uses the following phrases:

In Thessalonica:

"reasoned...from the Scriptures"; 17:2

"explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead"; 17:3

In Berea:

"the word of God was proclaimed"; 17:13

In Athens:

"reasoned in the synagogue... and in the market-place every day"; 17:17

"preaching Jesus and the resurrection"; 17:18

In Corinth:

"reasoned...and tried to persuade"; 18:4

"testifying...that the Christ was Jesus"; 18:5

"teaching the Word of God"; 18:11

In Ephesus:

"spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading...about the kingdom of God"; 19:8

"reasoning daily... so that all the residents...heard the word of the Lord"; 19:9–10

Look at the different verbs used. What will be the practical implications for our preaching if we are going to follow the model they describe?

Reinforce the apostolic model by doing this brief word-study of the vocabulary used in Acts 17–19 to describe the ministry of proclamation (preaching).

Note:

- the **content** of Paul's preaching—Scripture, the Word of God, Jesus and the resurrection, the kingdom of God;
- his **method**—he appealed to the mind (reasoning, explaining, proving); he testified to the identity of Jesus as the Christ; as herald, he proclaimed Christ's kingship, which implies submission to his rule;
- his **manner**—he was persuasive, not coercive, and dialogical in his approach.

You may want to prompt the trainees by asking:

"What was the content of Paul's preaching?"

"What was Paul's method?"

"What was Paul's manner?"

5. Revisit Paul's proclamations in Acts 13:16–41 (in the synagogue in Antioch) and Acts 17:22–31 (to the Gentiles in Athens). Split into small groups. Identify the similarities between these two proclamations. Identify the differences due to the different occasions and audiences. What can we learn from these proclamations for our own preaching of the gospel? Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

It is worth pointing out that the accounts of the proclamations are fragmentary; so conclusions must be carefully drawn.

Do not allow the trainees to use commentaries (including those available online) at this stage. They need to do the thinking for themselves, as far as they can.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

Look for the following points:

- In both cases Paul begins with history, in order to paint a background with which the hearers can identify. Both focus on what God has done in the past to bring his hearers to their present situation. In the Antioch synagogue this is a summary of God's covenant dealings with Israel (13:16–22). With the Gentiles in the Areopagus this is a summary of God's dealings with the whole human race in creation, preservation, and providence (17:24–28).
- Paul deals in both cases with the rebellion exhibited towards God, by Israel in rejecting the promised Saviour, Jesus, leading to his execution (13:23, 27–29), and by the Gentile world in its idolatrous worship of the creation and its manufacture of multiple deities (17:23, 29).
- The focus in both is on God's judgment and the consequent need for rescue.
- Jesus (although unnamed in Athens) is "the man" appointed by God to be both the rescuer and the judge, and God has accredited him through his resurrection from the dead (13:30–33, 38 and 17:31–32).
- The response required is repentance (17:30) as the indication of faith (13:40–41).
- The essential message is the same for both Jews and Gentiles, but their different backgrounds, cultural presuppositions and levels of knowledge dictate different emphases in the preaching and determine which parts of the gospel need extra explanation in each context.

John Stott writes in *The Message of Acts*:

What is immediately clear is that, like the apostles, we must focus on Jesus Christ... It is impossible to preach the gospel without proclaiming Christ... he is *historical* (he really lived, died, rose and ascended in the arena of history), *theological* (his life, death, resurrection and ascension all have saving significance) and *contemporary* (he lives and reigns to bestow salvation on those who respond to him). Thus the apostles told the same story of Jesus at three levels—as historical events (witnessed by their own eyes), as having theological significance (interpreted by the Scriptures), and as contemporary message (confronting men and women with the necessity of decision). We have the same responsibility today to tell the story of Jesus as fact, doctrine and gospel.¹

¹ John Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Acts* (Nottingham, England: IVP, 1990), 79–81.

6. Dr Timothy Keller writes in his *Studies in the Book of Acts*:

Paul does not “change” the gospel, but only “adapts it”. And this is the very key to effective ministry. If we never adapt the gospel, we will be completely ineffective. Like Paul, we must deeply discern the particular beliefs, hopes, aspirations, fears, prejudices, and wisdom of others or our gospel communication will seriously miss the mark. But if we change or lose the basics of the gospel, we will also be completely ineffective. Like Paul, we must not shrink from declaring that there is only one true God, that every single person (no matter how nice and good) is sinfully trying to be his or her own Lord and Savior, that Jesus was really divine and human, that he died in our place and was raised bodily from the dead. These basic truths and “events” are non-negotiable. To alter or omit any of them leads to the loss of distinctive Christianity.²

How should this quote and the patterns defined in this Unit change the way you will now approach preaching?

You may want to ask one of the trainees to read aloud the quote in the question above.

Depending on your trainees you may also want to split them into smaller groups of 2 or 3 to answer this question and pray for one another in light of their answers.

HOME STUDY AND PRAYER NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use the question below to discuss the previous Home Study.

In the previous Home Study we read part of Wayne Grudem’s chapter on the sufficiency of Scripture, in which he states that Scripture “contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly”.³ How should a growing conviction about the sufficiency of Scripture shape our lives and our preaching?

Some discussion issues to pursue might include:

- How much do we depend directly on Scripture, in contrast to other Christians’ advice or Christian books we read? In preaching preparation how much time do we spend in the commentaries, or listening to downloads, compared with firsthand immersion in the Bible text?
- What areas of contemporary debate or confusion challenge this conviction? When the Bible does not directly address the precise detail of a specific contemporary issue, we need to move through the current cultural expression or circumstances, to the deeper, underlying moral or theological principles beneath it, which will be unchanging.
- Why, if the Bible is sufficient for trust and obedience, do we fail to obey it so often? Explore areas of motivation. We may know what should be done, but our sinful natures and idolatries incline us away from wanting to do it. Recall the warning of Psalm 95 not to harden our hearts by hearing, but failing to act.

Remind your trainees to complete the Home Study and pray at the end of your time together.

² Timothy Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts, Leaders Guide* (published by Timothy Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2005), 121.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Nottingham: IVP, 2007), 127.

1. In the three proclamations we looked at in the book of Acts, we saw the pattern of: Recounting the Events, Relating the Explanation, and Responding to the Revelation. Identify this same pattern in Acts 4:8–12. What can we learn from this presentation for our own preaching?

2. Read the sermon by C.H. Spurgeon entitled *Repentance and Remission*, downloadable from www.spurgeongems.org. It is sermon #3224, on the text of Luke 24:47. Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult. Note especially the opening paragraphs:

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:47.

THIS verse is among our Lord’s last words to His disciples just before He left them to return to Heaven. He wished to impress upon them the Truth of God that it was His purpose and desire that their lives should be devoted to the preaching of His Gospel among all nations upon the face of the earth. In Christ’s own words and throughout the New Testament, we find the greatest stress laid upon preaching. Preaching is the great battering ram that is to shake the gates of Hell! Preaching is God’s chief method of winning souls unto Himself—“for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” We cannot too often remind this age in which we live of this Truth, for this is a time in which it is supposed that rites and ceremonies, human learning and literature and I know not what else, may very properly be allowed to supplant the preaching of the Word! Yet our Lord has given no intimation of any change in His purpose and plan—on the contrary, His great commission is evidently intended to cover the whole of this present dispensation—“Go you, therefore, and teach (that is, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (that is, those who have been made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or, more properly, unto the end of the age). Amen.” So, until this dispensation is brought to a close by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, “repentance and remission of sins” are to “be preached in His name among all nations.”

First, let us consider THE SUBJECT OF OUR PREACHING as here stated by our Lord—“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.” So the first part of the subject is that repentance should be preached in the name of Jesus... What does this mean? First, it means that we are to preach repentance as the gift of God. Christ was exalted with His Father’s right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, “to give repentance” as well as “forgiveness of sins.” Wherever there is real sorrow for sin, wherever there is an honest determination, by God’s Grace, to cease from sin, wherever there is a complete change of mind with regard to sin—for that is what repentance means—that repentance has been produced by the Spirit of God and it is as much a gift of the Covenant of Grace as even the pardon which comes with it is! This is the repentance which we are to preach in Christ’s name... Further, to preach repentance in the name of Jesus also means that wherever there is real repentance, it is the token of the pardon of sin—not merely a hopeful sign, but the sure and Infallible sign of pardon. If any man’s heart is turned away from sin. If he prostrates himself in the dust before God because of his offenses. If he looks with true penitence to Christ upon the Cross, crying, “Lord, remember me,” “Lord, save me,” “God be merciful to me, a sinner”—it is not a question whether forgiveness may or may not be granted to him—it is a fact that he is already forgiven!...

Now, secondly, we are to think of THE AUDIENCE THAT IS TO BE ADDRESSED UPON THIS SUBJECT... Why is this Gospel to be preached among all nations? Well, first, because all nations need it! And then, because the Gospel is exactly suited to all nations. And further, because God has a chosen number in all nations who will receive the Word and be saved by it. And also because it shall be a witness against those in all nations who hear it but refuse to heed it. We also are to preach, not as unauthorized persons who hope that what we say may possibly prove to be true, but as those who are proclaiming Divine Truths and certainties on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!⁴

3. Watch Clip 3: “If you could give one piece of advice about preaching—what would it be?” Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

⁴ source: <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols55-57/chs3224.pdf>



UNIT 4

WHAT ARE THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that even as you identify the challenges of your culture, God would deepen your dependence upon his Word and his Spirit.

Read the following aloud (or ask one of the trainees to do so; it also appears in the Trainee Manual) and then discuss briefly with your trainees:

In his *The Calling of the Ministry* (written over four-hundred years ago) the English Puritan, William Perkins, laments the fact that few men of ability were seeking the calling of the ministry and that of those who did, few deserved the name of messenger and interpreter. He traces this to the “contempt” with which the preacher is treated, because his task is to reveal sin and unmask hypocrisy. But it is also due, Perkins noted, to the difficulty of the work, since speaking to people on behalf of God is truly an overwhelming and awesome responsibility. Perkins wrote:

To stand in God’s presence...to be God’s mouth to his people, and the people’s to God; to be the interpreter of the eternal law of the Old Testament and the everlasting gospel of the New...to take the care and charge of souls—these considerations overwhelm the consciences of men who approach the sacred seat of the preacher with reverence and not with rashness.¹

We live at a very different time, but do you think Perkins’ words are applicable to our contemporary context? Discuss.

Allow 2–3 minutes discussion and then introduce the video by saying:

In this video we consider the challenges facing preachers today who seek to be “God’s mouth to his people” and we learn some strategies for being faithful messengers and interpreters, with authentic and engaging ministries.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. We heard in the video of 7 strategies to use and remember as we face our contemporary challenges:

- Determine that prayer will be foundational.
- Develop a robust doctrine of Scripture.
- Deepen your dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
- Designate the building up of your hearers as your priority.
- Don’t be diverted into celebrity models of ministry.
- Dialogue with the world and its contemporary culture.
- Develop authenticity in both life and teaching.

¹ William Perkins from *The Calling of the Ministry* in *The Art of Prophesying and The Calling of the Ministry* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 90.

Split into small groups of two or three and each share your answer to this question with your group: “Which of these is the most difficult for you personally and why?” Pray for one another in light of your answers.

Allow 6–10 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and pray.

Given the personal nature of this question it may not be appropriate to ask for public feedback, but do suggest to your trainees that as individuals they might like to inform you of their answers, so that you as the trainer will have a better idea of their current position and the issues they are grappling with.

2. We heard in the video that:

We need to be biblical critics of our own culture and especially of our own presuppositions and attitudes. In this way we shall be able to help our hearers to see where the culture needs to be challenged, when commended and where its evil has to be exposed.

What are the specific challenges you face in your particular cultural setting and what will be the best strategy to help you face them?

Try to keep the discussion on point rather than allowing it to become a series of negative comments and griping about the culture.

Point the trainees back to the 7 strategies from the video as a means of facing their challenges. Ask them which strategy or strategies will help them with the particular challenge they mention.

The following points may be helpful:

- ❖ The biblical preacher must live in both the Word and the real world. When it comes to the prevailing secular culture, we do need to keep abreast of its thought-forms, its fashions and developments. Especially we need to be aware of the current philosophical and social trends in the academic world, which will soon be seeping into and reshaping popular culture. But, although we will need to be in constant dialogue with the world and its contemporary culture, the culture must never be in the driving seat. That place is reserved for the Word of God alone. We must allow the Word to teach us what we need to know about the world, and then apply its truth to the particular cultural context in which we live and minister.
- ❖ Human beings in rebellion will express their scepticism towards God’s Word in their denials and denunciations. The world will insist that the Bible should answer its questions. But when we read the Bible, we realise that God has a very different set of questions to ask the world, and that attention to those issues will reshape entirely the world’s view.
- ❖ A preacher who is conditioned by the culture will find himself asking whether there is some way in which he might persuade his sceptical hearers to accept God, or at least to give God a chance. But the Bible’s question is whether there is any way in which the living God might be persuaded to accept me. That is a very different perspective and requires a very different sermon.
- ❖ Congregations may want the preacher to provide promises for the future in this world which the Bible does not actually promise until the new creation. We need to be convinced that this is making blessings into idols, worshipping the gifts rather than the giver, serving the creaturely rather than the Creator. So we must ask the Lord for courage and winsomeness to expose false promises for what they are.
- ❖ You may face a tendency among your hearers to reject your teaching because of your (comparative) youth or inexperience. Different cultures have different prejudices either in favour of age or youth. We all hope to grow in ability and experience, but what matters most is not our stage in life, but our faithfulness to the Scriptures, our dependence on the Holy Spirit, and our commitment to live out what we preach. This will set an example to the believers, in the way that Paul exhorted Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12.
- ❖ Many cultures attribute their dissension and division to the effects of religion. Counteract this by “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15), but also by pointing out that truth essentially does divide from what is untruthful and that trying to please everyone by compromise will only confuse, mislead or destroy faith.

3. Read Acts 6:2–4. Split into small groups of two or three and each share your answer to this question with your group: “What will it mean for you personally to devote yourself to prayer and to the ministry of the Word—what will you need to give up, re-think, or delegate in order to make this a priority?”

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups.

Given the personal nature of this question it may not be appropriate to ask for public feedback, but ask them to feed back on the general principles, for example:

- We cannot micromanage everything that happens in our church.
- Our schedules must reflect these biblical priorities. We should book our study and prayer times into our weekly/monthly schedules. We should share with our fellow leaders how we are using our time and encourage them to keep us accountable.
- We need to identify people with suitable skills to help and support us. We also need a long-term strategy to produce church members of sufficient spiritual enabling and maturity for us to be able to delegate to them with confidence. We will need to prioritise potential leaders and invest time teaching them on a one-to-one or small group basis.
- In Acts, this issue arose as a product of growth (see verse 1). We must learn to distinguish between the urgent and the important in our allocation of time and energy, so that as our church grows we have an expandable pattern of leadership and pastoral care in place.
- It is easy to lose our bearings and to end up being merely a purveyor of Christianised therapies, mechanistic ministry programmes, or just entertaining anecdotal pep talks, rather than proclaiming the whole counsel of God—so the ministry of the Word and prayer must be our priority.

4. In his book, *The Trouble with the Church*, the German preacher Helmut Thielicke explored why the Reformation view of preaching as “the source and spring of Christian faith and life”² was no longer current in postwar Europe. Central to his enquiry were two questions:

Does the preacher really live “in the house of the dogmas he proclaims”?³

Does the rest of his life (out of the pulpit and the church) relate to that house?

His sad conclusion was that many a preacher no longer lived “in the house of his own preaching”.⁴ The problem, Thielicke observed, is that the preacher no longer believes, personally and passionately, the truth that he preaches; that the preacher has become bored with his work, and so the congregation are soon bored by his preaching. Discuss. Why is it important that we closely watch our lives as well as our doctrine?

Try to keep the discussion on point rather than allowing it to become a series of negative comments and criticisms of others.

Some points to mention or draw out:

- Preaching is a communication from heart to heart, so the preacher’s conviction must animate his message. Otherwise he will be mouthing words with which he may not even agree. That is hypocrisy.
- If the preacher doesn’t deeply believe his message, why should anyone else? Why should they even listen?
- What the world most needs is not more slick gospel salesmen, but more ‘free samples’. The daily lives of our congregations will either tell for or against Christ and they will learn their pattern from the preaching.
- Sometimes a preacher may be beset with doubts about his own beliefs—intellectual or personal. It is essential that these are not repressed or hidden away because they will surface eventually. They need to be dealt with by reading, by discussion with others with greater experience, and by prayer and study of the Word.

² Helmut Thielicke, *The Trouble with the Church*, translated by John W. Doberstein (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), 1. ³ Ibid., 5. ⁴ Ibid., 6.

Thielicke writes:

What the preacher says in the pulpit must have a relationship to what fills the rest of his existence. Sure, he is a nice, pleasant, affable fellow. But I ask you, when does anything about Christ come out in his ordinary human conversation?... So we ask, does he really live in his doctrinal house?... Does he do his thinking, feeling, and willing in it? Or are the pulpit and his study outside of this world, separated from the pleasant normalities of his existence?... The question is...whether he quenches his own thirst with the Bible, just as he satisfied the thirst of his intellectual and human interests in the theatre or in association with his friends. If I see a breach, if I see no connections, between his Christian and his human existence—so argues the average person consciously or unconsciously—then I am inclined to accept the conclusion that he himself is not living in the house of his own preaching, but has settled down somewhere beside it, and that therefore the center of gravity in his life lies elsewhere.⁵

5. Ask someone to read aloud 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10. Split into small groups of two or three to answer this question together: “What were the responses to Paul’s ministry in Thessalonica and what produced such responses?” Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Do not allow the trainees to use commentaries (including those available online) at this stage. They need to do the thinking for themselves, as far as they can.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

Some notes on the text:

Verses 2 and 3 involve Paul thanking God for a faith that leads to work, a love that labours, and a hope that promotes endurance. These are all marks of genuine Christian conversion.

Verse 4 stresses that the salvation of the Thessalonian believers was entirely God’s work. He chose them and he empowered the messengers, both in what they said and in how they lived (v. 5). So it is God who is to be given all thanks and praise for the existence of the church in Thessalonica (v. 2), not the messengers.

Verse 5 indicates that the gospel has to be presented in words. Deep conviction, in both preacher and hearer, is only produced by the power of the Holy Spirit. The responses of verse 3 are evidence of verse 4, because only God’s Spirit can produce such fundamental spiritual change. This verse also stresses that the trustworthiness of the message was confirmed by the quality and character of the messengers’ lives.

Verse 6 shows that a further sign of the Spirit’s work was their joyful acceptance of and commitment to the gospel even though it meant suffering for them.

Verses 7 and 8 indicate that this authentic church is sounding out the gospel into their whole area. Other believers recognise that the Thessalonians’ changed lives and their commitment to making the gospel known is in genuine response to God’s life-changing message.

Verses 9 and 10 sum up this model response to the preaching of the gospel. Note the three verbs—you turned, to serve, and to wait. The idols are rejected, the true and living God is served, and their expectation is of Christ’s return (compare faith, love, and hope in verse 3). This can only be explained as a sovereign work of God in their lives. We must be praying for the same grace to be active as we preach the same message.

Our particular cultural challenges will be different, but in meeting them we need to follow Paul’s example of having confidence that God will use his gospel to transform lives. With Paul we need to be praising God that this is still evidenced in people turning from idols to serve the living and true God, in the eternal focus and future hope of such believers, and also in the joy which is experienced even in suffering as we live out the gospel in our time and place.

⁵ Ibid., 5–6.

Use the question below to discuss the previous Home Study.

In the previous Home Study you were asked to identify the biblical pattern we observed in Unit 3 (Recounting the Events; Relating the Explanation; Responding to the Revelation) in the passage Acts 4:8–12. Share your answers aloud.

Ask a few of your trainees, who are willing, to contribute their answers and write them on a board so the others can compare and contrast them. You might also like to share the following answer with them:

The **event** is the miraculous healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple, recorded in Acts 3:1–10 and described in this passage by Peter as a “good deed” (4:9). The **explanation** is the power of the crucified and resurrected Jesus, who is the cornerstone of God’s new building (4:10–11). This **revelation** requires a response—rejection of Jesus must become acceptance that he truly is God’s only appointed means of human salvation (4:12).

Remind your trainees to complete the Home Study and pray at the end of your time together.

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:1–7 several times. As you reflect on the challenges your culture presents, how does this passage encourage you to keep persevering? Consider the resource for the task (v. 1 and v. 7), the essence of our responsibility (v. 2), the three pictures of priorities and what each teaches (vv. 3–6).
2. Listen to the talk by D.A. Carson *The What and Why of Expository Preaching*, downloadable from <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/the-what-and-why-of-expository-preaching>. This will help to reinforce what we have been learning in the Units so far. Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult. Note especially the following headings from that talk, as well as the final quote taken from his chapter “Preaching that Understands the World”:

Preaching is verbal oral communication of which at least the following things are true:

1. Its content is God’s gracious and special self-disclosure; his revelation...that means its content is the Bible, as its focus is Christ.
2. It is biblical truth mediated through human personality.
3. Its immediate purpose is to inform, persuade, appeal, invite a response, encourage, rebuke, instruct in righteousness. More generally put, to elicit an appropriate human response to the God whose revelation is its content.
4. Its ultimate goal is the glory of God and the calling forth and edification of the church.
5. It has an inescapable heraldic element.

Expository preaching:

1. It is preaching subject matter which emerges directly and demonstrably from a passage or passages of Scripture.
2. It is not simply running commentary on the text.
3. It is not necessarily preaching through a book or large parts of a book; although that is the most common form of it.
4. The length of the passage is exceedingly variable.
5. It is preaching which, however dependent it may be for its content on the text or texts at hand, draws attention to inner-canonical connections that inexorably move to Jesus Christ.
6. In many instances, expository preaching can be usefully combined with other forms within the one sermon.

Why then establish expository preaching as primary?:

1. It is the method least likely to stray too far from revelation.
2. Properly done, and especially if the selections of Scripture you choose to expound are reasonably extensive, expository preaching teaches people how to read their Bibles.
3. It gives confidence to the preacher and authorizes the sermon.
4. If truly applied...it meets the need for relevance without letting the clamour for relevance dictate the message.
5. It not only enables but compels preachers to deal with tough questions.
6. It enables the preacher most systematically to expound the whole counsel of God.⁶

Notwithstanding...the critical importance of a fundamentally biblical understanding of the world, it is essential for preachers to integrate with their general Christian understanding of the world an acute and accurate understanding of the particular culture where they minister... [W]hile trying to understand a culture, we must still be trying to think biblically and theologically. This means we shall be obliged to decide what cultural elements are largely neutral, what are to be opposed and reformed by the gospel, what are the fruit of common grace and therefore to be espoused and cherished... And if for reasons of communication a preacher *begins* with the self-perceived interests and needs of his people, sooner or later he must establish links between these and the Bible’s agenda, or he should stay out of the pulpit... The student of Scripture must try to understand the Bible on its own terms, within the cultures in which it was first given, and then learn to transport and apply its truth into his or her own world... We seek the Spirit’s help, while recognising that the burden of responsibility and privilege in heralding the gospel accurately and comprehensibly falls on us.⁷

3. Watch Clip 4: “If you could give one piece of advice about preaching—what would it be?” Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

⁶ D.A. Carson, *The What and Why of Expository Preaching*, delivered June 1, 2003 at Katoomba Christian Conference Centenary (Sydney, Australia). source: <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/the-what-and-why-of-expository-preaching>. The transcription is from this source.

⁷ D.A. Carson, *Preaching that Understands the World* in *When God’s Voice is Heard*, edited by Christopher Green and David Jackman (Leicester, UK: IVP, 2003), 154–157.



UNIT 5

HOW DOES THE PREACHER PREPARE?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that God would guide you as you consider how to prepare to preach his Word to his people.

Ask the trainees for a show of hands in answer to the following questions:

- ☒ Do you find it easier to preach from the Old Testament narratives or the New Testament epistles? Raise your hand for OT? For NT?
- ☒ How long approximately do you think it should take to prepare a sermon: 1–5 hours, 8–12 hours, or 20–30 hours? Raise your hand as I call out the numbers again.
- ☒ Do you think a sermon should contain appropriate illustrations? Raise your hand for yes. For no.
- ☒ Do you use written commentaries and/or online downloads? Raise your hand for books? For online?
- ☒ Raise your hand if you always find preaching preparation very easy.

This is a quick exercise to lead into the video. There is no need to discuss or comment on the trainees' reactions; but they may give you an idea as to where your trainees are coming from.

After this quick exercise introduce the video by saying:

In this video we are going to think about preaching preparation and the process by which a sermon is constructed. The video is entitled: *How Does the Preacher Prepare?*

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 5

The headings and main points in the video are listed below and in the *Trainee Manual* to aid note-taking.

Section 1

EXEGESIS

Understanding the Meaning of the Text

Read, read and read again.

Locate the text in its setting.

Divide up the text and make connections.

Explore the meaning of particular words or phrases.

Summarise the theme of the text in one sentence.

Section 2

EXPOSITION

Understanding the Significance of the Text

- 1 What is the author's purpose for his original audience?
- 2 Where does the original purpose parallel our contemporary context?
- 3 Where are the differences between then and now?
- 4 Are these differences about primary truths or secondary applications?
- 5 How do other Scriptures help us to see the significance of the text?
- 6 How would you summarise the aim of the text in one sentence?

Section 3

STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY

Applying the Message of the Text

Every sermon is a journey and the journey needs a map.

The sermon outline takes its shape from the main points of the text.

Try to express the main points didactically not just descriptively.

Teach the truth to the mind, the heart and the will.

Make sure the sermon includes practical application.

Section 4

SCRIPTING

Producing your Sermon on the Text

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. The video suggested an approach to preaching preparation. What did you find helpful or unhelpful about this approach?

Allow the trainees to mention any difficulties or issues they have. Try, however, to encourage them to see the following points:

- Because we are not preaching other men's thoughts, but God's living Word, we must try to understand as much as we can from the Lord, through the Bible text, before we go to any human authority or mentor. Commentaries, sermon downloads and other aids must always play a subsidiary role and never be used as a substitute for soaking our minds and hearts in God's Word of truth. Encourage your trainees only to use commentaries when they have done as much as they can of the work of exegesis on their own. The commentaries are there to cast light on the remaining difficulties or problems, and also to provide a check that our understanding of the text is not eccentric or distorted.
- We always need to set the text in its context, or we shall be in danger of distorting its meaning. We need to ask why it comes in this book, at this point, and reflect on its place in the whole Bible and the whole sweep of redemptive history.

- ❑ The author's original purpose in writing any specific text must shape our purpose in preaching it. We are not at liberty to impose our own ideas or favourite emphases upon it. We need to work with the text as God has given it, not only in its content, but also according to its pastoral intention.
- ❑ Though every text has a primary intended meaning and significance, there may be many different applications of its message to our own particular time and culture. This will give colour and relevance to the sermon. But we must be able to justify these from the text itself and not impose them from outside. They will always be secondary to the primary truth and do not have the same authority.
- ❑ Outlines of the main points of the sermon are vital for the logical flow of what we are saying, so that our hearers know where we are going, how we are getting there, and can see all the way through the sermon that the Bible is in the driving seat.
- ❑ Remember that this approach is not intended to make us all preach alike, but to enable each preacher to work hard at the text for himself, so as to be truly led by the Spirit of God who inspired it. Truly inspirational preaching is the fruit of the Spirit's work, through the Word, in the preacher's own heart as he prepares. It does not come when the preacher prepares superficially, or merely hopes that he will be "guided" to say whatever comes into his head when he stands up to preach.

You may want to remind the trainees that in this, as with all skills, practice develops competence. If they find the approach a little difficult at first—that is to be expected, so encourage them not to give up after the first couple of attempts. To develop as an effective preacher of the Word requires great patience and dedicated practice.

2. We heard in the video that:

The clear given meaning of a Bible text can develop many applications, but they all have to be tested by the contents of the text in its context. Because we are products of our generation and culture, we naturally tend to read our situation into the text and then impose our own ideas on it, so that a text has only the significance that we invest it with. But that is not the way the Bible interprets the Bible... What we must avoid, for example, is taking an Old Testament narrative, or prophecy, and imposing on it our own contemporary moral lessons, which were not the purpose of the original inspiration. The strongest line of connection and relevance will always be drawn from what God is teaching the readers about himself, which is, by definition, unchanging in its content.

“The story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) is primarily a call to be brave and to have faith in God as we face the giants of life. The narrative of Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35–41) tells us that he can calm the storms in our lives too. The feeding of the 5000 (Luke 9:12–17) is a call for us to share our provisions with others.” Discuss.

Tackle these examples with your trainees one by one. Get them to look up each passage so that they are working from the text and not from memory. Try to show how the careful reading of the text in its context directs us to the right application.

David and Goliath

Certainly David is a young shepherd boy, but this is not the main point about him in the text. In 1 Samuel 16:13 (just before this event) Samuel has anointed him to be king of Israel, following God's instructions, “and the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward” (ESV); “from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power” (NIV). So, he comes against Goliath as the Lord's anointed, empowered to win the victory for the soldiers of Israel, whose knees are knocking on the side-lines. God does not send the Israelites an example of bravery to follow; he sends them a rescuer. David is not a picture of us, but of Jesus, God's anointed conqueror, who has won the victory over all our enemies (sin, death and the devil) through his own triumph by his death and resurrection. Similarly, God does not send us an example; he sends us a Rescuer. Through the story of David and Goliath, God is teaching his readers that only he can provide a deliverer able to rescue them; and that he chooses and empowers his agent of salvation (whether David as the Lord's anointed or Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One) to win the victory which otherwise would be impossible.

Stilling the Storm

This is a real storm on a real lake, not a metaphorical one. This is a miracle of power over nature, as Jesus rebukes the wind and the sea, by a word, and there is instant calm. It is part of the sequence of events in the early chapters of Mark, all designed to answer the question of verse 41: “Who then is this...?” Only God can do such things; only God has power over nature (the Old Testament makes it clear that only God has power and authority over the wind and waves: see Psalms 65:5–7, 89:9 and 107:23–30). We should not get sidetracked into why the storm occurred, what happened to the other boats, why Jesus was asleep, etc.—that is all speculation. Also, we must not get diverted into a spiritual comfort homily about how Jesus can calm all the storms of life that we may face. The text is about Jesus first, not us. It concerns his identity, not our problems. Jesus’ miracle is teaching and pointing his followers to who he is—the Lord God who has power and authority over even nature itself. The application then is that we should recognise that Jesus is God and submit to his authority as our Lord.

Feeding the 5,000

Again this is a real physical miracle of nature. Jesus tells the disciples to give the hungry crowd something to eat (v. 13) but this only highlights their inability and impotence. This event has nothing to do with sharing our resources, but everything to do with us being dependent on God’s resources. In Exodus 16:2–12, God rained down bread from heaven (manna) for the Israelites to feed them in the wilderness, saying: “Then you will know that I am the Lord your God”. We know that this is the true identity of Jesus also, because he meets the people’s physical needs in the miraculous provision of the multiplied bread and fish, reflecting his fulfilment of the Old Testament promises of a Shepherd-King and Redeemer. Again this event is a revelation of who Jesus really is, as he does what no human being could ever accomplish. It also reveals his compassion, care and lavish provision (v. 17) for needy people. Jesus is again, through this miracle, teaching his followers who he is.

Note also that Jesus’ miracles look back to the world God created originally, to the Garden of Eden. Feeding miracles look back to when no one was hungry; healing miracles look back to when no one was blind or broken or sick; nature miracles (like the calming of the storm) look back to when there was total harmony between humanity and nature. But the miracles do not only look back; they also look ahead. They point forward to the new heaven and new earth. This means that we should not primarily think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order but as the restoration of the natural order. God did not originally design us to be sick, diseased, hungry, and poor. So Jesus’ miracles are a foretaste of the salvation that is coming, the restoration of all creation by the ruling power of God.¹

3. Split into small groups of two or three. Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together. Remembering that:

The *theme sentence* summarises in contemporary language the core content of the text, in faithfulness to its original meaning. It identifies what the essentials are, in other words—what must be preached from this text.

The *aim sentence* summarises the significance of the text in one sentence. It should reflect the original purpose of the text as it focuses on its on-going significance.

Look at John 2:1–11 and Exodus 17:1–7 and write a theme sentence and an aim sentence for each respectively.

Allow 5–7 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

John 2:1–11

The theme sentence needs to be controlled by the author’s intention in selecting this event (see John 20:31 where he states: “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”) which is highlighted in verse 11. Wrong theme sentences might talk about inviting Jesus into your marriage to transform its ordinary water into sparkling wine, or about God keeping the best to last (i.e. heaven). Don’t allow the immediate context of the wedding feast to distract your trainees from the main purpose of the passage. It is not about marriage or about Christ as the bridegroom.

¹ This quote is from the “Notes for Teachers on the Text” (written and developed from material by Timothy Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian Church) on the chapter *Filled Full!*, from *The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum* by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas, published by Zondervan.

This first miracle mirrors the miracle of creation (see John 1:3) and manifests the glory of God in the supernatural power of Jesus. When his “hour” does come (see verse 4), that glory will be fully revealed at the cross. There is also an Old Testament background to this incident, which underscores the manifestation of Jesus’ glory as the promised Messiah, or Christ. Passages like Amos 9:13–14, Jeremiah 31:12 and Isaiah 25:6–8 use the image of wine, in rich quality and plentiful quantity, as a picture typifying the fulness of joy in the coming of the Messianic kingdom.

Theme sentence: Jesus’ miracle is the first public sign of his divine nature as the glory of God is revealed and his disciples begin to believe.

Aim sentence: That our hearers would realise that only God could do such a thing, and come to believe with his disciples that this is the glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Exodus 17:1–7

The naming of a place is highly significant in Hebrew culture, so verse 7 is designed to shape our understanding of the passage. This is a story about testing and quarrelling (first five verses) and only one half verse (verse 6b) about the miracle. Wrong theme sentences will concentrate on the gracious gift of water in spite of Israel’s sin. It might run: “God will always provide for his people’s needs even though they have little faith” and then the aim sentence might be: “Trust God to provide even when your faith is weak”. This makes what is a warning passage into a comfort passage. But the rest of the Bible (see Psalm 95:7–11, Hebrews 3:7–4:2) doesn’t look at it that way.

You might want to point out to the trainees that our principle of the centrality of Christ in all the Scriptures is supported here by 1 Corinthians 10:1–5, which affirms that he is the Rock, who is the true source of the “spiritual drink” of life-giving water for his people. The rod of God’s judgment struck Jesus when he hung upon the cross, but from that death comes our life.

Theme sentence: While God goes on providing for the rescued Israelites whose hearts are demonstrating unbelief, he warns them of the dangers of not trusting him and questioning his goodness.

(Note that Hebrews 3:12—via Psalm 95:7–11—describes the people as having an “evil, unbelieving heart” and because the later revelation interprets the earlier—the phrase is applied here.)

Aim sentence: That we will learn the lessons Israel failed to learn and use every evidence of God’s providential care for us to deepen our trust in Christ, who is our Rock and our giver of life.

4. We heard in the video that:

Illustrations are good servants, but bad masters. They can open windows in the sermon, when they help people to understand the text more clearly, or apply it more helpfully. But, if they are merely “breathers” or amusing interludes they are ultimately counterproductive, whatever light relief they may seem to bring.

Consider two biblical examples of illustration: 1 Corinthians 9:24–25 and Psalm 42:1. Split into small groups again to explore how each one works to illuminate understanding and motivate response. Choose a different spokesperson to contribute comments and ideas to the larger group when we come back together. (You may also want to discuss—in your small group only—your own use of illustrations and give examples of why they worked or why they were unhelpful.)

Allow 5–7 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

In the feedback underline these points:

1 Corinthians 9:24–25

The illustration makes the point that you run a race in order to win and that there is only one winner. To achieve that goal and the passing fame and glory it brings, an athlete will exercise discipline and self-control in every part of life. The illustration is designed to motivate wholehearted devotion and sacrifice to win an imperishable crown, by drawing the parallels between the gospel worker and the athlete and between earthly fame and eternal glory.

The exhausted deer, in a dry and thirsty land, will die unless it finds the streams of water for which it pants. The illustration compares this with the soul's thirst for God. Longing to be satisfied with his living water is not just a pleasant option; it is a life-preserving necessity spiritually. The vivid visual image challenges our easy-going spirituality. Often we do not realise just how desperately we need our ever-gracious God.

We need to embody these explanatory and motivational qualities in our own contemporary illustrations of biblical truth.

5. Ask someone to read aloud Galatians 5:1–6. Split into small groups of two or three to answer this question together: “How could this passage be preached with relevance today, when in almost all cultures circumcision is not a religious issue?” Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Do not allow the trainees to use commentaries (including those available online) at this stage. They need to do the thinking for themselves, as far as they can.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

Some notes on the text:

Verse 1 summarises much of what Paul has so far taught in the letter about freedom in Christ, especially freedom from the yoke of the law (see 3:23) and the “worthless elementary principles of the world” (4:9). The danger is that any of us may leave our freedom in Christ for a renewed slavery.

Verses 2–3 use the specific example of circumcision, because of its Jewish background as the physical sign of membership of the covenant, as a “son of Abraham”. But it required full obedience to the law which proved impossible (see 2:15–16).

Verse 4 explains that to go back to seeking to add law-keeping as a means of making oneself acceptable to God (legalism) is to cut yourself off from Christ since you are saying that his sacrificial death, God's grace in the gospel, is not enough.

Verse 5 affirms that through faith in Christ we have received the Spirit (see 3:14) and we have the sure and certain hope of perfect imputed righteousness in the everlasting kingdom.

Verse 6 continues the argument that any additions to Christ and confidence in them count for nothing. We are called to a life of faith, which will work itself out in love, not the conflicts which develop inevitably when Christians put their confidence in something else other than Christ and Christ alone (see 5:14–15).

Application will then focus on contemporary ways in which we rely on criteria other than faith in Jesus for our justification—e.g. baptism, church attendance and membership, self-denial, good works, keeping the rules and regulations of our subculture, and all other ways of self-justification. These will deprive us of our freedom in Christ and lead to divisions between believers. “Stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery”—however plausible that yoke may sound.

As you are over halfway through the Module, use the question below to discuss what has been learned during the previous Units and Home Studies, and to assess your trainees' progress:

Given all you have learned so far (both in the Units and the Home Studies) what would you say is the difference between an expository lecture and expository preaching?

An expository lecture is primarily concerned to convey information about the content and meaning of the biblical text as it addresses the minds of the hearers. Its purpose is cognitive and may go no further, or deeper, than that. The purpose of the lecture is fulfilled as the students carry away the information in their minds and notebooks.

Expository preaching deals with the whole person—mind, heart and will. It begins where the lecture begins, with the mind; but as the preacher explains not just the meaning but the significance of the text (its implications and applications) he addresses the heart. Biblically, this is not the seat of the emotions, but the control-centre of the whole personality. This is where God's message will either be received, as the Holy Spirit softens the hearer's heart, or rejected, as the heart hardens. So, as the whole person is engaged in receiving and assimilating God's Word, the will becomes involved. The hearer asks: "What must I do?" and is then motivated and energised to put the preached Word into practice in life. Preaching is never merely conveying information; it is designed to change lives. As we heard in the Home Study: "Its immediate purpose is to inform, persuade, appeal, invite a response, encourage, rebuke, instruct in righteousness...to elicit an appropriate human response to the God whose revelation is its content. Its ultimate goal is the glory of God and the calling forth and edification of the church."²

Remind your trainees to complete the Home Study and pray at the end of your time together.

² D.A. Carson, *The What and Why of Expository Preaching*, delivered June 1, 2003 at Katoomba Christian Conference Centenary (Sydney, Australia). source: <http://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/the-what-and-why-of-expository-preaching>. The transcription is from this source.

1. Practise writing theme and aim sentences by working on an Old Testament narrative in 2 Kings 4:1–7 and a New Testament epistle in 2 Peter 1:3–8.

2. Reflect on the following extracts about preaching preparation. Underline anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

It does not answer the aim which God had in this institution, merely for men to have good commentaries and expositions on the Scripture, and other good books of divinity; because, although these may tend... to give a good doctrinal or speculative understanding of the word of God, yet they have not an equal tendency to impress them on men's hearts and affections. God hath appointed a particular and lively application of his word, in the preaching of it, as a fit means to affect sinners with the importance of religion, their own misery, the necessity of a remedy, and the glory and sufficiency of a remedy provided; to stir up the pure minds of the saints, quicken their affections by often bringing the great things of religion in their remembrance, and setting them in their proper colours, though they know them, and have been fully instructed in them already.³ Jonathan Edwards

It may perhaps be not unuseful to point out the manner in which these discourses are formed. As soon as the subject is chosen, the first inquiry is, *What is the principal scope and meaning of the text?* Let us suppose, for instance, that the text of Jer. xxxi. 18–20, were the subject. Upon examination, it appears to be a soliloquy of the Deity, expressing what He had seen to be the workings of Ephraim's mind, and declaring the emotions which the sight of his penitent child had occasioned within his own bosom. Having ascertained this, nothing is to be introduced into any part of the discourse, which does not, in some way or other, reflect light upon the main subject.⁴ Charles Simeon

The first thing you have to do is deal with the meaning of your text. At this point there is one golden rule, one absolute demand – honesty. You have to be honest with your text. I mean by that, that you do not go to a text just to pick out an idea which interests you and then deal with that idea yourself... You must take your text in its context... You must discover the meaning of the words and of the whole statement... Ask questions such as, Why did he say that? Why did he say it in this particular way? What is he getting at? What was his object and purpose? One of the first things a preacher has to learn is to talk to his texts. They talk to you, and you must talk to them.⁵ Martyn Lloyd-Jones

To begin with, we have to transport ourselves back, by the use of both our knowledge and our imagination, into the biblical writer's context, until we begin to think what he thought and feel what he felt. Our responsibility is not to assimilate his views to ours, by reading our opinions back into what he wrote, but to assimilate our views to his, by struggling to penetrate into his heart and mind... Read the text... Turn it over and over in your mind... Probe your text... To discover the text's meaning is of purely academic interest unless we go on to discern its message for today... But to search for its contemporary message without first wrestling with its original meaning is to attempt a forbidden short cut. It dishonours God (disregarding his chosen way of revealing himself in particular historical and cultural contexts), it misuses his Word (treating it like an almanac or book of magic spells) and it misleads his people (confusing them about how to interpret Scripture).⁶ John Stott

3. Watch Clip 5: "How do you prepare your sermons?" Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

³ Jonathan Edwards from *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections in The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (London: William Ball, 1839), 242.

⁴ Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae* (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1832), vi.

⁵ Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (London: Hodder, 1971), 198, 201.

⁶ John Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), 170, 205, 206.



UNIT 6

HOW DOES THE PREACHER DEVELOP?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that God will enable you to have an appetite to make progress in your preaching.

Ask the trainees to share aloud their answers to the following questions (which also appear in the Trainee Manual):

How do most people react to criticism?

How should we deal with criticism of our sermons?

Allow 2 minutes for the trainees to call out answers and then introduce the video by saying:

Sometimes we may receive negative criticism, which we shall need to weigh as we seek to develop our preaching. The video for this Unit looks at how to assess our sermons, as well as focusing on how we can develop personally as preachers of the Word.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. Recognise that you are not yet the finished article.

What does the Bible have to say on the subject of pride and humility? How does this affect us as preachers?

Below are some suggestions for Bible verses and the inferences to be drawn from them:

2 Chronicles 12:1

King Rehoboam's strength and success led him to be careless about continuing in submission to God by keeping his law. In Chronicles this inevitably leads to disastrous results for the king and the people.

2 Chronicles 26:16

After a wonderfully blessed reign, Uzziah makes a bad end due to pride. Not content with being king, he wishes also to be priest—incurring God's judgment on his arrogance—and ends up as a leper

Psalms 138:2–6

David celebrates who God is—his faithful love, his name (or nature) and his Word, his answers to prayer, his great glory. In the light of these eternal realities, God has regard for those who are lowly before him and who humble themselves, but he rejects the proud.

Proverbs 15:31–33 and 18:12

Humility is the outcome of listening to the Lord's wise instruction and not seeking to exalt or justify oneself by refusing to respond to his correction or reproof. A haughty heart will lead to destruction, but humility leads to honour from God. We are not to be seeking great things for ourselves, but resting content in God's will for us.

Luke 22:24–30

The disciples are seeking to position themselves for greatness in God's kingdom, even the night before Jesus' crucifixion. That is all future (vv. 29–30). The present call is to become the servant of all and to follow in Jesus' steps as he goes to the cross in the service of his people.

1 Corinthians 4:6–7

Paul warns the divided Corinthian church about being puffed up, one faction against another (see also 8:1). There is no room for boasting, because everything we have is God's gift to us and whatever task we are called to fulfil, "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (3:7).

1 Peter 5:5–6

Pride is not just a small misdemeanour, it is hated by God. He goes to war against it (see Prov. 3:34). Being the preacher never puts us above our congregation. Humility is the essence of all Christian discipleship (which leads to unity in love and the development of godly character in the church. For this general principle, review Eph. 4:1–3 and Col. 3:12–14.)

It is impossible for a preacher to bring glory to Christ and to himself at the same time. Our model is that of John the Baptist, the great herald of the Lord Jesus, who declared: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). We are handling the Word of eternal Truth, revealed by the unchanging sovereign ruler of the universe, the only true and living God. That sinners like us could be called to this high privilege and awesome responsibility should find us on our faces before him in worship and humility, if ever we are to speak to others in his name.

We shall constantly remember that ultimately we preach before the audience of one—God himself. If his Word is our message and his Spirit our enabling then his greater glory will indeed be our supreme concern. Our aim, then, will be not merely to preach well, but to glorify God.

2. Review and be self-critical.

Request feedback from others.

Why is it important to assess and be assessed when it comes to our sermons? What are the values of doing this and what are the possible drawbacks?

Discuss some of the points raised in the video with your trainees.

Please note that we provide a sample assessment on page 41. You may want to look at it briefly with your trainees.

Among the drawbacks are the possible discouragement of too much negative criticism too soon, which can have a paralysing, even destructive, effect. One can come out of too heavy a criticism so much wanting to do better and learn from the comments of others, but actually not knowing which way to go and then giving way to panic or depression. Even when assessing ourselves we should find something good to commend and not just concentrate on the deficiencies.

One of the great values of being assessed by fellow preachers is that they know the whole process of preparation to proclamation in the detail of personal experience, often repeated on a weekly basis. We need others who are facing the same challenges to help us to see where we are making progress and where we are stuck in a restrictive net.

3. Resolve to cultivate strong relationships across the congregation you serve.

Relate through pastoral interaction and care.

Reserve time to nurture your own personal relationships.

With all the demands placed on a preacher and with the priority we must have on "prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4) do we really have time to develop these "extra" relationships? Don't we just need to concentrate on our preaching? Discuss.

Look for the following points:

- ❖ The preacher's role biblically is that of the shepherd-teacher (Eph. 4:11). A shepherd has to know his flock, living his life among them and for them. The risen Lord's commission to Peter in John 21:15–17 sets the agenda: "Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep".
- ❖ Ministry is carried on within the fellowship of the body of Christ. The shepherd-teacher is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). We are all in the ministry, because we are members of the one body, so the option of just dropping in to preach but not to share fellowship is not biblical.
- ❖ We do need to concentrate on our preaching, but we must not use our preparation or study time as a retreat or escape from the privilege and responsibility of sharing our lives with our hearers.
- ❖ Paul tells the Thessalonians: "We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:8).
- ❖ The better we know and understand our congregations through personal friendship, rather than acting as a detached professional coach or trainer, the better we shall preach to their needs and help them to grow in godliness.
- ❖ Our teaching is fed by our pastoral work and our pastoral work is often generated by our preaching.

You may find it helpful to direct the trainees to the work and resources of the Christian Counselling and Education Foundation (CCEF) based in Philadelphia, USA. Their training courses, numerous publications, and perhaps especially their *Journal of Biblical Counselling* are rich resources for the preacher in the area of pastoral interaction and care. They will also be beneficial in developing our pastoral application in preaching.

4. Retain your evangelistic edge.

Should we preach differently to Christians and non-Christians? Are there parts of the Bible we should avoid when preaching evangelistically?

Don't be surprised by a variety of opinions.

There is a difference in emphases between a talk which is specifically designed to preach the gospel to unbelievers (for example at an evangelistic event hosted by a University) and one in which the main purpose is to build up believers (for example at a Christian conference). But much of the regular preaching in local churches will find a mixed congregation of believers, at many different levels of maturity and assurance, as well as non-believers. We shall preach the gospel to both and ought to have both in view every time.

The church needs constantly to hear the gospel, because it is not only the way *in* to the Christian life, but the way *on*, as well. But it must not be in a repetitive, predictable, entry-level approach each week. This will soon bore the hearers. If we preach Christ in all the Scriptures, we shall address both believers and those who are not yet believers whenever we preach. We must always preach with a view to the non-believer listening in, looking over our shoulder, as it were, at the biblical text.

Here we need to recognise the legitimate difference in our applications of the text to the believer and the unbeliever, so that it may be wise at times to address them separately in the preaching. For example: "Maybe you are not yet convinced about the Christian faith, but wondering whether this has anything to say to you. Well.....". Or to Christians: "This text has something to say to you whether you have been a Christian a long time, or just recently trusted Christ.....". We are preaching the same text with its same intended meaning and significance, but from that base can arise a variety of potential applications that we apply to our specific hearers.

Jesus taught that every part of the Old Testament testified to him and to the gospel (John 5:39, Luke 24:27; 44–47), so it is possible to preach Christ in every text of Scripture. But clearly there are some passages which lend themselves to a more straightforward gospel presentation than others—we will do well to major on them for special evangelistic occasions.

You may decide to watch Clip 6B: "Do you preach differently to Christians and non-Christians?" at this point rather than leaving it for the Home Study if you think it would help your trainees at this juncture.

5. Remember the essentials.

Split into small groups of two or three and let each member take 2 minutes to articulate the essentials of the gospel. In other words, give as succinct and clear a gospel presentation as you can in the time limit. For example, one of you can take the 2 minutes to sum up the gospel under the headings of creation, fall, redemption, restoration. After each of you has given a short gospel presentation, take 2 minutes to discuss and comment on the presentations.

Give the trainees about 10 minutes to complete this exercise.

There is no need for feedback to the whole group.

However if further discussion is needed or asked for, it would be useful to assess what has been put forward against some of the biblical summaries of the gospel such as John 3:16–21, 1 Thessalonians 1:9–11, and Titus 3:4–7.

It may also be helpful to review Ephesians 2:1–22, noting that Ephesians 2:1–10 concerns our individual Christian experience, while Ephesians 2:11–22 is focused on more corporate, community-based aspects.

6. Ask someone to read aloud Philippians 3:7–16. Split into small groups of two or three to answer this question together: “What developments can Paul see have already happened in his life, and what is he still hoping to achieve?” Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Do not allow the trainees to use commentaries (including those available online) at this stage. They need to do the thinking for themselves, as far as they can.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You will need to ask for contributions from each group and monitor the responses.

Some notes on the text:

Verse 7 has Paul using the word “gain”. The “gain” he is referring to is detailed in verses 5–6 in his Jewish pedigree and achievements. But he has come to count all this as “loss”, because it represented what he calls “confidence in the flesh” (vv. 3–4).

Verses 8–9 show that his understanding has developed to see that nothing is of value to him in comparison to knowing the Christ, Jesus the Saviour, as Lord and gaining Christ as his only ground of righteousness and acceptance with God, accessed only through faith. This is Paul’s present situation as a believer.

Verses 10–11 highlight what Paul is still hoping to achieve. Ultimately, this will be his resurrection body beyond the grave (v. 11). But at present his desire is to develop in his relational knowledge of Christ, by experiencing his risen and eternal life in the here and now. This is what will enable Paul to continue to share Christ’s sufferings, and not to give up and not to deny his Lord. Remember Paul is in prison (see 1:13).

Verses 12–14 show that there is a necessary development for Paul (and for us) in this life. Notice the repeated verb in verses 12 and 14: “I press on”. The object of this concentrated effort is the heavenly completion and fulfilment of the work of the gospel in him. That is the resurrection body (v. 11) and the prize of the upward call (v. 14).

Verses 15–16 tell us that this is not only Paul’s ambition, but one that we also should share. A mark of maturity is to live always in the light of eternity, as citizens of the eternal, heavenly kingdom even while we are here on earth. We must not go back, but stand firm in all that God has given us. However, there is still so much more to be experienced, so we too need to “press on”. If we are not developing and making progress we shall soon be slipping back.

As we think about our progress as preachers, let us realise that it is only a subsection of our total development as Christians, growing increasingly into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beyond any preaching skills we may develop, by God’s grace, it is greater likeness to Christ that matters most, and most glorifies God.

Use the question below to discuss the previous Home Study.

In the previous Home Study you wrote theme and aim sentences for an Old Testament narrative in 2 Kings 4:1–7 and a New Testament epistle in 2 Peter 1:3–8. Share your answers aloud.

Ask a few of your trainees, who are willing, to contribute their answers and write them on a board so the others can compare and contrast them. You might also like to share the following theme and aim sentences with them:

2 Kings 4:1–7

In context, this is the first of a series of incidents in Elisha's ministry which show that God's power "is triumphant over debt (4:1–7), death (4:8–37), drought (4:38–44; two episodes), disease (5:1–27), and difficulty (6:1–7). It is, in its own way, quite a sustained argument. One might compare the section to the battery of Jesus' miracles in Mark's Gospel (4:35 –5:43)... Originally...it was a revelation to the remnant in Israel that Yahweh, Israel's God and our God, is the help to the helpless."¹ It reveals that God is powerful and able to help.

Note also that there seems to be a repeated focus on Elisha as a "man of God" in these narratives (e.g. 4:7, 4:25, 4:42 and many more). So these narratives point forward to Christ since Elisha as a "man of God" is a picture of God's true prophetic messenger and representative. With the implication that we should listen.

Theme sentence: The all-powerful God reveals himself as Israel's faithful covenant helper and provider, as he rescues his believing and obedient servant from disaster.

Aim sentence: To listen carefully to God's Word and be obedient in detail, so that through our dependence on him, by faith, we may experience his grace.

2 Peter 1:3–8

Theme sentence: Because God's power and promises have provided all that we need in order to know him and experience his life in us, we must actively seek to grow in godliness and live fruitful lives.

Aim sentence: To make every effort, through faith in God's power and God's promises, to grow in our likeness to Christ.

Remind your trainees to complete the Home Study and pray at the end of your time together.

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2005), 53–54.

1. Read and consider Paul's testimony about his own ministry as recorded in 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12. What were his priorities in the short time he was founding the Thessalonian church? How did they relate to his own well-being, to the methodology of his preaching, and to the attitude he has towards his hearers? Think through whether you need to make changes in your assessment of your own ministry and your development as a preacher in the light of the apostle's example.

2. Reflect on the following extracts about God's concern for holiness in his ministers. Underline anything you find helpful and write down anything you need to develop or change in relation to your own life and ministry.

Do not forget the culture of the inner man—I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, His instrument—I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.²

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

Take heed to yourselves, lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that Gospel which you preach; and lest while you proclaim the necessity of a Savior to the world, your own hearts should neglect him, and you should miss of an interest in him and his saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish, while you call upon others to take heed of perishing, and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare their food... Can any reasonable man imagine that God should save men for offering salvation to others, while they refused it themselves; and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglected and abused?... God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves; first, that you be that which you persuade your hearers to be, and believe that which you persuade them daily to believe, and have heartily entertained that Christ and Spirit which you offer unto others.³

Richard Baxter

Whatever "call" a man may pretend to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry... [W]hen God calls us to ministerial labor we should endeavor to get grace that we may be strengthened into fitness for our position, and not be mere novices carried away by the temptations of Satan, to the injury of the church and our own ruin. We are to stand equipped with the whole armor of God, ready for feats of valor not expected of others: to us self-denial, self-forgetfulness, patience, perseverance, longsuffering, must be every-day virtues, and who is sufficient for these things? We had need live very near to God, if we would approve ourselves in our vocation... We must cultivate the highest degree of godliness because our work imperatively requires it. The labor of the Christian ministry is well performed in exact proportion to the vigor of our renewed nature. Our work is only well done when it is well with ourselves. As is the workman, such will the work be... Seek then strength from the Strong One, wisdom from the Wise One, in fact, all from the God of all.⁴

C.H. Spurgeon

3. Watch Clips 6A and 6B: "How do you deal with criticism?" and "Do you preach differently to Christians and non-Christians?" Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

² Robert Murray M'Cheyne quoted in Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoirs of McCheyne* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), 95.

³ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (London: Thomas Ward, 1656), 28.

⁴ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1996), 13, 19, 22.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT

This sample assessment is a tool which we can use for ourselves, but is probably best used by our listening group.

Much more detail is given than could be used in any one assessment—but it is designed to provide a range of features and issues, any of which could be profitably employed in a critique. It would be a good idea to select questions from each section according to the sermon heard and the stage of development of the preacher, but to cover all four sections at some point. Please pay special attention to the explanations beneath the questions, which will help to develop the use of this assessment in a positive and creative way.

SECTION 1: AIM AND STRUCTURE

Q1 Was there a clear structure to the sermon and if so what were the main points?

This is not designed to impose a particular homiletical pattern or method on the text, but to ask whether the Bible text was in the driving seat and whether the structure of the talk reflected the structure of the original passage with accuracy and clarity.

Q2 Was there a clear message? What was it?

The message should represent the contents of the passage, but presented in a more than merely informational way. A “message” is something deeper and more urgent. It is a communication through the mind, to the heart, to activate the will. So if preaching is designed to change lives, to make us more like the Lord Jesus, in what way did the sermon accomplish that?

Q3 Was the introduction engaging and appropriate? Did the sermon deliver what the introduction promised?

Q4 Was there a clear conclusion? How effective was it?

A strong conclusion will probably drive home the aim of the whole sermon and provide a strong motivation not only to receive and understand what the Bible text is saying, but to put its significance into practice in our lives.

SECTION 2: INTERPRETATION

Q1 Was the text properly understood and expounded? Did the main points of the text come across clearly?

Was the meaning of the text explained adequately, especially the more difficult parts? And as it was expounded, did the hearers have a sense of how it fitted together, its integrity and purpose?

Q2 Was the text set in its immediate and whole Bible context? How did that help to clarify the contents?

The clarification this brings is in understanding the significance of the passage; why it is an important Word of God to our minds and hearts so many centuries later.

Q3 Did the application arise from the text and reflect its main points?

This is an extension of Q2 to ensure that the method was not “impositional”, bringing in the application from the outside. Was there a smooth transition from the original hearers then to us now?

SECTION 3: PRESENTATION

Q1 Was the sermon clear and easy to follow?

Good preaching is intellectually stimulating but it is not complex or abstract. Were the main points stated clearly, explained lucidly and applied cogently? Were the connections between the sections of the sermon explained well, so that there was no loss of purpose or direction as the sermon unfolded?

Q2 Were illustrations used effectively to deepen understanding or focus application, or did they distract?

Q3 Was the talk compelling? What response was being asked for?

This is less about content and more about the preacher’s style. The preacher will be in the foreground and our attitude to him will determine our attitude to the whole talk.

Q4 How appropriate were the manner of the preacher, the verbal style, and use of language, as well as the pitch and pace and the body language of the preacher?

Each of these should be considered and commented upon, since any of these aspects can greatly heighten or diminish a sermon’s usefulness.

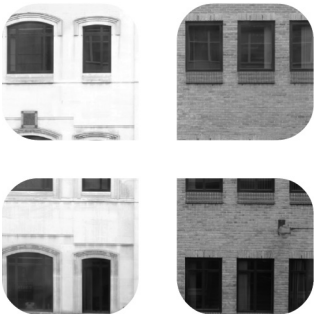
SECTION 4: GENERAL

Q1 What was the strongest positive quality of the sermon?

We all need that sort of encouragement so that we take away something from the critique which can act as a stimulus to work at developing our strengths as well as resolving our weaknesses.

Q2 What immediate steps could be taken to improve?

The ‘immediate steps’ stresses that we all need to start somewhere in developing what is a lifelong improvement programme. But it is a long haul—and if the criticisms are too many or too negative it can be confusing and discouraging. Identify an aspect or two that you can work on immediately, and go away hopeful and prayerful, with a desire to be faithful and above all dependent on God himself, who makes us grow.



UNIT 7

HOW DOES THE PREACHER CONNECT?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that God would show you new ways to connect with your hearers from the divinely-given examples within the Scriptures themselves.

Ask someone to read aloud 1 Corinthians 5:1–13.

Ask someone to read aloud Ephesians 4:17–5:2.

As the passages are read, ask the trainees to focus on the way Paul connects with his hearers.

Introduce the video by saying:

We will be looking at both those passages in our video for this Unit: *How Does the Preacher Connect?* Preaching is often likened to bridge-building. As preachers we have to cross the bridge of 2,000 plus years back to the biblical books in their context, and then bring their unchanging truths across the bridge to our own contemporary world in a way that connects with our hearers. This video will focus on that bridge-building so that we can learn how to be preachers that connect.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. We heard in the video that:

It's been said that contextualization is not about how to make Jesus relevant—it is about how to show the relevance of Jesus... What the text has to say about Christ will be the first and strongest connection from its original context to our own. He is the eternal, unchanging element of God's truth, then and now, whatever the differences in cultural setting may be... For our preaching to connect we must preach Christ as the supreme and sufficient answer to all the real-life issues, challenges and opportunities that are the everyday experience and context of our hearers... So, preach Christ in all the Scriptures; preach him as unique, supreme, central and sufficient; and preach the Word in such a way that motivation springs always and unfailingly from the gospel.

Discuss. What do you find surprising, encouraging or difficult about this?

Draw out the following points:

- ❖ The first and strongest line of authentic application to our present context will always be the unchanging nature of God as revealed in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. This means that everything God teaches us about himself in the passage remains the same now as it was to then, and finds its ultimate fullness of expression in and through Jesus.

- ❖ We also know that human nature has not changed. Superficially, our problems, challenges and opportunities may appear to be different from those of the original readers. Yet just below the surface, the root problems of humanity remain the same, as do the divine remedies which God has given to us in his Word. But making the connection demands time and hard work. The truth that is quarried from the text has to be related to the needs and life situations of today's hearers.
- ❖ Remember that the Bible is God's book about himself before it is his book about us. We tend to concentrate on our end of the connection process, but that is not the primary focus of the revelation. So we must view every passage of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, through the lens that is the person and work of the Lord Jesus.
- ❖ But, we are not to use the Old Testament as a springboard to get to the gospel by the quickest route. We must let each passage speak with its own authentic tone and content, and then apply the interpretative lens of Christ by asking: "What difference does it make to this passage that Christ has come?" So we are not trying to find where Jesus is "hiding" in every verse. We don't have to bring him in, but to recognise how this particular Scripture, within the sweep of the whole Bible narrative, distinctively points to Christ.

2. Read aloud the following quote taken from Dr. Timothy Keller's address: "Gospel-Centered Ministry":

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 Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing wither he went to create a new people of God. Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us. And when God said to Abraham, "Now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me," now we can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, "Now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love from us." Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserved, so we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us... Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant... Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends. 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 Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in. Jesus is 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 him.¹

Split into small groups of two or three and state as a principle the implications of this quote. Write down the same connections for the narratives of Joseph, Daniel, and Esther. Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Allow 5 minutes for the groups to discuss and then ask for feedback.

Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.²

Jesus is the true and better Daniel hated without cause, attacked by those in power, condemned by law in a miscarriage of justice, his enemies thought they had triumphed and yet he comes out of the grave and is vindicated.

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.³

¹ Dr. Timothy Keller's address, "Gospel-Centered Ministry," from the Gospel Coalition conference. source: <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2007/05/23/keller-gospel-centered-ministry/>. See also: <https://vimeo.com/23642755>. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid.

3. **Martyn Lloyd-Jones described preaching as “logic on fire”.⁴ Cotton Mather wrote of preaching:**

The office of the Christian Ministry...is an office and character that are deeply interested in the highest concerns of God’s perfections and glory. It is an employment that obliges a man to the closest attention, to find out the true mind of God in the holy Scriptures. It is a work in which we are called, to instruct the minds of men in the noblest knowledge, and teach them to adore and love God. The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher are to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men; to display in the most lively colours, and proclaim in the clearest language, the wonderful perfections, offices and grace of the Son of God.⁵

How is preaching “logic on fire”? How is the throne and dominion of God to be restored in the souls of men?

The logic is the content of God’s revealed Word and the fire is the passion of the Holy Spirit burning in the mind and heart. Our confidence is not in the act of preaching, but in the Word that is proclaimed and in the Spirit to make it live. Exegesis and homiletics on their own are of little use if there is not the experience of hearing a word from God for any needy soul. That’s the connection that will make the difference.

John Stott writes concerning this:

Some preachers serve out excellent theology from the pulpit, but it seems to have come out of the freezer. There is no warmth, no glow, no fire. Other pulpits catch fire all right, and threaten to set the church ablaze, but precious little theology goes with it. It is the combination that is almost irresistible in its power, namely theology on fire, passionate truth, eloquent reason.⁶

Remind the trainees of what was learned from Romans 10:14–16: people need to hear God’s good news, and the divinely-appointed way for them to hear is through preaching. So the preacher is sent to proclaim the gospel. The gospel restores the throne and dominion of God as dead souls are raised to newness of life in Christ.

The earliest Christian creed was that Jesus (the Rescuer) Christ (God’s anointed King) is Lord (he has supreme authority over all things). Declaration of that truth is the means God uses to bring men and women to acknowledge and embrace his rescue. Passages that shed light on this include Philippians 2:5–11, 2 Corinthians 4:5–6, and Romans 14:9.

There can be no separation between Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord. He is only able to be the Saviour because he is the Lord. The Rescuer is also the Ruler. So any preaching that offers the benefits of forgiveness and eternal life without requiring repentance and submission to Christ as Lord is making an unbiblical connection with the hearers.

Note that if the trainees find the descriptions in these quotes daunting, you may need to encourage them to remember that “the Spirit of God takes the Word of God to do the work of God”. Also point out to them that in the Timothy Keller quote (in the previous question) it is clear that God uses broken people to achieve his purposes.

4. **We learned in the video the pattern of Christian development as expounded by Paul in Ephesians 4:22–24: “put off your old self...be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and...put on the new self”. This he describes as learning Christ (4:20). The gospel changes our thinking and becomes the motivation for a radically different lifestyle. We heard that:**

The same pattern emerges in Paul’s dealing with unwholesome talk and malice [Eph. 4:29–32]. In every practical example the details are clear and uncompromising, the actions are equally specific and the theological motivation springs always and unfailingly from the gospel. This is how Paul connects with the real life situations facing the churches.

Split into small groups of two or three. Look at Ephesians 4:29–30 and 4:31–32 and identify the way Paul does this. Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Allow 3–5 minutes for the groups to do this and then ask for feedback.

⁴ Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (London: Hodder, 1971), 96.

⁵ Cotton Mather, *Student and Preacher* (London: Charles Dilly, 1781), iii–iv.

⁶ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 286.

Draw out the following:

Ephesians 4:29–30

Paul's fourth practical example (we looked at examples one through to three in the video) is to do with unwholesome talk. Destructive, corrupt speech is to be put off and replaced by speech which builds up and gives grace to those who hear. Undisciplined speech is a major cause of friction in church life so we need a strong gospel motivation to apply the corrective. Paul points his hearers to their mark of ownership, the sealing of the Spirit, which identifies them as God's own people. They are destined for the day of redemption, in all its fulness, so they are to live now in the light of eternity. To do otherwise would be to bring grief to God's gracious Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:31–32

Paul's fifth practical example is malice. The negativity of the attacks on others which characterised the old self are to be replaced by kindness, tender-heartedness and mutual forgiveness among God's people. And here the motivation could hardly be more gospel-centred and therefore could hardly be more passionate and persuasive: "as God in Christ forgave you".

5. Connective preaching needs to be grounded both in the truth of the Bible and in the realities of our contemporary world. What will be the consequences for our hearers, in their thinking and lifestyle, if our preaching majors only on one part of the connection process, if it is either all exegesis or all contemporary application?

If the sermon is all exegesis, it will mean that our hearers will have difficulty integrating their Christian discipleship with the whole rest of their life. As a result they will tend to reduce their Christian faith to an "add-on" to the more important issues of the every day, instead of its being foundational. Many Christians effectively live their lives in two different spheres; they compartmentalise the sacred and the secular. The sacred sphere is all that pertains to things of the soul, of eternity, of Christ and his gospel. The secular sphere is everything else—things of the body, the mind, work, and this current world. This can seem an attractive option. The more "spiritual" you are, the more time and energy you will invest in that sphere and leave the secular sphere to others. Unintentionally our preaching often complies with this by presenting a Christianity in which you "psych" yourself out of the secular into the sacred, for as long as you can—especially for a few hours on a Sunday. But the two circles of sacred and secular are not merely connected by Christ—in his incarnation, death and resurrection they are superimposed on each other. The resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ points all of us who are in him forward, to the new creation and the full restoration of our redeemed humanity in the image of God. And that means renewed minds, transformed relationships, everything—the sacred and the secular—increasingly under Christ's lordship here and now. Then we shall become increasingly in practice what we already are in God's purpose—the salt of the earth and the light of the world. So when we preach we must connect to the realities of contemporary life and not just theologize, or leave the truth floating in a sort of spiritual vacuum.

If the sermon is all contemporary application, we shall find that the questions and concerns of today's world will tend to drown out what God is actually saying in his Word. Instead of our thinking being driven by the application of the Bible text we shall be in danger of appropriating bits of the text either to support, or perhaps question, the cultural ideas we already have. The text is then no longer a free agent to instruct and challenge: it has been straightjacketed by the contemporary world. Of course, we must apply the text to our culture, but we must not allow the culture to become the interpretative or applicatory tool.

In our contemporary application we should focus on the different ages and stages of life represented in our congregations. As we draw out the implications of the text, we should relate them to the specifics of life represented by our hearers. What would this mean for a teenager or a student, a young single or a young married, new parents, busy middle-aged workers and homemakers, retirees, those who are ageing and frail? If one or two of these categories predominate in our congregation, then clearly more of the application will be geared to them. But if the church family is a wider spread, we should try to make our applications specific to each group over a period of time.

6. Ask someone to read aloud 1 Corinthians 6:1–11. Split into small groups of two or three and divide the passage under the following headings:

- Identify the problem clearly and uncompromisingly.
- State the action that must be taken.
- Give motivation for things to change.
- Relate the issue back to the revelation of the gospel.
- Support the argument with spiritual reasoning.

Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

Keep this discussion focused on identifying the 5 headings, and do not get distracted by the minutiae of the text.

Draw out the following:

The video traced Paul's pastoral methodology in 1 Corinthians 5 and a survey of 6:1–11 reveals a similar pattern. Paul **identifies the problem clearly and uncompromisingly** in verse 1, that Christians are resorting to pagan law courts to resolve their differences, and there is a strong rebuke concerning their ignorance of God's purposes and the shame they ought to feel if they are really saying that there is no one competent within the church to resolve these issues. Then Paul **states the obvious positive action:** that they should sort out their disputes among themselves. Paul continues with biblical, **gospel reasoning which is to be used as motivation** to resolve the problem. He tells them that they are already damaging the brotherhood of the cross by elevating one individual's personal rights or interests above those of others. Paul then **supports his argument with spiritual reasoning** as they are reminded of what they were when God rescued them. This is so that they can see again the contrast of the new life that is theirs, in Christ, and live according to the realities of the gospel—washed, sanctified and justified through Christ.

Just like Paul we should preach Christ in all the Scriptures; preach him as unique, supreme, central and sufficient; and preach the Word in such a way that motivation springs always and unfailingly from the gospel.

HOME STUDY AND PRAYER NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use the question below to discuss the previous Home Study.

Discuss what you discovered from the previous Home Study in 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12 about Paul's reflection on his ministry.

Draw out the following:

- ❖ God gave Paul strength and courage to preach the gospel at Thessalonica even after his shameful beating in Philippi (v. 2). This is not natural bravery, but divinely-given boldness.
- ❖ His motivation was to please God (v. 4), not personal kudos or manipulative techniques, not seeking human approval, but to be faithful to the message and to the one who sent him. He wasn't in it for what he could get out of it.
- ❖ He had great affection for the people to whom God sent him—gentle, like a nursing mother (v. 7), exhorting and encouraging like a faithful father (vv. 11–12)—and all the time working hard to support himself and living out a holy and righteous life before them (vv. 9–10). He had great affection for them, a real love and concern for their well being (v. 8).

Clearly, Paul connected with the people to whom he preached at a personal, relational level. He was not just addressing them from an emotional distance. Rather, his life became interleaved with theirs.

Remind your trainees to complete the Home Study and pray at the end of your time together.

1. Read and consider Joshua 23:1–16, 24:31 and Nehemiah 8:1–12, 9:1–3. What were Joshua and Ezra’s strategies for connecting the people of Israel with God’s will and purpose? What results did it produce? What can you learn and put into practice from these examples?

2. Reflect on the following extracts. Underline anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

For what ought sermons and doctrines be, except expositions of what Scripture contains? Truly, if we add the slightest nuance, it only results in corruption. Our Lord has left us a perfect doctrine in the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel. Thus, what ought we be preaching today? We ought not be adding anything new to the text, but ought to be providing a clearer exposition that would confirm our understanding of God’s teachings. That, I repeat, is the purpose of any sermon...we hear, that we might each be better instructed with respect to God’s will. That way, whenever we hear anything, we have a basis for inquiring whether God has spoken or not. By the same token, all who are charged with preaching God’s Word know that it is wrong of them to add anything of their own, or anything they might invent. They must be certain that what they preach is not of their own conjecture but derives from God, who guides them on the basis of his certain and infallible truth.⁷ John Calvin

Great is the profit to be derived from the...Scriptures and their assistance is sufficient for every need. Paul was pointing this out when he said, ‘Whatever things have been written have been written for our instruction, upon whom the final age of the world has come, that through the patience and the consolation afforded by the Scriptures we may have hope.’ (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11) The divine words, indeed, are a treasury containing every sort of remedy, so that, whether one needs to put down senseless pride, or...to trample on the love of riches, or to despise pain, or to cultivate cheerfulness and acquire patience—in them one may find in abundance the means to do so.⁸

John Chrysostom

I think the preacher is the one who learns most, and I think the word of God kept me going. The point of the parable of the sower is to say that in sowing the seed we shall be infinitely discouraged, and yet there will be a great harvest. So I learnt fairly early not to worry too much about discouragement, which I think is the chief temptation of a preacher, but to realise that the harvest is not only in this world but in the world to come. Then I was fortunate over the years in having the support of friends and some wonderful Christians in the congregation. But above all, a merciful God. I think you can only say that God who began a good work continues it. I’ve been sent back again and again to the word of God, to bore into it and to find out what God is really saying, and I think that’s spoken to me, as well as to other people.⁹ Dick Lucas

The power that is in the Gospel does not lie in the eloquence of the preacher, otherwise men would be the converters of souls. Nor does it lie in the preacher’s learning, otherwise it would consist in the wisdom of man... Again, the power which converts souls does not even lie in the pathos which the speaker may employ. Men may weep to the tragic muse in a theater as well as to prophetic strains in a chapel!... No, there is something more than this needed and where it is absent, all preaching is nothing! We might preach till our tongues rotted, till we should exhaust our lungs and die, but never a soul would be converted unless there were the mysterious power of the Holy Spirit going with it, changing the will of man!... We might as well preach to stone walls as preach to humanity unless the Holy Spirit is with the Word to give it power to convert the soul!¹⁰ ...[H]ave genuine faith in the Word of God, and in its power to save. Do not go up into the pulpit preaching the truth and saying, ‘I hope some good will come of it;’ but confidently believe it will not return void, but must work the eternal purpose of God... Speak boldly; for if you speak by the Holy Spirit, you cannot speak in vain.¹¹ C. H. Spurgeon

3. Watch Clip 7: “If you could give one piece of advice about preaching—what would it be?” Write down anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

⁷ John Calvin from his sermon on Micah 3:5–8 in *Sermons on the Book of Micah*, translated by Benjamin Wirt Farley (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2003), 160.

⁸ John Chrysostom from “Homily 37: On John” in *The Fathers of the Church: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 1–47* by John Chrysostom, translated by Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin (The Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 359.

⁹ Spoken by Dick Lucas, Rector Emeritus of St Helen’s Church, Bishopsgate, in an interview with John Nicholls. source: <https://banneroftruth.org/uk/resources/articles/2006/an-interview-with-dick-lucas/> ¹⁰ C. H. Spurgeon from the sermon: *Election—its Defenses and Evidences* (No. 2920), 1862.

¹¹ Charles Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1969, orig. 1900), 343.



UNIT 8



HOW DOES THE PREACHER PERSEVERE?

INTRODUCTION NOTES FOR LEADERS

Welcome the trainees and pray as you begin this Unit that God will enable you to find enthusiasm and resolve to work hard and persevere at this vital preaching ministry.

Ask someone to read aloud 1 Timothy 4:6–16.

As the passage is read, ask the trainees to focus on how Paul encourages Timothy to persevere.

Introduce the video by saying:

We will be looking at that passage in our video for this Unit: *How Does the Preacher Persevere?* It is one thing to start well, but another to finish well. Preaching ministry is a long-distance race and we need both energy and skill to keep on keeping on. The video for this last Unit will teach us important principles and priorities for the long haul of the faithful expository preaching ahead of us.

VIDEO NOTES FOR LEADERS

Watch Unit 8

We want trainees at the end of this Module to have a clearer knowledge of what to preach and how to preach it, with the motivation to put in the hard work in study and prayer to enable them to make discernible progress, but above all to be thinking: “Yes, by God’s grace, I can begin to do this and I will!” Therefore it is important that as you lead this final Unit you keep a positive and encouraging tone throughout. Where trainees show that they have learned principles, or are applying tools and developing skills as a result of the Module, recognise and commend their progress. Keep the focus on the ability of the Word of God to do the work of God, to accomplish God’s purposes, so that they continue to look to him and not to themselves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES NOTES FOR LEADERS

Use these questions and exercises after watching the video. The notes beneath the questions and exercises are not intended as answers to be read aloud—they are notes to help you guide the trainees to develop their understanding and practical applications of the principles taught in the video.

1. We heard in the video that:

GOD’S WORD is always living.

GOD’S WORD always penetrates human hearts.

GOD’S WORD always does God’s work.

At what times and in which circumstances do we find it difficult to persevere as preachers and how can these truths and God’s promises in the Scriptures help us?

Possible points to draw out:

- ❖ When we meet with hardening or hardened hearts so that there is a resistance to the plain truth of Scripture, we need to remember the parable of the soils (Mark 4:1–20) which teaches that there is nothing wrong with the seed—it can produce a yield of a hundredfold. The problem is with the soils, the human heart. So we don't give up sowing the seed (God's living Word) and we don't stop asking God to change the hearts of our hearers.
- ❖ When people make us afraid of them, by their hostility, especially if they are influential in the church or community, we should remember that God will vindicate his message and his messenger if our trust is truly in him and in his living, penetrating Word.
- ❖ When we are stretched on so many fronts that we have begun to sacrifice our own time in God's Word, both in personal devotions and in preaching preparation, we need to remind ourselves that our priority must be "prayer and the ministry of the Word"—we need God's Word to do its work both in us and through us.
- ❖ When we see no visible results, in spite of all our efforts, so we are tempted to give up, remember that our gospel ministry is a ministry of the Spirit who gives life (2 Corinthians 3:6), that it is life-transforming (2 Corinthians 3:18) and we never know where the Lord is secretly at work, so we do not lose heart (2 Corinthians 4:1).
- ❖ When we are under direct Satanic attack and the father of lies accuses us and threatens us, telling us we are useless failures, as he certainly will do, we should meditate on Jesus' words in John 10:27–30 and John 16:31–33.

2. The exhortation in 1 Timothy 4:16 is to "keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching". In what areas of life and doctrine do you feel yourself to be particularly vulnerable? Split into small groups of two or three and try to be open and honest with one another about these personal matters. Pray for one another in light of your answers.

Allow 5–7 minutes for trainees to discuss in small groups and pray. Given the personal nature of this question it will probably not be appropriate to share feedback more widely.

3. What are the dangers if we do not protect our time for study and rest? What are some practical things we can do to protect this time?

Points to draw out:

- ❖ Diary control. We cannot be omniscient or omnipresent—these attributes belong to God alone. We cannot do more than we can do. We must not be driven by the tyranny of what appears to be urgent. We must put the important into our schedule first and stick with it.
- ❖ Many of us have had the feeling of always being pursued by the preparation we have yet to do and in the worst weeks experiencing debilitating bouts of Saturday night fever. Many preachers therefore begin their preparation two or three months ahead of their preaching plan. For example, between Christmas and Easter you study the book which you will be preaching in the quarter after Easter. This is not writing sermon notes. It is not study for anyone else other than yourself. It is so that the Word of Christ may dwell in you richly.
- ❖ We should balance our life to give proper priority to family, friendships, relaxation, and other interests. If we do not attain this balance we shall fail those nearest and dearest to us and ultimately the Lord himself, because we shall induce burnout. Often this is caused by failure to admit our human frailty and by an arrogant desire to appear to be "super pastor", the omni-competent.
- ❖ We need to recharge our batteries spiritually, physically, and emotionally on a regular basis. We cannot run long on empty in any of these areas.
- ❖ We need constantly to renew our confidence in the Word of God and our dependence on the Spirit of God.

4. Look again at 1 Timothy 4:6–16. Split into small groups of two or three. Make a list of all the imperatives (commands) that Paul uses in his instruction to his younger colleague, Timothy, as he is seeking to train him to be “a good servant of Christ Jesus”. Make a list of the expected results. Think together about these lists as you consider your priorities and how to persevere as a preacher. Each group should choose a spokesperson, ready to contribute comments and ideas from the small group to the larger group when we come back together.

Allow 3–5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups and then ask for feedback.

You may want to write the lists up on a board.

Try and draw out all of the following:

Imperatives

- v. 7 Have nothing to do with silly myths (false teaching and speculation);
- v. 7 Train yourself for godliness;
- v. 11 Command and teach God’s truth;
- v. 12 Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity;
- v. 13 Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching;
- v. 14 Do not neglect your gift;
- v. 15 Practise these things, immerse yourself in them;
- v. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching;
- v. 16 Persist in this.

Results

- v. 8 Godliness holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come;
- v. 10 We toil and strive because we have our hope set on God himself as Saviour;
- v. 15 All may see your progress (not your perfection!);
- v. 16 You will save both yourself and your hearers.

Encourage your trainees to meditate on how these imperatives should affect their own life and ministry.

5. Watch Clip 8: “What keeps you going and persevering as a preacher?” Discuss anything you find surprising, encouraging or difficult.

Discuss the clip with your trainees and then ask them to write down one thing that struck them from this Unit that they would like to hold on to and remember about perseverance.

MODULE SUMMARY AND PRAYER NOTES FOR LEADERS

Give your trainees 2 minutes to answer the following question (also found in the Trainee Manual):

As this is the final Unit, write down 3 things that you want to work on in your preaching as a result of this entire Module.

Ask a few trainees (who are willing) to share their answers (and write them on a board), so that the group can pray specifically for them at the end. (If the group is small enough, encourage each trainee to share at least one of their answers.)

Remind the trainees that the goal is to be making progress; that we all have a long way to go, but that the Bible is God’s sufficient equipping for our ministries.

Remind them that the Spirit of God takes the Word of God to do the work of God and that there is no plan B.

But also remind them that these divinely-given resources are constantly available to them all. Echo Paul's apostolic confidence in 2 Corinthians 3:5 and 2 Timothy 3:16–17: “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God” and “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

Encourage the group to pray together, for one another before they leave, using the answers on the board as a basis for the prayers.

Close in prayer using the following prayer based on Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:16–3:5:

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word, the Holy Scriptures, through which you have spoken and continue to speak to us. Thank you that you have loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope, through your grace, and so we pray that you will continue to strengthen our hearts and establish them in every good work and word. We ask that your Word may speed ahead and be honoured through our preaching, as you direct our hearts and those of our hearers into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. May glory be brought to your name, as we, your servants, humbly depend upon your resources and seek increasingly to be preachers who are equipped by the Lord. We ask these things, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.