

Preaching Day
Terrington St Clement, June 3, 2017
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A. Defining our purpose

A reminder of the Nehemiah 8 passage:

1. The Word of God: the heart of preaching
2. The teacher: the task of preaching
3. The congregation: the purpose of preaching

Defining preaching

David Jackman: *'This is what preaching is all about; it is not just simply laying out the truth of the message, but it is the invasion of the living God through his word into the mind, heart and will of the hearer.'*

John Stott: *To preach is to open up the inspired text with such faithfulness and sensitivity that God's voice is heard and God's people obey him.*

The five elements interacting in the dynamic of preaching

Situation – Message – Teacher – Hearers – the Holy Spirit

The Word is central: preach on the passage, the whole passage, and nothing but the passage!

The preacher is engaging in a conversation with the passage, with the Lord, and with the congregation. So **prayer** is a fundamental ingredient.

The five looks of Bible study (paper 1)

- Look up: because it is the Word of God
- Look down: because it is the words of human beings
- Look back and forward: because God has given us the Bible as a whole
- Look here: because God still speaks through his Word today

B. Introducing the journey from the Bible passage to the sermon

See **PAPER 2 'From text to sermon'** which introduces our task and gives a model

TEXT

The **meat** of the text – examining the details of the passage

The **bones** of the text – looking for the structure or shape of the passage

The **heart** of the text – discovering the theme or heartbeat of the passage

The **bridge** - what will be the main thrust of this sermon that will communicate the main point of that text to these people?

SERMON

Heartbeat – main theme or purpose statement for this message

Skeleton – an outline structure or shape for the message

Flesh – the explanation, illustrations, examples that fill out the message

C. Understanding the passage

GOD SPOKE ... TO THEM ... FOR US

1. Where the text fits

- **The Bible is a library:** different types of Biblical literatures. Listening to a conversation between the Bible author and the original listeners, identifying and rightly interpreting the type of speech they used.
- **The Bible is history:** as we listen into the conversation – what is the context, who is the author, what is the historical background and situation....
- **The Bible is a unity:** many human authors, one divine author. So we expect harmony and unity. We interpret scripture by scripture; we use clearer texts to shed light on difficult texts; we see how each text fits the wider Biblical picture.

2. What the text says

See PAPER 3 'Studying a Bible passage'

Exegesis: explaining, making clear, setting out what the original writer meant to say to the people to whom he was speaking/writing at the time. *We don't ask 'what does this text mean for me now?' until we have understood as best we can 'what did this text mean for them then?'*

a) Understanding the passage in context

What type of literature is it?
What is the context?

b) Understanding the passage in detail (exegesis)

Are there significant words or ideas to check?
Are there images and metaphors?
Using our senses!
What are the units of thought?
Is there a structure or flow of thought?
What is the main theme or point the author is making?
What was the original meaning of this passage?

c) Understanding the passage in relation to the whole Bible

An example: Habakkuk 3:16-19

- Type of literature
- Context for Habakkuk's doxology
- Words, images...
- Flow of thought
- Main theme
- Other parts of the Bible?

Summarizing the main theme of the passage as clearly as possible

D. Building a bridge from the text to sermon

See PAPER 2 'From text to sermon' which we have already introduced

Crafting the message

1. The heart – purpose, theme, intention

We have worked on the passage and tried to understand its original meaning. Now we ask: what does it mean to us now? It is essential to clarify exactly what the main thrust of your sermon will be. What is it primarily about? What do you want to communicate that expresses the heart of the text you have studied?

2. The bones – the structure or framework

Why have a structure or conceptual framework?

i) Helping the listeners

- It helps them see the significance of the text
- It helps them concentrate
- It helps them remember

ii) Helping the preacher

- It makes for careful preparation
- It guides our preaching

There are different types of structure, or outline, or concept.

The worked example of Habakkuk 3:16-19

Main theme and divisions?

3. Putting flesh on the bones

See PAPER 4 Working on a sermon outline

- The primacy of the heartbeat, the main theme
- The link between each point and the main theme
- The issues which need explaining
- Other supporting Bible references
- The examples I can use
- The application I can bring

The importance of application

- Direct – as we saw when thinking of the dynamic of preaching, the goal of preaching is transformation. So application is best when direct and definite.
- Personal – the message needs to take root, so that each hearer senses it is for him or her.
- Sustained – ideally throughout the message.

The purpose of the introduction

- Gaining a hearing
- The two contexts of the Bible and the world of the listeners
- Building the bridge to the main theme

The place of illustration and example

- Bible illustrations
- 'Windows that let the light in'
- 'Don't punch people with a raw idea: shake their hand with an example'

The discipline of the conclusion

- Summarising the theme
- Bringing it home
- Keeping it short!

Remembering our purpose: *Christian preaching is the event of God bringing to an audience a Bible-based, Christ-related, life-impacting message of instruction and direction from himself through the words of a spokesperson. (Jim Packer)*

THE DYNAMICS OF BIBLICAL PREACHING
The example of Nehemiah 8:1-12

A. The Word of God: the heart of preaching

Its centrality

Its authority

Some implications for preachers

1. Biblical preaching must be centred on God's Word
 2. Biblical preaching must be immersed in God's Word
 3. Biblical preaching must expound God's Word
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B. The teacher: the work of preaching

Make it accessible

Make it clear

Working together

Some implications for preachers

4. Biblical preaching must be focussed
 5. Biblical preaching must be clear
 6. Biblical preaching must be relevant
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C. The congregation: the purpose of preaching

They were expectant

They were serious

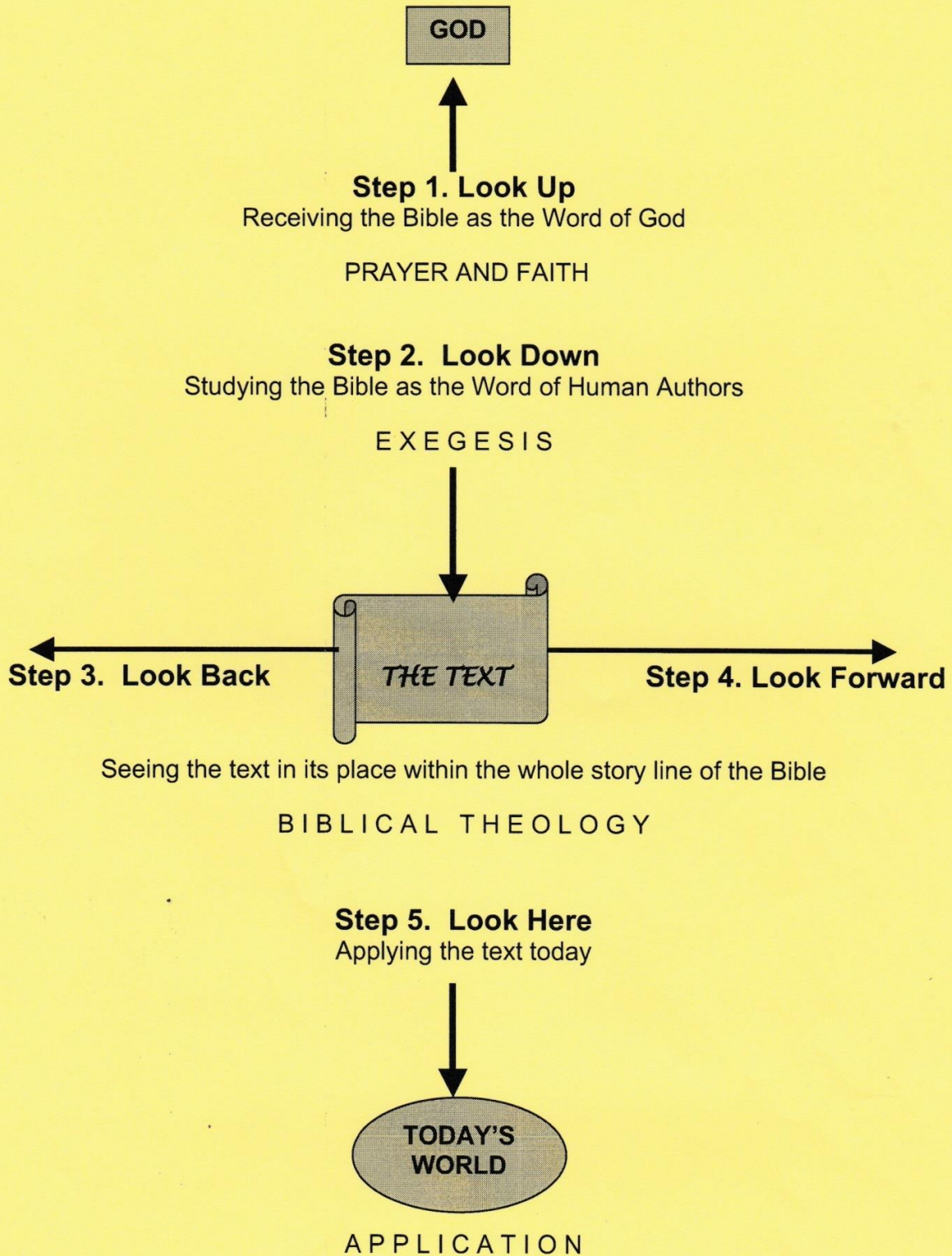
They were obedient

Some implications for preachers

7. Biblical preaching must call for change
 8. Biblical preaching must engage the listener
 9. Biblical preaching must proclaim God's grace in Christ
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Paper 1

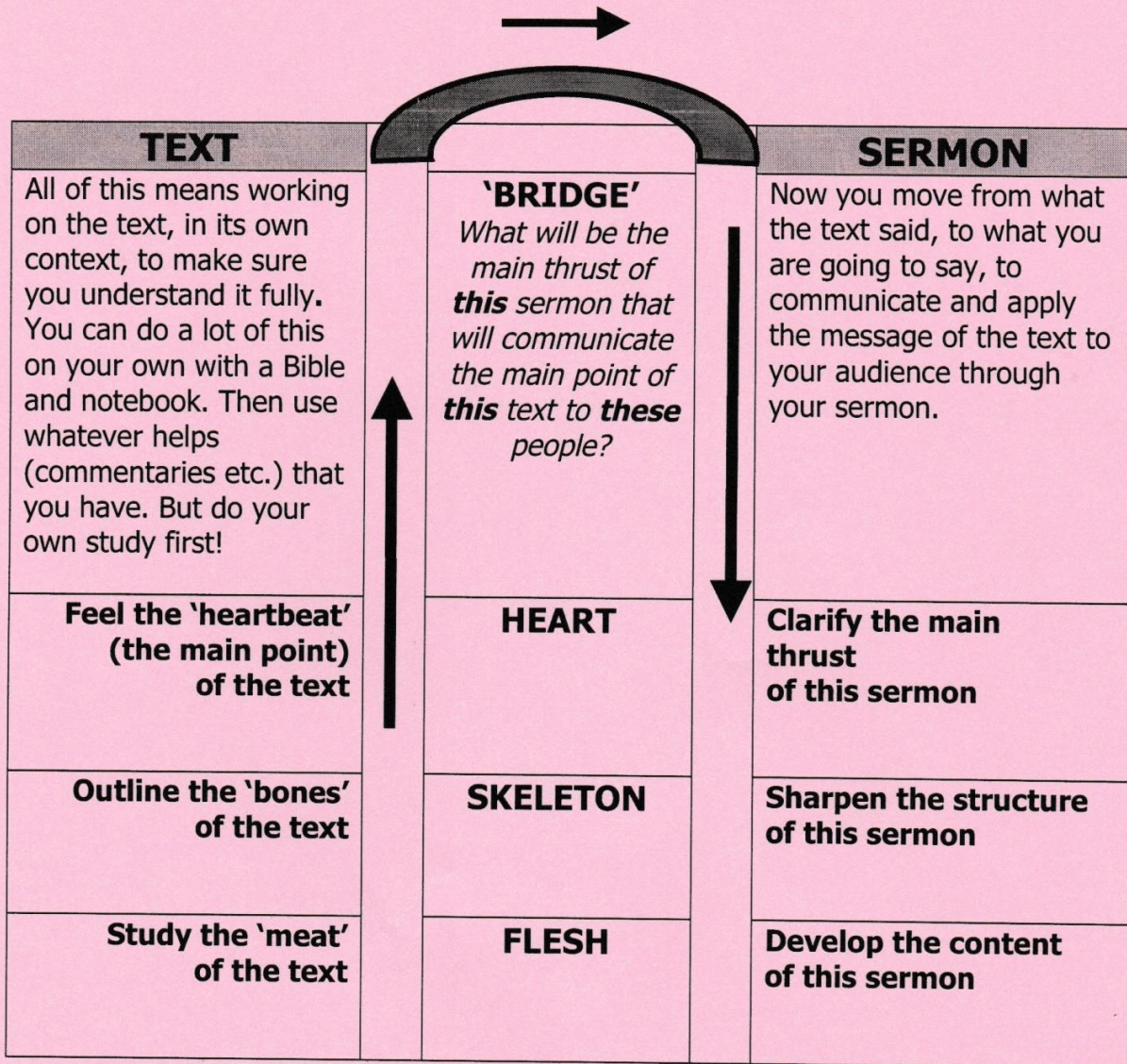
THE 'FIVE LOOKS' OF BIBLE STUDY



[Indebted to Andrew Reid, Ridley College, Melbourne]

Paper 2
'From text to sermon'

Passage: _____



START – study the text

FINISH – preach the sermon!

Indebted to Ramesh Richard : *Scripture Sculpture* (Baker)

Paper 3: Studying a Bible passage

Text: _____

1. Understanding the passage in context		
Kind of literature	Historical context (author, situation, people)	Editorial context (what comes before and after)
2. Understanding the passage in detail (exegetis)		
Key words, emphases, contrasts, links...etc FLESH	Outline structure and flow of thought SKELETON	Main theme, main point of the author HEART
3. Understanding the passage in relation to the whole Bible : connections with other Bible passages and teaching		

Paper 4
Working on a Sermon Outline

Text: _____

Summarise the 'heartbeat' of the passage, the main point of your message (this should also affect your introduction and conclusion)

Verses:	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
What is the link with the main theme?			
What must I explain?			
What other Bible references, if needed?			
What examples could I give?			
What application should I bring?			

Paper 5: Workshop notes

Passage: 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Closing session:

Personal study
Group discussion
Plenary discussion
Conclusions

1. Personal Study: read the passage carefully several times. Your main task is to understand the Bible passage, as outlined below.

Ask yourself the following questions, and make some notes of your answers, to take to the group discussion

1. What kind of writing is this?
2. What is the context of this passage? How does that help me to understand what it is about?
3. What was the situation of the original author and listeners (readers)?
4. What is the passage talking about? What is the flow of thought or argument? Make an outline of the passage, summarizing what it says.
5. What is the main point that the author was trying to make to the original hearers/readers in this passage? What is the 'heartbeat' of this text? Try to summarize it in a single sentence.

2. Group discussion: your task as a group is to begin to move from the Bible passage to a simple Bible message. There are 2 areas to cover

- i) Discuss the observations you have made in your personal study, in answer to the questions above. Try to agree on answers to questions 4 and 5. That is, what is the main point, the central thrust, of this text? Try to be specific and avoid vague generalizations.
- ii) Discuss possible outlines for a sermon. Try to develop a simple structure of points or headings that will faithfully reflect what the text says. If you have time, try to have points or headings that are short and simple and easy to remember.

3. Discussion

We hope to have time to discuss together what our groups discovered, and also draw some conclusions from the passage about our own Christian service.

Paper 6

Checklist for evaluating a sermon

A. Faithfulness

1. Did the sermon express the main point of the passage of the Bible that was preached from?
2. Did the sermon stay close to the text that was being preached from and explain what the original author meant?
3. If other Bible texts were referred to, did they throw helpful light on the main text of the sermon, or did they distract from it and confuse people?
4. Was the sermon faithful to the overall message of the biblical faith? That is, was it balanced and true to the whole of Scripture, or did the preacher misuse the text to push a narrow or unbalanced message that would not be supported by the rest of the Bible?

B. Clarity

1. Was the message clear?
2. **If so**, what methods did the speaker use to make the structure of the sermon clear?
3. **If not**, how could the speaker have made it more clear?
4. How did the speaker help you to follow and remember what was said?

C. Relevance

1. How did the preacher build bridges from the world of the biblical text preached from, to the world of today?
2. Were any illustrations that were used appropriate to your own context and helpful in explaining the relevance of the text? (or inappropriate and irrelevant!)
3. In what other ways would you have applied this text if you had been preaching it?