

Lesson 1A (Theory)

The Bible Passage and the Aim

A shepherd in Palestine sees some ferocious wolves approaching to attack his sheep.



Let's hope he'll manage to frighten the wolves. I think he'll be able to do it because he knows how to plan his tactics well. In this first Lesson, you will learn, like him, to plan your course of action in preaching — that is, to have a clear idea of your aims or goals.



1. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13. What did Paul preach?
 a. A message from men.
 b. His own message.
 c. The word of God.
2. *“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding round him and listening to the word of God ...”* (Luke 5:1)
What did Jesus preach? _____
3. If we are going to follow the example of Paul, and of Jesus himself, we also ought to preach the _____.

4. The Bible references below emphasize this basic principle; that of preaching the word of God. Read the references and, at the side of each one, write the capital letter of the phrase that best sums it up. The first one has been given as an example.

References

Phrases

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1) B__ Luke 8:5 & 11 | A. Being filled with the Holy Spirit the early Christians spoke the word of God boldly. |
| 2) _____ Acts 4:31 | B. In the parable of the sower, the seed which was sown represents the word of God. |
| 3) _____ Acts 13:4,5 | C. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. |
| 4) _____ Ephesians 6:17 | D. Believers are born again by the word of God. |
| 5) _____ 1 Peter 1:23 | E. The apostles, sent by the Holy Spirit on a missionary journey, preached the word of God. |

5. From all these examples, it is quite clear that when we preach, we ought to pass on to those who are listening to us _____

6. Paul is a good example of how we ought to preach the word of God. He said:
“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.” (1 Corinthians 2:4)

How did Paul preach the word of God?

- a. Trusting in his own wisdom and personality.
- b. In total dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- c. With his own skilful and persuasive words.

Answers

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| 1. c. | 4. 1) B | 5. the word of God |
| 2. The word of God | 2) A | 6. b. |
| 3. word of God | 3) E | |
| | 4) C | |
| | 5) D | |

7. From the beginning of our course we want to emphasize a very important point. All our preaching of the word of God must be based on and depend totally on the Holy Spirit. That is why it is absolutely necessary not only to preach but also to prepare ourselves in the power of the _____ and in total dependence on Him.
8. The preparation of the message is as important as the actual preaching of it. For this reason you ought to pray and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit not only in the preaching the word but also in the _____

A. Choosing the Bible Passage

9. In the preparation of the message the first step that the preacher ought to take is to choose the Bible passage (or verse) on which he is going to preach. The best Bible passage for your sermon will be the one you discover when you are on your knees, that is to say when you are _____.
10. But, on how many Bible passages ought you to base a sermon? At this point the illustration on page 3 will help us. Read what the shepherd says in drawings A and B. In drawing B what does the shepherd decide to throw at the wolves?
- a. 20 heavy rocks
 - b. 20 little stones
 - c. 1 heavy rock
11. The shepherd's got a point hasn't he? He cannot throw 20 heavy rocks at the same time; and if he throws 20 little stones, even though they all hit the wolves, they won't have much effect. This suggests that the best basis for one sermon or talk would be:
- a. 1 good-sized Bible passage.
 - b. 20 good-sized passages from different parts of the Bible.
 - c. 20 isolated verses from different parts of the Bible.
12. It is important to realize that (in most cases) the best basis for a sermon or talk is **one** Bible passage. Check below the advantages (in most cases) of basing a sermon on just one Bible passage.
- a. The congregation will have to leaf through their Bibles continuously in order to find the verses quoted by the preacher.
 - b. The congregation will have their Bibles open at one passage only, and so will be able easily to look at the verses that the preacher refers to.
 - c. Those who listen will be able to remember afterwards the main ideas in the sermon simply through reading again the Bible passage.

Continued

Answers

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|----------------|------------|-----------|
| 7. Holy Spirit | 9. praying | 11. a. |
| 8. preparation | 10. c. | 12. b. c. |

12. Continued.

- d. Those who listen will have to search for many different verses (that is if they can find them) in order to be reminded of what the preacher said.
- e. The preacher has the general lines of the sermon determined by the Bible passage, and so there is less chance of him distorting the Bible teaching.
- f. The preacher will be able to include all his favourite ideas and develop the sermon as he likes.
- g. The preacher will have problems preaching again about (for example) prayer because he's already said what he had in his own mind about this.
- h. The preacher will always be able to choose another Bible passage with a different slant, so as to preach on another occasion about (for example) prayer, and the sermon will be totally fresh and new.

13. Regarding the previous frame, it is important to be clear that:

- This not absolute law, but rather a general rule.
- This principle of using only **one** Bible passage as the basis for a sermon is not a law that must **always** be obeyed but is more of a guide-line for the **majority** of cases.
- In addition we understand here by “one passage only”, one that has from 1 to 100 verses — that is to say, it doesn't matter how long or short it might be, but that it is a passage with all of its verses together in just one part of the Bible.
- This emphasis on using one Bible passage only as the basis and source of the majority of the ideas in the sermon, does not take away the possibility of quoting **briefly** other verses from other parts of the Bible which support the principal passage.

In other words:

- a) As an absolute rule, when we preach we must present the _____ of _____.
- b) As a general and flexible rule, a sermon should be based on _____.

B. The Aim of the Message

14. Besides choosing a suitable rock, the shepherd in the picture was also concerned to choose carefully his target before throwing. This is the way it should be when we preach - we ought to ask ourselves, “What is the target or aim for this sermon which I am now preparing?” For those who are not yet Christians, what would be the most appropriate aim? Tick only one.

- a. That they will give a tenth of their income to the church.
- b. That they will witness for Christ.
- c. That they will trust in Christ and become Christians.

Answers

12. e. h.

14. c.

- 13. a) The word of God
- b) One single passage of Scripture

20. And so, just as the shepherd chooses first of all one wolf only at which to throw his first rock, hoping to have another opportunity afterwards to throw another rock at another wolf, etc., so we ought to prepare the sermon in order to try to get rid of:
- a. all the different spiritual “wolves” that attack those who listen to the sermon.
 - b. none of the spiritual “wolves” that attack those who listen to the sermon.
 - c. just one of the spiritual “wolves” that attack those who listen to the sermon.
21. In other words, how many aims ought we (normally) to have for one sermon? _____
22. I hope you will not misunderstand me in this matter of “throwing rocks at spiritual wolves”! Read Ephesians 6:12. (“Flesh and blood” means people.)
- Bearing this in mind, which of the following are the spiritual “wolves” that we want to attack with the sermon?
- a. Christians whom we don’t get on well with.
 - b. The unconverted who criticize us.
 - c. Members of the congregation who are not very dedicated to the Lord.
 - d. The problems and difficulties that are caused by the devil and his spiritual forces.
23. Yes, we preach, not against people (and certainly not against other Christians), but against the devil. Rather, we want to help those who hear us to get rid of their spiritual enemies: Satan and the sin he causes in their lives.
- a) What should be our aim in preaching:
- 1) to those who are Christians? That they will _____ spiritually.
 - 2) to those who are not Christians? That they will _____ Christians.
- b) In just one sermon, how many aims should we normally have? _____
24. All this should not give us the impression that preaching is a work of the human mind and no more. On the contrary, if we’re going to base our sermon on just one Bible passage, and have one aim only, how are we going to decide on the passage and the aim for the next sermon?
- a. Letting the Bible fall open anywhere and using the passage that appears before us.
 - b. Asking the Holy Spirit to guide us in our study and thinking.
 - c. Just asking another Christian what he thinks.
 - d. Scratching our head and giving the matter a lot of thought.

Answers

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|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------------------|-----|----|
| 20. | c. | 22. | d. | 24. | b. |
| 21. | One | 23. | a) 1) grow
2) become
b) one | | |

25. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible is the one to show us, in answer to prayer, what part of the Bible would be the most appropriate basis for our next sermon, and how to develop the truths that it contains in order for them to be a blessing for those who are going to be present. For this reason, before preparing, we should always pray and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In Study 5 we will concern ourselves with the spiritual preparation of the preacher — the most important of all.

But God has made us with a mind, and he wants us to use it. So now we are going to practise how to choose a suitable aim for a sermon. Let us imagine that we are going to preach on the parable of the Good Samaritan. (If you don't have a clear idea of what it says, read it in Luke 10:25-37).

Which of the following express the main teaching of the passage?

- a. You should follow the example of the Good Samaritan and show practical love, even to your enemy.
 - b. You should follow the example of the Levite and the priest and not get involved in other people's affairs.
 - c. You should follow the example of the teacher of the Law and try to justify yourself.
26. So then, if the main teaching is about Christian love, which would be the most appropriate aim of the various possibilities below?
- a. That they should only feel love for their friends.
 - b. That they should only express love in what they say.
 - c. That they should show love in a practical way, doing good to all, even when it involves personal sacrifice.
27. Another example to give you more practice. This time the imaginary sermon is based on 1 Timothy 2:5,6. Read this passage and decide which of the following aims would be the most appropriate:
- a. To bring them to trust in Christ as the one to bring them to God, just in case their good behaviour is not enough.
 - b. To bring them to trust in Christ as the only one who can bring them to God.
 - c. To cause them to examine all the religions that there are in order to discover if, in fact, there is only one true God.
28. One final example. Read Ephesians 6:10-13. What would be the most appropriate aim for a sermon based on this passage?
- a. We should be really frightened of the devil.
 - b. We should use our own strength in the struggle against the devil.
 - c. We should use all the means that God has given us for our struggle against the devil.

Answers

- | | |
|--------|--------|
| 25. a. | 27. b. |
| 26. c. | 28. c. |

29. Did you notice how each one of the aims we've looked at was expressed in terms of the practical effect that it was hoped to produce in the life of those who listen? This is the way it should be in preaching; we try to change lives (including our own!)

List 1-References

- a) ___ Luke 11:9-13
- b) ___ Eph.2:8,9

- c) ___ Heb. 11:8-10
- d) ___ James 4:7
- e) ___ 1 John 4:7-11

List 2-Sermon aims

- A. That they show love in their relationships with others.
- B. That they trust in Christ as their Saviour instead of trust in their own efforts.
- C. That they persevere in prayer
- D. That they have a firmer faith in the Lord
- E. That they will struggle against the devil and temptation.

30. All this shows us that when a preacher has a practical aim:

- a. he just passes on facts and information
- b. those who listen come to understand, to appreciate, or to become disturbed about something but without a change in their attitude or way of living.
- c. those who listen are moved to put the teaching into practice.
- d. those who listen acquire new knowledge to be able to boast their wisdom.

31. In order for the aim to be practical it is not enough that the listener merely realizes that something is true, but that he or she also does something about it. You can become aware of something without doing anything about it!

Which of the following aims are not practical?

Note: It is not necessary to read the Bible passage mentioned in each case; these are included only to show that there is a Bible passage used as the basis for each sermon.

Check only those that are not practical.

- a. That they will give generously to the Lord's work (Mark 12:41-44)
- b. That they will be entertained by the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-27)
- c. That with thanksgiving they will take all their needs to the Lord in prayer (Philippians 4:6,7)
- d. That they will realize that the only way to put themselves in touch with God is through Christ (2 Timothy 2:5,6)
- e. That they will resist every tendency to be envious of unbelievers for their apparent prosperity (Psalm 73)

Note: Be ready to explain the defect in each aim which you feel is badly expressed, and suggest how to improve it.

Answers

29. a) C
b) B
c) D
d) E
e) A

30. c.

31. Feedback in group

32. So, in the first place you must make sure that the aim of your sermon is a call to the listeners to take action, so that those who listen to you will do something.

In other words the aim should be p _____

33. But there's something else to consider. We have already see that normally in a sermon there should be only one aim. But if we're not careful, two or more distinct aims can disguise themselves as just one, causing confusion in the mind of the people (and in that of the preacher, as well!). For this reason we must make sure that as well as being practical, the aim of our sermon is also clear - really one and well defined.

When a preacher has a clear aim:

- a. he tries to achieve just one kind of change in the lives of those who listen to him.
- b. he mixes together several apparently contradictory ideas.
- c. he addresses himself first to one group in the congregation, then to another, and then to yet another.
- d. he has several ideas in his mind but doesn't link them well together.

34. What are the two words that describe what the aim of any sermon should be like?

_____ and _____

35. Which of the following aims are not clear? (Again the Bible passages are printed to show that the sermon is based on one Bible passage only - they are not to be read now). Check only those that are not clear.

- a. That they will leave everything to follow Christ, maintaining contact with their previous friends in order to bring them, as well, to Christ. (Main passage Matthew 9:9-13)
- b. That they will use well for the Lord, all the abilities that he has given them. (Main passage Matthew 25:14-27)
- c. That they will believe in Christ in order to be saved, testifying to others of his love which is ready to save anyone. (Main passage John 3:16)
- d. That they will always keep in close, living contact with the Lord. (Main passage John 15:4,5)
- e. That they will persevere in prayer. (Luke 18:1-8)
- f. That they will forgive any wrong done to them by others, remembering God's so much greater forgiveness of the believers. (Matthew 18:23-35)

Answers

32. practical
33. a.

34. Practical/Clear
35. Feedback in Group

Note: Be prepared to explain in the group meeting what you think is wrong with the aims that you criticize here, and to suggest how to make them clearer. Do this in writing in an exercise book.

36. Write two words to describe what the aim of any sermon should be like.

_____ and _____

Now do the Test at the back of this Study Book.

Answers

36. Practical/Clear

Lesson 1B (Practice)

Now you should be able to set aims for sermon based the following passages.

- a) Carefully read the first passage and try to summarize its main teaching.*
- b) Then write, in your exercise book, the aim for your sermon.*
- c) Ask yourself if your aim is clear and, if it isn't, adapt it until it is clear.*
- d) When you are satisfied with the aim, write it below, beside the Bible reference.*



The exercise on each passage will probably take you a fair amount of time, so spread your work out over the week.

- 1) Luke 12:13-21.

- 2) Luke 18:9-14.

- 3) John 11:25,26.

- 4) Hebrews 11:24-28.
