

The Evangelistic Sermon



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Evangelism Course

Church of the Nazarene
Mesoamerica Region

Bernie Slingerland
General Coordinator for the Evangelism Course



The Evangelistic Sermon

A book in the School of Leadership series
Evangelism Course

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Introduction

The School of Leadership book series is designed to provide a tool for the church to train and educate its members so they can actively participate in Christian service according to the gifts and calling (vocation) they have received from their Lord.

Each book provides study materials for a course of the School of Leadership program that is offered by the Nazarene Higher Education Institutions of the Mesoamerica Region of the Church of the Nazarene. Most of the key leaders from our schools (presidents, directors, academic vice presidents and directors of decentralized academic studies) actively participated in the program design.

The School of Leadership has five core courses common to all ministries and six specialized courses for each individual ministry. After completing the series, the respective theological Institution gives the student a certificate (or diploma) in Specialized Ministry.

The general objective of the School of Leadership is “to work with the local church in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, giving them solid, theological, Biblical knowledge and developing them through the exercise of their gifts for service in their local congregation and in society.” The specific objectives of this program are threefold:

- Develop the ministerial gifts of the local congregation.
- Multiply service ministries in the church and community.
- Raise awareness of the vocation of professional ministry in its diverse forms.

The objective of the book series entitled Evangelism is to train those who are gifted in evangelism and desire to participate in the Great Commission, but who do not yet have professional ministerial education. Missionaries, pastors and lay people throughout the Mesoamerica Region have written the lessons of these six books and the desire of the authors is that each student would receive an enriched vision of the Great Commission and the training to win others for Christ. We desire that God would be glorified through the courses and that each student would grow in their preparation and service as an effective worker in his kingdom.

A special thanks to Dr. Ruben E. Fernandez, Education and Clergy Development Coordinator, Dr. Monica Mastronardi Fernandez for her dedication as General Editor of the project, Rev. Simone Mulieri Twibell for her assistance, and the team of writers and designers who collaborated to publish these books. An additional thanks to the teachers who will share these materials. They will make a difference in the lives of thousands of people throughout the Mesoamerica Region.

Finally, I give thanks to the Mesoamerica Regional Literature team for the publication and distribution of these materials, and to Dr. L. Carlos Saenz, Mesoamerica Regional Director, for his continued support in this task, which is the result of his conviction of the important need for the church to be comprehensively trained.

I pray for God's blessing for all the disciples whose lives and Christian service will be enriched by these books.

Dr. Bernie Slingerland
Coordinator of Evangelism Mesoamerica Region

What Is the School of Leadership?

The **School of Leadership** is an educational program for lay ministry in different specialties to engage in the mission of the local church. This program is administered by the Theological Institutions of the Church of the Nazarene in the Mesoamerica Region and taught both at these institutions and in the local churches enrolled in the program.

Who Can Benefit from the School of Leadership?

It is for all the members of the Church of the Nazarene who have participated in Levels Saving Grace and Sanctifying Grace - Growth in Holiness of the discipleship program A Journey of Grace, and who, with all their heart, wish to discover their gifts and serve God in His work.

The Plan - A Journey of Grace

In the Church of the Nazarene, we believe that making disciples in the image of Christ in the nations is the foundation of the missionary work of the church and the responsibility of its leadership (Ephesians 4:7-16). For this, at all levels of the church, the implementation of progressive discipleship is promoted as “A Journey of Grace” (John 14: 6), a lifestyle of discipleship. The School of Leadership is part of the “Sanctifying Grace - Ministry Development” section, and is designed for those who have gone through the “Prevenient Grace” and “Saving Grace” sections of the discipleship path.



The work of discipleship is continuous and dynamic; therefore, the disciple never stops growing in the likeness of his Lord. This growth, when healthy, occurs in all dimensions: the individual dimension (spiritual growth), the corporate dimension (joining the congregation), the holiness in life dimension (progressive transformation of our being and doing according to the model of Jesus Christ) and the service dimension (investing our lives in ministry).

Dr. Monica Mastronardi de Fernandez
Managing Editor, The School of Leadership Book Series



How Do I Use This Book?

This book contains eight lessons of the School of Leadership program, along with activities and final evaluation of the course.

How are the contents of this book organized?

Each of the eight lessons of this book contains the following:

- ▶ **Objectives:** These are the learning objectives the student is expected to understand at the end of the lesson.
- ▶ **Main Ideas:** A summary of the key teachings of the lesson.
- ▶ **Development of Lesson:** This is the largest section because it is the development of the contents of the lesson. The lessons have been written so that the book can be the teacher, and for that reason the contents have been written in a dynamic form and in simple language with contemporary ideas.
- ▶ **Notes and Comments:** The information in the margins is intended to clarify terms and provide notes that complement or extend the content of the lesson.
- ▶ **Questions:** Sometimes questions are included in the margin that the teacher can use to introduce or reinforce a lesson topic.
- ▶ **What did we learn?:** The box at the end of the lesson development section provides a brief summary of the lesson.
- ▶ **Activities:** This is a page at the end of each lesson that contains learning activities, for individuals or groups, on the subject studied. The estimated time for implementation in class is 20 minutes.
- ▶ **Final evaluation of the course:** This is the last page of the book and once completed the student must remove it from the book and hand it in to a course instructor. The final evaluation should take about 15 minutes.

How long is each course?

The courses are designed for 12 hours of class over 8 ninety-minute sessions. Each institution and each church or local theological study center will coordinate days and times of the classes. Within this hour and a half the teacher or the teachers should include time for the activities contained in the book.

What is the role of the student?

The student is responsible for the following:

1. Enroll on time for the course.
2. Buy the book and study each lesson before class time.
3. Arrive for class on time.
4. Participate in class activities.
5. Participate in practical ministry in the local church outside of class.
6. Complete and submit the final evaluation to the teacher.

What is the role of the teacher of the course?

The professors and teachers for the School of Leadership courses are pastors and laity committed to the mission and ministry of the church and preferably have experience in the ministry they teach. The Director and/or the School of Leadership at the local church (or theological institution) invites their participation and their functions are the following:

1. Be well prepared by studying the book's content and scheduling the use of class time. When studying the lesson, you should have on hand the Bible and a dictionary. Although the lessons are written using simple language, it is recommended that you "translate" what you consider difficult in order to help the students understand. In other words, use terms that they can better understand.
2. Ensure that the students are studying the material in the book and achieving the learning objectives.
3. Plan and accompany students in the activities of ministerial practice. The local pastor and the director of the respective ministry must schedule these activities. These activities should not take away from class time.
4. Take daily attendance and grades in the class report form. The final average will be the result demonstrated by the student in the following activities:
 - a. Class work
 - b. Participation in ministerial practice outside of class
 - c. Final evaluation
5. At the end of the course, collect the evaluation sheets and hand them in with the form "Class Report" to the local School of Leadership director. Do this after totaling the averages and verifying that all data is complete on the form.
6. Professors and teachers should not add tasks or reading assignments apart from the contents of the book. They should be creative in the design of the learning activities and in planning ministry activities outside the classroom according to the reality of their local church and its context.

How do I teach a class?

We recommend using a 90-minute class session as follows:

- **5 minutes:** Review the topic of the previous lesson and pray together.
- **30 minutes:** Review and discuss the lesson. We recommend using an outline, chalkboard, cardboard or other available materials, using dynamic learning activities and visual media such as graphics, drawings, objects, pictures, questions, assigning students to submit parts of the lesson, and so on. We do not recommend lecturing or having the teacher reread the lesson content.
- **5 minutes:** Break either in the middle of class or when it is convenient.
- **20 minutes:** Work on activities in the book. This can be done at the beginning,

middle or end of the review, or you can complete the activities as you proceed in accordance with the issues as it relates to them.

- **20 minutes:** Discussion about the students' ministry practice that they currently do and that they will do. At the beginning of the course you will need to present the schedule to the students so that they can make arrangements to attend the ministry practice. In the classes when the students discuss their ministry practice, the conversation should be focused on what they learned, including their successes and their errors, as well as the difficulties they encountered.
- **10 minutes:** Prayer for the issues arising from the practice (challenges, people, problems, goals, gratitude for the results, among others).

How do I implement the final course evaluation?

Allocate 15 minutes of time during the last class meeting for the course evaluation. If necessary, students may consult their books and Bibles. Final evaluations are designed to be an activity to reinforce what was learned in class and not a repetition of the contents of the book. The purpose of this assessment is to measure the understanding and evaluation of the student concerning the class topics, their spiritual growth, their progress in the commitment to the mission of the church and their progress in ministerial experience.

Ministerial Practice Activities

The following are suggested activities for ministerial practice outside of class. The list below includes several ideas to help teachers, pastors, directors of local School of Leadership groups and local ministry directors. From the list you can choose the activity best suited to the contextual situation and the local church ministry, or replace these with others according to the needs and possibilities of your context.

We recommend having at least three ministerial activities per course. You can put the whole class to work on a project or assign group tasks according to interests, gifts and abilities. It is advisable to involve students in a variety of new ministry experiences.

Suggested Practical Ministry Activities for the Course

The Evangelistic Sermon

1. Throughout the week, make a list of ideas and themes for evangelistic sermons by observing your congregation, community, family, your own life, and the news through social media.
2. Organize a breakfast for the church, inviting a panel of preachers with evangelism experience who can answer questions, share examples, advice and experiences about this ministry.
3. Visit a library at a theological institution and find some of the recommended sources that could be possible tools for completing the steps for studying the Bible for your sermon (Lesson 4-5).
4. Preach an evangelistic sermon for a cell group, small group, mission, nursing home, prison or another place where you can disciple other believers.
5. Let various students present an evangelistic sermon at youth group, allowing each one to participate in part of the sermon.
6. Let various students present an evangelistic sermon at a women's meeting, allowing each one to participate in part of the sermon.
7. Organize a retreat day to share with other classmates the sermons you created so that each one of you has the opportunity to preach, be evaluated, and receive advice from classmates and the instructor.

Lesson 1

BASIC CONCEPTS

...fuentes
...pasua
...bien

Objectives

- To identify the specific characteristics of evangelistic sermons.
- To understand which aspects to take into account when preparing a sermon.
- To relate the content of the message to the Apostles' Creed.

Main Ideas

- An evangelistic sermon should tell the truth of the gospel in an interesting, brief, clear and direct way, and the message should connect with the needs of the people.
- The content of an evangelistic sermon needs to narrate Christ's life and all that he has done for us.

Introduction

Bernie Slingerland, author of this lesson, serves as Evangelism Coordinator for MAR as of 2002. Under his leadership, 153 missional zones have been established, 723 new churches organized, 6,157 missions started, and 12 new districts started.

In 2007, I was asked to preach at a funeral service in the East District of Guatemala. The Evangelism Coordinator for the district had died in a car accident, and his mourning family asked me to preach an evangelistic sermon. When we got to the cemetery they told me to stand on top of a gravestone, and they handed me a microphone. There I was, ready to preach John Wesley style, except I was not on top of my own father's grave, as was his experience.

At that funeral service there were more than 300 people in attendance and many were not even part of the church. This man knew many people in the community and neighborhood. God gave me a simple passage to preach from, since many of the people there did not have much education and their language was not Spanish, but rather a Mayan dialect from that region. In addition, the time they gave me was very short, so I had to make it brief and simple. My preaching was based on John 11:25-26:

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"

After reading these two verses I preached a sermon in the following manner:

1. I told a personal testimony about the deceased man.
2. I explained what the passage said, that Jesus gives us the gift of eternal life ...
 - a. When we believe that he is the great I AM.
 - b. When we believe that he can do it.
 - c. When we believe today.
3. I left them with a brief life application and the personal challenge that Jesus can give the gift of eternal life to all who believe today.

In your opinion, are people who attend funerals more receptive to responding to the message of the gospel? If so, why?

After this, I made the invitation for all who would like to accept Christ, and 82 people accepted the Lord that day! Glory to God! This was a special situation, and it may not ever happen in the same way again. However, from this we can learn that when the Spirit of God leads us in preaching his Word we should do it without doubting and without holding back, knowing that when God calls us, he is the one who saves and he will do his part.

Kerygmatic Sermons

In this section, we will study kerygmatic sermons.



Preaching, then, means to proclaim the Word of God. In order to make this proclamation efficient, those who proclaim must do the following:

- They should proclaim with divine authority, since they represent God and not themselves (Matthew 7:29).
- They should proclaim exactly what God wants and nothing more (Matthew 7:28-29).
- They should proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world (Acts 17:4).

When we preach, it is crucial that we do it with confidence in God's authority, because he is the author of the message we are sharing.

Evangelistic sermons are called *kerygmatic* sermons, based on the Greek word *kerigma* (κήρυγμα). This word is related to the Greek verb *kērússō* (κηρύσσω), which means to proclaim or cry as a herald, and it also means proclamation, announcement, or preaching. Orlando Costas says that kerygmatic sermons are "preaching the message of salvation to those who have not received it."

We Are Responsible for Announcing Salvation

Now we will take a look at an efficient tool for evangelizing.



Preaching the message of salvation means to offer people an opportunity to accept or reconcile with Jesus Christ. This message should be communicated in a way that is as brief, direct and clear as possible so that people can understand the message and apply it to their lives. Other types of preaching have the goal of helping people maintain, depend, or reinforce their relationship with Jesus Christ. However, this does not mean that this type of preaching is any more or less important since all are necessary for building up the body of Christ.

Nevertheless, preaching the evangelistic sermon creates a greater sense of urgency since the days of each person are limited. People die every day

The authority of a sermon does not depend on the preacher, but rather the words have authority when spoken out of faithfulness to the author of the original message.

The term kerygma comes from passages like Luke 4:18-19, Romans 10:14 and Matthew 3:1.

"There is power in the sermon! The power of the Holy Spirit is the power of the Word. When the Word is proclaimed, the Spirit is busy working in the mind and heart of the hearer" (Carl J. Sanders, translated from Spanish).

How can you tell when the preacher and the message are full of the power of the Holy Spirit?

from old age, sickness, accidents, and violent crimes; there could be a natural catastrophe, an epidemic, or a war and hundreds of people could die. Furthermore, the Second Coming of Christ is approaching. For these reasons, time is limited for people to know the Lord. Therefore, it is urgent that everyone be given the opportunity to hear and respond to the calling of salvation.

The message of the “good news” or gospel is the only way people will know the truth. In Romans 10:14 the apostle affirms: “*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*” Paul highlights the words of Isaiah 52:7: “*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’*”

It is important to remember that it is God’s Spirit who calls and touches people, which is why the preacher needs to be following the flow of the Spirit. Evangelistic preaching is not just an exercise of the intellect, but rather an exercise of the Spirit in obedience to what God wants with the world, so that everyone can come to know the truth. That is why we should always preach about Christ, letting the Spirit guide us. Only then will God speak through our mouths and guide the people, so that they can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Evangelistic preaching should fulfill the purposes of the *kerygmatic* messages, which includes the following:

- Confront humanity with the reality of life.
- Inform them about what Christ did for them on the cross.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to persuade the nonbeliever, so that he/she has the opportunity to repent (change his/her life).
- Give the opportunity for the nonbeliever to profess that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.

Presenting the Message

Next, we will study the practical suggestions for the preacher.



Making the message attractive and interesting for the audience is very important. For example, a message that goes in circles and says the same thing over and over again will not have the same results as one that is concise and to the point.

Therefore, to be able to present the gospel with excellence it is important to take some important recommendations into account. By practicing the

following recommendations, we will be better at connecting the message with the audience, which will make it easier for people to respond to the message:

1) Pray before and during the message: Prayer not only prepares the heart of the person praying but it also prepares the hearts of those listening, so that the seed may be planted in its time.

2) The message should be accompanied by a good program. Bible readings should be brief and concise. The music should be in a style and rhythm that people are used to hearing, and it should be well interpreted, with good audio and a clear message. A recommendation would be to have the program before the sermon be about 25 minutes.

3) It should be interesting and clear: We need to present our sermon in a way that is geared towards nonbelievers, towards people who ignore the truth of the Word. That is why it is very important to make the message attention-grabbing or attractive. It should be simple, but also well thought out and truthful. Use good examples. It is important to clarify these points:

- **Explain the person of Jesus Christ:** The Bible is full of many passages that talk about Jesus. Memorize two or three verses and include them in your presentation.

- **Explain the meaning of sin:** It is important to include a simple explanation of sin because that helps us understand our need for a Savior.

- **Offer a solution to sin:** You need to take time to explain the solution to sin: how God offered Christ to free us from sin.

4) Be concise: The recommended time limit is no more than 30 minutes. A sermon that goes on for a long time, no matter how good it is, will lose the interest of the audience. The gospel is simple and should be presented in few words so that people can remember it and keep it in their minds. Remember that after 30 minutes you will lose the attention of the people and their thoughts will be far from the message and from you.

5) Be direct: People need to know that God speaks to us personally.

6) End with an invitation: The invitation needs to be clear and understandable, guiding the audience to make a decision. It is important to create a comfortable atmosphere, with quiet music, stillness and a conversational yet respectful tone. The evangelist Billy Graham made various invitations throughout his sermons, and then he made a final invitation at the end of the sermon so that people were prepared to make a decision.

7) The message should help people begin a personal relationship with Jesus Christ: People need to be guided in a personal prayer. The prayer of acceptance should be simple and direct, for example: "Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God and you died on the cross to save me. I realize that I have lived my life far from God's will, and I ask you to forgive all my sins.

Other than the recommendations mentioned in this lesson, it is also important to know the audience to whom we are preaching, which is the theme of lesson 2 of this book.

In your opinion, why are some non-believers not interested in hearing the evangelistic message? How can we attract these people so they can have the opportunity to hear the message?

Jesus, I invite you to come into my heart so that you can be my King and Lord. In your name I pray, Amen!”

8) Have a plan for discipleship ready: New believers need guidance to help them begin their new life in Jesus Christ. Train some people to be prepared for the initial contact with the new believers so that they can be disciplined and brought into the faith community.

The Content of the Message

Next we will take a look at the content of evangelistic sermons.



How does a non-believer evaluate evangelistic sermons? To non-believers the preaching is just a presentation of arguments or thoughts from a pastor or evangelist. He or she judges the presentation based on the oratory skills of the speaker and on how interesting the content of the message is to the hearer. In fact, the non-believer will evaluate the sermon based on his or her own experience and knowledge.

For a nonbeliever to pay attention to the message, the content or information needs to align with his or her belief system. If it is against the belief system, it will not be easy to accept. The apostle Paul said that the message of the gospel for many is “foolishness” (2 Corinthians 1:21), in other words, senseless. This was exactly the conclusion that a young person concluded after hearing an evangelistic sermon: “Jesus is what each person wants him to be.”

*“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe”
(1 Corinthians 1:21).*

That is why preachers should know how to prepare and present the evangelistic message in a way that reaches the needs of the people, but at the same time presents Jesus as he is and not what people think or want him to be.

I had a professor who taught me that for the message to be biblically relevant it should align with the Apostle’s Creed.

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hades;
The third day He rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In your own words, what is a kerygmatic sermon?

2. Look up the following Bible verses that support the Apostles' Creed. Afterwards, put the corresponding letter in the right side, based on what the verse says about Jesus Christ.

- A) 1 Corinthians 15:4 ___ Was crucified, dead, and buried
- B) Mathew 25:31 ___ The third day He rose again from the dead
- C) Acts 13:29 ___ He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty
- D) Luke 25:51 ___ Thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead

3. An activity for the whole class. Who in this class accepted Christ through an evangelistic sermon? Let each person share his or her experience with the rest of the class, remembering the preaching style and the content of the message. When everyone has finished, evaluate each of the preachers mentioned based on the style and content of the message with these questions:

- Is the message valid for people who live in today's context? Is there something that should be changed for it to be more effective?
- How was the presentation of the message? Was it brief, clear, and direct? Did it connect with the needs of the audience? How could it be improved?
- What was the invitation like? Would it be effective if it were done today in the same way or would something need to be changed?
- Was there a good discipleship plan? How would you make a realistic discipleship follow-up?



Lesson 2

THE PREACHER AND THE AUDIENCE



Objectives

- To define the prerequisites for being a Bible student.
- To understand the audience and its characteristics.
- To learn skills to connect with the audience.
- To know how to prepare the message based on the audience.

Main Ideas

- Every preacher needs to be, before anything else, a dedicated student of the Bible.
- The people will respond to the message if the messenger takes the audience into account and applies the skills learned in this lesson to effectively reach them.
- Knowing your audience and studying the Bible passages are both important aspects of evangelistic preaching.

Ruthie Córdova, co-author of this lesson, has been a missionary in the MAR region since 1995. She has served in Costa Rica and Guatemala in the areas of theological education, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries and with Work and Witness teams. She was an associate pastor for the Church of the Nazarene in Kansas and Chicago, USA. She has had experience in discipling the new converts and members of the local church.

Mónica Mastronardi de Fernández, co-author of this lesson, has been a missionary in the MAR region since 1995 and serves at the Nazarene Seminary of the Americas (San Jose, Costa Rica). Before, she was a pastor and professor in Argentina for ten years. She is the author of discipleship materials for new believers, which have been translated into approximately 30 languages. She also has written books about the Spirit-Filled Life. She is currently the editor of the books of the School of Leadership program.

Introduction

In this lesson, we will learn that to be a good preacher of evangelistic sermons we need to meet certain requirements.

The purpose of proclaiming God's Word is that the hearers would respond to God's call to be saved and allow the Holy Spirit to transform their lives. In order for that to happen, we as preachers need to perfect our skills in proclaiming the message so that we can effectively connect to the audience with the message of salvation from the Word.

Some preachers spend a lot of time working with the content of the sermon, but very little time thinking about the people who will hear it. That is why in this lesson we also will study many kinds of audiences, their characteristics, expectations and needs.

The Preacher as a Bible Student

In this section we will look at the requirements for being an interpreter of the Bible.



Every preacher is a Bible interpreter. Preachers are responsible for carefully dedicating themselves to the task of understanding the message to be able to share it with others. Preachers are called to be, more than anything, students dedicated to the Word. In order to do so they must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Live a life of prayer: Preachers have daily devotions and spend time praying that the Lord would guide them and that they would be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit.

2. Have a clear purpose for the sermon: When preparing sermons, students need time to think about the purpose. An evangelistic sermon seeks to explain to the audience what people need to know in order to be saved, and then help them to respond to God's Word.

3. Habitually read and study God's word: Preachers need to have a habit of reading the Scriptures daily, and this includes three key life practices: meditating on the Word, interpreting the Word and applying the Word. When preachers apply these skills to their daily readings, they will find a multitude of sermon topics.

4. Have studying and investigating abilities: Preachers need to cultivate study habits that can be applied to God's Word, such as reading, investigating, note taking, and translating, to name a few. In addition, they should master skills in working with the text and the theme that allow them to provide strong explanations for the spiritual truths and applications to everyday life. When beginning a study, it is important to study the Word for oneself before searching on the Internet or looking in books that have other people's ideas and copying what they have said on the matter.

5. Have a basic library: Every preacher ought to have a basic collection of Christian books to help with studying passages. Helpful books to have would be an English language dictionary, Bible dictionaries, theological dictionaries, Bible commentaries, different versions of the Bible, among others.

6. Have common sense: It is very important that preachers use common sense in choosing Bible passages. Passages should be clear, dynamic, and should reach the spiritual needs of people. They should not base their evangelistic sermons on passages that are hard to interpret or on passages that even the preachers have doubts about.

To help you better understand the text, keep an English language dictionary at hand and look up words that might be unfamiliar to you.

What does it mean to have common sense? Give some examples.

Who Is the Audience?

Knowing the audience will help us deliver the message more effectively.



One very important aspect of preparing a sermon is knowing the audience; therefore, it is important to know who will be hearing the sermon. There are different groups of listeners and each group has its own unique characteristics. A sermon is a shared message that is a result of the preacher's exegesis and interpretation of the Bible passage. Messages that make the greatest impact on the audience are those that are faithful to the text and its dynamics.

In order for there to be a sermon, there needs to be a messenger (preacher), a message (biblical text) and the listeners or receivers of that message (audience). Who are the listeners? An audience can be composed of people of different ages, backgrounds, social and economic classes, with different jobs and professions, each with their own personal needs, problems, situations, etc.

The Scriptures have messages for all kinds of listeners, because the teachings are based on situations that people have experienced in real life. Every message in the Word has a great purpose and meaning.

Exegesis:

a critical explanation or interpretation of the text or portion of the text, especially of the Bible. The word comes from the Greek ἐξήγησις, exegesis meaning “explanation” or “interpretation.” Some synonyms are these: explanation, commentary and interpretation. (www.dictionary.com).

At the beginning of his ministry, when Jesus was teaching the multitudes, he had all kinds of listeners (disciples, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, merchants, shepherds, farmers, housewives, children, etc.). Often, when he was teaching using stories and parables, he compared two groups of people. That way, people in the audience could identify with one of the two groups, for example, those who believed and those who did not believe.

We can see an example of Jesus’ strategy in Matthew 25:31-33. On this occasion, Jesus was teaching people who were either like sheep or like goats. He described the Day of Judgment and how there would be a great separation. The sheep would be placed on his right hand and the goats on his left. Jesus was referring to those who would be saved and those who would perish.

Jesus also taught about the two paths in his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:13-14. One path was wide and the other narrow. One leads to eternal life and the other to spiritual death. In these examples, we see how Jesus used an effective way of comparing these two groups of people to teach his audience clearly and simply about the only way to salvation.

Types of Audiences

Next we will look at some details about listeners.



Professor Fred B. Craddock classifies a preacher’s audience into two groups, one composed of listeners from the church, and the other of people who do not belong to a congregation. Let us notice some of the differences between these two groups.

Listeners in the church:

This group of listeners belongs to a local congregation, where they know each other and their pastor. In this congregation, there are individuals, families and groups. Generally, people know each other because they have been at the same church for some time. They see each other each week, get to know one another, learn names, where they live, where they work, what their families are like, unique characteristics, etc.

A congregation is not a homogenous group, but rather one with diversity due to many factors such as age, background, race, sex, job, and social status, among others. They also are different in their experience and maturity in their Christian lives.

When a preacher prepares a sermon for the congregation, it is much easier since the preacher generally knows the audience. Nonetheless, in preparing a sermon, the preacher should keep the following questions in mind:

Who is the intended audience of this sermon? (Visualize the faces of the members).

The listeners are waiting to hear a sermon that will touch their hearts and that will surprise them. Many of them think that they do not deserve God's grace, but they are looking for an invitation to come near to the Lord, to hear a message that will raise their self-esteem, and that will affirm and restore them. They are waiting to be encouraged to believe, to be accepted, to know that it is not shameful to repent, and to be invited to enjoy a life that is abundant and different. They want to be convinced by the message, and in the end they will be grateful that the preacher responded to their need.

The Preacher in Front of the Audience

Here we will see the importance of body language when preaching.



Homiletics professor Haddon W. Robinson affirms that sermons will be effective if they take into account two different factors: **what we will say** (product of studying the passage in depth and turning it into a message) and **how we say it**.

Body Language

Body language, or the way a preacher moves, maintains eye contact, makes gestures and uses the voice, should match the content of the sermon. Every time the sermon transitions from one point to another, the preacher should move from one side to the other to emphasize the change. Take a step forward, backwards, or to the side.

Body Language:
communication through gestures, eye contact, movements or posture. It is one of the most important means that humans have for communication, and it is used from birth.

Using body language requires certain abilities on the preacher's part. Changing the tone of voice as well as body movements while delivering a sermon sends out certain messages that say more than words do. Eyes, hands, face, and feet say a lot to the listeners. Those movements should be spontaneous, varied and precise, just as the words that are spoken. When the gestures communicate emotion and feeling it helps the audience to connect with the message.

The preacher controls the focus of the audience through his or her hands, voice, and facial expressions. If used well, the message will be more interesting. However, if these gestures are poorly executed, people will get distracted, and will not hear the content of the message. Also, the way the preacher is dressed and groomed influences the audiences' attention to the message.

Eye Contact and Voice Inflection

Another aspect that determines whether or not listeners will pay attention is eye contact. The audience wants to see the face of the preacher, but it is also important that the preacher observes the audience to see if they understand what she/he is saying, and to see if they are interested or bored. It is recommended to look at the listeners and face them in an individual way, as if he or she is the only person there. It is important to pause and look at the sections of the auditorium (instead of just looking at the same group of people the whole time).

For the voice, it is important to know how to use it and control it (projection, tone, volume, silence, etc.) throughout the presentation.

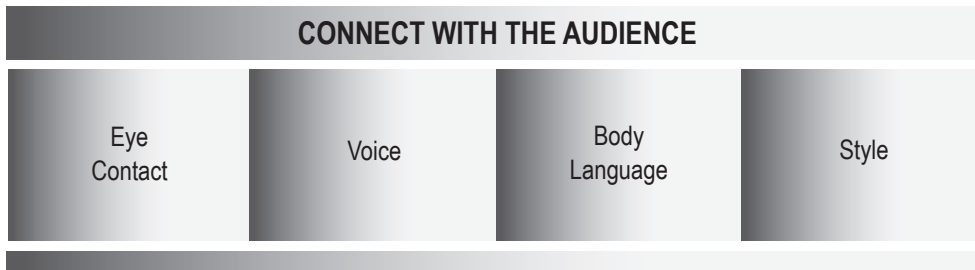
Style

Jesus preached to the multitudes of his time. Scriptures say that people listened to Jesus because his message had authority (Luke 4:32). His words had power because they spoke to important matters of life. His words, although sometimes very deep, offered strength and hope to those who heard them. He used stories and invited the listener to use the imagination. Thus, Jesus connected with people.

A preacher uses different preaching styles, making changes in the preaching models and incorporating elements and language according to the listeners present (youth, adults, children, believers, non-believers, colleges students, etc.).

An evangelistic preaching for modern audiences requires using a multicultural and multisensory presentation. This means using pictures and sounds, which reflect the diversity of the global society of the century. In preparing to preach to non-believers it is important to be clear on which group is to be reached, and prepare the sermon based on a style that would best communicate to such an audience. Remember that preaching is communicating the truth of God's Word in a way that the audience can best understand so they can respond to the message.

The image that a preacher projects is an important detail. His/her clothing should meet the expectations and customs of the audience. An extremely formal or elegant style can be offensive to a humble audience. When the audience is mostly children or young people, it may be better to wear athletic or informal clothing, such as tennis shoes, jeans, and T shirts.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

In order for the audience to hear and respond to the message of the good news, the sermon should meet the needs of those listening. Furthermore, a good connection needs to be made with the listeners both through body language and through appropriate preaching style based on the characteristics of the target group.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Evaluate your own life as a student of the Word, based on the six characteristics that have been mentioned in this lesson.

a) Which of these areas are strengths for you?

b) Which areas are weaker and need improvement?

c) How will you work on improving in those areas in the next weeks and months?

2. How would you use body language to accompany the following phrases in a sermon? In other words, how would you walk, move your arms and your body? Practice alone and then practice with the class as your audience. Share ideas and advice among yourselves.

- a. "When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak" (Luke 1:5-22).
- b. "But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" (Matthew 14:22-33).
- c. "Many of those who are here are living for themselves. I used to think like you. I told myself, 'I need to enjoy life!' I was the boss of my life, and I chose the path I wanted to go on, the stops I wanted to make, and the speed I wanted to go. But, one day, I got tired of this life with no meaning, and I understood that my life was going in the opposite direction that God was calling me to go. That was when I understood that I need to repent and change course."
- d. The son came home repenting to the house of his father. His father, in seeing him from afar ran to him, hugged him and kissed him. Then He started to shout, "This is my son who has returned to me! He was lost but now he is found! He was dead but now is alive! Come everyone, let's have a party!" (Luke 15:11-32).
- e. The story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:20-40.

3. Practice varying your voice with the following lectures from the Word. Use projection when appropriate (making your voice clear and natural, not forced), change the tone (varying in tone), change volume (varying between high, low, avoiding monotony), and allow space for silence. Try this exercise in pairs to give and receive constructive criticism to improve.

- The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).
- The emotion of Joseph as he reveals himself to his brothers (Genesis 45:1-28).

4. Practice using gestures using both your facial expression and your arms to express the emotions and feelings that the following phrases transmit. Do this activity in groups of 4 or 5 to receive constructive criticism from the group concerning the areas in which you can improve.

- a. Jesus cried when he saw the multitudes and he cries today to see the multitudes of people in the stadiums, in the metro and in the streets of our city. (Mateo 9:36).*
- b. David saw Bathsheba from his balcony and his heart was filled with lust... (2 Samuel 11:2-4).*
- c. Saul was filled with jealousy and anger and threw his spear at David (1 Samuel 18:6-11).*
- d. Herod hid his real intentions from the Magi concerning the child. Calling them in secret he said, "I am interested in finding the child, the promised Messiah of God so that I can go and pay my respects to his parents and take gifts as all kings deserve. Please, when you find the child, let me know and I will be extremely grateful. You can stay here and rest, enjoy the food from my table and relax before returning home and in doing so you can tell me the all the news" (Matthew 2:1-8).*



Lesson 3

STUDYING THE PASSAGE (STEPS 1 AND 2)



Objectives

- To identify the seven steps for inductive studying.
- To learn how to choose a text.
- To discover the structure and the internal unity of a passage.

Main Ideas

- For an evangelistic sermon we need to choose passages that communicate God's plan of salvation for all of humanity.
- After choosing a text, the next step is to be immersed in the passage.
- The authors of the Bible wrote with a purpose, which must be discovered in the chosen passage.

Mónica Mastronardi de

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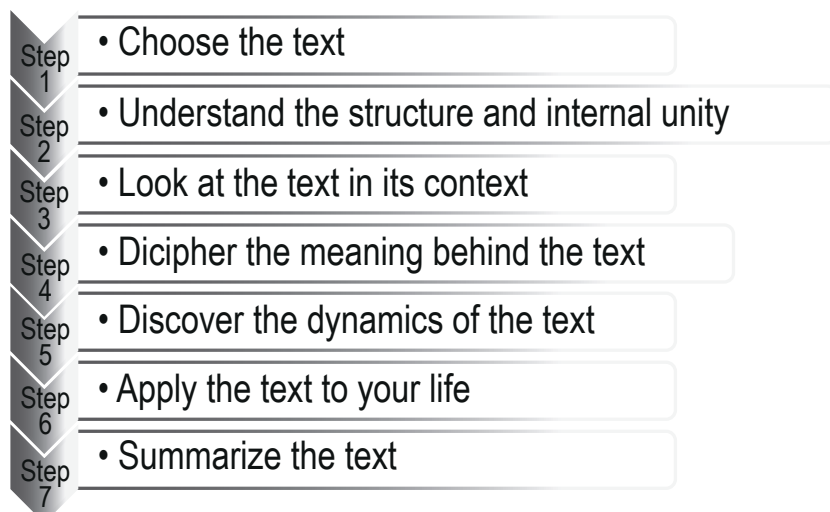
Introduction

A preacher gets his or her sermon **from** the Bible and does not place his or her sermon **into** the Bible. It is important to start with the Scriptures and extract the message from them, instead of deciding what should be preached and then trying to find a passage that supports that opinion. Sermons that are based on the Scriptures allow God to share his message to the audience and therefore create a greater impact on the people.

Some people just look for the easy path and the quick methods to avoid spending time actually studying the text. This is not worthy conduct for a spokesperson of God's message. Studying and interpreting a Bible passage requires commitment and loyalty to God's Word, as well as the practice of developing studying and communicating habits.

Before writing the sermon, a preacher needs to spend time studying the chosen passage from the Word. There are many methods we can use for this process. In this course we will learn and practice the inductive method for studying a Bible passage, following a guide that consists of seven steps. This is a good and simple model to put into practice for anyone who wants to become a preacher.

The Seven Steps for the Inductive Method



Choosing the Text (Step 1)

In this section we will learn how to choose a text for preaching.



Choosing a biblical passage allows the preacher to focus on the text and not to digress and express his or her own opinions or prejudices about the text. To do this, it is important that the preacher be immersed in the text in order to understand what the original author wanted to teach the first readers of their writings, and then the preacher must apply the teaching to life today.

For the first step of inductive study, we begin by selecting a section of the Scriptures that will be the base of the sermon. When one reads the Bible daily, one comes to know the different themes that develop across the Scriptures from the book of Genesis to Malachi (OT) and from Matthew to Revelation (NT). Therefore, it will not be difficult to choose passages that announce God's salvation for all of humanity.

How do we choose a biblical text when there is so much important material in God's Word? Observe the following recommendations:

1. Do not choose a text based on its length. Many good stories develop in various chapters of the Bible or even throughout an entire book (for example, Ruth and Esther). However, four verses can be enough for an expository sermon and can even be used in a thematic sermon. For example, to preach about God's love, John 3:16 could be the base.

2. Choose a text based on its meaning. There are people who take the easy way out when choosing a text from which to preach. There are people who open the Bible, close their eyes, and put their finger down to choose a random text to preach from the Bible. Others choose a story from the New Testament that they think would be easy to preach. However, the easy route is not always the most effective. In truth, there are some passages that are better than others and some that are easier than others. Everything in the Bible is God's Word and it all should be preached as such. When the objective is to preach the good news of the gospel to the nonbelievers, we need to choose passages that talk about the problem of sin, the need that people have to be saved, and the offer of free salvation that God has given through Jesus Christ, etc.

3. Choose a text that is important to you. When the passage has spoken to you personally or when you found truth that changed your life, you will want to have the opportunity of sharing these words of life with others. Doing this puts passion into your preaching.

4. Take into account the needs of the audience. Look for a passage that people from the audience can identify with.

5. The passage should be unified, revolving around a central theme. For example, choose a section of the Word that talks about the grace that God offers, the problem of sin, God's calling for reconciliation, who is Jesus (the bread, the vine, the giver of the water of life, etc.), or another thematic section of Scripture.

You can read the Bible in a year if you follow a systematic daily plan (for example, you can follow one of these plans: <http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/reading-plans/>).

Which biblical passages stand out to you? Mention passages that have impacted you and could be used for an evangelistic sermon.

The first person to divide the Bible into chapters was Stephen Langton, an Englishman in 1220. In 1551, the Bible was divided into verses in the Greek, Hebrew and Latin Bibles.

6. Don't be driven by chapter and verse division. The Bible was not written with the titles and divisions that we have today. Sometimes we need to look at the verses from the previous chapter to keep the train of thought of the chosen passage.

Examples of passages frequently used for evangelistic sermons:

Individual Verses	Passages
John 8:12 Acts 2:38 2 Corinthians 5:17 1 John 1:9 Revelation 3:20	Matthew 11:28-30 Luke 5:17-25 Luke 11:1-4 Luke 9:18-27 John 1:1-18 John 8:1-11 John 10:25-30 John 14:1-6 Acts 16:11-32 Romans 5:6-8

Immerse Yourself in the Text

In this section we will learn how to immerse ourselves in the text.



As we continue with step 1, we start getting a complete understanding of the passage, which requires time and study. A preacher of the Word cannot be given to improvisations or interpretations that are just whims or ideas. Before going to other books that explain and expand on the text, it is important to spend time alone with the text, letting the text speak directly to the heart and listening to God's voice, before going to other sources.

As preachers, we are responsible for immersing ourselves in the passage so that it becomes so familiar to us that it is like our own skin. When we know our own skin well, we know where we have birth marks, where we are more sensitive, where we are ticklish, where we put on perfume, etc. To know the background of a passage we will take the following steps:

"Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread"
(D.T. Niles).

1. Read and reread the text. Read the passage at least 30 times or until you know it so well it becomes a part of you. It is not about memorizing the words, but many of the key phrases will imprint themselves in the memory.

2. Read the context. Every passage has a history that further explains the background of the story. In general you can find this in the same book, but sometimes, you may have to look at other books of the Bible that narrate the story. Read the context of the passage several times.

3. Read parallel passages and compare them verse by verse. You could make columns for writing the extra information that is found in other passages. For example, the four gospels narrate the story of Jesus through the authors' different perspectives (especially the synoptic gospels). It also happens with other books. To find parallel passages, it would be helpful to get a study Bible or a Harmony of the Gospels book.

4. **Read the passage in several versions.** Take notes in the columns of the differences in translation you may find as you read different versions of the Bible. Use some Internet versions or printed Bibles.

5. **Write the passage in your own words.** This means to paraphrase the text.

Structure of the Passage and Internal Unity (Step 2)

Here we will learn how to find the central theme and purpose of the passage.



The authors of the Bible wrote with purpose. They wanted to share with their readers the message that God had given them to so that people could live according to his teachings. Each book of the Bible was written with a purpose. This purpose is the objective or goal that the author had in mind.

Sometimes we find ourselves in stories that stretch over several chapters, sections of various books or an entire book. However, these stories each have a teaching, a central message, and the message is what we will describe in step two. The following guided questions will help to accomplish this step:

1. What is the main theme of the passage? Once you have read and immersed yourself in the text, you most likely have identified the theme. For example, the theme could be the mercy Jesus had towards people as he hung on the cross, Jesus calling Matthew, Zacchaeus' repentance, among others. Write the main theme in your own words as briefly as possible.

2. What is the purpose or goal of the passage? For example, it could be showing the hope of eternal life in Jesus, making the radical calling to discipleship, showing how Jesus wants to transform the life of the sinner, among others. Write it in your own words as briefly as possible.

3. What is/are the key verse(s) (if there are any) that sum up the central truth of the entire passage? Write this verse. You can also copy it in different versions and memorize it.

A preacher is a messenger to his/her audience and therefore is responsible for delivering the Word, living and active, because through it Jesus Christ, the living Word is revealed. A sermon should communicate LIFE to the hearers.

Everything we learned in steps 1 and 2 will be helpful for creating an outline and then preaching the sermon.



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Before preparing the outline for a sermon, we need to study the chosen passage deeply, to be sure to be faithful to the message that God wants to share. In this course we will learn a method with seven steps. Step 1 begins with the selection, highlighting and reading so that we relate to the passage and immerse ourselves in the text. In step 2, we define the central theme and purpose.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Choose a short Bible passage that is meaningful to you and has an appropriate message for calling unbelievers to repentance. You can use any of the examples included in this lesson.

The chosen passage is: _____

The context for this passage is: _____

The parallel passage(s) to this passage are: _____

The Bible versions I will use are: _____

2. Study the chosen passage using step 1 of this lesson. Put an "x" when you have completed each step.

___ Read and reread the text 30 times.

___ Read the context several times.

___ Read the parallel texts and compare verse by verse. Write in the columns any additional information that relates to the passages.

___ Read the passage in various versions and take note in the columns of any significant differences in the translations.

___ Write a summary of the passage in your own words.

2. Fulfill step 2, following the teaching of this lesson. Answer the questions below in order to complete this step.

a) What is the main theme of this passage?

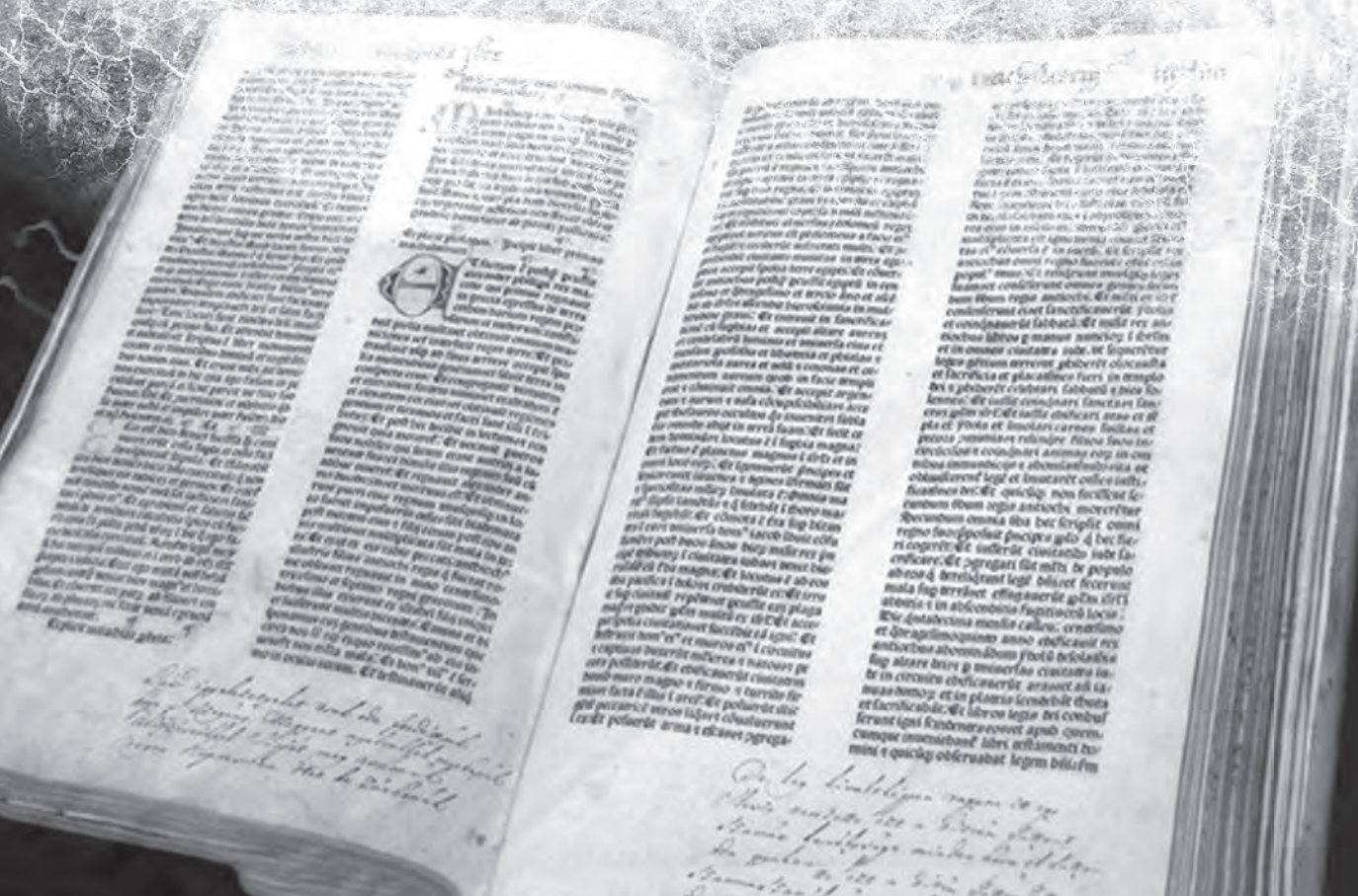
b) What is the purpose or goal of this passage?

c) What is/are the key verse(s) (if there are any) that sum up the central truth of the passage?

d) Write down the key verse(s) from two different versions and memorize them.

Lesson 4

STUDYING THE CONTEXT (STEP 3)



Objectives

- To learn how to find the historical context of the passage.
- To know how to identify the special characteristics of the literary context.
- To recognize the tools for biblical interpretation.
- To put step 3 into practice with a chosen text.

Main Ideas

- Studying the context helps us better understand the authors and the characters, and it allows for a clearer interpretation of the passage.
- The literary context of a passage includes the special characteristics of the book, as well as the purpose and the circumstances that surrounded the author and the audience.

Introduction

In the previous lesson we began studying a method that included seven steps for studying a biblical passage that will serve as a base for our evangelistic sermon.

Steps 1 and 2 help us familiarize ourselves with the text and discover what the passage is really saying, plainly and literally.

In this lesson we are taking a close look at step 3, which provides a guide for studying the context of the chosen text for the sermon. This step and the one that follows (Step 4) will help us to interpret the chosen passage by finding its original meaning. In other words, what did the original receivers of this message understand?

In these two studying phases we need to use tools such as biblical dictionaries, biblical encyclopedias, commentaries, biblical manuals, biblical biographies, study Bibles, biblical atlases, among others. These books can be found in libraries of preachers and the libraries at theological seminaries. They are also available on the Internet.

At the end of this lesson there is a chart that describes the types of references tools that are most commonly used by preachers for studying passages.

What Is Historical Context?

In this section we will explain the importance of studying the context.



The Bible covers a period of more than 4100 years of history, from Adam (approximately 4000 BC) until the year 100 AD. Every biblical story has a particular historical period with specific characteristics.

The story of salvation begins with the Old Testament that narrates God's interactions with humanity through his people, Israel. It contains the promise of salvation through the Messiah. The New Testament tells the story of the fulfillment of this promise and begins the Church's ministry, as well as the announcing of the Lord's glorious return to establish his eternal kingdom.

The Bible covers a period of more than 4100 years of history, from Adam (approximately 4000 B.C.) until the year 100 A.D. Each biblical story is found in a historical period with specific characteristics. For example, the Psalms were written by different authors who faced different challenges in their lives.

Studying the context helps us better understand the authors and the people they wrote about. It helps us better understand the things that influenced their lives, their ideas, their emotions, their fears, their passions, their intentions, their decisions and even their way of being. This step is key to allow us to interpret more accurately, to identify the central teaching of the passage, and to understand what God is telling us today through the words of the original author.

How Do We Study the Historical Context?

In this section we will learn how to study the history surrounding the passage.



To study the context of the verse or selected passage, we need to inform ourselves on the political, social, cultural, religious, historical, economic, geographical and other circumstances related to the context.

Our first source will be reading the complete book where the selected passage is found in order to become familiar with the content, style and thoughts of the author. For example, if we study Romans 7, to reach an accurate interpretation we need to also visit chapters 1 through 6 before it and chapter 8 afterward.

As you read, jot down any questions that come to your mind that relate to the historical context. Also write down the verse or verses that relate. Later on, you will be able to answer those questions with help from tools: a study Bible, a biblical manual, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, among others (see the graph at the end of the section).

For example, to study the historical context behind Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 a list of questions could be the following:

1. Which historical, political, social, etc., circumstances did Jesus live with at the time of this encounter?
2. What was the distance between Judea and Galilee and where was Jesus going? How many days were they into the journey? Why was Jesus going to Galilee? Was he fleeing from the Pharisees? What dangers threatened them? (vs. 1-3).
3. What were characteristics of the cities of Sychar (vs. 5) and Samaria (vs.4)?
4. What were the inhabitants like? What were their interests? Their beliefs (vs. 19-26)? Their problems?

Historical context
helps us to understand
the circumstances that
surround the chosen story.

“To preach a sermon that is useful for the congregation but at the same time honors Christ, a minister needs to dedicate hour after hour, drop after drop of blood, minute after minute, to be able to present a sermon that effectively feeds people. In other words, young preachers need to fight hard to serve a banquet worthy of the hearers. This type of food will give a greater and deeper understanding of God's depth and the beauty of the gospel” (translated from Spanish. Eric Davis y Alberto Solano).

5. What was the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans? (vs. 9).
6. What was the Samaritan woman's condition? What treatment would a woman who had changed partners six times receive? (Vs. 18).
7. What was the distance between the well and the city of Samaria? Were there other wells nearby? Why did the woman go to the well at Sychar in the heat of the day? (vs. 6-8). How much did a jug of water weigh?
8. How did men and women treat each other if they were strangers in those days? (vs. 9 y 27)
9. What was the distance Jesus had to travel to get to this well?
10. How did Samaritans dress? Did their clothing resemble a field of wheat ready for harvest? (vs. 35).

What Is the Literary Context?

In this section we will explain the importance of the study of the book.



The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years by more than 40 authors. The literary context of a particular passage of the Bible includes the knowledge of the special characteristics of the book, as well as the purpose and circumstances that surrounded the author and the audience.

In regards to the specific characteristics of a book, it is true that there are common elements that run through all the books of the Old Testament on one side and the books of the New Testament on the other side. There also are specific elements that are unique to each book that we need to take into account.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament are comprised of 39 books. The great variety of "literary genres" in the books of the Old Testament makes it a bit complex to study. This is why we need to apply different styles of interpretation depending on the literary genre. To understand the literary genre of the studied passage, it is important to identify the types of literature.

In the O. T. there are five literary genres:

Literary Genres	Books of the O.T.
Narrative	Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
Law	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi
Poetry	Psalms, Song of Songs
Books of Wisdom	Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes

Approximately how many authors contributed to the Bible?

With regard to the context, the books of the O.T. address a variety of themes. Based on the general themes and the content, the books of the Old Testament can be classified in the following ways:

Theme or Content	Books of the O. T.
Historical Book on the Origins of the World	Genesis
Books of the Law	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Historical Books	Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 y 2 Samuel, 1 y 2 Kings, 1 y 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah y Esther
Wisdom Books	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
Poetry Books	Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations
Prophetic Books	Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Lamentations
	Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi

Just like the books of the Old Testament, the New Testament is also quite diverse. The heart of these books is the gospel of the good news of salvation centered on Jesus. The New Testament fulfills the promises of the coming Messiah and the history of the birth and development of the Christian church in the first century.

The majority of these books are narrative genre in the form of accounts, histories, biographies, parables, testimonies, discussions, instructions, mandates, prophecies, letters, Jesus' teachings and others. In some of the books there are pieces of poetry, hymns, prayers, citations from the Old Testament, and quotes.

The general theme and content of the books from the New Testament are classified as the following:

Topic or Content	Books from N. T.
Gospels	Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
History Books	Acts of the Apostles
Epistles	Romans, 1 y 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 y 2 Thessalonians, 1 y 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 y 2 Peter, 1, 2 y 3 John, Jude
Prophecy Books	Revelation

How do we choose a good biblical commentary? For those who are starting in the ministry of preaching, it is important to have good tools to rely on when studying passages. When it comes to commentaries, it is recommended to use authors from one's own theological background.

TOOLS FOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION (STEPS 3 Y 4)		
Type of book	What information do they contain?	What are they used for?
Biblical Versions	Bible translations from different time periods and places	To better understand of the meaning of the text
Concordances	Words that appear in the Bible in alphabetic order, indicating the books and verses where they are mentioned. Some also include a portion of the verse. Thematic concordances are in order based on specific themes in Scriptures such as names for Christ, miracles, trees, etc.	To locate texts, parallel passages, follow the historical data of a person, or investigate how a word is used in other books. To investigate places, themes or ideas specific to Scripture. The thematic concordance is useful for investigating the development of a theme in the whole Bible, such as marriage, slavery, etc.
Biblical Dictionary	Dictionaries of words used in the Bible.	To find definitions of terms, information about places, authors, genealogies, archeological discoveries, etc.
Biblical Manual	A general study of every book of the Bible, information about the author, the context, the purpose and a description of the themes.	To be informed about the books, the authors, the themes they address, the outline of each book, the characters, and the places and the culture.
Biblical Atlas	Contains maps, illustrations, and information about the geography, history, culture, etc.	To understand the geography and the genealogy of the studied passage. To describes the temples, the buildings, the sacred tools, etc.
Commentaries	Explain the meaning following the order of the text, verse by verse. Whole Bible commentaries are 1 or 2 volumes at the smallest, and the most extensive can be up to 50 volumes. There are some commentaries that are a single book as well.	To explain difficult terms and phrases, historical and geographic information. Be cautious with theological interpretations, because the authors of the commentaries draw conclusions from their own theological orientation. (It is best to draw your own conclusions when it comes to doctrine).
Biographical Books	Study and exposition of the lives of people mentioned in the Bible.	To have a broader understanding of the person, the context, their character, education, family, etc.
Cultural Books	Explains the local customs and culture of the people mentioned in the Bible.	To understand a custom, a ritual. For example, clothing styles, celebrations, how bread was made, how people with leprosy were treated, etc.
Biblical Theology	Explains the development of a doctrine based on Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.	To research the development of a doctrine from the Word. It gives us a panoramic view of the O.T. and N.T. according to a specific theological theme.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Continue to study the context behind the passage you have chosen for your sermon from the previous lesson. Read the chapters before and after the passage and find the parallel passages in the Bible. As you read, jot down the questions that come to your mind related to the historical background. Take note of the verse or verses that relate to the questions.

2. Using the list from the table "Tools for Biblical Interpretation" choose the tools that you will need to answer the questions that you have made (at the end of the lesson). Write a list of the tools you need. Locate them and have them readily available.

3. Research and write the answers to your questions. It is possible that as you search, more questions will come up. Add them to your list and answer them.

4. Choose and make a note of the adequate tools for studying the literary context.

5. Answer the following questions for studying the literary context according to the instructions from this lesson.

a) Who is the author? Describe the author, with the most relevant details.

b) When did the author live and write? What were the circumstances surrounding the author's life and writing?

c) Why did the author write the passage? To whom was it written? What was the message that was being shared?

d) What is the literary style of the book? Is it historical or narrative? Is it rhetorical, poetic, wisdom, or prophecy?

e) What was the general purpose of the book?

Write an outline of the book. (Use a separate sheet of paper).



Lesson 5

DECIPHERING THE TEXT (STEP 4)



Objectives

- To learn the process for deciphering the meaning of the text.
- To find the protagonists, their actions, and the circumstances of the passage.
- To put step 4 into practice with the selected text.

Main Ideas

- In order to understand the meaning of the passage, we need to understand its literal and figurative meaning.
- If we familiarize ourselves with the people in the story, we can apply the teachings of the text to our own lives and the lives of the audience.

Introduction

In the previous lessons we began the study of the 7-step method for studying the biblical passage, which serves as the base for the evangelistic sermon.

By practicing steps 1 and 2 we become familiar with the text and we discover what the passage says in a plain and literal sense. In step 3 we learned to study the historical and literary context.

In this lesson we will continue with the next step, step 4, which helps us decipher the selected passage.

What Does It Mean To Decipher the Text?

In this section we will take a closer look at step 4.



Deciphering the text means understanding the ideas expressed by the words. Due to the distance in time and culture that separates us from the authors of the Bible, we find words, phrases, actions and attitudes of the characters in the studied passage that are hard to understand.

This step is basically “decoding” the content that is difficult to comprehend from the selected biblical text. Without this step, it would be very difficult to come to a clear conclusion about what the author was trying to communicate.

Preachers who come to a rushed conclusion without investigating the background of a passage run the risk of teaching false doctrines that are not faithful to the Lord’s message in his Word. We must remember that the most important principle to understanding the meaning of a passage is that “Scripture speaks for itself.” This means the following:

1. Scripture has its own interpretation. The Bible has the basic elements for its own interpretation. That is why when we study a selected passage for an evangelistic sermon we also should study other verses that refer to the same theme or event. These passages are called “parallel passages.” For example, the story of Jesus’ baptism is told in Matthew 3:13-17, in Mark 1:9-11, in Luke 3:21-22 and in John 1:29-34.

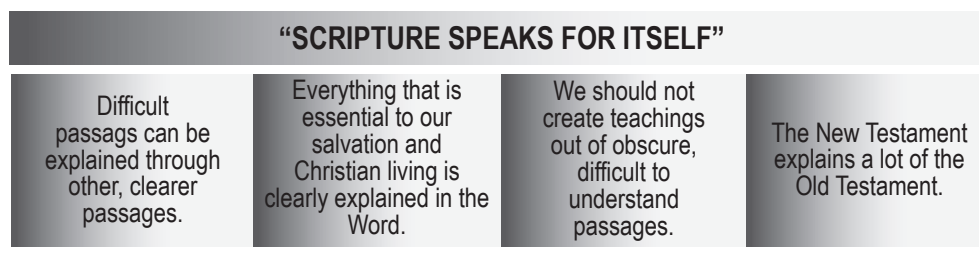
Decoding:

Applying the correct background to the passage in order to understand the message.

In other instances, we find an explanation of the studied passage in the same book, as occurs often with Jesus' parables. For example, in the parable of the farmer in Matthew 13:1-9, the author also included Jesus' explanation in Matthew 13:18-23.

2. Many false teachings come up when this principle of the interpretation is not respected. For example, the belief that the living can be baptized for the dead is stemmed out of 1 Corinthians 15:29, and the Roman Catholic doctrine that is held by nuns in convents is based on Luke 2:36-38. There are many more examples of this.

Some of the practical implications of this principle that we should apply to studying sermon passages can be summed up in the following graphic:



The process for deciphering the text consists of an analysis of the characters, the main action, and the words and key phrases. Coming up next in this lesson, we will study how to do this step.

Analyzing the Characters

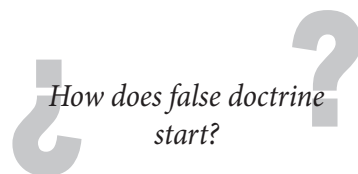
In this section we will learn how to study the protagonists of the passage.



Studying the characters from a Bible story is very important for understanding the motivations that drove the people to act as they did. It helps us to "be in the shoes" of the characters and identify with them.

As preachers, when we study a character, we should keep two important objectives in mind:

1. We need to be prepared to deliver a good and interesting narration of the story to the audience. Sometimes we can act as one of the protagonists, telling the story as if the character were telling it. Contemporary audiences will easily identify with the characters when they realize that they have the same problems, fears, concerns, and feelings as the characters in the Bible story.
2. Only when we are familiar with the characters of the story can we apply the teachings of the text to ourselves and our audience. The most effective preaching happens when I use passages that have spoken to me, have touched me and continue to change me. If a passage has been instrumental in my life, it is very likely it will also be instrumental to the audience. As a result, we incorporate passion and conviction into our message, both of which are contagious.



Depending on the passage, as we study characters that are involved in narrating the biblical text we can be guided by the following questions:

1. How many characters are there?
2. Who are the primary characters and the secondary characters?
3. Where are they geographically located? Why are they there?
4. What is the significance of this location?
5. What is the historical time period in which this occurred?
6. What are these people doing?
7. How and why are they doing it?
8. How do these people interact and react with one another?
9. Who is the center of attention?

Parallel passages:
two or more passages of the Bible that refer to the same idea/story and are found in the same book of the Bible or in two or more distinct books of the Bible.

Next is an example in a graph that helps to study characters that are involved in a scripture story or passage.

Selected passage: Luke 8:43-48

Parallel Passages: Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:24-26

Passages that refer to the Jewish law regarding this sickness: Leviticus 15:19-20,25,27

1. Who are the primary and secondary characters?	Jesus	The woman	The disciples	The crowd
2. The motivations of each character. Why is each character there?	He had compassion for the woman.	She was searching for healing. She wanted to be restored to her family and society.	They were following and learning from the Master.	They wanted to see Jesus. They had been waiting for him.
3. Describe the attitude of the characters. How were they feeling? What was important to them?	Restoring life to this woman, without caring about the laws that prohibited a man from touching a woman in public, especially a woman whom the law considered untouchable because of her sickness.	After 12 years of suffering from bleeding, neither doctors nor money could bring relief. She was weak, poor, and afraid of being discovered. Physical healing was what she wanted more than anything.	Worried about Jesus' safety.	Happy, excited.

Analyzing the Main Action

In this section we will learn how to analyze the main action of the passage.



Every passage in Scripture has some kind of main action. It can be a story, a need for a lesson, correcting a false belief, a bad habit, a wrong action, etc. Identifying the main action and its implications are very important for making a correct interpretation of the passage.

Here are some questions that can help guide us in this analysis:

1. What is the main action?
2. How did it happen?
3. How did it develop?
4. Why did it happen? (implicit or explicit reasons).
5. What circumstances surround this act?
6. What are the consequences of this act?
7. Are there other implications?
8. Are they expected or unexpected?

We can also use a table or chart for this. Let's look at the main actions of the same passage used previously. Note that there are some questions that might require other books to answer them in addition to the Bible.

1. Who are the primary and secondary characters?	Jesus	The woman	The disciples	The crowd
2. Where did the actions occur? At what historical moment?	In Galilee while he was going to the house of Jairus, the chief of the synagogue, who had a very sick daughter.	We don't know if she was from Galilee.	Where were they coming from? Where were they going? How much time had they spent with Jesus already?	Is there any significant historical event that happened while in Galilee?
3. What was the main action?	The healing of the woman who was bleeding.			
4. What did they do? How did they do it?	He treated her like a person, like a daughter of God. He spoke to her, healed her, gave her peace, restored her to her family and society and gave hope back to her.	She approached him from behind and touched the edge of Jesus' robe. She was trembling in fear, and she knelt before Jesus and she trusted that he could heal her.	They protected Jesus. They watched and learned.	They followed Jesus, crowded around him and pushed.

*An **explicit idea** is what the author openly and directly states. On the contrary, an **implicit idea** is something the author suggests but does not express directly, so that the idea can only be captured by "reading between the lines" and inferring the meaning.*

Analyzing the Words and Key Phrases

In this section we will look at the process for identifying and defining key words.



When studying the biblical passage, we are often confronted with words that we do not know or words that we have heard but we are not entirely sure how to explain their meaning. For example: Cushite (Num. 12:1), publicans (Matt. 5:46), etc.

Furthermore, we come across words that have a special meaning when used in the Bible. For example: talents (Matt. 18:24), heart (Jer. 17:9), saints (2 Cor. 9:1), among others.

There are other words that are used in the Bible that refer to a different meaning depending on the surrounding passage. Let's look at some examples:

- people: can refer to the people of Israel (nation), another nation, the Church, or a city.
- anathema: in the O.T. it means the spoils of war that should be destroyed or given to the priests. On the other hand, in the N.T. it is a curse.
- sheep: can refer to an animal, or it can refer to the children of God.
- flesh: can refer to sexual union within marriage, of "becoming one flesh" (Gen. 2:24); it can refer to the body (Rom. 7:18); it can refer to being open and receptive to God (Ezek. 11:19); among others.

The same thing happens in English when we use words that are spelled the same and pronounced the same but can refer to a different meaning depending on its use. These are called homonyms. For example, the word "bow" changes meaning depending on how it is used. Let's look at some examples:

- "Bow down to God alone."
- "The anchor is at the *bow* of the ship."

Another pronunciation of the same word:

- "Don't forget to tie your *bow*."
- "Let's hunt with our *bow* and arrows."

The same thing happens with other languages, including the languages of the Bible (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek).

Another problem we find in the Bible is the use of literal and figurative language. The literal sense refers to text in which words used by the author can be interpreted today in the same way they did back then. For example: mother means mother, cup means cup, dog means dog.

However, when authors use metaphors or rhetorical concepts like parables, similes and symbolic expressions, etc. we need to apply the rules of interpretation to every type of language (see the end of this lesson for the types of figurative language and Hebrew sayings that appear in the Bible). This means that we need to decipher when a phrase should be taken literally and when it is used metaphorically (as an illustration).

How do we know if a text is literal or figurative? Here are some rules:

1. The passage itself has an explanation. Let's look at an example:

- John 7:38 says: *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."* In this verse "rivers of living water" as explained in verse 39 refers to the Holy Spirit.

2. The meaning can be found in a general sense in the surrounding passages. Let's look at some examples:

- Psalm 119:105 *"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."* This means that the Bible guides us and teaches us how to live.

- Lucas 13:24 *"—Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to."* This means that being faithful to God is not the easiest path.

3. When a passage does not make sense when it is taken literally. For example, John 6:53 cannot be interpreted in the literal sense. "Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

To complete the analysis of the words and phrases of the selected passage for the sermon, this process should be followed:

1. Make a list of difficult or unfamiliar words. Find their meaning by using interpretation tools. For example, a list of unknown words from Luke 16:19-31 could look like this:

v. 19 - clothed in purple and fine linen

v. 20 - laid at the gate

- full of sores

v. 22 - Abraham's bosom

v. 23 - Hades

2. Make a list of key words, verbs, names and main ideas that are repeated. Based on the previous passage the list could be the following:

- Extravagant, carefree living.

- The lack of compassion of the rich man.

Figurative language:
“uses words in a way that deviates from their conventionally accepted definitions in order to convey a more complicated meaning...Figurative language is often created by presenting words in such a way that they are equated, compared, or associated with normally unrelated meanings”
 (Wikipedia).

- Not considering life after death.
- The difficult life of the poor and the sick, a life without hope. However, if they are faithful they have eternal life.
- Take advantage of the time left in this life to do good for our families and speak to others about the opportunity for eternal life that we have in Jesus.

3. See if these are written in the literal or figurative sense.

4. Make a list of words that contrast each other or show opposite ideas. For example in Luke 16:19-31 we see:

- rich-beggar
- banquet-crumbs
- Abraham’s bosom-Hades
- consoled-tormented

5. Write the ideas or images that come to mind when you come across the key ideas or words. You can also illustrate it. Here are some examples:

- The beggar who sleeps in the corner of the temple.
- The private rich neighborhood in the city and the dangerous neighborhood on the other side of the city.
- The poor and sick without access to medical attention.
- How do people picture hell and heaven?
- What kind of torment do you think people will have in hell?

This last activity is very helpful because it gives ideas for illustrating the sermon and explaining the meaning of the passage. By providing visuals, you are able to illustrate the sermon with images of things that are familiar to the audience.

HEBREW SAYINGS	
Type of Saying	Examples
Absolute or relative	Absolute language is when an idea is expressed in exact, absolute, and superlative terms. Words like “good, always, never, yes, no”, etc. are used in absolute language. Relative language expresses comparison, relation, or preference. It uses words like better, worse, more, less, older, younger, etc. Examples: Pr. 8:10, Lk. 14:12.
Affiliation	For example, “son of something or someone.” Can be physical, moral, or spiritual relationships. Jn. 21:15, Acts 3:25.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Identify figurative language in the following passages and explain the meaning according to the context of the passage.

a. Matthew 16:6 (Find the explanation in verses 11-12).

b. 1 Corinthians 3:1 (Find the explanation in verses 3-4).

2. Complete the first part of step 4 for deciphering the selected text for an evangelistic sermon. Study the characters using the chart below. Use different Bible versions and other Bible interpretation tools.

Selected passage:

Parallel passage:

Related passages:

1. Who are the primary and secondary characters?				
2. What are the motivations of each character? Why is each character there?				
3. Describe the attitude of the characters. How were they feeling? What was important to them?				

3. Continue by analyzing the main action of the selected passage, completing the following graph.

1. Who are the primary and secondary characters?				
2. Where did the actions occur? At what historical moment?				
3. What was the main action?				
4. What did they do? How did they do it?				

5. Why did it happen? Explicit or implicit reasons?				
6. Describe the attitude of the characters. How were they feeling? What was important to them?				

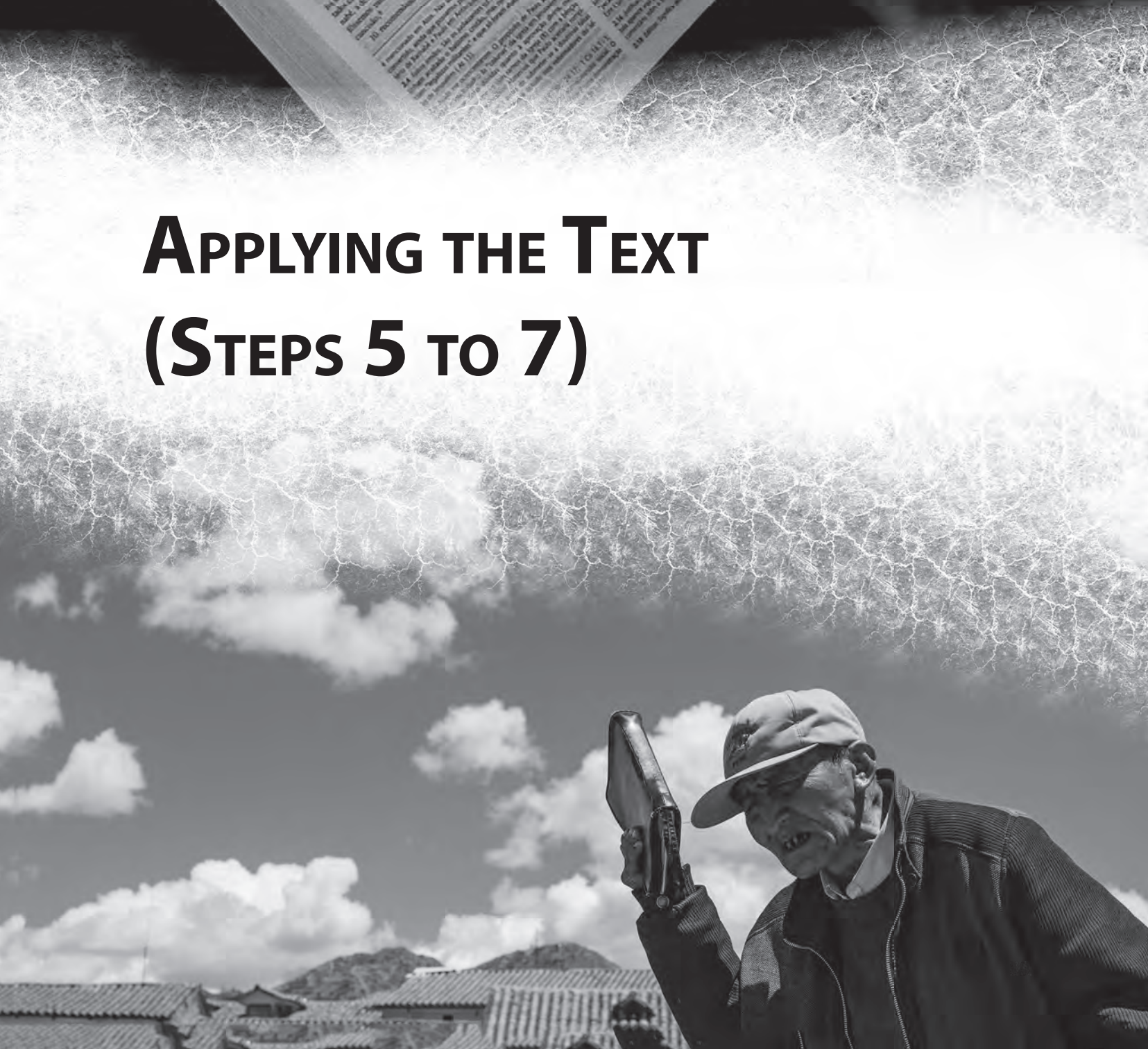
4. End by analyzing the words and phrases of the selected passage for the sermon.

- a. Make a list of words you do not understand completely and use an interpretation tool to help you understand the meaning.*
- b. Make a list of key words, verbs, names and ideas that are repeated.*
- c. See if they are written literally or figuratively.*
- d. Make a list of words that contrast or are opposites.*
- e. Write the ideas or images that come to mind when you see the key words or ideas. You can even use drawings.*



Lesson 6

APPLYING THE TEXT (STEPS 5 TO 7)



Objectives

- To discover the dynamics of the passage and consider how it applies to your life.
- To learn the steps for applying the text to your life.
- To understand how to make a simple summary of the passage.
- To put steps five to seven into practice with the selected text.

Main Ideas



- To discover the dynamics of the passage, we need to identify the actions, feelings and reactions of the characters as well as the conflicts they face.
- Applying the text to life is an indispensable spiritual discipline for preachers.
- Being able to prepare a simple summary of the story will be very helpful for preaching.

Introduction

In the three previous lessons we learned how to put steps one to four into practice for studying the section of the Bible that will be used for the sermon.

In this lesson we will learn the last three steps for completing the study, and as a result we will be ready to build the sermon. These steps are the following:

- Discover the dynamics of the text (Step 5)
- Apply the text to our lives (Step 6)
- Make a simple summary of the text (Step 7)

In the activities section, we will practice these last three steps with the text that we have chosen for our evangelistic sermon.

Discover the Dynamics of the Text (Step 5)

In this section we will explain how step five works.



The fifth step comes in two phases. The first consists of discovering the internal unity of the passage. This means to identify the purpose or goal of the author as well as the key verse.

The second phase consists of making a dynamic narration of the studied passage. This phase only applies to texts that tell a story (narratives or to those that contain teachings through parables or illustrations. When we make a dynamic narration, we are rewriting the story content in the passage while highlighting the actions, the conflicts between God and humanity, the interpersonal conflicts, the feelings of the characters, the attitudes and reactions, and the conclusions of everything that happens in the narrated story in the passage.

Let's look at the instructions for fulfilling this step and an example from the story of Joseph, found in Genesis 37 to 50:26.

“To discover the dynamics of the text one must relate the action of the story in detail.”

To discover the internal unity of the passage, do the following:

1. Write the central theme of the passage in one sentence.
2. In one phrase, write the purpose or goal the author is trying to accomplish.
3. Copy the key verse that summarizes that main teaching of the passage.

To discover the dynamics of the text we need to know the details of the actions that occur in the story. Before writing down this dynamic narration we need to follow these four steps:

1. Discover the action of the passage found in the verbs: for example- went, came, did, etc.
2. Make a list of the feelings, emotions, and reactions that you notice in the characters.
3. Ask yourself: What is the conflict or the conflicts present in the passage? Is it between God and one person? Is it between God and the people? Is it between people? Is it between nations?
4. How was the conflict resolved or what conclusion was reached?

Can you explain the term *dynamic narration* in your own words and explain why it is important when studying the passage?

An Example of Step 5 (based on Genesis 37 to 50:26).

1. Internal Unity:

- a) Main purpose: Joseph was a man chosen by God to save Israel and make it a great nation.
- b) Purpose or goal: To show that God can intervene in the lives of men and women to fulfill his plans of redemption.
- c) Key verse: Genesis 45:7 *“But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”*

2. Dynamic Narration:

“Born in Syria, Joseph travels with all his family to Canaan and there his mother dies. His father is very much afflicted by his loss. When Joseph is 17 years old, he already has his responsibilities as a man. Not only does he need to look after the flock of sheep, but he also has to bring his father a report concerning his brothers: Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Aser—all older than he.

In addition to being the center of his father’s attention, Joseph understands that God wants to put him in a place of authority over his family. He has to accept the ridicule, insults, and hatred of all his brothers. He obeys his father and goes to find his brothers in Dotham. He has a cruel welcome as his brothers sell him as a slave into pagan hands. His own brothers left him homeless, without a family, and without his father’s love. Imagine Jacob’s suffering as he hears their lie about how Joseph had been killed!

Later, when it looks like Joseph had won an important position in Potiphar's house, he is again the victim of injustice! He is accused of something he did not do, and he loses the trust of his master and is condemned. Even in prison we see Joseph's attitude to progress, to learn, and to help those who are suffering, even in the midst of his own suffering. Joseph is suffering and he does not know what God will do with him.

The years of suffering and sadness end when the God's intervenes in his life and he becomes the governor of Egypt. Imagine the excitement that Joseph feels as he prepares to meet with Pharaoh! Imagine the surprise he feels when he is named governor of Egypt. Later on we see Joseph administering and supervising a multitude of workers, making a home and enjoying all kinds of luxury in the royal court. But we can also imagine the anxiety Joseph must feel for his family, his father, and his brother Benjamin. At the end, when 20 years have passed, we can imagine his desire to hug them and run back to his father. But now, his wisdom and his desire to teach his brothers to practice brotherly love is greater and even though he is suffering, he teaches them and reaches his goal, like a loving father who looks after his children.

When he reveals himself to his brothers, it is a huge moment of the story. Joseph cries out and they are terrified of what he will do to get his revenge. But Joseph responds with love and forgiveness. Later we see Joseph caring about the wellbeing of the entire family. He takes care of them and brings them all into Egypt and moves them to the land of Goshen. He brings peace to his father in his old age, feeds his brothers and participates in his father's funeral.

At the end of his life we see that he taught his grandchildren and encouraged his brothers to trust in God's providence, to wait for the time when He will take them out of Egypt and return them to Canaan again. That's how Joseph died, full of years and even after his death receiving the gratitude of his people and his brothers in Egypt.

Joseph was a tireless leader, a diligent and efficient administrator, a bright mind, always progressing and taking advantage of every situation in life, even in old age as a loved and respected grandfather."

Apply the Text to Your Life (Step 6)

In this section we will explain what it means to apply the selected text.



In this step we will discover the practical implications of the selected portion of the Word.

This step is essential for every preacher. Here is where we let the double edged sword of the Word of God enter the depths of our being and transform us into Jesus Christ's likeness. It is the moment that with the Holy

Don't read other interpretations of the passage in commentaries until you first have personally heard God's voice in the text.

Spirit's guidance, we reflect on the teachings of the passage and how it applies to our life and the lives of those who will hear our message.

Avoid talking to others or reading interpretations or commentaries about the passage until you have listened to God's voice in the text. Only when the Word becomes flesh in us, when the teachings become life teachings in our own lives, when we have committed to put the Lord's teachings into practice, can we preach with authority.

Let's look at instructions for this step, using an example from Psalm 91.

To apply the text, ask yourself these questions:

1. How does this passage speak to me personally?
2. What are the central truths found in this passage?
3. Of the actions and reactions in the passage, which ones are similar to those of people today?
4. What is the dialogue between God and the man/woman in this passage?
5. What is the dialogue of the man/woman to God? How do we fit into this dialogue?
6. In what sphere of our personal or social life can we apply the truths of this passage?
7. What is our answer to God? How will my life change after studying this passage?

Once you have responded to all of the questions, write your reflections in first person (singular or plural). Be practical and describe how to apply it to our lives starting today. Be clear and specific, so that even a child would understand.

An Example of Step 6 (based on Psalm 91).

"Many times our human mind does not want to depend on God when we are in high pressure moments. We do not doubt God's power or his will, but we really should be asking ourselves if we are doing his will, so that he can support us in what we do.

Sometimes we believe, just like the psalmist did, if it's not a "sin," it must be pleasing to God. What a huge mistake! We forget that sin is disobedience; putting God's will aside to do our own. If you think of it in this way, how could God bless a prideful plan made by a man or woman, no matter how "good" the person is, even if the plan is to win others for Christ, if we have not waited for the Lord to approve the plan, or even better, let him be the one to inspire the plan or action?

When a person understands how carefully God looks after his sons and daughters, there is no other song more beautiful to exclaim than this Psalm of David, in which the human king humbles himself to exalt the King of

"Only when the Word becomes flesh in us, when we have applied its teachings to our own lives, and when we have committed to the Lord to put the teachings into practice can we preach with authority."

"When I read the Bible, the Bible criticizes me, I don't criticize the Bible"
(R.C. Sproul from Keven Hollaran's blog).

Heaven, recognizing God's omnipotence, omniscience, and his perfect love towards his creation.

It is also wonderful to know that the apparent happiness of sinners that Satan uses to frustrate us, is not really happiness. I could not be happy knowing my prosperity will end in death! The happiness that I want for my life is one that does not end with physical death. If we are faithful, the promise of this Psalm is, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked"(vs. 8 KJV).

It makes me happy to know that there is a God of justice who will give everyone their just reward based on their faithfulness. It is good to know that God's justice also involves his great love, and this shows his great wisdom. If it was not so, if his love had no justice, God would be a laughingstock to all of humanity because he would forgive everyone the same way and compensate everyone in the same measure.

But for me, it is a great joy to discover every day in his Word that that is not the case, and his love grows bigger and more awesome because of the justice that surrounds it. That is the God I believe and trust in, and I know that God will reward me someday."

Simple Summary of the Text (Step 7)

In this section you will learn how to make a simple summary of the passage.



To finish the study of a passage, the last step will be preparing a summary of the story in the passage. This summary will be useful when preaching the sermon, since writing it in our own words will be easier to memorize.

When we take this step we need to think about our audience. We need to pick out words that they would understand best. Tell the story in a way that will capture the attention of the hearers. Think about gestures, phrases, changes of rhythm and tone of voice when telling the story.

*When you are talking to a diverse audience it is better to use **simple language**, meaning to utilize words that people use in their daily life. Sentence structure and phrases should not be complicated.*

To make a summary, let's follow the recommendations listed:

1. Write a summary of the passage in your own words.
2. Don't use theological vocabulary or words that will be difficult for the audience to understand.
3. Write as if it were for a small child (preschooler).
4. Do not add commentaries or personal reflections. Just tell the story and the details.

Example of Step 7 (Based on Genesis 37 to 50:26).

"Joseph, the son of Jacob in his old age, is the most beloved of his father, and Joseph loves his father very much. Since Joseph was small, God has had a special purpose for his life and he revealed it to him through dreams that

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Complete step 5 with the text you have chosen for your sermon.

a. Central unity:

- Main theme:

- Purpose or goal:

- Key verse:

b. Write a dynamic narration of the passage, following the instructions of the lesson.

2. Complete step 6. Apply the text to life. Reflect on the questions included in the lesson and then write what you have learned from this passage in first person (singular or plural).

3. Complete step 7. Write a summary of the text in simple words. Read it several times out loud to keep it in your mind.

4. Finally, share the summary with the class. Use gestures and change your tone of voice, so that your audience can “see” and “feel” the story. Let your peers and the professor give recommendations at the end for improving the presentation, using the following guidelines:

- Suggest words or phrases recommended to change in order to facilitate the audience’s comprehension (think about the comprehension level of preschool children)
- Suggest ideas for presenting the story in a more interesting way for the audience.



Lesson 7

THE EVANGELISTIC INVITATION



Objectives

- To identify the characteristics of an evangelistic invitation.
- To know how to use the tools for guiding people to make a decision for Christ.
- To write an invitation for an evangelistic sermon.

Main Ideas

- The effectiveness of sharing the gospel is measured by a clear presentation of the message of salvation, and after, through an invitation which gives the opportunity for each hearer to make a decision.
- Every evangelistic campaign needs to be clear, simple, humble, and full of conviction.

David Webb, author of this lesson, has served as a missionary in the MAR region since 2006. He lives in Costa Rica with his wife, Shelley. He has helped formed eight new missional zones in Nicaragua, five in Costa Rica and three in Panama.

Introduction

Imagine an eight-year-old girl anxiously waiting for her birthday party. Her room is decorated with balloons and streamers. The cake is gorgeous, in the shape of a princess. There are clowns and other entertainment there for the guests' enjoyment. Imagine the disappointment she must feel when it is time for the party, but no one shows up. Imagine her parents as they try to explain that they forgot to send out invitations to her friends.

For most events, people usually come because they are invited. It does not matter how important the event is, no one will come if they are not invited. In the same way, we respond to the Word that has been preached at an evangelistic event when someone gives an invitation to help us make a decision. The invitation begins when we approach someone and we take them to the event so that they hear the Word. This should lead to a point where the person makes a personal decision.

That is why in this lesson we will be studying the importance of making an evangelistic invitation. In the first place, we need to value the wonderful privilege we have to invite people to come hear the Word proclaimed. Later, we will study some characteristics of the invitation that comes at the end of a sermon, so that people will respond to the message.

Without invitations, no one shows up to birthday parties, weddings, or anniversary celebrations. In the birthday party example, no one came to the party because no one was invited. Unfortunately, many times we forget to invite people to come to know Jesus. Every believer can have different talents, but every single one has authority to invite as many as possible. Let's take advantage of this great privilege!

The Essentials of Evangelism

Now we will look at what makes evangelism effective.



An attractive presentation and a clear invitation are two crucial aspects of personal evangelism. The sermon, in the same way, should have a presentation and an invitation that are clear and effective so that the hearer can make a decision to follow Christ. Every person needs to hear and understand the message of the gospel in order to be ready to make a decision to surrender his or her life to Jesus.

After sharing the truth of salvation with someone, we are ready to invite that person to enter into a personal relationship with Christ. The invitation can be made personally from the pulpit or through another form of communication. In the case of the sermon, it is important to have a clear and simple invitation that is applicable to the lives of the hearers.

Bernie Slingerland, a missionary in Mesoamerica, always says that people are generally comfortable with sharing Jesus with others, but they are not as comfortable with inviting people to come to Christ for salvation. Bernie recommends that we remember the following:

Information without an invitation = Education

Invitation without information = Exhortation

Information with an invitation = Evangelism

An evangelist in the United States surveyed people a few years ago and the results show that the average number of times a person needs to hear the gospel before accepting Christ as Lord and Savior is 7.6 times. While these statistics can vary, they bring us to an interesting point: before a believer shares his or her faith with another person, the Lord is already working in the heart of that person. When we share our faith with someone, it could be the first or fourth time that the person has heard the message of salvation. The invitation is always necessary because it is impossible to know when a heart is willing or ready to “invite” Jesus into it.

When we give an invitation, not only are we offering an opportunity for that person to say “yes” to Jesus, but we are also participating in the plan of God’s redemption. The invitation after a preaching should be clear, humble, and full of conviction.

Every person needs to hear and understand the message of the gospel to be moved to make the decision to surrender his/her life to Jesus.

Characteristics of an Invitation

“The invitation after every preaching needs to be clear, humble, and full of conviction.”

If we pay attention to these elements, the invitation will be effective.



1. Clarity

Probably the most common error made when extending an invitation at the end of a preaching is a lack of clarity. Even if a person wants to make a personal decision for Christ, he or she may not know exactly how to do that. We need to think about how to make our invitation clear and effective to help someone make a decision for Christ. We need to ask ourselves, “Do our words make sense? Are we communicating the message we want to get across in a clear and simple way?” Someone told me that he was trying to share his testimony with someone and said, “I got saved this week.” The other person said, “What were you saved from?” and he responded, “I don’t really know exactly.” This happens a lot, unfortunately. Sometimes we present a sermon about salvation and we say at the end, “Who wants to receive Jesus as your Savior?” without explaining why we need to be saved. In every sermon we need to show that there is a problem with our lives, and then we need to present the solution so that people can make a decision.

For every sermon we need to show that we have a problem in our lives and we need to offer the solution so that people can make a decision.

When we give an invitation, we need to bring the hearers to understand their need for Christ. No one is good, not even one (Romans 3:10), and that is why we all have done things that are against God’s will for our lives (Romans 3:23). Because of our sins, we need a mediator (John 14:6). To be able to enter into this relationship with God, every person needs to believe that Jesus is the only way to God and his death on the cross is the only acceptable payment for our sins (John 3:16, Romans 5:8, I Peter 2:24). When we accept Christ’s Lordship in our lives and follow him, we receive his forgiveness for our sins and a new life (I John 1:9, Mark 8:14).

In order to make a clear and effective invitation at the end of the sermon, it is good to ask direct questions that contain pertinent information, for example, “Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross and came to life again to forgive and rescue you?” “Do you want to receive the forgiveness that your life needs to reconcile with God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross?” “Are you ready to give your life and open the door of your heart to Jesus Christ?” These questions can be followed by some related verses that announce God’s promises to people who want a change in their lives. For example, if we ask people if they are ready to open the door of their heart, we can read Revelation 3:20, when Jesus says, “Here I am, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

2. Humility

During the invitation, the presenter of the gospel should remember the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, when he affirms that some plant, others sow, but God is the only one who can grow the seed. Without

Humility: *Humility is not a synonym of poverty but rather the absence of pride. It means not feeling more important or better than anyone else, no matter how educated or how many accomplishments one has achieved in a lifetime.*

the word of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people, even the best invitation will not convince a person to accept Christ. Therefore, we need to give the invitation with humility, knowing that we are not the ones who change hearts, but rather Christ is the One who invites people to have a relationship with him.

In the sermon, after giving the invitation, it is recommended that the preacher be silent a few seconds, to give the people time to reflect and be touched and moved by the Holy Spirit. This is not always easy for preachers because they are used to speaking all the time so that being silent can be uncomfortable. However, the reason for this “sacred silence” is for the Holy Spirit to work and move in the sinner, because through the invitation the person has been confronted by the need to make a decision and demonstrate this desire before other people, who will be witnesses of this commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

Many people think that they will never be good enough or that they need to fix their lives before accepting Christ. Whoever receives the gospel needs to understand that no one is worthy of the salvation that God gives, including the preacher. The apostle Paul wrote, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

Perhaps it is important to remember since as the invitation is not ours, but rather God’s, we should have a humble perspective. Just like DT Niles says, “Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”

3. Conviction

We always need to look for ways to improve our presentation of the gospel and the invitation so that people will respond to the message they heard. We also need to remember that when we do the best we can, God is in charge of the rest. We also need to know that not everyone will respond to the invitations that we make. This does not mean that we have failed in our presentation. Our success does not depend on how many people come to the altar, but rather on the simple act of proclaiming the Word of God and inviting people to enter into a relationship with Christ. God is the only One who can transform a life, and we have the promise that his Word will not come back empty (Isaiah 55:9-11).

We have to be careful not to “bribe” people in the invitation. There are preachers who make false promises like, “if you receive Christ into your heart, you will never suffer or have any problems” or “Jesus will heal you of every sickness and you and your family will never go through any more pain.”

As we know, the best decision a person can make in this life is to receive Christ, but it is not right to promise people things in return that we cannot fulfill. In fact, the traditions of the church say that every apostle was a martyr, with the exception of John. God promised that his salvation would bring peace in our lives, peace with God and freedom from a life of sin. But

“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

“Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread” (D. T. Niles).

Jesus Christ never promised a life without suffering or temptations for those who follow him. Unfortunately, when people accept Christ for the wrong reasons, they abandon him quickly when hard times come.

Conviction:
as applied to preaching,
conviction is to
demonstrate confidence in
the message based on the
truth from God's Word,
which we believe and live.

In the evangelistic invitation we need to follow Jesus Christ's example. He sought to bring people to a point of commitment. When Jesus spoke with the rich young man, he knew that material possessions were more important in his heart than cultivating a relationship with God. Jesus said that he needed to sell everything and give the money to the poor in order to serve him. This was a clear invitation, asking the young man to make an immediate decision. This invitation had to be given with love. Mark 10:21 says, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." The Lord's motivation for giving the invitation to the young man was compassion. He had compassion on him, because even though he had everything he could want materially, he did not have the most precious thing in life. Jesus invited him to cultivate a relationship with God that begins with the forgiveness of sins, and continues with the participation in eternal life with Christ. As we can see, an evangelistic invitation should come from a heart that loves people with the love of Christ.

Some preachers scare their hearers to force them to accept Christ by threatening them with hell, etc. This is not the way Jesus did it. He always came to people with a clear, humble invitation, full of love and conviction, that led people to make a decision.

An example of how to present the invitation at the end of an evangelistic sermon including the three elements would be the following:

"Jesus said he is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can come to the Father without accepting the sacrifice of his Son. The Bible also says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever and he never changes. God is love and, therefore, He loves you just as you are and today he is inviting you to experience this love by entering into a relationship with him. All you have to do is accept this invitation and open your heart so that God can enter your life and change you.

Jesus Christ already paid the price, a very high price, and is ready to help you confront the situations in your life so that you can have peace and hope. He wants to free you from the weight of sin in your life. Do you want to receive him as your Savior? If so, close your eyes and raise your hand from where you are seated. (Pause). If you raised your hand, please come forward so that we can pray for you."



WHAT DID WE LEARN?

There are two types of evangelistic invitations. The first is before an event. The second is after the preaching and it must be clear, full of humility and conviction. This way the invitation will fulfill the purpose of confronting the hearers, many of whom will become Jesus' disciples.

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. What is the importance of giving an invitation before the preaching and what is the importance of the invitation after the preaching? What is the difference?

2. Read the example invitation that was at the end of the lesson and answer these questions:

- a) Is the invitation clear? What is the specific invitation?
- b) Is it biblically based? What Bible references does it use?

3. Write three invitations that are clear and convicting. Choose three target groups from the following list or add one from your context.

- a) Campaign with indigenous people groups
- b) Auditorium with more than twenty thousand people
- c) A group of children from your community
- d) Teens (some involved in gangs)
- e) Working women who are the heads of their households
- f) Men in prison
- g) Prayer cell group in a home



Lesson 8

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



Objectives

- To know the components for the outline of a sermon.
- To analyze a model evangelistic sermon.
- To build your own evangelistic sermon.

Main Ideas

- An evangelistic sermon needs to include three components: the problem, the solution, and the decision.
- There are many ways to present a sermon, but for those who are learning the art of preaching, it is best to start off with a simple outline.

Bernie Slingerland, author of this lesson, serves as Evangelism Coordinator for MAR as of 2002. Under his leadership, 153 missional zones have been established, 723 new churches organized, 6,157 missions started, and 12 new districts started.

Simone Twibell, author of this lesson, has been a co-pastor of Grace Community Church of the Nazarene in Nicholasville, Kentucky, USA, since 2010. She and her husband Andrew have served in the MAR region as volunteer missionaries since 2012, organizing and leading Jesus Film teams.

An evangelistic sermon can be presented in various ways, but in this lesson, we will learn to come up with a simple outline of the message of salvation through three phases. These phrases embody the structure of the sermon and are called phases because they follow the logical process of the presentation. At the end of the lesson, you will have all the tools you need to construct the outline, the body, and the conclusions for your own sermon, including other essential details for making the presentation of the gospel message interesting and attractive to the audience.

Introduction

First Phase: The Outline

The first step is selecting a pertinent text and three main points.



In the previous lessons we learned that we should choose a text that speaks to us personally. For an evangelistic message, the passage needs to relate to or to present God's plan of salvation to all of humanity. Once the text is chosen and studied (using the seven steps we have learned in this book), the outline of the sermon can be constructed.

For the example that we present in this lesson, we have chosen Genesis chapters 1 to 3 using verses 8 and 9 as key verses. This portion declares a simple truth: God wants to save the world. To build an outline we use questions that will help us present the message. In this passage we will ask "Why": "Why does God want to save the world?" (In the following phases we will use questions that begin with "how" and "when").

When we ask ourselves why God wants to save humanity, we can answer using main points. The initial outline in our example will look like this:

Why does God love humanity?

1. God created a good world (Genesis 1:27-31)

becoming extinct; cities that have become massive urban centers that use natural resources in huge quantities; natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, sinkholes, droughts, storms, etc. Furthermore, as if that is not enough, the social problems have not stopped increasing: wars, drug trafficking, sexual abuse, divorce, murder, and the list goes on. Who will save the world from this situation?

God wants to save the world!

I. God created a good world (Genesis 1-2, v. 1: 27, 31)

A) In the beginning the world was in perfect condition

1. God is in the world (Gen. 1:2, 8-9)
2. Creation was good: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31a).

B) Mankind was created in God’s image, perfect and holy

1. We were made in God’s likeness
2. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27).

C) God made a pact with his creation, especially with mankind... “And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (Gen. 2:16-17).

D) God sent his Son: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

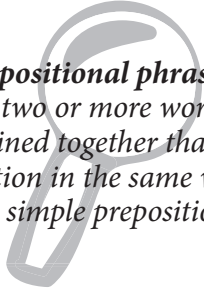
Illustration: It is a miracle when a baby is born. Think about it; this person will grow, think, walk, write, see, hear, breathe, sleep, eat, laugh, and feel. It’s amazing! The Lord made us in his image. That is why we can say that he made us very well just as he made the mountains, seas, rivers, trees, plants, stars, moon, sun, valleys, beaches, deserts, etc. It does not take much to realize that all this was also marvelously made.

Transition: Something had to have happened for the world to get to the state it is in today...

II. The world fell into sin and problems (Genesis 3:1-11, v. 6-7)

A) Sin entered the world through an act of disobedience

1. The fall of the world: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—” (Romans 5:12).



Prepositional phrases are two or more words joined together that function in the same way as a simple preposition.

2. Mankind sinned: “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Gen. 3:6).

B) As a result of Adam and Eve’s sin, all of mankind sinned

1. “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
2. “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law” (Romans 2:12).

C) We were all born inheriting the original sin and our destiny is death

1. As a result, every person has sinned and deserves to die: “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).
2. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Romans 8:22).

Illustration: When you get a computer virus you may not notice for a few days, weeks, or even months. With time, however, the computer starts slowing down and could just stop working at any moment altogether. A technician could repair it at any moment, but it has to be brought to the technician. If you do not take it on time, you could lose all the information on the computer. The same thing happens with sin. There are many people that do not realize that sin is destroying their lives little by little and that they need a technician to repair their lives. If they are not brought to Christ in time, the damage will get worse and worse.

Transition: The world had no hope after the fall, but God had mercy and sent his only son to save us...

III. God has a plan to fix this situation (Genesis 3:21-24, v.21)

A) In the past, God sent leaders and prophets. Later, he sent his Son to save mankind from sin.

1. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).
2. Jesus Christ (God) was born in the world: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you” (Luke 2:11a).
3. Jesus Christ is the Son of God: “And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11).
4. Jesus Christ is the Messiah/Savior: “Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:11b).

B) God was present in the garden to rescue Adam and Eve

1. He came searching and calling out to humanity (3:8-9)

Examples of prepositional phrases:

- Due to > functions as the preposition word “for”
- Next to > by
- With respect to > about
- In favor of > for
- On top of > over, on
- In order to > to
- In view of > for
- As a result of > for
- In front of > before
- In the midst of > between
- By virtue of > by

2. He confronted sin (3:10-20)
3. He made a sacrifice with animals (Gen. 2:21-24)
4. Humanity survived (Gen. 3:24)
5. But they would not have eternal life (Gen. 3:24)

C) Jesus is the only way to reach God (John 14:6). Jesus Christ came to rescue the world. He became human like us, confronted sin, and destroyed its power through his death and resurrection.

1. Jesus gives us victory: “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1: 13-14).

2. Jesus Christ resurrected: “He has risen from the dead” (Matthew 28:7).

3. Jesus is the only way to eternal life. “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

4. We are not saved by works... “not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:9).

Transition: The victory over sin and death is possible with Jesus Christ, but it depends on you!

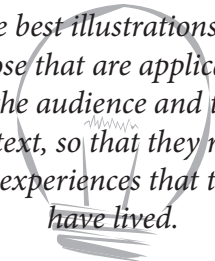
Illustration: George’s excuse was, “I’m a good person!” Inside he was thinking, “I don’t have peace about my destiny after death.” After hearing the message of salvation, he prayed asking for forgiveness for his sins and receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. After the prayer, he joyfully exclaimed, “I have peace with God!” George’s life changed when he realized that God wanted to save him from his sins and that he had made the right decision.

The same thing can happen in your life today. The Lord wants to save you!

Conclusion:

The offer for salvation is open to us today. The Lord is waiting with open arms to save you and give you new life, free from the power of sin and eternal death.

1. God made you and loves you. You are a marvelous creation and unique to God.
2. You have a problem, though. There is sin in your life and you need God’s forgiveness. You need to leave behind your life of sin and begin a new life in Jesus Christ.
3. God has the solution to the problem of sin in your life: His name is



The best illustrations are those that are applicable to the audience and their context, so that they relate to experiences that they have lived.

Jesus Christ. He is here today. He wants to forgive you and cleanse you from sin. He wants to be Lord of your life and guide you to living a life free from the power of sin.

Please, repeat this prayer ...

It is a good idea to practice your sermon in front of a mirror, or video or record yourself. That way, you can correct your gestures, eye contact, voice variations, and movements.

*Jesus Christ, you are my Savior.
Jesús, you died on the cross to save me from my sins.
That is why I accept your forgiveness for my sins by faith.
Jesus, I know that you are the only way to Heaven.
Come into my heart with your Holy Spirit.
In your name I pray, Amen!*

Invitation: If you prayed this prayer, we invite you to come forward so we can pray for you.

Model of an Expository Sermon

In this section, you will find an example of an expository sermon.



The expository sermon is constructed by explaining and narrating the story of the passage and then sharing life lessons from the text. The following model is based on Luke 19:1-10. This passage is the story of Zacchaeus and the conversation he had with Jesus when they arrived at Zacchaeus' home. You will notice that this style is very different from what we studied so far since it narrates the story in a way that audiences can enjoy. This style is recommended for a contemporary audience and is also appropriate for children, youth, the elderly and those with lower educational level. Let's read and "hear" the story of salvation in this message:

First Part: Mention the people and the context of the passage

The chapter begins with these words: "Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through." On this occasion, Jesus is found on the road to Jerusalem. He had been travelling for months with the goal of arriving to Jerusalem, but for various reasons, he had been delayed. The closer he got to Jerusalem, the larger the crowds were who wanted to see the man that so many were following.

The streets of Jericho were lined with sycamore trees, which looked like fig trees that grew to a height of 10 or 12 meters and provided shade for the travelers of this time period.

Second Part: Present the main character

"A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus" (v. 2). Zacchaeus is a Hebrew name which means "pure" or "just." However, Zacchaeus was not considered pure or just. As we have read, the citizens of Jericho hated him

and the reason is given in verse two and it has to do with his position in the society. What was Zacchaeus' position? He was a tax collector; one who might be considered part of the Internal Revenue Service today. I have never met anyone who has said, "It is my dream to be a tax collector!" However, the career today is a very good career in comparison to what it was during this time.

In Palestine, the tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Roman government. This means that they collected taxes from their own people to sustain the government that had invaded their land. For this reason, they were seen as traitors. But here we see that Zacchaeus was the boss of the tax collectors and had taken advantage of his position to enrich himself by taking the people's money. Even though he was a rich man with a high social position, Zacchaeus was not a happy man.

Third Part: Zacchaeus overcame obstacles to see Jesus

The next verse is very important to understand the development of the story because it says that Zacchaeus "...wanted to see who Jesus was" (v. 3). Surely Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus' miracles such as healing the blind and raising the dead to life. When he heard that Jesus was passing by, perhaps he thought that Jesus could help him make sense of his life. In my opinion, he wanted to see Jesus because he had the hope that he could be accepted by someone.

In verse three it says that there were two things that were making it difficult to see Jesus: the crowd and his height. It is possible that Zacchaeus was risking his life to try to see Jesus, and this shows his determination. Perhaps he tried to make his way through the crowd, but the crowd pushed him away. Then he looked up and saw that he could climb the tree to be able to see Jesus.

The tree symbolizes all that we use to overcome that which can become an obstacle to seeing Jesus clearly. What things are you willing to overcome to see Jesus? Perhaps there are many people in your way that are blocking your view of Jesus, perhaps it is pressure from your family, perhaps it is your work or some other priorities. There are a multitude of things that can block our vision. Whatever it is, there are no obstacles that cannot be overcome. We know this because the Bible says. "For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:8).

Zacchaeus "ran ahead" (v. 4a). Adult men did not run in these days, especially important men. However, this did not matter to Zacchaeus. The most important thing was seeing Jesus. So, he climbed the tree so he could see.

A few years ago, a student and a teacher walked together through a town. The student asked the teacher, "Teacher, how can I find the Lord?" The teacher answered the student, "Come with me to the river. We will get in the water and I will show you." As they entered the water, the teacher grabbed

the young man, put his head under water and held him there for a short time. When he let him go, the young man came out of the water quickly and tried to breath in the air. Then the teacher told him, “When you want to find the Lord as much as you just desired air, you will find the Lord!”

Fourth Part: Zacchaeus opens his home to the Lord

“When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today” (v. 5). Jesus knows your name! He knew everything about Zacchaeus: the heartache, his needs and also his potential. Jesus did not only tell him to come down, but also, he told him that he wanted to go to his house. Zacchaeus could have said no. He could have given an excuse to Jesus. But instead, he came down quickly and changed his attitude. He was happy that someone of such importance would want to be his friend.

It is the same with each one of us. Jesus knows our names. Can you imagine if Jesus wanted to come to our homes? I don't know about you, but I would have to give the house a thorough cleaning before receiving Jesus. But that should not be my excuse because Jesus never sees the external, but instead he focuses on the internal. If our lives are dirty, there is no one better than Jesus to clean it up! When we hear Jesus calling, we have two options. We can accept his invitation or deny him entrance. Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Rev. 3:20). Are you hearing his call?

Fifth Part: Zacchaeus' life is transformed

As a result, Zacchaeus said to Jesus, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor” (v. 8a). In other words, Zacchaeus was saying, “I do not want to be the same, and I am going to try to correct all the damage I have caused the people.” Zacchaeus was not obligated to do anything, but he felt so repentant about what he had done that it caused this impressive action. Zacchaeus' attitude is a beautiful demonstration of what true repentance looks like. The word “repentance” comes from the Greek word “metanoia” which means to change the way of being or thinking. Repentance means that one is transformed to the point of making true changes in the life! Zacchaeus responded to the love of Christ in an unexpected way: he gave half of his belongings to the poor and said that he would pay back four times everyone he had cheated.

Sixth Part: The call

Just as he did for Zacchaeus, Jesus wants to bring salvation to your home, and he wants to give it to you today. “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Christ is seeking us and wants to save us, but he cannot until we accept his invitation so he can come to our home. Just as Zacchaeus repented of his sins and gave his life to Jesus, in this same way the Lord is calling today, will you invite him to stay in your home? He wants

Activities

Time

20'

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Design your evangelistic sermon using the passage you have selected and studied in the previous lessons. Use the model from the lesson and the following form to guide you.

Title

Passage:

Key Verse:

Context:

Initial illustration:

1. First main point

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

Illustration:

Transition:

2. Second main point

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

Illustration:

Transition:

3. Third main point

A) _____

B) _____

C) _____

Illustration:

Transition:

Conclusion:

Invitation:

Final Evaluation

Time



COURSE: THE EVANGELISTIC SERMON

Name of Student: _____
Church or Study Center: _____
District: _____
Instructor: _____
Date of this evaluation: _____

1. *What makes the evangelistic sermon different from other types of sermons?*

2. *Mention three important aspects that every preacher should take into account when speaking to an audience.*

3. *Explain the studying and preparation that occurs before the sermon is written.*

4. *What did you learn in the practical ministry component of this course?*

5. *In your opinion, how could this course be improved?*

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