

Preparing to Teach the Bible—Step by Step

Part 1—Understanding the passage

Pray

Read the passage several times

Context

*What has just come before this passage?
What has just come after this passage?
Where does this passage fit in the book?*

Observe (Who, what, where, when)

*What sort of literature is this?
Who are the main people involved?
Where and when is the action / writing
happening?
What facts are being taught?
What instructions are given?
What warnings or promises are given?
What examples are given?*

Structure

*Repeated words or ideas
Later verses which relate to earlier verses
Link words or phrases (e.g. "Therefore", "but",
"For", "And then he went . . .")?
Logical sections
Can you summarise the logical flow?
Topic sentence or key verse*

Meaning of words

*List the important words
What do the words mean?
(Use English dictionaries / Bible
dictionaries)*

...Remember that meaning depends on context

Background

*History (Bible dictionaries / commentaries)
Geography (Atlas)*

...Remember not to spend too much time on this

Difficulties

*Your own difficulties
Potential difficulties in your group / audience*

...Remember that you don't have to solve everything

Main message: 'By the end of this talk / lesson / study I want the people I am teaching to learn that ...'

One simple sentence (not just a 'subject')

Impact

*How this passage changes our thinking
How this passage changes our feelings
How this passage changes our actions*

Part 2—Preparing to teach the passage...

...in a discussion group

Who is in the group?

Age, level of understanding, motivation

Review the main message

*All questions should build up to the main
message*

Observation questions

*Based on your observations (see above)
Easy
Open*

Interpretation questions

*Based on your understanding of the structure,
meaning of words and difficulties (see
above)*

Summary questions

*Based on your summary of the logical flow,
topic sentence and main message (see
above)*

Impact questions

*Based on your understanding of the impact
(see above) and the group*

Launching question

*Purposeful—introduces the main point
Interesting and relevant to the people in the
group
Easy—so everybody can have a go*

...by giving a talk

Who are you speaking to?

Age, level of understanding, motivation

What convinced you that the main message was the main message?

*This will give you a series of points
(hint: Each point will probably take 5 minutes)
Perhaps use your logical flow summary (above)*

For each point:

Say it

Show where you found it in the passage

Explain it

*Perhaps use your understanding of meaning of
words, background and difficulties (see above)*

Illustrate it

Show how the point is 'like' something we all know

Apply it

Use your understanding of the 'impact'

Then put the talk together:

Prepare an introduction

*Purposeful—introduces the main point
Interesting and relevant to the audience*

Prepare a conclusion

Practise the talk

Tips for Teaching the Bible—Delivery

Tips for Leading a Bible Discussion Group

Do...

- Keep interacting with the Bible. Keep everybody's attention on what is actually in the Bible, and what that means in their lives
- Welcome pauses, especially near the beginning of the time in the group. If you have asked a question, and nobody responds straight away, hopefully that means that they're thinking about it and looking at the Bible to see what it says. Don't try to "fill the vacuum" by saying anything - this will just distract their attention.
- Value every contribution, but not equally. Be interested in everybody in the group; after all, you are in a relationship with them. Gently correct people if they say something that is definitely wrong, not by jumping in and correcting them (a sure way to shut everybody else up!) but by trying to get other people to respond, or by probing further, and helping them to understand for themselves where they are wrong.
- (Titus 2:7-8) In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Don't...

- Don't answer questions straight away. Instead, try to get the group thinking of the answers by looking at the Bible. For example, if somebody asks a question, you might want to point them to a particular part of the passage (or even read it out) and ask them what the Bible is saying about it. Or you might want to ask the rest of the group about it - often another member of the group knows the answer. Help people as much as possible to understand what the Bible is saying, but don't just hand out answers.
- Don't get caught out focussing on one talkative person at the expense of others. Make sure everybody becomes a part of the discussion.
- Don't just sit back and let the discussion run away. You must always be directing people back to the Bible and the main message which you have discovered from reading it.

Tips for giving a talk

- Try to be concrete as much as possible rather than abstract, especially in your illustrations. A good talker will paint a picture in your mind. Saying something like "the car went down the road" is much less effective than "the black porsche raced down the highway". Make sure that when doing this you are still being faithful to the Bible.
- Repeat yourself in interesting ways, especially when you're stating important points. The more times you say the same thing, the more chance that the people listening to you will take in what you're trying to tell them. There are a lot of ways to repeat yourself without being boring. One way is just to say the same sentence twice, the second time more slowly. Or pause, let what you've said sink in and allow your listeners to repeat what you've said in their own minds. You may want to rephrase what you've just said, putting a new slant on it.
- Some analyses have shown that the casual listener takes in only about 10% of what he or she hears. So if you've stated your main message in different ways at least ten times during your talk, there's a good chance that your listeners will get it!

- In a *word processor*, I can use different type styles to **emphasise** what I'm communicating. When *speaking*, we can use changes in speed, voice pitch, loudness, gestures, etc to make our talks interesting and bring out important points.
- Usually it's best to speak at about half the speed you think you should. Remember that you know your own talk very well, but your listeners will be hearing it for the first time.
- Before you start, make sure that everything around you is organised and in its right place, that you are comfortable and that you know what the first thing you are going to say is. Take a few breaths, and then begin.
- Listen to and watch good speakers and analyse what they're doing. What makes them effective?
- PRACTISE!!!