LETTING THE BIBLE SPEAK

ENGAGING THE BIBLICAL TEXT
EVERY PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE IS ABOUT . . .

- Something ...
- Something important to be understood and communicated ...
- Something important to be understood and communicated about God ...
- Something important to be understood and communicated about God that can transform lives.
ENGAGING THE TEXT IN THE STUDY
Carefully examining the text for whatever information it contains on the subject it addresses and seeking to discern the universal principles thus revealed.

- Subject - revealed by the text of Scripture
- Purpose of study - to reveal the biblical author’s ideas
PURPOSES OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

▸ To see what is in the text.
▸ To let the text speak on its own terms.
▸ To discover the timeless truths of the text.
▸ To direct your research.
▸ To develop a sermon that is text-driven and Christ-centered.
ENGAGING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

VALUES OF INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

- You can get to work whether you are inspired or not.
- You are a first-hand user of the primary documents - the words of Scripture.
- You are less dependent on the interpretations of others.
- You will have more passion for truth you have discovered yourself.
- You will be more receptive to the Holy Spirit.
- You will be more creative in your communication of the text’s meaning and application.
PHASE 1: READ THE TEXT

- Read the text over and over.
- First, in the translation you will use for preaching.
- Then, in a few other translations for comparison.
- Reading the passage out loud often helps in understanding.
- In most cases, a paragraph of Scripture is ideal for one sermon.
PHASE 2: MAKE IMMEDIATE OBSERVATIONS

- Look at the details of each verse of the text to see what you can discover on your own.

- “It’s amazing what you can see just by looking!”
TYPES OF OBSERVATIONS

- Significant words
- Verb tenses
- Repetition
- Figures of speech
- Historical and cultural references
- Progression of thought
- Theological themes
1 The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.

2 Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.

3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.

4 Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!

5 Your decrees are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore.
OBSERVATIONS OF PSALM 93 (PART 1)

- “LORD” – indicates Yahweh. Covenant language.
- “The Lord reigns” – declarative. All other statements in Psalm seem to refer back to this first truth.
- “Robed in majesty, etc.” – figurative language, comparing the Lord’s reign to a garment.
- “Of old” and “from everlasting” – related concepts.
- “Floods have lifted up” – seems to be referring to a specific event. Flood of Noah? Significant flood in Israel’s history? Flood as a symbol for calamity or turmoil?
“Decrees are very trustworthy” – God’s reign connected to the need for His people to trust and obey Him.

“Holiness befits your house” – Moral and spiritual response to God’s reign. Some connection to the temple.

Repeated words: LORD, robed, established, floods, lifted, mightier
PHASE 3: ASK INTERPRETIVE QUESTIONS

- Your observations will prompt questions about the language, grammar, history, and theology of the passage.

- Asking basic questions directs your study so that you don’t waste time “wandering around” commentaries or other study helps.

- Involves asking about definitions, background, theological concepts, cross-references, among other issues.
TYPES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. **Journalistic questions.** Basic fact-finding.

2. **Definition questions.** What do significant words mean?

3. **Cross-reference questions.** Where do these ideas appear elsewhere in Scripture?

4. **Context questions.** How does this passage fit in with the passages around it, the book it is in, and the whole Bible?
PHASE 4: RESEARCH YOUR QUESTIONS

- Answer questions to understand the author’s intended meaning.
- Commentaries are helpful but should not be the first resources you consult.
- A Bible software program such as Logos or a Bible study website such as biblegateway.com or preceptaustin.org can be helpful in answering questions.
PHASE 5: DETERMINE YOUR PREACHING MATERIAL

- Inductive study will yield more material than you will need for the sermon.
- It is more blessed to edit than to pad!
- Always serve results, not processes.
ENGAGING THE TEXT IN THE PULPIT
EXPLANATION OF THE TEXT

- Makes facts and ideas of the Bible passage clear to the listener
- Clarifies ideas that are fuzzy, unknown, or misunderstood
- Explanation seeks to ...
  - ... define biblical words and theological concepts
  - ... teach new information
  - ... remove false notions
EXPOSITION BEGINS WITH EXPLANATION

“Transformation comes through the commitment of the mind. Without the proper knowledge and thinking, we have no basis for personal change and growth” – Bill Hull, *Right Thinking*

“The unique contribution of Bible exposition is its substantial enhancement of the listeners’ comprehension of Scripture’s intent.” – Robert L. Thomas, *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*
EXPOSITORY PREACHING IS INSTRUCTIVE

- The pastoral office is equated with teaching in Ephesians 4:11
- The preacher continually addresses people who do not know the most basic Bible truths
- Long-time Christians need reminding of Bible truths
- Old truths explained in new ways help the listener understand
UNDERSTANDING: THE GOAL OF EXPLANATION

- Some passages are misunderstood by listeners
- Certain words may be unfamiliar
- Relationships between words may be unclear
- Listeners are distant from Bible history, geography, and culture
- Explanation bridges the gaps between the then and the now, between the unknown and known
ENGAGING THE BIBLICAL TEXT

METHODS OF EXPLANATION

- Definition — telling the meaning of a word
- Division — breaking complicated ideas into their simpler parts
- Exemplification — giving a specific example of a general principle
- Comparison — showing similarity between a known idea and a new one
- Narration — retelling the biblical story
- Background — giving historical and cultural context of the Bible text
- Paraphrase — putting the words of Scripture in your own words