



**KNOX CENTRE  
FOR MINISTRY  
& LEADERSHIP  
TE WHARE MAIRE**

# Taking Steps on the Journey A Preaching Workshop



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# The Spirituality of the Preacher

If disciples' lives could be described by using the various types of Scripture, we might say the following about people:

## GOSPELS

Your life in Christ and witness is marked by a particular focus on Jesus and the Kingdom with grit, wonder, confrontation, grounded presence, courage, and love.



## LETTERS (EPISTLES)

Your life in Christ and witness is marked by a considered approach with a rhythm of doctrine and ethics. Your approach to the Christian faith runs deep and wide with a clear context in view.



## PARABLES

Your life in Christ and witness is told by means of strong points of reference in life which naturally and immediately involve people in such a way that either revelation and/or bewilderment results.

## APOCALYPTIC (E.G. PARTS OF DANIEL; BOOK OF REVELATION)

Your life in Christ and witness is of a rarer and definitely riskier flavour. You have strong leanings towards eschatology, mystery, symbol, metaphor and images. Your approach to the Christian life is more circular than linear.



## NARRATIVE

Your life in Christ and witness gravitates to a story-like feel and movement. You are swept up, gripped by and passionate about telling THE Story and being immersed in story. Story-telling fuels your soul and impacts your listeners.

## POETRY

Your life in Christ and witness has a musical feel to it. Your way of speaking of Christ is rich, dynamic, beautiful, emotive, descriptive, visual, purposeful, intentional, careful, powerful – heartfelt and soulful.



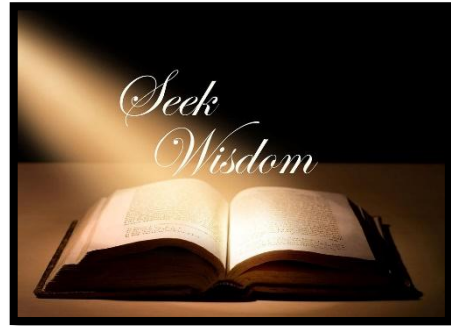


## PROPHETS

Your life in Christ and witness has a sense of immediacy and, oft-times, urgency to it. You possess the ability to be insightful and incisive; possibly confronting and disconcerting. There is a sense of force in your words.

## WISDOM

Your life in Christ and witness is disarming and models the aspect of Wisdom literature which deals with the ordinariness and extraordinariness of life. However, your experience of God has the distinguishing feature of the quiet and life-giving ways by which God works in and through events but can be easily missed (e.g. Joseph's story Gen 38-50; the Book of Ruth). This can be the disorientating, and at times distressing, feature of the Wisdom life; God seems absent in the swirling stresses of life events. Yet the feature of the Wisdom life is God actively working behind the scenes and in the midst of the events.



Which type of Scripture comes closest to describing your life as a disciple of Jesus?

# Biblical Literacy/Illiteracy<sup>1</sup>



## Biblical Literacy

Biblical literacy refers to how well people know the content, shape, and core themes of the Bible. It may also include how comfortable they are at using that knowledge to shape their faith and life.

Here are a few things that can shape the level of Biblical literacy possessed individuals and communities.

01

## Preaching & Worship (1)

The preaching and messages heard and songs sung in worship have become disconnected from Scripture. What is heard and sung are sound Scriptural, but lack the content and authority of Scripture. Scripture not read or heard in the context of worship.

02

## Preaching & Worship (2)

The preaching and messages in church are aimed at creating an emotional reaction without a deeply visible Scriptural basis for those messages and how it's communicated. Outside of the experience of worship there is little to connect Scripture to.

03

## Preaching & Worship (3)

The preaching and messages in church reinforce a particular status quo. Scripture and its content are subverted to achieve that. The Bible speaking truthfully and critically into that cultural context, and that of the church, is silenced or misrepresented.



04

## Too Hard

Engaging with Scripture is seen as too hard and taking too much time. This can lead to overly simplistic engagement with the Bible and reading bits of the Bible out of context. Broader Biblical themes (e.g. forgiveness, justice) can get ignored or lost.



05

## Confidence

Church leaders may have little or no training in prayerfully and thoughtfully reading Scripture, and if they do, they might not have continue to develop and resource that once they are leaders. They may not be confident reflecting deeply on Scripture.



06

## Role Models

The relevance of Scripture in faith and life is best seen in good role models who faithfully live out the Christian life through loving God, loving neighbour, and loving their enemies. A lack of good examples to follow can undermine trust in the relevancy of Scripture for faith and life.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Stephen Garner, formerly academic dean of Laidlaw College (Auckland).

07

## Experiences

The experience of people using Scripture in ways that have hurt or marginalised individuals and communities can shape whether people want to read and engage with the Bible. Positive experiences can increase a desire to go deeper into the Bible.

08

## "Magic Book"

The Bible is seen as possessing a special power distinct from its content. Possessing a copy of the Bible conveys this power to a person without them reading it. Sometimes the Bible is only consulted as a "wise oracle" in moments of crisis.

09

## Spiritual Practices

Spiritual practices that emphasise regular individual and communal reflection on Scripture such as following a guided reading plan, small groups, safe spaces to ask questions about the Bible, and prayerful meditation on Scripture can all help with feeling more confident with the Bible, its content, and core themes.

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If Scripture was your friend – how would you describe your relationship?

## Convictions

John Stott<sup>2</sup> – easily one of the most influential, respected, and effective preachers of the 20th Century – famously wrote;

“The secret of preaching is not mastering certain techniques but being mastered by certain convictions.”<sup>3</sup>

Such convictions can include:

- Convictions about God
- Convictions about Christ
- Convictions about the Holy Spirit
- Convictions about Scripture
- Convictions about the Church
- Convictions about Ministry
- Convictions about Preaching

### With preaching...<sup>4</sup>

Is it more about mastering convictions **OR** being mastered by convictions?

Is it more about holding to convictions **OR** being held by convictions?

What is the difference?

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<sup>2</sup> “I consider [John Stott] to be the most faithful, purest expository preacher in world history. I mean the claim in all seriousness. Stott never spoke anywhere for any reason without speaking from a biblical text.” Darrell W. Johnson, “The Transforming Power of Text: Seven Discoveries” in John Tucker (ed) *Text Messages: preaching God’s Word in a smartphone world* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 23. Johnson also makes the claim in his must-read book: *The Glory of Preaching: participating in God’s transformation of the world* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 13.

<sup>3</sup> John Stott & Greg Scharf *The Challenge of Preaching* (Carlisle: Langham, 2011), 13. This publication is an updated and simplified edition of Stott’s seminal book *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982). The US title is *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*.

<sup>4</sup> These questions have been crafted by Rev Dr Paul Windsor, Director, Langham Preaching.

## Biblical Terms for Preaching

The Bible has a range of verbs which describe the ministry of preaching.

### KEY OLD TESTAMENT TERMS<sup>5</sup>

Term	Meaning	Reference
<i>Parash</i>	To distinguish or specify clearly	Neh 8:7–8
<i>Sekel</i>	To give the sense of meaning	Neh 8:7–8
<i>Bin</i>	To cause to understand (to separate mentally for use)	Neh 8:7–8
<i>Nabi</i>	one who pours forth or announces Under the divine impulse (a prophet)	Deut 13:1; 18:20; Jer 23:21 cf. Num 11:25–29
<i>Hozeh</i>	one who glows or grows warm (a seer or a prophet)	Amos 7:12
<i>Roeh</i>	one who sees (a prophet)	1 Chron 29:29; Isa 30:10
<i>Qohelet</i>	a caller or a preacher	Eccl 1:1
<i>Qara</i>	to call out	Isa 61:1
<i>Basar</i>	to announce glad tidings	Psa 40:9; Isa 61:1
<i>Nataph</i>	to drip, to pour out words	Exe 20:46; Amos 7:16; Mic 2:6, 11

### KEY NEW TESTAMENT TERMS<sup>6</sup>

In two verses in Acts 17:2–4, we see an example of the range of terms that the New Testament uses to describe the different voices of the ministry of preaching.<sup>7</sup>

Acts 17:2–4

<sup>2</sup> As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> **explaining** and **proving** that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am **proclaiming** to you is the Messiah,” he **said**. <sup>4</sup> Some of the Jews were **persuaded** and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

<sup>5</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centred Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* 2nd Ed (Grand Rapids: University of California Libraries, 2015), 96–97.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, *Glory of Preaching*, 78–98; William H. Willimon *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 145.

<sup>7</sup> Compare also Acts 28:23–31.

When we consider all of the New Testament, the main words for preaching are:

- ◆ **Evangelize** (*euangelizō*) – simply means “to announce good news.” It appears more than 40 times in the New Testament.
- ◆ **Herald** (*kēryssō*) – usually translated as “preach” or “proclaim.” Appears more than 70 times in the New Testament.
- ◆ **Teaching** (*didaskō*) – this means to develop the implications of the gospel in terms of content and behaviour.
- ◆ **Exhorting** (*paralaleō*) – literally means to “call alongside.” It is hard to reduce it to one meaning. Can also be translated to mean “to call to”, to beseech”, “to exhort”, “to convict”, “to comfort”, “to admonish”, “to console.”
- ◆ **Prophesying** (*prophēteuō*) – to speak a word directly given by God.
- ◆ **Confessing** (*homologeō*) – it means to “agree in statement”, “to say the same thing.”
- ◆ **Witnessing** (*martyreō*) – it means “one who remembers, who has knowledge of something by recollection, and who can thus tell about it.”

### Summary<sup>8</sup>

Evangelize: the passion is joy; the hoped-for outcome is to “receive Jesus” and enter into his new world order.

Herald: the passion is truth; the hoped-for outcome is to “hear Jesus” and trust this new reading of reality.

Teach: the passion is understanding; the hoped-for outcome is to “obey Jesus” and do what he tells us to do.

Exhort: the passion is freedom; the hoped-for outcome is to “follow Jesus” and walk with him into a new way of living.

Prophesy: the passion is revelation; the hoped-for outcome is to “see Jesus” and live a new life in light of him.

Confess: the passion is “no choice but to speak”; the hoped-for outcome is to “join Jesus” and see if you too find him a rock on which to stand.

Witness: the passion is life; the hoped-for outcome is to “live Jesus too” and see if he does not do for you what he has done for me.

### Preaching Spaces<sup>9</sup>

<b>I. In an intentionally sacred space</b>  <i>Some gospel knowledge</i>	<b>II. In an intentionally sacred space</b>  <i>No gospel knowledge</i>
<b>III. Not in an intentionally sacred space</b>  <i>Some gospel knowledge</i>	<b>IV. Not in an intentionally sacred space</b>  <i>No gospel knowledge</i>

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *Glory of Preaching*, 98–99.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, *Glory of Preaching*, 78–79.

New Testament preaching terms for each of the four quadrants:

- I Exhort and teach
- II Herald
- III Witness
- IV Evangelise and herald

Johnson argues that all seven preaching verbs can operate well in all four quadrants; and all the verbs definitely operate in quadrant I.

Which space are you most comfortable and least comfortable in?

## Psalms

Psalm 1 starts with "happy" and Psalm 2 ends with it.

*Nearly every New Testament writer quotes Psalms*

- ◆ Psalm 1 focuses on the Torah. It's the way individual should take.
- ◆ Psalm 2 focuses on the Messiah. It's the way nations should take.

From Ps 3 onwards, the vision of Pss 1 & 2 is challenged and wrestled with.

Throughout Psalms, there is a movement from lament (complaint) to praise.

The first ½ of the Book of Psalms has lots of lament psalms; the 2nd ½ of the Book of Psalms has lots of praise psalms. Within this pattern (lament to praise), there is another pattern — movement from individual lament to community praise.

In Hebrew, "Psalms" means "The Praises." And yet most of the psalms are complaints! (Laments).

Or to put it another way— "I start by crying out to God in my distress; I finish by praising God with all the people of God!"

Compare Psalms 3, 4, 6 and 7

Psalms is the most quoted book of the Bible in the New Testament.

## SPREAD OF LAMENT AND PRAISE

The turning point in Psalms from lament to praise is Psalm 73; and the turning point in Psalm 73 is vv 16-17:

"When I tried to understand all this  
it troubled me deeply  
till I entered the sanctuary of God;  
then I understood their final destiny."

**Psalms of Lament** (blue in the chart)

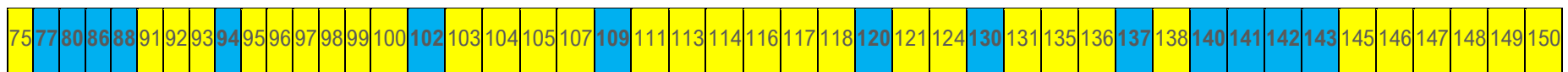
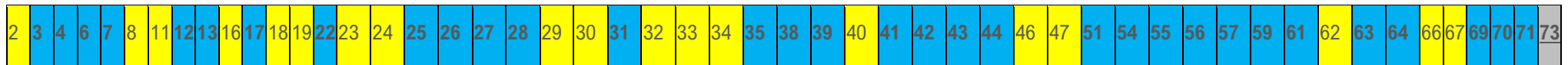
1 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, **73**

77, 80, 86, 88, 94, 102, 109, 120, 130, 137, 140, 141, 142, 143 **150**

**Psalms of Praise** (yellow in the chart)

1 2, 8, 11, 16, 18, 19, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 40, 46, 47, 62, 63, 66, 67, **73**

75, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 107, 111, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 121, 124, 131, 135, 136, 138, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, **150**



## Preaching from the Old Testament Prophets

### RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL: THE PROPHETS<sup>10</sup>

The great rabbi of the 20th Century, Abraham Heschel, wrote a classic book simply entitled “The Prophets.”



Consider this selection of quotes from his book. Which one speaks to you?

The prophet is a person, not a microphone. He is endowed with a mission, with the power of a word not his own that accounts for his greatness – but also with temperament, concern, character, and individuality.

The prophet’s task is to convey a divine view, yet as a person he is a point of view. He speaks from the perspective of God as perceived from the perspective of his own situation.

Reflection about the prophets gives way to communion with the prophets. . . we must think as if we were inside their minds. For them to be alive and present to us we must think, not about, but in the prophets, with their concern and their heart. Their existence involves us. Unless their concern strikes us, pains us, exalts us, we do not really sense it.

The prophet always begins with a message of doom and concludes with a message of hope and redemption.

The prophet is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden upon his soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man’s fierce greed. Frightful is the agony of man; no human voice can convey its full terror. Prophecy is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor, to the profaned riches of the world. It is a form of living, a crossing point of God and man. God is raging in the prophet’s words.

Reading the words of the prophets is a strain on the emotions. We and the prophet have no language in common. To us the moral state of society, for all its stains and spots, seems fair and trim; to the prophet it is dreadful.

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<sup>10</sup> Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: HarperCollins 1962/2001).

The prophet's ear perceives the silent sigh.

The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears. He experiences moments that defy our understanding. He is neither a "singing saint" nor "a moralizing poet," but an assaulter of the mind. Often his words begin to burn where conscience ends.

Above all, the prophets remind us of the moral state of a people: Few are guilty, but all are responsible.

To the one with prophetic sight, everyone else appears blind

The prophet's word is a scream in the night. While the world is at ease and asleep, the prophet feels the blast from heaven.

The prophet is a lonely man . . . but to be a prophet means to challenge and to defy and to cast out fear.

The prophet's eye is directed to the contemporary scene; the society and its conduct are the main theme of his speeches. Yet his ear is inclined to God. He is a person struck by the glory and presence of God, overpowered by the hand of God. Yet his true greatness is his ability to hold God and man in a single thought.

The prophet claims to be far more than a messenger. He is a person who stands in the presence of God (Jer 15:19), who stands "in the council of the Lord" (Jer 23:18), who is a participant, as it were, in the council of God, not a bearer of dispatches whose function is limited to being sent on errands. He is a counsellor as well as a messenger.

As a witness, the prophet is more than a messenger. As a messenger, his task is to deliver the word; as a witness, he must bear testimony that the word is divine.

The words the prophet utters are not offered as souvenirs.

There are no proofs for the existence of the God of Abraham. There are only witnesses. The greatness of the prophet lies not only in the ideas he expressed, but also in the moments he experienced. The prophet is a witness, and his words a testimony – to *His* power and judgement, to *His* justice and mercy.

The prophet is not a mouthpiece, but a person; not an instrument, but a partner, an associate of God.

The fundamental experience of the prophet is a fellowship with the feelings of God.

This is what the prophets discovered. *History is a nightmare.*

History is not a blind alley, and guilt is not an abyss. There is always a way that leads out of guilt: repentance, or turning to God.

The two staggering facts in the life of the prophet are: God's turning to him, and man's turning away from him. This is often his lot: to be chosen by God and to be rejected by the people. The word of God, so clear to him, is unintelligible to them.

No one expects to receive a reward for the habit of breathing. Justice is as much a necessity as breathing is, and a constant occupation.

The prophets had no theory or "idea" of God. What they had was an *understanding*.

Consider that you are talking to someone who wants to preach a sermon from the OT prophets. Based on the quote that spoke to you: give that person advice about preaching from OT prophets.

#### **Important:**

The prophets' message was as much about forth-telling (living here-and-now) as it was fore-telling (living there-and-then)

Their message was as much about how to live now in the light of God's covenant of love; as it was predicting the future

## **Preaching the Prophets**

### **WHAT THE PROPHETS ANNOUNCED<sup>11</sup>**

The most common ways the prophets spoke their message were:

**1. Breaking News** – "This is what the Lord says"

This is the most common way the prophets spoke their message.

**2. Bad News** - the accusation (e.g. Micah 6:1-8).

The scene is like that of a court room, and the case for the prosecution is presented. And the verdict is "guilty as charged."

**3. Worse News** - The cry of woe (e.g Habakkuk 2:6-20)

The news is especially bad. The prophet declares a message of woe and with it laments the state Israel is in. The prophet delivers a devastating message of misery and is heartbroken with it.

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<sup>11</sup> Wright, *Sweeter than Honey*, 180-187.

#### 4. **Good News** – Promise (Amos 9:11-15)

Just when you thought there can be no hope or coming back from the devastating effects of sin – the prophets announce extraordinary and life-giving good news. Even though the covenant has been shattered, God restores and rebuilds. Time and again . . . good news!

### HOW THE PROPHETS ANNOUNCED

#### 1. **Persuasion**

Their message was one of life-and-death. They needed to persuade the people to listen and obey God's message. They would speak in ways which at times were shocking, exaggerated and confronting (e.g. Eze 23).

#### 2. **Poetry**

Often, they would use poetry; short, strong words. They would use images and words to help the message stick in the Israelites hearts and minds; but this can mean it takes more work for us as preachers to understand these ancient images thousands of years later (e.g. Jer 2).

#### 3. **Pictures**

Their language was often vivid – they would paint word-pictures. They would use anything in the world as materials to paint on the canvas of people's minds (e.g. Isa 52:7-10).

#### 4. **Predictions**

Not all the predications the prophets made would definitely happen – some were conditional. The prophet would warn what would happen if Israel did not change (e.g. Jeremiah 18:7-10):

#### **Take special note:<sup>12</sup>**

Be cautious - with the predictive element in OT prophecy

Is it for back then?

. . . because the prophet speaks about the future in order to bring about change in the lives of his own listeners

Is it for later?

. . . because the prophet does speak about the coming of Jesus and the church without fully understanding the significance of his words

Is it for much later?

. . . because the prophet can have in mind the still future "day of the Lord" and the future return and eternal reign of Christ

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<sup>12</sup> Rev Dr Paul Windsor.

## THREE HORIZONS OF THE NEWS

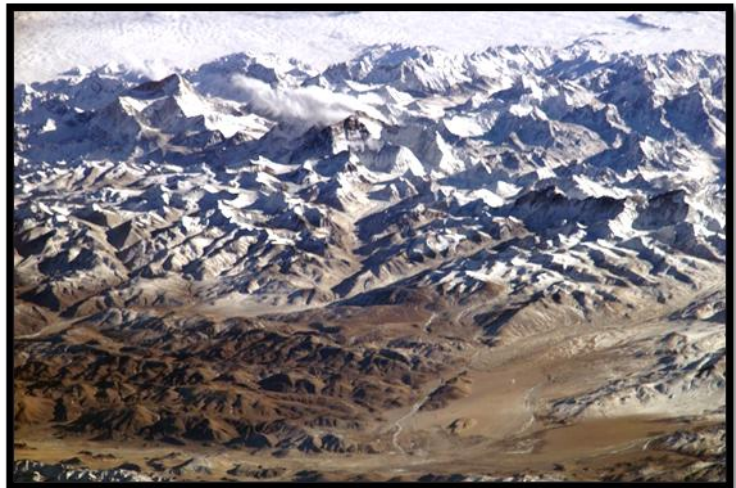
Often the prophets' words sound like they are speaking about the one thing for the one time. However, their message is often collapsed in terms of time. Some of what they are speaking about was for the people of their day; some of their words were for the future; and some of their words for the end-of-time.



Think of it like this.

If you look at hills and mountains like in this photo – they all look like they are the same distance away . . .

. . . however, a different view shows how there is a lot of distance from the hills at the front to the mountains at the back.



So it is with the words of the prophets; some of their message is close at hand and some of their message is for a distant time. So when we read the prophets we need to keep in mind that we the message might seem all at the “same distance” (here and now) but they in fact have “a lot of distance” (now and then).

We can speak of three horizons:<sup>13</sup>

### 1. Old Testament Era

The time when the prophets first gave their message

### 2. New Testament Era

The time of Christ when Jesus fulfilled the words

### 3. New Heavens and New Earth Era

The time when all things are reconciled to God and all things are made new

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<sup>13</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Sweeter than Honey: preaching the Old Testament* (Langham Preaching Resources: Carlisle, 2015), 187-193.



Exercise - Identify the three horizons in Isa 42:1-9 & Isa 61:1-6

## PRACTICE SCANNING THE HORIZON

A Case Study<sup>14</sup>

Three Things the Prophets Were Wary About

“What is the highest good? Three things ancient society cherished above all else: wisdom, wealth, and might. To the prophets, such infatuation was ludicrous and idolatrous.”<sup>15</sup>

### HORIZON 1: OLD TESTAMENT ERA

So then - three things nations and empires loved at the time of the prophets:

1. Wisdom
2. Wealth
3. Power

<sup>14</sup> Rev Dr Geoff New.

<sup>15</sup> Heschel, *Prophets*, 9 - I have substituted “power” for the word “might” as “power” is a word more familiar to us today.

However, the prophets were not impressed by any of these – they are the raw materials for idolatry from age-to-age:

**Jer 9:23-24**

This is what the LORD says:

“Let not the **wise** boast of their **wisdom**

or the **strong** boast of their **strength**

or the **rich** boast of their **riches**,

but let the one who boasts boast about this:

that they have the understanding to know me,

that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness,

justice and righteousness on earth,

for in these I delight,”

declares the LORD.

(See also Isa 10:13; Jer 8:9; Hosea 10:13-14; 12:8 Zech 4:6)

Wisdom, wealth and power can all be good; but the prophet is concerned when they are disconnected from God. Then they become idols. Note Jeremiah’s words:

The wise boast of **their** wisdom

or the strong boast of **their** strength

or the rich boast of **their** riches

We can speak of the spirituality of wisdom, the spirituality of power, and the spirituality of wealth. Without these being surrendered to God or seen as gifts from God – we become attached to them and worship/idolise them.

We trust and rely on them and not on God.

We worship the gifts not the Giver.

When preaching from the prophets – look if any of these three desires are being spoken about.

When preaching from the prophets and to your people – consider how these three desires need to be spoken about.

## HORIZON 2: NEW TESTAMENT ERA

There they are in the Incarnation ...

Wisdom, wealth and power are the possession of God and in the Incarnation we see Christ relinquishing them all:

### Phil 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:  
Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
rather, he made himself nothing **[Power marked by humility]**  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness. **[Wealth marked by generosity]**  
And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross! **[Wisdom marked by reverence]**

There they are in the temptations of Jesus . . .

Take note of Jesus' response to the temptations in the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11). His responses define true wisdom, true might and true wealth.

If we read the temptation story from the view-point of Jesus' humanity - each temptation presented a way of life that was godless, or sought to bring God into our service:

#### 1. **Godless Wisdom: "make stones into bread" (Matt 4:3)**

But he [Jesus] answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (v 4)

True wisdom is gained by hearing the Word of God rather than acting independently of it.

#### 2. **Godless Might: "throw yourself off the highest point of the temple" (Matt 4:6)**

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (v 7)

True power is gained by relying on God's action in God's way in God's time.

### 3. **Godless Wealth: “worship me and gain all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour” (Matt 4:9)**

Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,  
‘Worship the Lord your God,  
and serve only him.’” (v 10)

True wealth is gained by seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

There they are in the ministry of leaders . . .

Peter writing to the scattered church in Asia Minor and addressing the leaders of a persecuted church:

#### **1 Peter 5:1-5**

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be [**Wisdom**]; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve [**Wealth**]; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock [**Power**]. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. [**Wisdom/Riches/Power**]

There they are in the life of the church . . .

In the Book of Revelation, the church of Laodicea was proud and self-reliant with her sense of wisdom, wealth and might. But Jesus showed this church that they were quite the opposite:

#### **Rev 3:17**

You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor [**No wealth**], blind [**No wisdom**] and naked [**No power**].

Jesus calls the church to gain these three things in Him:

#### **Rev 3:18**

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich [**True wealth**]; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness [**True power**]; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see [**True wisdom**].

### **HORIZON 3: NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH ERA**

There they are in the songs of heaven . . .

The end of the matter is probably the best place to start. Gain a vision of how it ends, listen to the music and endeavour to keep your preaching in tune with these songs:

## Rev 5:11-12

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive **power** and **wealth** and **wisdom** and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

Consider the content of your preaching:

*how much do you address issues of wisdom, wealth and power gained attention?*

## Preaching Old Testament Stories

### *The Most Important Thing*

*The most important thing to remember when you study and preach the Old Testament stories is: God is the hero.*

When preaching OT narratives, remember the acronym: **SHAPE**

Most OT stories are arranged in the same way and **SHAPE** describes the common features of the plot in OT narratives.<sup>16</sup> As you consider each of these points – keep Genesis 22 in mind.

- **S**tart of the story = what is happening at the start of the story?
- **H**elp is needed = what is the problem?
- **A**ction takes place = what happens because of the problem?
- **P**roblem solved = what finally helps?
- **E**nd of the story = how does the story end?

Not all OT narratives have all five parts, but nearly all have three:

- **S**tart of the story
- **H**elp is needed
- **P**roblem solved

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<sup>16</sup> I have created the acronym SHAPE from a compilation of a variety of sources describing features of OT narratives. These include Laurence A. Turner, “Preaching Narrative: Plot”, in *‘He Began with Moses . . .’: preaching the Old Testament Story* (Eds: Grenville J.R. Kent, Paul J. Kissling & Laurence A. Turner (Nottingham: IVP, 2010), 14-29. Turner leans on Daniel Marguert & Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: an introduction to Narrative Criticism*, trans John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1999), 16.; Christopher J.H. Wright, “Preaching from Narrative” in *Preach the Word* ed. Greg Haslam (Sovereign: Lancaster, 2006), 341-352 and *Sweeter Than Honey: preaching the Old Testament* (Langham Preaching Resources: Carlisle, 2015); Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 3rd edition.

SHAPE: Look for the scenes in the story and their order<sup>17</sup>

i. Start of story

*What is happening at the start?*

Who is involved and maybe some clues about what is happening.

ii. Help is needed

*What is the problem?*

Something is said or happens which introduces a problem into the story.

iii. Action takes place

*What happens because of the problem?*

Some action happens which responds to the problem and tries to remove it.

iv. Problem solved

*What finally helps?*

The action or speech begun in response to the problem comes to an end.

v. End of the story

*How does the story end?*

The story finishes and comes to a resting place.

**SHAPE**

**START OF THE STORY**

**HELP IS NEEDED**

**ACTION TAKES PLACE**

**PROBLEM SOLVED**

**END OF THE STORY**

**EXERCISE: Look for SHAPE in these stories:**

- ◆ The Fall: Gen 3:1-7
- ◆ Moses and the Burning Bush: Exo 3:1-12
- ◆ Num 21:4-9 – The Bronze Snake
- ◆ The call of Samuel: 1 Sam 3:1-18
- ◆ Anointing of David: 1 Sam 16:1-13
- ◆ 2 Sam 11 – David and Bathsheba
- ◆ 1 Kings 3:16-28 – Solomon’s Wisdom
- ◆ 1 Kings 17:17-24 – Elijah and the Widow’s Son
- ◆ 2 Kings 4:1-7 – Elisha and the Widow’s Oil

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from Laurence A. Turner, “Preaching Narrative: Plot”, in *‘He Began with Moses . . .’:preaching the Old Testament Story* (Eds: Grenville J.R. Kent, Paul J. Kissling & Laurence A. Turner (Nottingham: IVP, 2010), 14-29. Turner leans on Daniel Marguert & Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: an introduction to Narrative Criticism*, trans John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1999), 16.

Where the ending of the story is well known, consider starting at:

- ◆ **Problem Solved**

and flash-back to:

- ◆ **Start of story**
- ◆ **Help is needed**
- ◆ **Action takes place**

This strategy will help bring fresh understanding to familiar stories.

Alternatively, work at understanding the heart of how and why the problem was solved. This may well produce the sermon proposition of the sermon.

## KEEPING THE SHAPE

When studying and preaching OT stories, it is helpful to remember several features about the way the Hebrews write their stories.

As you work through **SHAPE** – keep the following in mind:

### 1. Listen to the Story-Teller

When you read the story, there is a story-teller (or narrator) who writes what happens. He decides which parts of the story are told. Often the story-teller is telling the story from God's point of view.

Gen 3:1, Gen 11:1-2, Gen 22:1, 1 Sam 3:1, 1 Kings 18:1

### 2. Identify who is who

Usually there are the same types of characters in OT stories:

- ◆ *The main person* – usually it is very clear who this is (e.g. in Gen 16 it is Hagar)
- ◆ *The main foe* – this is the person or group of people who cause problems for the main person (e.g. in Gen 16 it is Sarai)
- ◆ *The main friend* – often there are others involved in the story who are involved in the main person's struggle (e.g. in Gen 16 it is the Angel-of-the-Lord)

### 3. Pay close attention to what is said about characters

In OT stories, little if any idea is given about what the person looked like. Usually the story will talk about the person's place in life and society.

E.g. Num 12:3, 1 Sam 3:2

If some physical description is given, then it is important to take note because it is uncommon for such a detail to be mentioned and it is important for the story.

E.g. Jdg 3:17; 1 Sam 9:2; 1 Sam 17:4, 33, 42

#### 4. Listen to who says what

*Note the first thing that is said*

The first thing said is often very important.

E.g. Gen 3:1; 11:3; 22:1; Num 12:1-2

When the story spans chapters, look for the first thing said at the beginning of each major scene.

E.g. Gen 6:3, 13, 7:1, 9:1

*Note the contrast of what is said*

What is said by the different characters in the story can be very important because they are so opposite to each other.

E.g. Gen 22:5 & 7; Gen 25:30-32; 1 Sam 17:44-46

Take note of the contrast between what the narrator says and what the character says.

E.g. Gen 6:6-9; Gen 40:14 & 23; 1 Sam 1:13-14

*Note what is repeated or summarised*

Sometimes key words are repeated (e.g. "son" is repeated 13 times in Gen 22)

Sometimes a speech is repeated (e.g. Gen 6:5-6 & 11-12; 1 Kings 19:10 & 14)

Sometimes important summary speeches are made (e.g. Gen 22:15-18; Gen 50:20)

#### 5. Keep it a story!

Is it still a story by the time you have preached it? Instead of trying to force main headings onto the OT story, you can simply follow the story-line. Use the order of the story:

**S**tart of the story

**H**elp is needed

**A**ction takes place

**P**roblem solved

**E**nd of the story

# Preaching the Gospels

## 1. What is the Gospel?

Three main elements (Mark 1:14-15):

1. Jesus is the fulfilment of the Scriptures
2. Jesus announces the arrival of the Kingdom of God
3. Jesus calls for a response

## 2. Preach the Gospel in its Own Voice

*"A Voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" (Isaiah 40:6)*

*"You're not really preaching until people hear that Other Voice." Billy Graham*

## EACH GOSPEL WAS WRITTEN FOR PARTICULAR PEOPLE AND PURPOSE

- ◆ **Matthew** (1:21-23; 28:18-20) – the voice of divine fulfilment
  - Matthew was writing for Jewish Christians (who were being hassled by “the synagogue across the street”)
- ◆ **Mark** (1:1) – the voice of suffering discipleship
  - Mark was writing for Jewish and non-Jewish Christians in Rome, and wider afield
- ◆ **Luke** (1:1-4) – the voice of far-reaching salvation
  - Luke was writing for Jew and non-Jew with a message for those on the margins
- ◆ **John** (20:30-31; 21:25) – the voice of the Word-made-flesh
  - John was writing for Jews and converts to the Jewish faith

### (A) Listen to the four voices of the Gospels

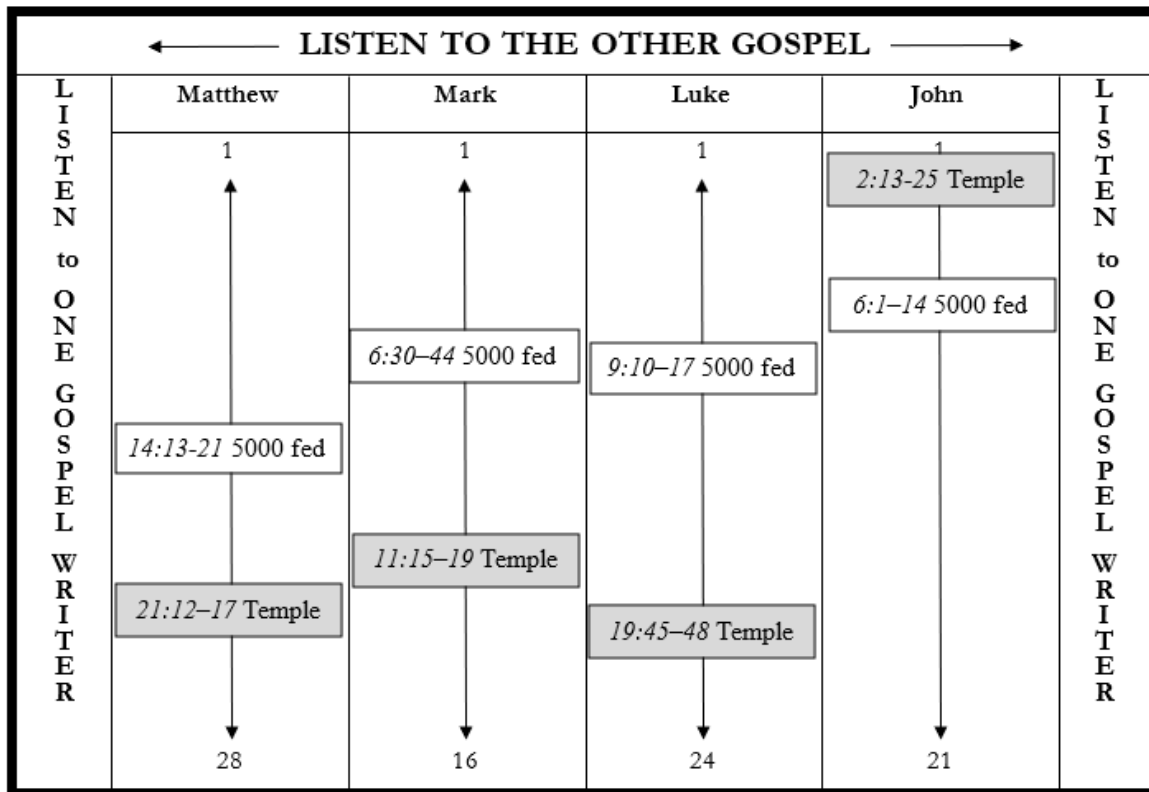
*1st Priority* - Listen to the **One** Gospel Writer

Does my sermon honour what this Gospel writer says and when he says it?

*2nd Priority* - Listen to the **Other** Gospel Writers

Is my sermon lacking anything because it has not allowed the full story to be told?

The table below shows where two stories common to all the gospels appear in each gospel (1st priority) and in relation to the other three gospels (2nd priority).



**(B) Voice the Gospel's Good News! (Luke 4:18-19)**

Preach the Gospels with a spirit of invitation – “Come and see” (John 1:39 & 46)

**(C) Voice the Gospel's Abundant Life! (John 10:7-10)**

Rom 1:1-6 offers a wonderful description of how the gospel impacts all of life the world over

**(D) Voice the Gospel's Demands! (Matt 10:34-39)**

The gospel is not just grace – it is grace and *truth* (John 1:14-18)

### 3. Preach the Gospels in Your Voice

A *very important* fact: we preach from a privileged position. We preach *this* side of particular key events; not before them (1 Peter 1:10–12):

(What words would you use to complete the table below?)

<b>The Gospel/Acts event</b>	<b>What does the Bible say was new?</b>	<b>What quality now marks our preaching?</b>	<b>What blessing can people now enjoy?</b>
<i>Kingdom preached</i>	The Good News	Vision	New life
<i>Cross</i>			
<i>Resurrection</i>			
<i>Ascension</i>			
<i>Pentecost</i>			
<i>Church birthed</i>			

Preach the Gospel text in your time and place by asking:<sup>18</sup>

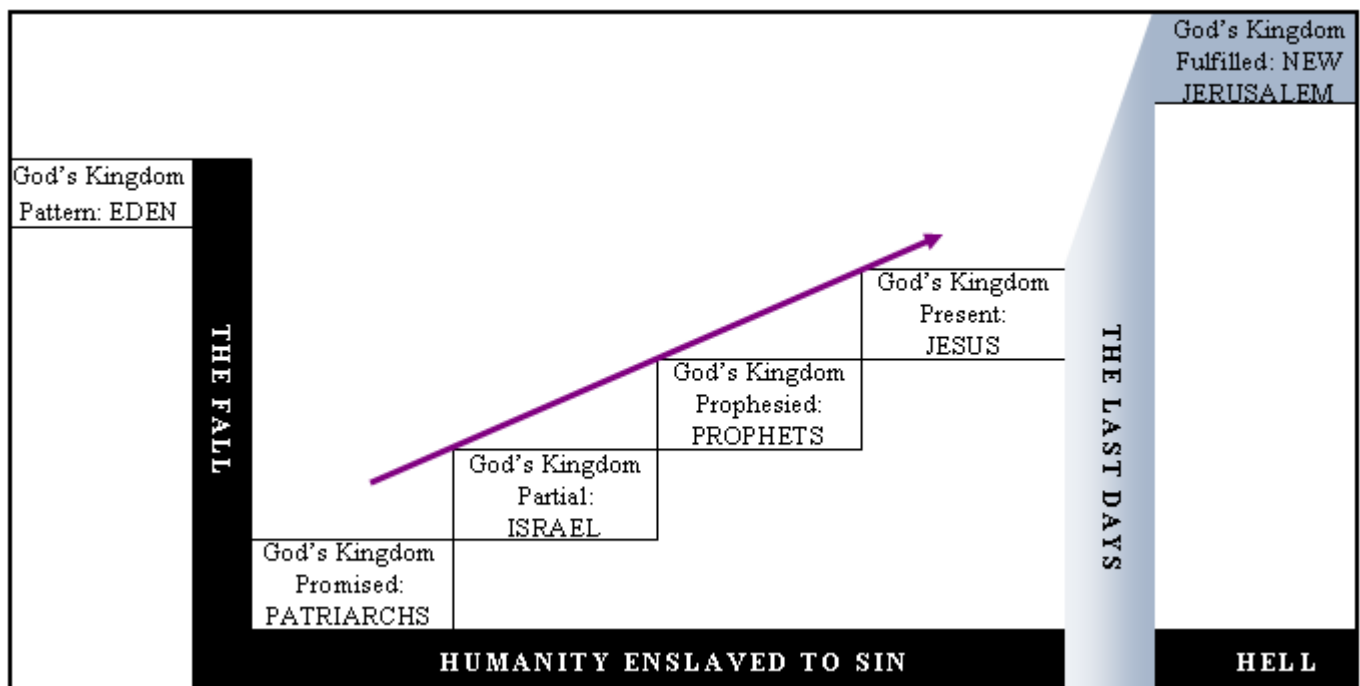
- i. “Who did Jesus say/do this to back then and why?”
- ii. “Why does the gospel writer include this at this point in the story?”
- iii. “What is the Spirit saying to the Church now?”

### 4. Voice the Culture of the Gospel: the Kingdom!

The one major message in all four Gospels it is the Kingdom of God.

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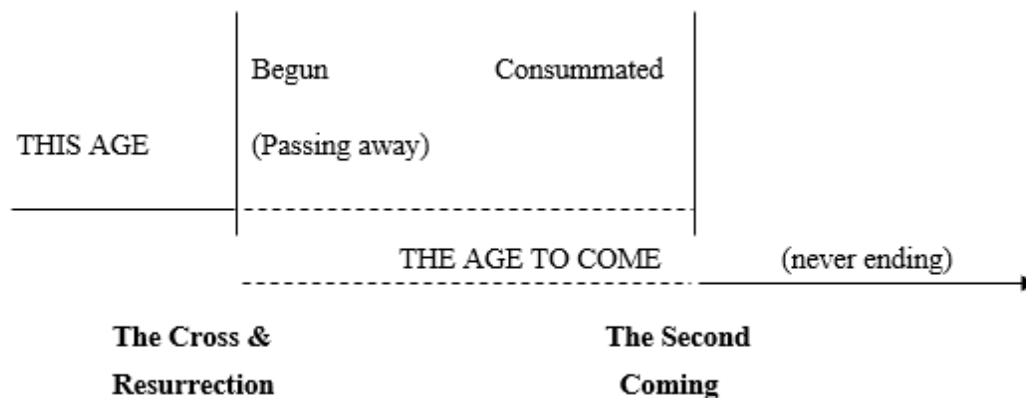
<sup>18</sup> These questions are influenced by Mark Meynell, *What Angels Long to Read: Reading and Preaching the New Testament* (Carlisle: Langham Preaching Resources, 2017), 83.



**(A) Preach the King (The Son of Man)**

- i. The Earthly Son of Man (Matt 8:20) – preach faith
- ii. The Suffering Son of Man (Mark 10:45) – preach love
- iii. The Glorified Son of Man (Matt 26:64) – preach hope

**(B) Preach the Kingdom Come (already but not yet)**



Preach so that people know how to live in this in-between time!

**Preach Already**

**But Not Yet**

- Free & full forgiveness.....Perfected
- Victory over death .....Free from death
- Living in the Spirit .....Free from satanic attack
- Justified and no condemnation.....Faced the final judgement

### **(C) Preach “The Kingdom is like . . .” (The Parables)**

The parables are the Kingdom stories. (See the next section in this manual: “Preaching the Parables”)

### **(D) Preach the Kingdom Ethics (The Sermon on the Mount)**

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) is the most concentrated collection of what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom.

### **(E) Preach the Kingdom Power (The Miracles)**

Miracles are wonderful to preach about – yet also contain deep challenges for the preacher.

- ◆ The Miracles reveal Jesus
- ◆ The Miracles reveal the Kingdom

In preaching the miracle stories:

- ◆ still raise the question of Who Jesus is
- ◆ still advance the Good News that the Kingdom is breaking into this world
- ◆ still excite faith that He can work miracles

### **(F) Preach the Kingdom Declarations (The Pronouncement Stories)**

Some stories finish with a pronouncement by Jesus (Matt 11:28-33; 12:8; Mark 2:17; 3:31-35; 12:17; Luke 19:10). Look for what they reveal about Jesus’ mission and the Kingdom. These Kingdom Declarations often challenge how things are!

## **CHECKING YOUR GOSPEL PREACHING<sup>19</sup>**

- ◆ Is this truly good news?
  - Is my application/implication from the gospel actually good news? Am I reflecting the grace of God or undermining it?
  
- ◆ Is this description or prescription?
  - Is this gospel passage telling us what happened or telling us what ought to happen in our lives?
  
- ◆ Is Jesus our Model or our Saviour here?
  - There are times when the gospel story is describing something that we are to model ourselves on from Jesus’s words/actions/examples; and other times when the story is showing us he is our saviour. There are times when Jesus alone attends to particular actions/events

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<sup>19</sup> Meynell, *Angels*, 84–91.

## Preaching the Parables

“I like to think of a parable as a *picture* that becomes a *mirror* and then a *window*.”

(Warren W. Wiersbe)<sup>20</sup>

In considering Wiersbe’s Picture–Mirror–Window template – I want to add one more – a Door.

When you read a parable – how would you expect it to work as:

A Picture

A Mirror

A Window

A Door

Wiersbe explains his model like this:<sup>21</sup>

A parable starts out as a picture of something in life, something recognizable that at the same time contains something different.

The longer we look at the “parable picture,” the more it becomes a mirror *and we start to see ourselves*. . . . Jesus didn’t simply use parables as “*illustrations*,” . . . but as illumination, the kind of light that pierced the very hearts and minds of listeners and made them aware of their needs.

But that isn’t the end: the mirror must then become a window *so that the listeners see God and His truth and receive the message by faith*. Our Lord’s enemies never got to this third stage. Having seen themselves reflected, they then tried to break the mirror by resisting the truth. The “shock of recognition” was too much for them.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond the third stage (the window) stands a door. Through and beyond the door lies the path of discipleship in Christ. Beyond the door lies life deepened and defined by the parable at hand.

For a parable is not an explanation. A parable is not an illustration. We cannot look at a parable as a spectator and expect to get it. A parable does not make a thing easier; it makes it harder by requiring participation, by entering the story.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination: the Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 164.

<sup>21</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Preaching and Teaching with Imagination: the Quest for Biblical Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 165.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Matt 21:45-46: “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.”

<sup>23</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Tell it Slant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 19. The quote within Peterson’s words are from Jean Sullivan, *Morning Light* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 59-60.

Parables are full of trap doors into another world, another vantage point, another focus, another insight into what we think we already know.<sup>24</sup>

What do you see when you look . . . <sup>25</sup>			
. . . <i>at the Picture</i>	. . . <i>in the Mirror</i>	. . . <i>through the Window</i>	. . . <i>beyond the Door</i>
We see life	We see ourselves	We see God	We see others
Sight	Insight	Vision	Imagination
Information	Intimidation	Invitation	Incarnation
Somebody else	Me!	God and me	God, me and others
I'm interested	I'm shattered	I'm challenged	I'm called
<i>(Add your descriptions)</i>			

## A Case-Study: The Pharisee, the Sinful Woman and the Two Debtors (Luke 7:36-50)

Let's see this at work with one of the parables Jesus told.

In Luke 7:36–50, we are treated to a wonderful example of how Jesus's parables work as a Picture–Mirror–Window–Door.

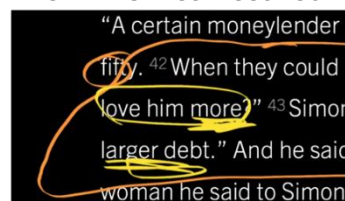
This portion of Scripture describes the day a Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. This meal resulted in Jesus telling a parable to his host: The Parable of the Two Debtors.

Let's read the account first: **Luke 7:36–50**

The woman has entered the house and interrupted and disrupted the occasion. The Pharisee says nothing to Jesus but a lot to himself.

Interestingly, Jesus "answers" (v 40) the Pharisee's private monologue. Jesus says he wants to tell him something and begins the parable. The personal nature of the story is signalled in that Jesus addresses the Pharisee by name: Simon. This is the first mention of Simon's name in the story.

Look at how, for Simon, this parable moves from being a Picture to a Mirror to a Window to a Door.



"A certain moneylender fifty. <sup>42</sup> When they could love him more?" <sup>43</sup> Simon larger debt." And he said woman he said to Simon

<sup>24</sup> Megan McKenna, *Parables: The Arrows of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 102.

<sup>25</sup> Adapted from Wiersbe, *Imagination*, 165.

**Luke 7:41–50 – The Parable of the Two Debtors**

<p><b>Picture</b></p>	<p><sup>41</sup> “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”</p> <p><sup>43</sup> Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”</p> <p>“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.</p>
<p>How does this parable act as a Picture for Simon?</p>	
<p>Remember – looking at the Picture . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ We see life</li> <li>◆ Sight</li> <li>◆ Information</li> <li>◆ Somebody else</li> <li>◆ I’m interested</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Mirror</b></p>	<p><sup>44</sup> Then he [Jesus] turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.”</p>
<p>How does this parable act as a Mirror for Simon?</p>	
<p>Remember – looking in the Mirror . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ We see ourselves</li> <li>◆ Insight</li> <li>◆ Intimidation</li> <li>◆ Me!</li> <li>◆ I’m shattered</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Window</b></p>	<p><sup>47</sup> “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”</p> <p><sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”</p>
<p>How does this parable act as a Window for Simon?</p>	
<p>Remember – looking through the Window . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ We see God</li> <li>◆ Vision</li> <li>◆ Invitation</li> <li>◆ God and me</li> <li>◆ I’m challenged</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Door</b></p>	<p><sup>49</sup> The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”</p> <p><sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.</p>
<p>How does this parable act as a Door for Simon and the other guests?</p>	
<p>Remember – looking beyond the Door . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ We see others</li> <li>◆ Imagination</li> <li>◆ Incarnation</li> <li>◆ God, me and others</li> <li>◆ I’m called</li> </ul>	

# Preparing the Sermon

## “YOUR SERMON NEEDS TO LINGER IN THE TEXT, LOITER IN THE CONGREGATION, LIVE IN THE WORLD” (GEOFF NEW)

### 1. Read the bible passage aloud and slowly several times

There really is no substitute for reading the Bible aloud. There is something wonderful and spiritual about verbalising Scripture and hearing it. It is literally the Word of God spoken and heard. When reading aloud it is much more difficult to rush past familiar words and portions of Scripture. This is a simple exercise in preparation, familiarity and focus.

### 2. Dig deep into the bible passage

Study and observe everything you can in the bible passage. Listen to its voice; it is telling you how to preach it.

At this stage, resist the temptation to read what others have written about the bible passage (online or in books).

This is your time to soak in the bible passage. Pray, study, listen, explore, dig, observe . . .

- Who is in the passage and what is happening? How is it happening? What is being said? Etc.
- Are there important places, objects, or mentions of time in the passage?
- Are there any events or action taking place?
- Do you notice any words/phrases being repeated?
- Does this bible passage echo a similar event/idea from elsewhere in the bible?
- How would you put this bible passage in your own words?

### 3. How does this bible passage fit in Scripture?

Take note of the biblical context of the passage you are preaching from.

- ◆ What is immediately before and after this passage?
- ◆ How does it fit within the book of the bible it appears?
- ◆ How does it fit in the Testament it appears?
- ◆ How does it fit in the bible?

### 4. What is the Spirit saying to the church?

You are encouraged to spend 2-4 hours making these kinds of observations in your bible passage as you start the process of preparing your sermon. Experience the joy of discovery for yourself! Then stand back from all your notes. Reflect. Go for a walk. Take a break. Express your dependence on the Spirit of God. “What do you want me to do with this passage?” “What angle should I take?”

Again and again, the sermon is born at this very early stage of observation.

The Spirit will be guiding, leading, inspiring and illuminating the passage as you study.

Listening to the Spirit throughout the whole process of observing the text is crucial. As you prepare your sermon, your heart and mind need to be inclined to the prompting and revelation that only the Spirit can give. This spiritual practice is not confined to the time when you are intentionally preparing your sermon. This spiritual practice continues all the time.

There is no quick and easy way to facilitate this.

You must be committed to careful, deep, slow, and thoughtful study and reflection – fueled by prayer and reliance on God the Holy Spirit.

At this point ask – what is at least one new idea, or a new way of seeing an old idea, that has been revealed to me?

## 5. Consult a Bible Commentary

Once you have completed your own study, check your findings with a good bible commentary.

At this point in your sermon preparation, you will need to be *humble*, *discerning* and *courageous*.

*Humble* to submit your own observations from the text to scholarship as contained in various sources; and being prepared to change your view.

*Discernment* concerning your own observations from the text insofar as what to keep and what to leave for another day.

*Courage* to decide when your own observations are correct even if you have not had them confirmed by reading other books.

## 6. Write your sermon in a sentence

This is perhaps one of the most difficult – and important parts of your sermon preparation: until you can write your sermon idea in one sentence it is not ready to write.

## 7. Create your sermon

- ◆ Write a clear structure
- ◆ Ensure headings are short, clear, and memorable
  - Don't just repeat what is obvious from the bible passage:

For example, this is an example of poor headings (Luke 19:1-10)

- Jesus comes into Jericho
- Zaccheaus climbs a tree
- Jesus goes to Zacchaeus's house
- Zacchaeus is saved

- Ensure the headings are symmetrical/balanced.

For example, the Temptations of Jesus (Luke 4:1-13)

- Self-sufficiency after a Long Time (vv. 3-4)
- Self-fulfilment in No Time (vv. 5-8)
- Self-Reliance Next Time (vv. 9-12)

- ◆ Make it a habit to assign the verse numbers to each heading/movement in your sermon to ensure you are preaching from the passage
- ◆ Aim to attend to three aspects in each part of your sermon
  - Explanation – what do I need to explain from this part of the bible passage?
  - Illustration – how can I help people understand this part of the bible passage?
  - Application/Implication – what does this bible passage call us to do, or what impact does it have? Applications and implications can be difficult to craft. At one end of the spectrum they can be dull and at the other end too hard to embrace. Consider whether an application/implication is about:
    - Doing
    - OR**
    - Knowing
    - OR**
    - Being

(From Andrew Reid, Holy Trinity Church, Doncaster - Melbourne)

