

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

Q. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE GREAT BIBLE TALKS YOU'VE HEARD?

- What made them great?
- Why do you remember them?

Q. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE TERRIBLE BIBLE TALKS YOU'VE HEARD?

- What made them terrible?
- Why do you remember them?

Q. WHAT HOPES DO YOU HAVE FOR THIS SEMINAR / MATERIAL?

- What interest do you have in it?
- What do you hope to know?
- What do you hope to be able to do?

This material makes 2 assumptions:

1. A Bible talk will be prepared with much prayer and humility. In prayer we ask "Lord speak and bring change", with humility we pray "Lord speak and change me". These are the first 2 ingredients to preparing and delivering a good Bible talk: prayer and humility.
2. A Bible talk requires a good understanding of Biblical Theology. That is, how Christ fulfils everything written in "the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 22:27, 44), in short, how every part of Scripture explicitly or implicitly leads us to Jesus. This doesn't mean that every part of Scripture must conclude with the death and resurrection of Jesus (as essential as that is), there is more to the gospel than that alone (otherwise the Gospels would only be the Easter story).

For more information read:

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *The Goldsworthy Trilogy*. Paternoster, 2001.

Roberts, Vaughan. *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2003.

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

For a **GOOD** Bible talk, the process begins with 1. The **Bible passage**. 2. The **Big Idea** of the passage. Lastly, 3. the **Logical flow** of how the Big Idea comes from the passage.

A GOOD BIBLE TALK

1.

-EXEGESIS:



- GENRE [What am I reading?]
- CONTEXT [What's important about where it is?]
- STRUCTURE ... [What's the flow of writing within its genre?]
- DETAILS [What are the important words and phrases?]



2.



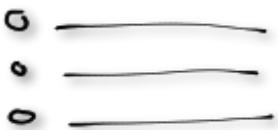
-BIG IDEA

- From the passage.
- One concise sentence.
- Summarises the points of the talk
- What do I want people to know by the end?



3.

-LOGICAL FLOW:



- INTRO [Give me a reason to listen]
- POINT [State what you want me to believe]
- EXPLAIN [Show me in the passage]
- ILLUSTRATE .. [Show me what it's like]
- APPLY [Ask me the right reflective questions]
- CONCLUDE [Give me your big idea]



= "A BETTER THAN AVERAGE BIBLE TALK MOST OF THE TIME"

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

For a **GREAT** Bible talk, the process begins the same...1. With the **Bible passage**. 2. The **Big Idea** of the passage, but then 3. How this Bible passage overcomes **UNBELIEF**. Lastly, 4. the **Logical flow** of how the Big Idea comes from the passage but injected with your own personality and style (**Mojo**).

A GREAT BIBLE TALK

1.



-EXEGESIS:

-GENRE [What am I reading?]

-CONTEXT [What's important about where it is?]

-STRUCTURE ... [What's the flow of writing within its genre?]

-DETAILS [What are the important words and phrases?]

2.



-BIG IDEA

- From the passage.
- One concise sentence.
- Summarises the points of the talk
- What do I want people to know by the end?

3.



-QUESTION:

-“WHAT DON'T I BELIEVE ABOUT THIS?”

- “Preach to the **UNBELIEF** in whichever heart it may be found”
- Profound **THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION** and **CULTURAL INSIGHT** are key

4.

-LOGICAL FLOW + YOUR MOJO:

Preach with a logical flow but inject your own personality into it.

Play to your strengths: If humour, use it. If dry wit, use it. If stories, use it. If excitement, use it.

If none of those things, find what charisma God has given you and use it.

Profound theological reflection and cultural insight is more important than the most excitable personality and style.



-INTRO [Give me a reason to listen.]
[A story? A question? A predicament?]

-LOGIC EXPRESSED WITH PERSONAL MOJO / STYLE

-CONCLUDE ... [Give me your big idea]



= GREAT BIBLE TALK MOST OF THE TIME

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

Let's get to the point...

IF YOUR BIBLE TALK HAS NO POINT THEN THERE'S NO POINT.

This is why the Big Idea is crucial to any Bible talk.

Without a Big Idea you may walk me through the passage and say lots of good and insightful things, but you won't have given your listeners anything concise to hang onto those insights.

Bible passages don't usually state their Big Idea in a single phrase (though some do!) but all Bible passages do have one Big Idea. Big Ideas can be phrased in a variety of ways but **the Big Idea of a passage is always the same.**

You may wonder, "how is it then, that some speakers preach from the same passage but with different Big Ideas?". The answer is that Bible passages contain many subordinate ideas which together support the **one** Big Idea.

For example, take a passage like 2 Samuel 7:1-17. There are many ideas in this passage that you could speak about in a Bible talk. You could speak about:

- Prophets and how God speaks through them...
- The priority of serving God over self...
- The importance of God's chosen king in his kingdom...
- The importance of family names and lineage...
- How God has historically always secured his kingdom...

There's plenty more ideas in there. However, none of those ideas binds the whole passage together. Instead, together, each of those ideas builds to and supports the Big Idea of the passage which is that "God builds his eternal kingdom".

That Big Idea could be phrased in various ways (some are more cumbersome than others):

- "God is in charge of his own eternal kingdom"
- "God builds his kingdom and it lasts forever"
- "God's kingdom is built in his timing"

You could phrase the Big Idea in as many ways as there are words but the core of it remains the same. The Big Idea is not a full blown theological statement with subclauses and nuanced caveats. It is short, simplistic and memorable. The task of your Bible talk is to unpack the Big Idea, argue for it from the passage and demonstrate its sound theological basis.

Let's take the Big Idea as it was first phrased:



The passage explains what you mean by "God builds" and "His eternal kingdom". As you prepare your Bible talk, the Big Idea itself becomes the structure of your talk.

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

Here's an example of what it *might* look like in a Bible talk outline.

Grand Designs...

The introduction will be either a story about my own failed building attempts OR... some reflections on "Grand Designs" TV show + failed building attempts.

→ The segue is something like: "This is like what we see in our passage today. David has grand designs for God, but the Lord has far bigger + better plans for David, and for us."

The house that God built...

vv. 1-9... God is the owner/builder.

→ I want to correct the view that is dependent on us in any way or that we are autonomous.

- Q. Is God dependent on you? Or are you dependent on God?
- Q. What claim do we have that God has not given us?

The house that God builds...

vv. 8-17... God's plan is for an eternal kingdom with an eternal king. A place of peace + rest.

→ I want to contrast God's design for our future with our own meagre / failed effort to secure a utopian society.

→ Show how God fulfils this promise in Jesus, the kingdom of life that Jesus brings + rules.

- Q. Where do you place your hope for humanity?

God builds his eternal kingdom.

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL EXERCISE: MARK 8:27 - 9:1

What's the Big Idea?

(Start with a cumbersome sentence and then simplify it until it is concise catchy and memorable.)

Show me why that's the Big Idea from the passage. Give me verses!

There are 3 distinct parts to this passage and each part has a Big Idea of its own. If you were just speaking on Mark 8:27-30 for instance, your Big Idea would be that "Jesus is the Christ". Your talk would then need to unpack who Jesus is (eg. Is he John the Baptist? Is he Elijah? Is he a prophet? etc.) and what being the Christ means for his identity (eg. What does Christ mean? Why is it an important title? etc.)

However, because we're speaking on these 3 parts of the passage as a whole, the Big Idea must encompass the Big Ideas of all 3 parts.

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah
27Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"
28They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."
29"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"
Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."
30Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death
31He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. 32He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
33But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

The Way of the Cross
34Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36What good is it for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? 37Or what can you give in exchange for your soul? 38If any of you are ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."
And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

JESUS IS THE CHRIST

THE CHRIST MUST SUFFER, DIE AND RISE AGAIN

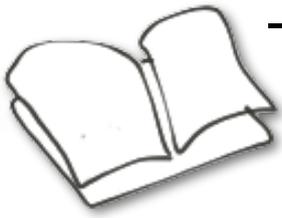
FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST DIE TO SELF IN ORDER TO LIVE

So what is the Big Idea of the whole passage?

THE BIG IDEA IS? _____

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

Breaking down the Big Idea process:



-EXEGESIS:

-GENRE [What am I reading?]

You often do this instinctively when reading modern literature.

Some genre's are:

- narrative (historical, fictional, primeval)
- poetry
- song
- parable
- prayer
- accounting
- satire
- wisdom
- letter
- prophetic
- apocalyptic
- etc...

-CONTEXT [What's important about where it is?]

Where is the passage in the Bible?

- OT or NT?
- At the start? In the middle? At the end?

Where is it in the book?

- At the start? In the middle? At the end?

Where is it in terms of salvation history?

- Before/after Jesus?
- Before/after the cross and resurrection?
- Before/after the ascension of Jesus?
- Before/after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all believers?

What makes this passage unique?

- What would we miss if it wasn't included?
- Why was it included?
- What does it teach us or emphasise that other similar passages don't?

-STRUCTURE ... [What's the flow of writing within its genre?]

Can you see a theme or argument developing/continuing?

Where does the passage begin and end?

Is there a key summary verse?

Is there a key question posed and answered?

-DETAILS [What are the important words and phrases?]

Are there any repeated theme words?

Any prominent images, metaphors, similes?

Any key characters?

RESEARCH:

- Look up words you don't know, phrases you don't understand, place & people names ("Ichabod", "Elijah") - Bible Dictionary
- Think about the significance of geographical location and where the scene is taking place - Bible Atlas
- Read commentaries on the passage for further insight.

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

When you've done your research, then try write a few versions of what the Big Idea is, gradually making it more concise, sharp and memorable.

Then break it down into the points that make up the Big Idea so that you have the structure for your Bible talk.

After you've got the Big Idea and structure, the [MOST IMPORTANT!!] key goal is speaking to the heart...

“WHAT THE HEART DESIRES, THE WILL CHOOSES AND THE MIND JUSTIFIES”

(Ashley Null summarising Cranmer)

Q: WHAT DON'T I BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIG IDEA?



This is where you must search your own doubts about Christianity and what is being taught from the passage.

If the people you're speaking to are people you know and do life with (eg. you're at church with them every week or you're from the same area) then your doubts about the passage are most likely their doubts too.

If you're not from the same area or church, and the people you're speaking to are unknown to you, then you'll have to do some research to find out about their particular underlying unbeliefs (this a particular hardship of itinerant speaking). However, in lieu of much (or any) further information, your own doubts will more often than not provide your Bible talk with an insightful way to engage people's hearts and minds.

Once you know your doubts about the Big Idea, ask yourself:

- How does the passage argue against your doubts?
- How does the passage challenge your doubts?
- How does the passage provide a better alternative to your doubts?
- How does the passage undermine your doubts?
- How does the passage expose the fallacy of your doubts?

If the passage can overcome your doubts then you can give a Bible talk from the passage to overcome the doubts of your listeners and change their hearts.

Some good questions to ask about you audience as you write your Bible talk:

- a. Do they **know** this?
 - i. Then **teach** them
- b. Do they **believe** this?
 - i. Then **persuade** them
- c. Do they **obey** this?
 - i. Then **exhort** them
- d. Do they **love** this?
 - i. Then **move** them

PREPARING A BIBLE TALK

A Selection of Random Hot Tips:

1. Write conversation style.
2. Speak with the tone of the passage. Where “Judgement” with judgement. Where “Joy” with Joy. Where “Rebuke” with Rebuke. etc.
3. Rhetorical devices: Synonymous Parallelism and Antithetical Parallelism, Metre (eg. saying things in threes)
4. Less is more. Make it punchy. If you can say it in less words then say it with less.
5. It's not just about **what** you speak, but also **how** you speak.
6. When preparing, think to yourself “what will the audience thinking when I say this?”
7. Read then re-write again, and again etc.
8. Practice out loud, record, listen, and re-write etc.
9. Ask yourself if you're interested in what you're saying, if not, no one else probably is either!
10. Pray the points of the big idea in your prayer before you do the talk.

Extra things to consider.

Age groups:

- ★ Kids generally have an attention span the is equivalent to their age in minutes (ie. 7 years old = 7 minutes)
 - ↳ Therefore Kids talks will have only one point. One talk = One point
 - ↳ Teens and kids can listen for longer than their age but you'll need to use a variety of learning styles, eg. Visual (slides, pictures, video), Auditory (discussion, music), kinaesthetic (playdough, tactile activities).
- ★ When doing the same talk to different age groups, two elements of the structure must change.
 1. The **illustrations** will be different, and
 2. the **application** will be different.

Things to avoid:

1. Being nervous...
2. Being too 'wordy', use of jargon...
3. Being uninterested in what you have to say...
4. Using irrelevant or inappropriate illustrations...
5. Spending more time on the illustration than the point...
6. Adding too much extra information...
7. Relying on technology...
8. Spoiling movies!

ALWAYS REMEMBER....

“IT IS GOD’S WORD, AND HE IS THE ONE WHO WORKS THROUGH IT.”

(1 Corinthians 3:5-7)

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Setting Hearts on Fire: A Guide to Giving Evangelistic Talks (Matthias Media, 1999).

The Homiletical Plot, Expanded Edition: The Sermon as Narrative Art Form (Exp Sub.; Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).