

Interpreting the Bible

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

2Timothy 2:15

❖ **Read Psalm 19:7-9 – What does it tell us about the Bible?**

❖ **Read Psalm 19:10-14 - How should we approach the Bible?**

I. The Bible and Teaching

1. The Nature of the Bible

1) Confidence and Conviction

❖ **Timothy 3:14-17 - The nature of Scripture**

- **3:14** – Many people turn from the truth – Timothy must persevere.
- **3:15** - It makes us wise for salvation.
- **3:16** - All Scripture is “*theopnustia*” – “*God-breathed*”.
- **3:16** – It is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training.
- **3:17** – It equips us for ministry.

❖ **Timothy 4:1-5 – The purposes of Scripture**

- **4:1** – “*This is really important*” – Paul’s last instruction.
- **4:2** – How to teach.
- **4:3-4** – The challenge of teaching.
- **4:5** – The need to persevere.

❖ **The power of the Word and the Spirit**

- **Isaiah 55: 11** – You can trust in the power of the Word.
- **Hebrews 4:12** – The Word is like a double-edged sword.
- **1 Peter 1:23** – We are born again through the imperishable word
- **John 16:7-11** – The Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:5-6** – “...not simply words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.”
- **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** – “...not wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.”

❖ **It is an authoritative word**

- Authority is “the power and right to command change.”
- **Matthew 7:28-29** – Jesus preached with authority.
- **1 Timothy 4:11** – We are to command and teach.

❖ **Engaging - Connect with hearers**

- **Acts 17: 22-31** - Paul is “all things to all men...”
- John Stott – The teacher is a “bridge builders” who lives in two worlds.
- The teacher is a kind of matchmaker.

2. Inspiration

❖ **“Dual authorship”**

“Dual authorship” means that the Bible was written by God and by men.

a) They are the words of God

- **2 Peter 1:19-21** – “...men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”.
- The words of the prophets originated with God.
- *What the Bible says - God says.*

b) They are the words of men

- The Spirit worked **in** and **with** and **through** the authors.
- God did **not** supersede the will and mind of authors.
- The Bible did **not** simply fall from heaven.
- Dictation is rare - most of Bible **not** dictated.
- It was **not** some form of automatic writing.

❖ **God used human Authors**

- **Psalms 139:13-16** - He supervised their creation & forged them in the womb.
- He continued to shape them through the experiences of their lives.
- **Luke 1:1-3** - The human authors researched their books.
At the moment of composition the Spirit overshadowed the writers so that the books we have the very words which God wanted to convey to us.
- The Bible is 100% the words of God and 100% the words of men.

❖ **Implications**

- We should discover as much as we can about the author's intention and purpose – this will be the intention and purpose of the Holy Spirit.
- **1 Peter 1:10-12** - We should be aware that because of the dual authorship of Scripture there may be a “*sensus plenior*” or fuller meaning.
- So, for example, we find prophecies which must have been revealed by God

to the human author.

❖ **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – How did Paul know that these things would happen?**

3. Word Ministry

❖ **Word ministry is vital to the health of the church**

- “Christianity stands or falls according to its preaching” – P T Forsyth
- Look at the history of the church.
- A healthy church needs more than teaching - **but** it cannot be healthy without teaching.

❖ **Old Testament examples**

- **Deuteronomy** - This is the record of the sermons of Moses.
- **Amos 7:14-16** - The Prophets were preachers.
- **Ezra 7:10** – Ezra the Scribe teaches the Word of God.

❖ **New Testament**

- **Mark 1:2-8** - John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ by preaching.
- **Mark 1:14-15, 35; Luke 4:14-21** – Preaching was Jesus’ priority.
- **Matthew 28:18-20** – Our mission involves making and teaching disciples.
- **Acts 2:14-42** – The church was born through the preaching of the Word.
- **Acts 6:2,4,7** - The Apostles prioritized preaching and prayer.
- **1 Corinthians 1:17, 21; 2:1-5** - It was also Paul’s priority.

❖ **Images**

- **Isaiah 40:9; 1 Timothy 2:7** – A Herald is sent with a message.
- **2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20** – An Ambassador serves the Emperor.
- **Matthew 13:1-23; 1 Peter 1:22-2:3** – A Sower sows seed.
- **John 21:15-19** – A Shepherd feeds his flock.
- **1 Corinthians 4:1-2** - A Steward is responsible for what is entrusted to him.

❖ *Why do people think that preaching is “an echo from an abandoned past”?*

❖ *How would you answer them?*

4. Preparing the Message

- Preaching involves a series of closely related skills
- These skills may be divided into two principal areas

<i>Exegesis or Hermeneutics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Understanding the passage</i>• <i>What does it mean?</i>
<i>Exposition or Homiletics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Communicating the passage</i>• <i>What should I say and how should I say it?</i>

- ***Exegesis:*** The explanation or interpretation of a text by the process of discovering the original and intended meaning of a passage.
- ***Hermeneutics:*** The branch of knowledge which articulates principles of interpretation. It may operate with a series of presuppositions which affect the way we read a text.
- ***Exposition:*** A clear and full explanation of the meaning of a text so that it is understood by the reader.
- ***Homiletics:*** The art of preaching or writing sermons. How do we communicate the heart of the text in such a way that it connects with real people in real life situations.

I. Twenty Principles of Interpretation

Principle 1 – Approach your text with prayer

❖ We need the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Scriptures

- ***2 Peter 1:20-21*** – The Spirit inspired the Scriptures.
- ***John 14:25-26; 16:13-15*** – He guided the Apostles into all truth.
- ***Psalms 119:17-20*** - The Holy Spirit illuminates the Word.
- ***1 Corinthians 2:10-14*** – The Spirit teaches us.
- He does not give us new revelations, but he opens our eyes to understand the book he has inspired.

❖ Prayer

- Our interpretation must flow from our prayer life.
- ***Jeremiah 17:9*** – The human heart is prone to self-deception.
- ***Ephesians 1:17-18*** – Paul prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.
- ***Acts 6:4*** – The Apostles committed themselves to the word ***and*** prayer.

❖ What does Paul pray for in Colossians 1:9-14?

Principle 2 – Cultivate faith and obedience to Scripture

❖ Faith and obedience

- The Bible is not a philosophical textbook to be debated.
- ***John 8:31-32*** – “So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ ”
- ***Acts 20:20, 27*** – We are to please God by declaring the whole counsel of His will.
- ***Proverbs 29:25*** – We are to fear God not man.

❖ **Character is more important than gifting**

- **Acts 20:28** – “Take heed to your life.”
- **1 Timothy 4:16** – “Watch your life and your doctrine”.
- Our personal walk with God is vital – we interpret and teach the Bible as servants of the living God.

❖ **What does James 1:22-23 teach us about our approach to the Bible?**

Principle 3 – Practice humility in your study of Scripture

❖ **Humility**

- **Philippians 2:2-3; 1 Peter 5:5** – We must be clothed in humility.
- **John 3:28-30** – We must aim to glorify Jesus.

❖ **Pride is the Bible teacher’s occupational hazard. Why is it dangerous?**

❖ **How do we combat it?**

Principle 4 – Study the Scripture in community

❖ **We need community**

- **Hebrews 10:25** - We live in an individualistic age, but God created us to flourish in community.
- **Philemon 6** – We discover the truth in fellowship with the Lord’s people.
- **Ephesians 4:11-13; Romans 12:8** – Within the church some are gifted as teachers.

❖ **Community shapes our interpretation**

- Learn through reading helpful books.
- Acquire and employ Bible study tools.
- Listen to good preaching.
- Be careful of unique and novel interpretations.
- Have a teachable heart.

❖ **How should these verses affect the way we interpret the Bible?**

- **Proverbs 27:17** – “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”.

- **Proverbs 24:26** – “An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.”

Principle 5 - Meditate on your text

“Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the word and prayer. The word feeds meditation and meditation feeds prayer” Thomas Manton

❖ **We are commanded to meditate**

- **Psalm 19:14** – “May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

- **Joshua 1:8** – Joshua was commanded to meditate on the word so that he could be an effective leader.
- **Psalm 1:2** – We are to delight in the Word and meditate on it day and night.

❖ **Meditate on your passage**

- Pray for understanding.
- At this stage you will approach the passage without any external aids.
- Look carefully at the passage itself and pray for understanding.
- Read and re-read your passage in several translations.
- Print it off and mark it.
- Read it in context – what comes immediately before and after the passage?
- Check the cross references.
- Give yourself time to ponder and probe the text.
- Let God speak to you personally.
- Come up with a list of questions you want to be answered.

❖ **Questions**

- Have I got the whole passage, and the whole unit of thought?
- Who wrote this?
- Why did he write it?
- What did the passage mean to the original hearers?
- Are there any difficult words or ideas I need to look up?
- What is clear and what do I not understand?
- What are the surprises?
- How do I apply the passage today?

❖ **Read 2 Kings 2:19-25. What questions would you ask to help you understand this passage?**

Principle 6 - Study your text

Get as much help as you can from commentaries, Bible notes & other Christians.

❖ **A commitment to painstaking study**

- **2 Timothy 2:15** – Be a good workman rightly handling God's word.
- Allow enough time for study.
- This includes both understanding and application.

❖ **Use the tools which are available**

- This is an aspect of fellowship.
- Bring your list of questions with you.
- Be suspicious of novel meanings no one has ever found before.

❖ **What kind of books will you use in your study?**

1) Bible Versions

- Literal – AV; ESV
- Dynamic Equivalent – NIV
- Paraphrases

2) Bible Introductions

- Books that will deal with the historical and cultural setting
- Bible Dictionaries.
- Study Bibles.

3) Linguistic and word study tools

- Concordances.
- Word studies – eg Vine's Dictionary

4) Commentaries

- Technical
- Devotional and practical – eg - Matthew Henry
- Homiletical – eg BST

❖ **What challenges do we face when we begin to study a Bible text?**

Principle 7 – Seek the plain meaning

❖ **The allegorical method**

- It is a common myth that the Bible's real meaning is hidden behind the surface text.
- **John 21:11** – Why does John record the fact that there were 153 fish?
- We must not search for a "*deeper meaning*" where one does not exist.
- No special, secret, arcane, esoteric meaning is poured into a text simply because it's divinely inspired.

❖ **Allegory**

- An allegory is a narrative in which every person, event and detail is interpreted as representing a hidden meaning with spiritual implications.
- This meaning is available to the spiritually mature and perceptive.
- It was popular in the early church and during the Middle Ages.
- This approach was rejected by the Reformers.
- The Bible contains allegory, but we are not at liberty to see it everywhere.

❖ **Try turning 2 Kings 2:19-25 into an allegory**

❖ **Why is allegory appealing?**

❖ **Why is it wrong?**

❖ **"Sensus literalis" - Read the text for its plain and obvious meaning**

- Look for the plain, straightforward meaning of the biblical text.
- It does not mean that every text in the Scriptures is given a "*woodenly literal*" interpretation.
- Parables are interpreted as parables, symbols as symbols, poetry as poetry, didactic literature as didactic literature, historical narrative as historical narrative and occasional letters as occasional letters.
- The Bible is to be interpreted according to the ordinary rules of language.

❖ **Figurative language**

- Figures of speech and illustrations are powerful and colourful means of expression.
- Figurative language in Scripture only enhances the plain meaning of the text.

❖ **How would you interpret:**

- **Isaiah 55:12**

- **Matthew 7:3**

- **John 20:19-20**

Principle 8 – Examine the specific words that are used

❖ **Look carefully at the words that the author chooses**

- **Matthew 4:4** - Every word proceeds from the mouth of God.
- Words carry thoughts.
- Revelational is “*propositional*” and “*verbal*” .
- It is based on words not the experiences that inspired them or that flowed from them.
- Examine each word carefully for the part it plays in the sentence.
- You can use Greek and Hebrew tools, such as lexicons to help with this.

❖ **Psalm 139:13** – “For you created my inmost being...”

- The Hebrew word for “created” (“*ka-ni-ta*”) means both to create to possess or acquire.
- What are the implications of this?

❖ **Philippians 2:5-11**

- **2:6** - “Very nature” (*morphe*) of God - “inward and abiding or unchanging essence of God”.
- **2:7** – “Very nature” (*morphe*) of a “servant” (“*doulos*” which may be translated as “slave”).
- What are the implications of this?

❖ **Questions to ask**

- What is the natural meaning of a particular word?
- How is it used elsewhere in the Bible?
- What words or themes are repeated?
- Are there words that introduce reasons or causes (“for / because / since”)
- Are there words that introduce purpose or result (“so that / therefore”).
- What are the commands? What are the reasons? What are the promises?
- It is also important to grasp the meaning of words which carry heavy theological freight, such as “*faith*”, “*grace*”, “*redemption*”, “*gospel*” and “*holy*”.
- Sometimes one English word may represent two different Greek/Hebrew words: e.g. John 21:15-17 – two words are used for “*love*” in Greek.

❖ **Some warnings**

- Be careful of etymology – e.g. “*butterfly*” is not flying butter!
- “*Repent*” (“*metanoēō*”). It is made up of two Greek words, “*meta*” (“*change*”) and “*noeō*” (*mind*) - ‘*to change your mind*’.
- But repentance is much more than a change of mind.
- All words have a range of meanings and nuances. The word “*cell*” can refer to your mobile or to a small room for incarceration. We must read each word in the context in which it is used.
- The same is true of Greek and Hebrew words.

❖ *How is the word “death” or “dead” used in these passages?*

- *Ephesians 2:1*

- *1 Thessalonians 4:16*

- *Revelation 1:17-18*

- *Revelation 21:8*

How are they used differently? Do they have anything in common?

Principle 9 – Explore the literary context

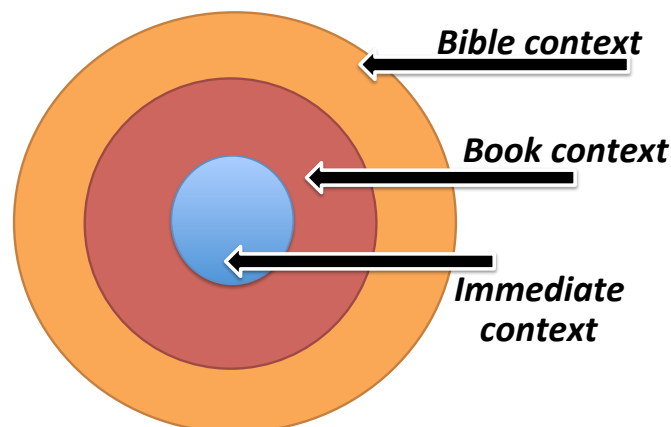
❖ *The danger of misusing texts by ignoring the context*

- A text without a context is a pretext.
- This can be a particular problem when we are teaching on a single verse.
- ***Revelation 3:20*** – In the context (***3:14,22***) it is addressed a church which has excluded Christ.
- It is often used as an invitation for Jesus to enter our hearts, but this is not its primary reference.
- ***Romans 8:28*** – “*God works all things for good...*” – What is the good in this situation?

❖ *What is the danger of preaching Philippians 4:13 without the context of 4:11-12?*

❖ **Three contexts**

- The immediate context.
- The context of the Book.
- The context of the Bible.



A. The immediate context

- The writer follows a logical line of thought in what he writes. What he said in the previous verses or chapters **and** what he said in the ones that follow will help make the text in question clear.
- Taking the text out of that context risks misinterpreting it. Often clues in the surrounding verses will open aspects of the meaning in your text you would have otherwise missed.

❖ **Romans 12:1-2**

- *Before - Romans 11:33-36 – Doxology
Romans 12:1-2*
- *After - Romans 12:3-16 – Humility and love in the church*

How does what comes before and after Romans 12:1-2 affect our interpretation of these verses?

❖ ***What is the context of 2 Kings 2:19-25?***

B. The context in the Book

- Where does it come in the overall flow of the book?
- How does it reflect the theology and purpose of the author of this book?
- How does an understanding of genre affect our interpretation?

❖ ***Matthew 7:24-29 – The authority of Jesus teaching***

- Matthew is written for a Jewish audience.
- Jesus is the new Moses (5:1, 21,27,31,33,38,43).
- Jesus is the Messiah/King
 - ⇒ The coming of the kingdom (3:17)
 - ⇒ The call of the first disciples (3:18-22)
 - ⇒ The first signs of the kingdom (3:23-25)
 - ⇒ The comprehensive signs of the kingdom – the king conquers sin, disease, demons, disorder and death (8:1-9:38).
- The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) declares of the king's authority. *Matthew 7:24-29 therefore reminds us that we must submit to the authority of this king, who is greater than Moses.*

C. The context of the Bible

❖ The Bible tells one story from Creation to Consummation.

- Common themes run through the Bible and we often re-visit them.
- The Old is filled with pictures, types and prophecies.
- The New describes the way in which they come to fulfilment in Christ.
- So we ask questions like:
 - ⇒ In which Testament is this text located?
 - ⇒ Does it contain types or prophecies?
 - ⇒ How does it reach forward and find its fulfilment?
 - ⇒ How does it look back and what does it fulfil?
 - ⇒ Can you discover common themes or pictures?

❖ Example - Ephesians 2:19-22 – God dwells among His people

- **Genesis 2** – God walks with humans.
- **Exodus 40** – God is present in the Tabernacle.
- **1 Kings 7** – God is present in the Temple.
- **Ezekiel 40-48** – The promise of the Temple where God dwells.
- **John 1:14** – God tabernacles with us.
- **Revelation 21-22** – God dwells with His people forever.

❖ John 1:29 – *Jesus is “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”*

What other Bible passages take up this theme?

Principle 10 – Explore historical, cultural & geographical contexts

A. The Historical Context

- Who wrote it?
- When did he write it?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What issues is the text addressing?

- Where does it come in the flow of biblical history and revelation?
- What is the historical background?

❖ **Revelation 2:1-7**

- *Who?*

- *When?*

- *Why?*

- *Where?*

- *What (aim)?*

B. The Cultural Context

- What were the customs of the time?
- What did people believe?
- How did they behave?

❖ **Matthew 16:24**

- What does Jesus mean by “taking up your cross”?

❖ **Revelation 3:18**

- How can knowledge of the cultural background help us here?

❖ **Genesis 23:7-20**

- What does Abraham do here? Why?

C. The geographical context

❖ **Physical geography**

- The land of Israel is roughly the size of Wales.
- The OT story engages with world empires - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon & Persia.
- Most Jesus’ life happened within 65 miles of his hometown of Nazareth.
- In the New Testament the biblical world was dominated by the powerful Roman Empire, which ruled the entire Mediterranean world.
- Paul himself was a Roman citizen and travelled throughout the empire.

❖ **Spiritual significance**

- Sometimes places have spiritual significance.
- Babel or Babylon represents the world in rebellion against God.
- Jerusalem or Zion symbolizes the church or heaven.

❖ ***What light does geography shed on these verses?***

- ***Ruth 1:1***

- ***2 Kings 2:7-16***

- ***Matthew 2:13,19-23***

Principle 11 – Discover the author’s Purpose

❖ ***Authorial intention***

- The Bible is both a human book and a divine book.
- The divine authorship of the Bible gives it its unity.
- However God used human authors - He did not dictate His word to them.
- The human authors had a specific historical audience, context and purpose.
- The authors wrote with a particular purpose or intention.
- The intended meaning of the author will also be the intended meaning of the Holy Spirit who inspired him to write.
- Meaning lies with the author not the reader – not “*what it means to me*”.

❖ ***How do we discover his intention?***

- This means we must get into the author’s context, historically, grammatically, and culturally and explore the literary forms and conventions that he is working with.
- There are both general and specific aims in a particular text.
- Sometimes the author tells us why he is writing. This is common in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament it often has to be inferred.

❖ ***How do these verses reveal some of the author's intention?***

- ***Psalm 1-2***
- ***Proverbs 1:1-7***
- ***John 20:31***
- ***1 John 1:4***

- Sometimes an author has a number of purposes in writing his book.

❖ ***What are some of the reasons why Paul wrote 2 Corinthians?***

- ***2 Corinthians 1: 8-11***
- ***2 Corinthians 6:1-2***
- ***2 Corinthians 13:5,10***

❖ ***Work out the dominant theme and purpose – the “big idea”***

- A talk is not a collection of random, unrelated points.
- A talk is not a running commentary.
- A talk is not a lecture describing all that you have learned from the text.

- **Typical Places** - Jerusalem or Zion typifies the church and finally heaven. (Galatians 4:25, 26; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 21:2).
- **Typical Object** - The bronze serpent, lifted up in the wilderness, through which the people found physical healing (Numbers 21:8) was a type of the lifted-up Christ (John 3:14; 12:32), through whom spiritual healing comes (Isaiah 53:5).
- **Typical Events** - The flood of Noah's day (Genesis 6-8) typified the sudden destruction of the world yet to come at the end of the age (Matthew 24:37-39).
- **Typical Offices** - There were three offices in the Old Testament characterized by anointing. Prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Exodus 28:41), and kings (1 Samuel 10:1) were anointed in anticipation of the coming of the anointed one or Messiah (Daniel 9:25, 26). He will be prophet (Acts 3:22), priest (Hebrews 3:1), and king (Revelation 17:14).
- **Typical Institutions** - The Passover with its spotless lamb (Exodus 12:5) was a type of the death of Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:7), who was without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:19).

❖ **What other types can you think of?**

Principle 12 – Compare Scripture with Scripture

❖ **Comparing Scripture with Scripture**

- The Bible is a collection of divinely inspired writings written by a number of authors, living in different geographical locations over a long span of history.
- Yet it retains an amazing unity.
- God, because of His omniscience and truthfulness would never contradict Himself.
- We can therefore trust Scripture to interpret Scripture.

- **John 1:1** says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” This clearly looks back to Genesis 1:1 and identifies the Word with God. But who is this Word? John 1:14 gives the answer.

❖ ***The “analogy of faith”***

- Since all Scripture comes from God there will be no contradictions.
- We are to compare passages which are less clear with those that are clearer.
- The “*faith*” or “*body of doctrine*” which they contain as a whole will not contradict itself.
- There are times when there may be two sides to one revealed truth. On such occasions we have to hold both sides with determination.
- For example God is both one and three and Christ is both fully God and fully man. In articulating this doctrine we need to recognize that the truth does not lie in one extreme or another, not in the middle. The truth lies in both extremes at the same time.

❖ ***The plain things are the main thing and the main things are the plain things***

- It is always important to interpret obscure passages by those that are clear.
- There are clear passages that teach the doctrine of eternal security (John 10:28-29; Romans 8:31-39; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Hebrew 6:4-6 raise questions about our security. We should interpret such a difficult passage in the light of the clearer passages which teach eternal security.
- Use the New Testament to help interpret the Old Testament. This recognizes the progressive nature of revelation. We need to understand the trajectory of Scripture from promise to fulfilment.

❖ ***Read Hebrew 6:4-6 . How would you interpret these verses?***

- ❖ ***1 Corinthians 15:29*** – “*Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?*”

Should we be baptized for the dead? Justify your answer

Principle 13 – Explore the Structure

❖ Introduction

- A great deal of Biblical literature operates in formal structures.
- Structure operates at a number of different levels.

1) Structures within single passages:

- **Psalm 66** is a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance. It follows a clear structure which moves inwards in praise from universal, through the national to the personal:
 - ⇒ Universal invitation (1-4)
 - ⇒ National proclamation (5-12)
 - ⇒ Personal affirmation (13-20)
- **Mark 1:1-20 – Who is Jesus – Four voices**
 - ⇒ The voice of the evangelist (1)
 - ⇒ The voice of the forerunner (2-8)
 - ⇒ The voice of God (9-13)
 - ⇒ The voice of Jesus (14-20)

❖ What structure do you find in Psalm 1?

2) Structures within books:

- The authors of individual books often follow a particular structure.
- Understanding this gives insight into the book and its message.

1. Genesis – two clear parts

- **Genesis 1-11** - Primeval History – Four events – Creation/Fall/Flood/Babel
- **Genesis 12-50** - Family History – Four men – Abraham/Isaac/Jacob/Joseph

2. Jonah - two repeated halves

- **Jonah 1-2** – The word of the Lord comes to Jonah; he disobeys; God saves him; he rejoices in salvation.
- **Jonah 3-4** - The word of the comes to Jonah; he obeys; God saves Nineveh; he complains about salvation.
- Notice the contrasts as well as the similarities.

3. **Mark - a gospel in two halves**

- **Mark 1-8** – Who is Jesus?
Mark 8:27-9:1 – The turning point in the gospel
- **Mark 9-16** – What is Jesus' mission?

4. **Luke - a gospel for Gentile disciples**

- Luke follows the structure of Mark, but pays more attention to the journey to Jerusalem, thus emphasizing the way of discipleship.
- **Luke 1:1-9:50** – Who is Jesus?
Luke 9:51-19:44 – What is a disciple?
- **Luke 19:45-24:53** – What is Jesus' mission?

5. **Ephesians – two clear sections**

- Paul's states the great doctrinal truths of the faith and then begins to work out their implications for life.
- **Ephesians 1-3** – Doctrine – our riches in Christ
Ephesians 4:1 - "Therefore...I urge you to live a life worthy of your calling."
- **Ephesians 4-6** – Practice – How we are to live in the light of this.

❖ **What does Acts 1:8 suggest about the structure of the book of Acts?**

3) **Structure within specific sections**

- **Ephesians** - There can be structure within a specific section.
- **Ephesians 4-6** - Paul covers specific applications of the gospel.
 - ⇒ **4:1-16** - In the church – Unity.
 - ⇒ **4:17 – 5:20** - In the World – Purity.
 - ⇒ **5:21-6:4** - In the Home – Unity.
 - ⇒ **6:5-9** - In the Workplace – Integrity.
 - ⇒ **6:19-20** - In the Battle – Victory.

Appendix - Structure and poetic parallelism

- Much of the Old Testament is written as poetry.
- Look for indentation in order to identify poetry.
- Hebrew poetry's main characteristic is parallelism.
- **Psalm 24:1-3:**

*The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;*

*for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.*

*Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?
Who may stand in his holy place?*

- Here we have three sets of parallel statements with the second reference restating the basic idea of the first.
 - ⇒ The phrase "*the earth and everything in it*" is amplified by the phrase "*the world and all who live in it*".
 - ⇒ The phrase "*for he founded it on the seas*" is rephrased "*established it on the waters.*"
 - ⇒ The question restated "*Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?*" is restated, "*Who may stand in his holy place?*"

❖ **Work out the parallelism in Isaiah 55:6-7**

Principle 14 – Pay attention to the genre

❖ Introduction

- There are a wide variety of genres in the Bible.
- There are particular keys for the interpretation of each genre.
- There are often a variety of genres within one Bible book.

Narrative	<i>Parts of Genesis and Exodus; Joshua, Judges; Ruth; 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles; Ezra; Nehemiah; Esther; Acts</i>
Law	<i>Parts of Exodus; Leviticus, Numbers; Deuteronomy</i>
Prophecy	<i>Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the “minor prophets” (Hosea to Malachi)</i>
Wisdom	<i>Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job</i>
Poetry	<i>Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations</i>
Apocalyptic	<i>Parts of Isaiah & Ezekiel, Daniel 7-12, Zechariah, Revelation</i>
Gospel	<i>Matthew, Mark, Luke, John</i>
Epistle	<i>New Testament letters</i>

❖ The Gospels – preliminary points

- Each writer has a specific audience for whom he is writing and he has selected his material for them.
 - ⇒ Matthew was written for a Jewish audience.
 - ⇒ Mark was written for a Roman audience.
 - ⇒ Luke was written for a Greek audience.
 - ⇒ John was written for a universal or Gentile audience.
- Read the gospels vertically and horizontally.
- The gospels are in a transitional stage between the Old and New Covenants.
- They contain a variety of genres.

1) Miracle stories

- Treat them as history.
- They authenticate Jesus – they have an apologetic purpose (Acts 2:22).
- They are evidence of Christ’s authority over all forces of evil in the cosmos.
- They are evidence the final victory of God in the new creation.
- Use sanctified imagination – let the story breathe – use a narrative voice.

2) Parables

- They are stories that are used to illustrate a truth.
- We need to understand the cultural background.
- **Matthew 13:1-23** - Parables are there to both reveal **and** hide what is true.

- Parables can be deceptive.
- They often have a sting in the tail - expect them to shock.
- There may be a number of lessons, but there is one main point.
- The same parable may appear in different contexts with different meanings. (Matthew 18:10-14 & Luke 15:3-7)
- They should be related to the Kingdom of God.
- They demand a decision.

3) **Apocalyptic**

- This is full of extravagant pictures and symbolic language.
- It is heavily dependent on the Old Testament.
- Don't get tied down in details – paint the big picture.
- We can understand without being dogmatic.
- They have a specific purpose – to encourage confidence in God in the midst of persecution.
- Do not speculate – they do not provide a timetable.

4) **Pronouncement stories**

- Stories which support and illustrate a great truths (eg Luke 5:17-26).
- Make the pronouncement central to the sermon.
- Show how the story illustrates it.

❖ **Luke 19:1-10**

- What kind of genre is this?
- How do the rules pertinent to this genre affect the way you would teach this passage?

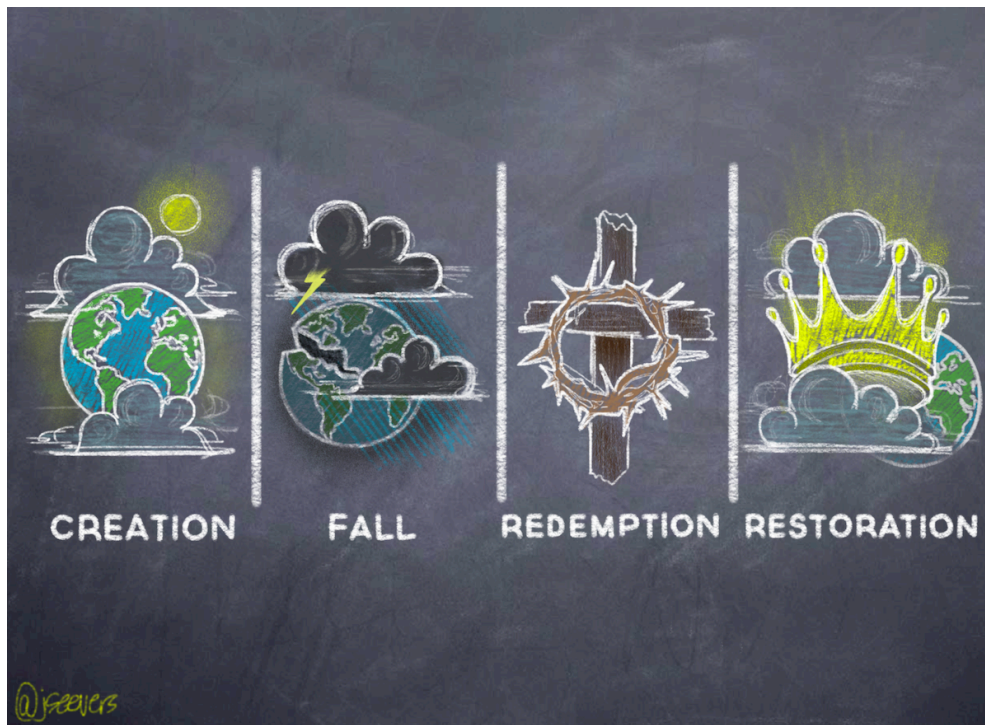
❖ **Mark 4:30-32**

- What kind of genre is this?
- How do the rules pertinent to this genre affect the way you would teach this passage?

Principle 15 – Remember the big picture

❖ *The Bible tells one story*

- **Psalm 66:5** – “Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!”
- The Bible is **not** a book of philosophical speculation.
- From the creation to new creation God has been at work in history.
- The Bible contains hundreds of stories.
- **Ephesians 1:8-10** – There is one ultimate plan and one big story.



❖ *The Old Testament and the New Testament form one book*

- The Old Testament and the New Testament belong together.
- The NT cannot be understood without the OT.
- The OT cannot be understood without the NT.
- We must come to the NT through the OT and the OT through the NT.
- **Matthew 1:22-23** - Promise and fulfilment.



❖ **Two Pictures**

A. Building a Cathedral

Plan	Eternity
Blueprints	Promises/prophecies
Scale models	“Types”
Project	Christ

B. Planting a forest



❖ **Two approaches**

A. Vaughan Roberts - “God’s Big Picture”

“God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule, enjoying God’s blessing”.

Eden - The Pattern Kingdom
Fall - The Perished Kingdom
Abraham -The Promised Kingdom
Redemption - The Pictured Perfect Kingdom
Conquest – The Progressing Kingdom
A Royal Nation - The Partial Kingdom
Decline, Exile and Restoration – The Polluted Kingdom
Prophecy - The Prophesied Kingdom
Jesus and the Kingdom - The Present Kingdom
The Apostolic Age - The Proclaimed Kingdom

B. Graeme Goldsworthy

“Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture.”

- ***In the Garden of Eden*** - God, his people, and the place all exist in the perfect relationships intended by God.
- ***Outside the Garden of Eden*** - The relationships established by God at creation are dislocated and confused because of sin. They are not totally disrupted, and the world goes on while under sentence of death.
- ***In redemptive history*** - God calls one family of people, and their successors, to be the context within which he reveals his plan and purposes for the redemption of people out of every nation. The relationships of the kingdom of God are put in place but never fully realized by sinful people.
- ***In prophetic eschatology*** -The pattern of redemption, and the promised kingdom of God that failed to eventuate in Israel’s history, constitute the pattern of a future glorious salvation and kingdom promised by the prophets.
- ***In Jesus Christ*** - Where Adam failed, and where Israel failed, Jesus comes as the last Adam and the true Israel to carry out God’s purposes perfectly. Believers from all periods of history are credited with his perfection and righteousness as a gift.
- ***In the consummation*** - The perfection that is in Jesus, and that believers possess by faith, is only fully formed in believers and the world when Christ returns in glory.

❖ ***Read Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12:1-5,9. How are these texts connected?***

Principle 16 – Remember that revelation is progressive

❖ **What do these verses teach about God’s revelation?**

- **Hebrews 1:1-2** - *“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.*

- **John 1:17-18** – *“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

❖ **There is progress in revelation**

- Progressive revelation simply means that the truths found in the Bible were not fully revealed all at once.
- It is **not** a movement from error to truth but from truth to more truth; from the lesser to the greater; from the provisional to the permanent.
- *“The new is in the old concealed; the old is by the new revealed.”*
- **1 Corinthians 13:11-13** - There are still many parts of the revelation that we do not yet fully understand.

❖ **A two-act play**

- The Bible is like a two-act Agatha Christie play.
 - ⇒ **Act 1** – The OT raises questions and sets the background for all that follows.
 - ⇒ **Act 2** – The NT reveals the solution to the mystery.
- The NT is the lens through which we are to read the OT.
- The Old Testament is like a room *“richly furnished but dimly lit.”*

❖ **Other biblical pictures**

- **Hebrews 10:1** - Shadow and reality.
- **John 3:14-15** - Type and antitype.
- **Matthew 4:1-11** - Narrative recapitulation and climax.
- **Hebrews 8:7-13** - Old covenant – New covenant.

❖ **Progressive Revelation – Continuity and discontinuity**

- **There is one God:** His identify becomes clearer as revelation progresses.
- **There is one Saviour:** Isaiah knew that he would be a divine king who would die for sinners, but he did not know that he would be called Jesus.
- **There is one plan of redemption:** No one gets to heaven except through faith in Christ.
- **There is one people of God:** There are massive differences between Israel as a national theocracy and the Church as a universal spiritual people. But there is only one people of God who are saved by faith alone.
- **There is one way of Holiness:** Christians do not obey all the ceremonial and nationalistic laws of Old Testament Israel. However they continue to obey the heart of the law – “Love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself.”

❖ **The example of the character of God**

- Some think that the God of the Old Testament is a harsh dictator and the God of the New Testament is a gracious and loving heavenly Father.
- This is completely unbiblical.
- **God is love in both Testaments**
 - ⇒ **Exodus 34:6-7** – His love is His glory.
 - ⇒ **Psalms 103:7-12** – This is the basis of forgiveness.
 - ⇒ **John 3:16** – His love is seen supremely at the cross.
- **God is holy in both Testaments**
 - ⇒ **Isaiah 6:3** - Holiness is fundamental to His character.
 - ⇒ **Nahum 1:2-8** – In His wrath & love for righteousness He punishes sin.
 - ⇒ **Revelation 6:15-17** - The final judgment is the fullest expression of His holy wrath
- In the New Testament and particularly at the cross our understanding that God is both gracious and holy is intensified.

❖ ***Should Christians obey these OT commands in Leviticus 19? Why?***

- **19:2**
- **19:11**
- **19:18**
- **19:27-28**
- **19:30**
- **19:32**

Principle 17 – The Bible is God-centred – Show them God

❖ ***Always adopt a God-centred perspective when interpreting your text***

- The Bible was not given describe ancient history and customs.
- It was given to tell us about God - it is His love letter to his people.
- What it says about God will ***always*** be central to every text.
- This means looking at the text in terms of what it reveals about God and His dealings with His creation and particularly with humanity.
- Even texts that give instructions as to how we should behave, like the Ten Commandments, reveal a great deal about the character of God. How?

❖ **Capturing the vision of God in our teaching**

- *“Our people need to hear God – entranced preaching. They need someone at least once a week, to lift up his voice and magnify the supremacy of God”¹*
- *“I can forgive a man a bad sermon. I can forgive a preacher almost anything if h gives me a sense of God. If he gives me some glimpse of the magnificence and glory of God, the love of my Saviour and the magnificence of the gospel – if he does that then I am his debtor and I am profoundly grateful to him”²*

❖ **What does a vision of God do for us?**

- It humbles our pride and deepens our faith.
- It increases our love and focuses our worship.
- It our elicits wonder and strengthens our courage.
- It enlivens our service and feeds our understanding.
- It sweetens our sorrows and challenges our apathy.
- It encourages our prayers and calms our fears.
- *“The purpose of preaching is to restore the throne of God in the soul of man”³*

❖ **How does a God-centred approach affect the way in which we would approach these texts?**

- **2 Kings 2:19-25**

- **Revelation 1:9-20**

¹*“The Supremacy of God in Preaching” – John Piper*

² *Martyn Lloyd Jones*

³ *Cotton Mather*

Principle 18 – The Bible is Christ-centred - Show them Jesus

“Like John the Baptist, the Scriptures, rightly understood, point away from themselves to Jesus. If therefore some of the Jews refuse to come to Jesus for life, that refusal constitutes evidence that they are not reading their Scriptures as they are meant to be read” D.A. Carson

❖ **Christ is the central theme of the whole Bible**

- We need Christ to understand the Bible.
- We need the Bible to understand Christ.
- Whether the text deals with him explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly, it is always about him.
- We see his face and hear his voice in Scripture.

❖ **The Old Testament is about Jesus**

- **Luke 24:25-27, 44-47** - Jesus is the key to interpreting the whole book.
- **John 8: 56** – “Abraham rejoiced to see my day”
- **John 5:46** – “Moses wrote about me.”
- **Matthew 22:45** – “David called me Lord.”

❖ **How?**

1) Gospels

- The teaching and ministry of Christ.
- The cross and resurrection dominate.
- Who is Jesus? Why has he come? What do people say about him?
- Be careful of mere moralizing.

2) Acts

- **Acts 1:1** - “All that Jesus began to do...”
- He is the theme of every sermon.
- “The Lord” usually refers to Jesus.
- How does he encounter individuals?

3) The Epistles

- Great individual texts point to Jesus.
- The revelation of great truths about Christ (Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:1-3).
- How are we to live in the light of Christ’s salvation – again avoid moralizing.

4) Apocalypse of John

- Jesus is the subject of every chapter.
- It is a revelation of him.
- It is not a timetable but a revelation to encourage.
- It gives us a full orb picture of Christ – the slain lamb, the reigning lamb and the wrathful lamb.

5) The Torah

- It contains types – shadows that point forward to Jesus.
 - ⇒ People (e.g. Joseph).
 - ⇒ Events (e.g. the crossing of the Red Sea).
 - ⇒ Places (e.g. the Tabernacles).
 - ⇒ Objects (e.g. the bronze altar).
 - ⇒ Institutions (e.g. the Day of Atonement).
- The law is our school master.
- **Exodus 19:1-6; 20:1-3** - The law flows from the grace of God and the experience of salvation.

6) The History Books

- Typology – they contain pictures of Christ in the individuals, institutions and events of the Old Testament (e.g. David and Goliath).
- The way of contrast – kings and leaders are contrasted with the true king and leader.
- It relates the great acts of salvation such as the Exodus or the Conquest.

7) Psalms and Wisdom books

- The book of Psalms was Jesus' hymn book.
- The Psalms describe the Christ-centred spirituality of the heart.
- We see Jesus in the Messianic Psalms.
- Jesus is the true wisdom of God.

8) The Prophets

- Accurate predictions of the life of Christ.
- The Apologetic value of the prophecies.
- Prophets as types of Christ (e.g. Jeremiah – *the "Weeping Prophet"*).

❖ Even in the Gospels we can miss the centrality of Christ

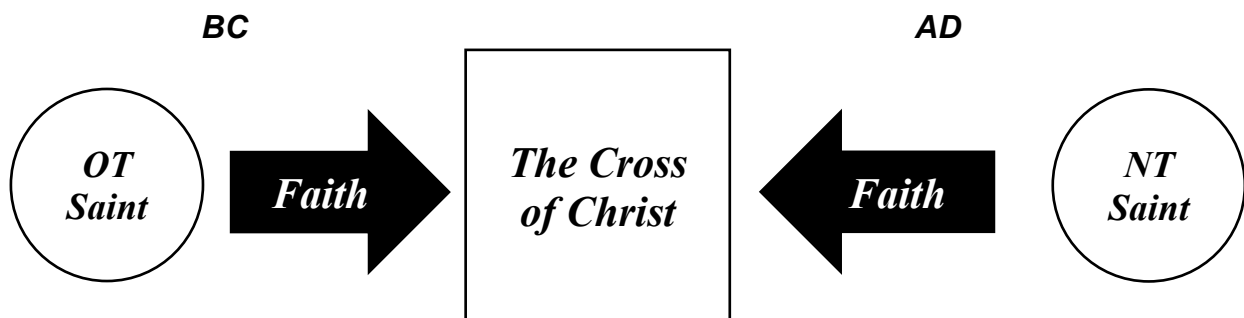
- We can turn a passage like the Sermon on the Mount into a form of moralism or legalism.
- We emphasize the faith response at the expense of a proper emphasis on Christ – eg walking on the water is about our willingness to “get out of the boat”.
- We can take Jesus as an example to follow rather than a Saviour to trust – eg the Temptations of Jesus.

❖ *How does 2 Kings 2:19-25 point to Christ?*

Principle 19 - Preach the Gospel

❖ *There has only ever been one way of Salvation*

- Will Abraham and David be in heaven? On what basis were they saved?
- **Romans 4:1-8** – They were saved by trusting in Jesus – there is only one way of salvation.
- Old Testament believers experienced salvation in the same way that we experience it.
- The only difference is that they were looking forward, while we are looking back.



❖ *Old Testament believers experienced the same forgiveness as us*

- **Psalm 32:1-2** – The blessing of forgiveness.
- **Psalm 51** – The glory of grace.
- **Jonah 3:1-4:11** – God has mercy on His enemies.

❖ *Atonement and sacrifices*

- In the OT the Lord dealt with his people through animal sacrifice.
- **Leviticus 1:4,20** - He promised atonement and forgiveness on this basis.
- These were not deceitful promises and OT believers rejoiced in salvation.
- Even in the OT people knew that something better was needed.

- David knew that his sins of murder and adultery were not fully covered by the sacrificial provisions of the OT cult,
*“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.”* (Psalm 51:16)
- Isaiah saw that God’s Suffering Servant would make atonement:
*But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.* (Isaiah 53:5-6).
- **Hebrews 10:4** acknowledges that *“it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins,”*
- **Hebrews 10:12** – Only the precious blood of Jesus can make atonement.

❖ **Every talk should have a gospel emphasis**

- The message of salvation, first announced in Genesis 3:15, underpins the whole Bible and is a key to understanding every text.
- **Matthew 28:18-20** – Our mission is to make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching.
- Both non-Christians and Christians need to hear the gospel.
- It is the motivation and power for holy living.
- It protects us from legalism and moralism.
- Therefore every talk should be...
 - ⇒ Founded on the Gospel
 - ⇒ Flowing from the Gospel
 - ⇒ Exulting in the Gospel

❖ **Where is the gospel in these passages?**

- **Exodus 14:13-14**

- **2 Kings 2:19-25**

Principle 20 – Discover the correct application of the text

❖ **Exposition without application is incomplete**

- Every passage of Scripture was written with the specific purpose of producing change in its reader.
- This may be a change in understanding, motivation, desire, activity or habit.
- Every text has one meaning – the meaning that was intended by the author.
- But there are many legitimate applications.
- We should work hard at finding this legitimate application.
- You have not done your work properly unless you have applied the text to your own life and to that of your listeners.

❖ **It is the purpose of Scripture**

- The Bible is designed to impart life and to bring about change – healthy and sustainable growth towards maturity.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*
- **Colossians 1:28** – *“He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.”*
- We preach to disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed.

❖ **Biblical examples**

- **Joshua 24:15 – Joshua** – *“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household we will serve the Lord.”*
- **Samuel 12:7 – Nathan** – *“You are the man.”*
- **1 Kings 18:21 – Elijah** – *“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”*
- **Mark 1:15 - Jesus** - *“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”*
- **Acts 2:38-39 – Peter** - *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*
- **Ephesians 4:1 - Paul** - *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”*

❖ **The Principles of Application**

- Work hard on understanding what the passage means before you to apply it.
- There is both continuity and discontinuity between the world of the text and our world.
- Be true to the text – exegesis not eisegesis.
- Be specific and clear – avoid generalities.
- Be blunt – don’t be rude.
- Be aware of the needs of your congregation.
- Beware of a personal agenda.
- If you need to confront someone do it personally rather than in a talk.
- Beware of legalism - always emphasize grace.
- Don’t scold or nag – try to persuade.
- Show them Christ – this is the best application.

❖ **Some dangers**

- Jumping to application too quickly.
- Moving away from the Word in a quest for relevance.
- Substituting psychological solutions for biblical ones.
- Felt-need preaching which is divorced from the text.
- Losing the balance between challenge and encouragement.
- Authoritarianism.
- Leaving application to the Holy Spirit at the point of delivery.
- Losing our nerve.
- Moralizing.
- Missing Christ.

Determine the “Fallen Condition Focus

- “The “Fallen Condition Focus” (FCF) is “*the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that required the grace of the passage for God’s people to glorify and enjoy him.*”⁴
- Each passage tells us about:
 - ⇒ The human condition
 - ⇒ The biblical solution
- “A sermon is about how a text says that we are to respond biblically to the FCF as it is expressed in our lives – identifying the gracious means that God provides for us to deal with the human brokenness that deprives us of the full experience and expression of his glory” (Pages 50-51)
- The FCF sets the tone, determines the approach and organizes the application of the talk.
- How we frame the FCF depends on the personality and experience of the teacher and the circumstances of the listeners.

⁴ *Christ-Centred Preaching* – Bryan Chapell, Page 50

❖ ***How would you apply 2 Kings 2:19-25 to believers today?***

❖ ***What applications can you find in 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10?***

❖ ***What applications do you find in the following texts***

- ***Exodus 22:18***

- ***Psalm 22:1***

- ***1 Corinthians 10:13***

- ***Hebrews 13:7, 17***

- ***2 Timothy 2:1-2***

Some Books

1. **Vaughan Roberts - God's Big picture (IVP)**
A very good overview of the story-line of the Bible.
2. **Graeme Goldsworthy - According to Plan (IVP)**
An overview of the whole of the Bible in relation to its major themes
3. **Andrew Reid - Postcard from Palestine (Matthias/GBC)**
A basic introduction to reading and using the Bible.
4. **Graeme Goldsworthy - Gospel & Kingdom (Paternoster)**
An easy to read explanation of the unity of the Old and New Testaments.
5. **G.D.Fee & D.Stuart - How to Read the Bible for all its worth (SU)**
A readable, but detailed, study of how to interpret different literary forms in the Bible.
6. **Bernie Wolvaardt - How to Interpret the Bible (Veritas/GBC)**
A very detailed analysis of Biblical interpretation in a step-by-step format.
7. **Sidney Greidanus - The Modern Preacher & the Ancient Text (IVP)**
An excellent "in-depth" study of biblical interpretation in the context of preaching.
8. **Sidney Greidanus - Preaching Christ from the Old Testament (IVP)**
It looks at the principles of handling the Old Testament as Christian Scripture.
9. **David Jackman - Opening up the Bible (IVP)**
An introduction to the nature of the Bible.
10. **Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach - Dig deeper (IVP)**
An excellent introduction to understanding a Bible passage.
11. **Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach - Dig even deeper (IVP)**
Using the example of exodus this book deals with understanding an OT Bible passage.