

PRINCIPLES OF EXPOSITION

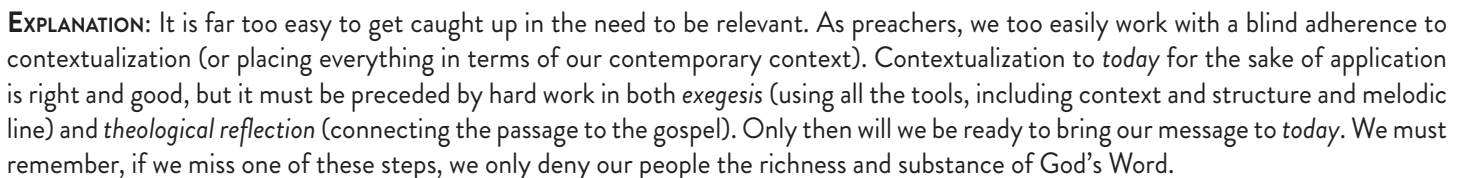


PRINCIPLE: *We must stay on the line of Scripture, never straying above it or below it.*

EXPLANATION: We are often tempted to say more than the Scriptures, zealously venturing into religious pietism, which becomes a kind of legalism. We judge others who do not maintain our extra-Biblical traditions and standards. In so doing, we add to the Scriptures. We can also be tempted to dip below the line into liberalism and pragmatism, ignoring both the content and point of Scripture. In so doing, we subtract from the Scriptures. As teachers of God's Word, we must commit ourselves to saying nothing more or less than the Scriptures say. It is a matter of obedience (Deuteronomy 4:2, Revelation 22:18-19).

STRATEGIES: pray for steadfastness, be aware of both extremes, anticipate how those who are the farthest above and the farthest below might treat the text, test consistency of your reading with the rest of Scripture

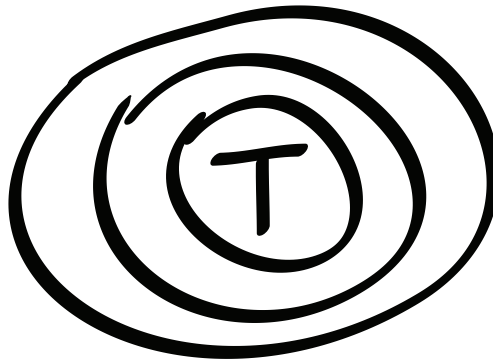
PRINCIPLE: *We must follow a proper sequence to studying the Bible and preparing to preach or teach.*



STRATEGIES: slow down, make sure you leave yourself enough time to adequately prepare, start by putting the exegetical tools to work on your text (before you consult any commentaries), consider the gospel implications, identify the author's main idea in the passage, consider how the author's main idea is relevant to your people

CONTEXT

PRINCIPLE: *We must understand the context in order to see how the original audience understood the text.*



EXPLANATION: In handling God's Word, it is tempting to isolate our text. When we do, we rip it from its context and we run the risk of missing the point or even getting the text wrong. But, by understanding the text in its context (how it would have been understood by the original audience), we are better prepared to understand the author's main idea and the right application of the text to our audience. In particular, we want to consider three levels of context in this session: literary (the flow of the argument or story by looking at the larger section in which our passage resides), historical (the circumstances or situation of the original audience), and biblical (how the author cites or alludes to other biblical passages that he and his audience could have known).

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *Why has the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book?*

STRATEGIES: read the chapter on both sides of your text, read the entire book, if paired with another book, then read both books (e.g., 1 and 2 Corinthians), know where your passage is specifically in historical context and read any corresponding passages (e.g., read 1 or 2 Samuel for some Psalms, read Acts for some Pauline epistles), look up citations and allusions

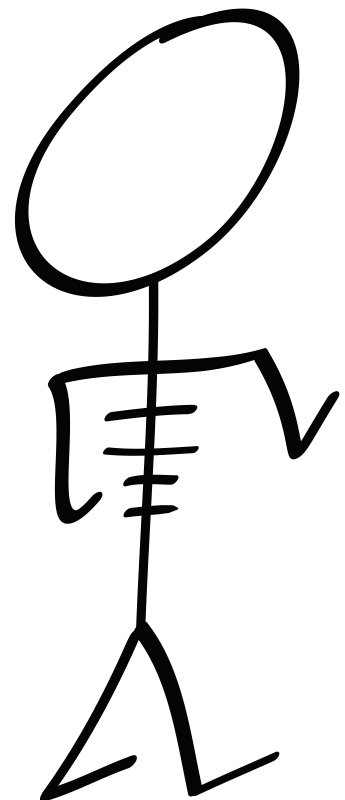
STRUCTURE (GENERAL)

PRINCIPLE: *Every text has a structure.
This structure will reveal an emphasis.
The emphasis must shape our message.*

EXPLANATION: We must apprehend how the author has organized the text and let his organizing principle dictate the shape and emphasis of our message. We might think of this as the skeleton of the text. We must get the *bones* straight in order for the body of our message to be healthy. And when we have apprehended the structure, we must find and teach the emphasis that the structure reveals. Only then will we see the *life* of the passage. Look at the text with x-ray eyes in order to see its skeletal structure.

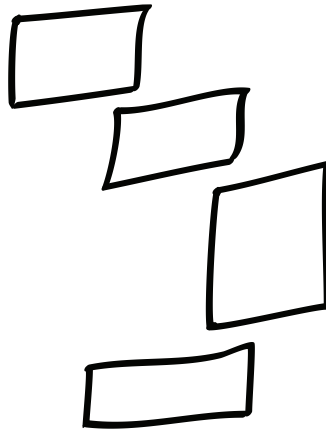
DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *How has the author organized this text?*

STRATEGIES: use a literal translation of the Bible, read and reread and read out loud, look for repetitions or clear thesis statements (sometimes in the form of a rhetorical question), identify your text type as *discourse* (look for grammar, transitional words, main verbs, the flow of ideas), *narrative* (look for plot, characters, literary devices, comparisons and contrast), or *poetry* (look for stanzas by finding repetitions, shifts in imagery, shifts in voice/grammar, shifts in parallelism, other literary devices)



STRUCTURE (DISCOURSE)

PRINCIPLE: Every text has a structure. This structure will reveal an emphasis. The emphasis must shape our message.



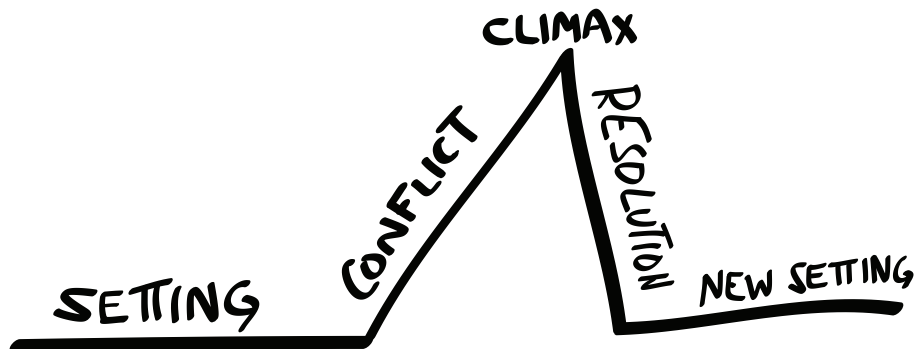
EXPLANATION: The Bible is full of discourses (or speeches). These are the passages in which one person is speaking (e.g., several passages in the Old Testament historical books, the speeches in the Gospels and Acts, and most of the text of the epistles). These discourses tend to be logically organized, following a particular line of argument. The key to understanding the structure of a discourse (and its emphasis) is observing which statements are primary and which are subordinate, uncovering the logic of the author's argument and apprehending the emphasis.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: Are there repeated words, phrases, or ideas? What are the main propositions and main verbs?

STRATEGIES: look for repeated words and phrases, notice grammatical transitions (e.g., *therefore*, *in order that*), trace the flow of ideas and graphically represent it, sentence diagramming (in the original languages if you can)

STRUCTURE (NARRATIVE)

PRINCIPLE: Every text has a structure. This structure will reveal an emphasis. The emphasis must shape our message.



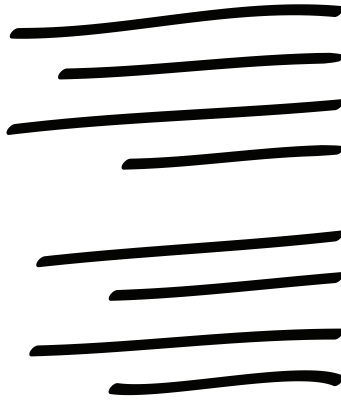
EXPLANATION: There are three primary tools for finding the structure of a narrative. The first is *characters* (i.e., paying attention to how and when characters are introduced or re-introduced, and especially how they are compared and contrasted). The second is *literary devices* (other features like time of day or change of scene embedded in the text). The third, which is pictured above, is *plot* (i.e., noting the plot arc: setting, the primary conflict, the climax, the resolution, and how a new setting is formed from the plot). The emphasis is most frequently located in the area of the conflict, climax, and resolution. In most narratives, if you can identify one or both of the development of characters and the organization of the plot, you will have found the structure.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: What is the conflict? What is the climax? What is the resolution? How are the characters organized?

STRATEGIES: look for the conflict and climax first (as they are typically easiest to spot), pay attention to the 'point of no return' in the 'action' of the story (this is the climax), note how things are different as a result of the plot arc, observe the characters and especially when a narrator describes them or comments on their actions/speeches

STRUCTURE (POETRY)

PRINCIPLE: *Every text has a structure. This structure will reveal an emphasis. The emphasis must shape our message.*



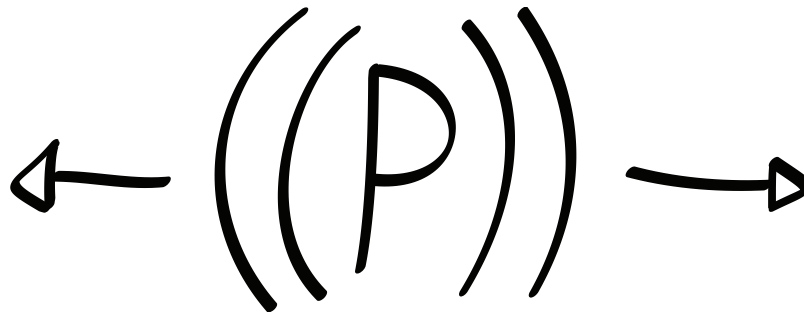
EXPLANATION: The key to understanding a poem (and its emphasis) is seeing how the stanzas work. Hebrew poetry works in sets of parallel lines (two or three lines) formed into groups called stanzas. If you can identify the content and flow and relationship of these stanzas, you will have the emphasis of the text.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: *How are the stanzas divided? How are they organized? How do they work?*

STRATEGIES: to find stanzas: look for repetitions, changes in the topic/imagery, changes in the person speaking (e.g., shift from first person to second person, shift from singular to plural), other significant changes in grammar, changes in the point of view, shifts in parallelism, or other comparisons and contrasts or literary devices (e.g., alphabetical arrangement)

PARABLES

PRINCIPLE: *To understand a parable, we must understand Jesus's purpose in telling it.*



EXPLANATION: A parable is usually a story (narrative), grounded in the real world, that is used to provoke the audience. Parables can be difficult for us because they are used to confound as well as to reveal (Matthew 13:10-17). In order to really understand a parable, we need to understand its various contexts: cultural context (cultural details that are foreign to our culture; dictionaries can be helpful here), circumstantial context (narrative brackets that explain the conversation leading up to or flowing from the parable), and the wider context (e.g., groups of parables, nearby associated teaching, how the characters in the story/audience are described elsewhere). Once we have dabbled in these contexts, we can identify the central concept of why Jesus told the parable.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: *To whom was Jesus speaking? Why did he tell this parable here (at this place) in the book?*

STRATEGIES: read the parable by itself first and learn about the cultural details that you will need to explain, look for details in the nearby narrative sections about those people to whom Jesus is speaking and why he told this parable, look in the rest of the book how the characters to whom Jesus is speaking are portrayed (e.g., the lawyers, the Scribes)

MELODIC LINE

PRINCIPLE: *Just as every song has a unique melody, every book of the Bible has a unique message.*



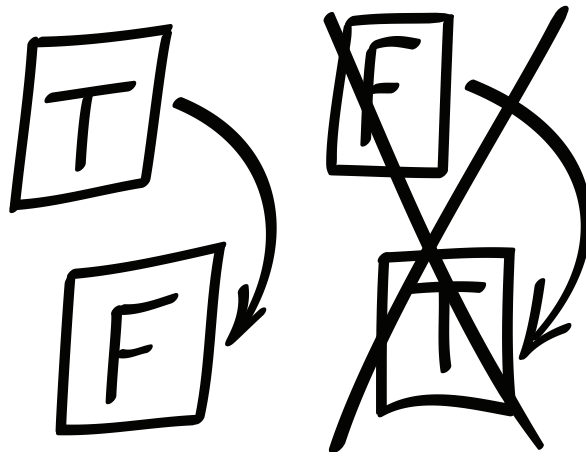
EXPLANATION: Books of the Bible have a coherent, sustained message—or big idea—similar to the unique melody of a song. It is waiting to be heard. Every passage will, in some way, be related (directly or indirectly, as support or even contrast) to this melody. Our task is to listen well enough and long enough to hear it and try to capture it in a concise statement, a melodic line. And once we know what the whole book is about, we will better understand each passage in the book.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *What is the message of the whole book? How does my passage relate to the message of the whole book?*

STRATEGIES: read and reread, identify a top and tail, find a purpose statement or thesis statement, find repeated words and phrases and ideas, follow the Old Testament quotations, identify the macro-structure of the book

TEXT AND FRAMEWORK

PRINCIPLE: *We must let the Bible shape our frameworks rather than letting our frameworks shape our interpretation of the Bible.*

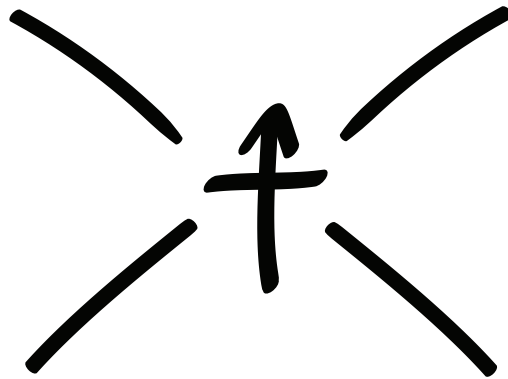


EXPLANATION: We all have frameworks. Whether theological, political, therapeutic, prosperity-driven, cultural, or social—we all bring our own assumptions to the Bible. Our own experiences, training, and desires emerge each time we sit down to study a text. And when our study of the text challenges our frameworks, we need to decide which will take priority. In other words, we need to be aware of our frameworks—as well as those of our congregations (believers and unbelievers). And then we must let the text be sovereign. Rather than making it say what we want it to say, we must hear it for what it says. Otherwise, we are inebriated preachers, using the Bible like a drunk uses a lamppost: more for support than illumination.

STRATEGIES: pray for clarity, identify your own frameworks (ideological, political, theological, etc.), constantly approach the text with fresh eyes, consult many different translations of the Bible (e.g. dynamic, literal, paraphrase)

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL (GENERAL)

PRINCIPLE: *If we are to teach the Bible as Christians, we must show a legitimate connection from our text to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



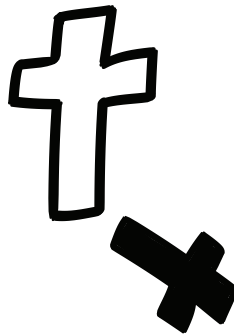
EXPLANATION: After the resurrection, in Luke 24:13-49, Jesus shows the disciples how the Old Testament Scriptures point to him. He also declares that they will be (apostolic) witnesses of this gospel to the end of the earth. And the content of those Scriptures and that witness specifically point to two things: his suffering/death (represented by the cross) and resurrection (represented by the arrow pointing up), which anticipate the intended response of repentance and the result of forgiveness. In other words, the text of the Old and New Testaments points to the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. If we are to teach God's Word in light of the gospel, we must find the legitimate relationship between our text and this gospel of Jesus Christ.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *How does my text relate to the gospel (narrowly defined as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ)?*

STRATEGIES: note any cross-references to the other Testament, develop a good sense of Biblical Theology, consider historical fulfillment and theological themes, use typology and analogy (including contrast and irony), know how key doctrines relate

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL (TYPOLOGY)

PRINCIPLE: *If we are to teach the Bible as Christians, we must show a legitimate connection from our text to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



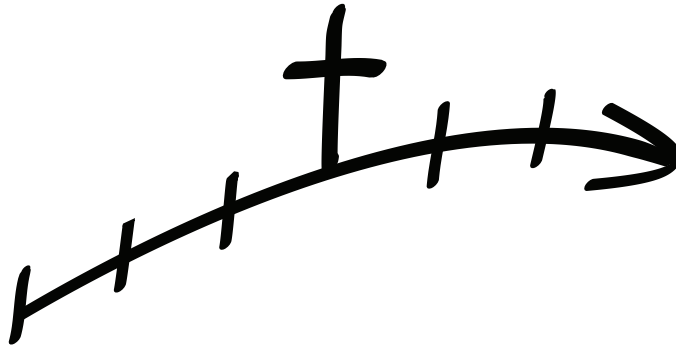
EXPLANATION: Throughout the story of the Bible, God purposely gave certain things—people, events, and objects—traits and functions that prefigure or anticipate Jesus Christ. The broadest and most complex of these correspondences might relate to the gospel broadly and are called analogies. More specific correspondences relate to Jesus Christ specifically and are called typologies. These people, events, and objects sometimes hold a specific office ultimately fulfilled in Christ (e.g., king, priest, prophet, judge) or contribute to a typical pattern of traits and functions in the biblical story that is ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: *Do any characters in my text perform a specific function or hold a specific office that Christ fulfills? Do any characters, events, or objects in my text have traits or functions that point me to Christ?*

STRATEGIES: identify the people, events, and objects in your text along with their traits and functions, identify if these traits and functions point to Jesus Christ, carefully look for New Testament texts that are connected to your text and how they may be anticipating traits and functions of Jesus, learn from New Testament writers (Acts 7:1-53)

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL (HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY AND THEMES)

PRINCIPLE: *If we are to teach the Bible as Christians, we must show a legitimate connection from our text to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



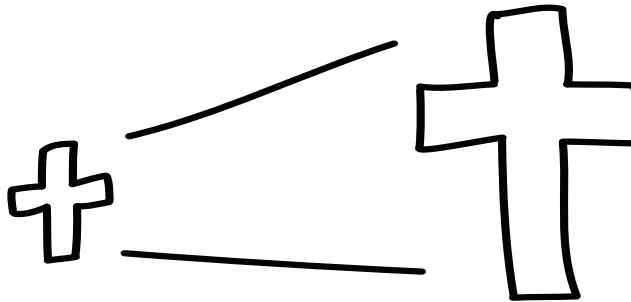
EXPLANATION: The Bible tells the story of God progressively revealing and working to save His people, climaxing in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Within this story, there are historical events and themes of how God works which are used in different ways and which develop throughout the story (e.g., kingdom, covenant, God's presence/temple). Legitimately connecting our text to the gospel often requires understanding the text's place in the historical trajectory of the Bible or its place in the development of a particular biblical theme.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: *Where is my text in the storyline of the Bible? How does my text contribute to the story of the Bible? Do I see any major biblical themes in my text that find fulfillment in Christ?*

STRATEGIES: read and reread the Bible, use helpful resources like those produced by Graeme Goldsworthy, Vaughan Roberts, etc., in order to learn the storyline, identify the major turning points in the story and how your text relates, identify concepts that are being developed thematically, learn from New Testament writers (e.g., Galatians 3:15-29; Hebrews 3:7-4:13)

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL (GOSPEL-BASED TEACHING)

PRINCIPLE: *If we are to teach the Bible as Christians, we must show a legitimate connection from our text to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



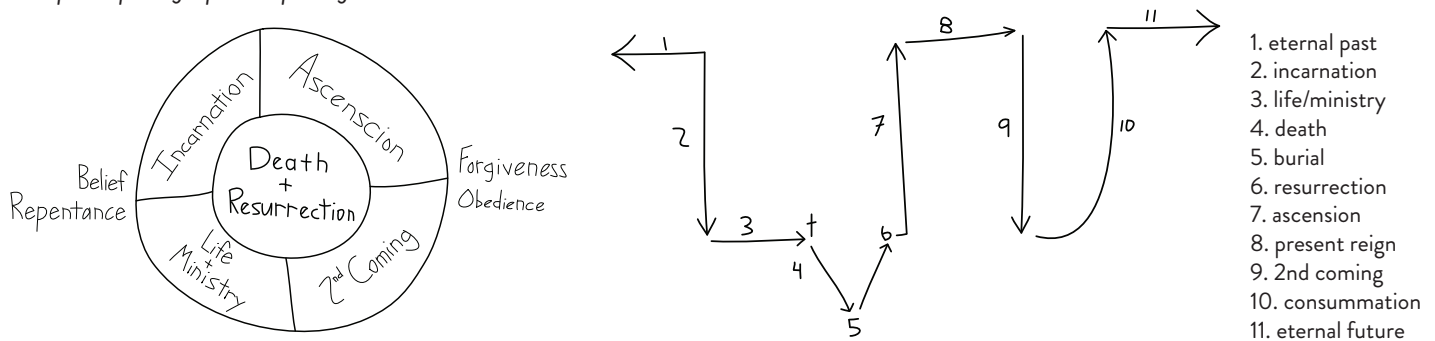
EXPLANATION: The gospel is not only the means by which we are saved, but it is the means by which we must live. When we are saved, we are given the righteousness of Christ (justification), a righteousness that depends on faith (Philippians 3:8-9; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). Works of righteousness do not save us, but they are how we are commanded to live in faith for our own good (sanctification), having been saved. When we come across the teaching or ethical demands God makes of his people, we need to understand these demands in light of the gospel. As teachers, we must be careful to not just teach the Law by itself and in a moralistic way, but to teach gospel obedience as the result of gospel salvation (Romans 6:22).

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: *What is the purpose of the commands in my text? Are they there to secure righteousness before God or bring glory to God, demonstrating my belief? Are any of the commands in my text repeated in the New Testament? How do these commands relate to justification and sanctification?*

STRATEGIES: find similar commands in (other) New Testament texts and see how they are related to the gospel there, demonstrate Jesus as the superior example of righteousness (as fulfilled in the gospel)

CONNECTING TO THE GOSPEL (ASPECTS)

PRINCIPLE: To teach the Bible as Christians, we not only need to show a legitimate connection to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must show to what part of the gospel our passage connects.



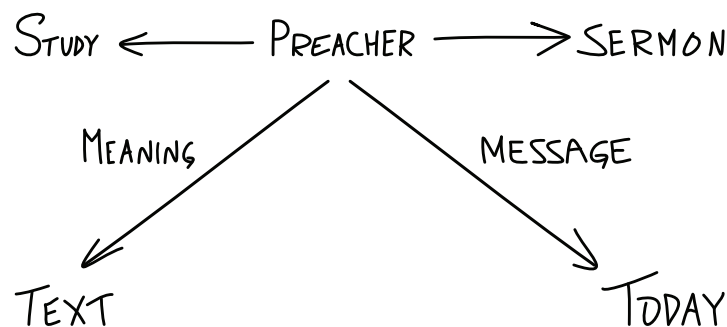
EXPLANATION: The center of the gospel is certainly the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Luke 24:13-49). Yet, there is another circle of gospel-related theological concepts that may be a helpful way into the gospel—sometimes considered aspects of the gospel in the Bible. Helpful ways into the gospel might include the Incarnation, Life and Ministry, Ascension, and Second Coming. Likewise, there are clear requirements required for someone to apprehend the gospel in the Bible (e.g., belief, repentance) as well as implications of the gospel (forgiveness of sins, obedience).

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS: To what aspect of the gospel does my text connect?

STRATEGIES: read and reread the Bible, use helpful biblical resources to develop a robust and full understanding of the gospel and its requirements and implications, identify concepts in your text that might be developed thematically and connect to various aspects of the gospel

FROM STUDY TO SERMON/FROM STUDY TO SERMON

PRINCIPLE: Teaching the Bible well is more than merely getting the text right. We also need to get it across.



EXPLANATION: The Bible is for life. It is not just for the head, but also for the heart and the hands. And so, the preparation of a message is more than just getting it right. It must involve *making an argument*, *arranging the material*, *studying our audience*, *applying the message from the text*, and *adorning the ideas well*. We might call this the contextualization (or placing everything in terms of our contemporary context) of the message for our people. But this contextualization work must always be grounded in the text. That is, our exegesis and theological reflection should guide our thinking on argument, homiletical outline, and applications.

STRATEGIES: *make an argument* (the goal of oratory is always a simple and clear statement of the argument, remember to articulate it in the language of the text), *arrange your material* (write out the structure of the text, consider how the author made his argument, make it memorable), *study the audience* (pray for your people, think through the different kinds of people in your congregation, make sure your language and sources are comprehensible, raise and answer the doubts and objections they might have), *apply the message from the text* (think in terms of a primary application, look for imperatives in the text, choose applications that are closely aligned with the text), and *adorn the ideas well* (choose appropriate, relevant, and interesting illustrations and sources that connect knowing and doing in the lives of your people)