

Understanding Biblical Exposition

Faith Taylor, taylorf@faith.edu

The Necessity of Expository Teaching

- 1 Peter 4:10-11 – “let [her] speak as one who speaks oracles of God” (ESV).
- We are obligated to make sure our content corresponds directly to the Word of God.

The Meaning of Expository Teaching

- The goal of expository teaching is to discover the author’s intended meaning and to clearly communicate that message to the audience.
- “Expository [teaching] is text driven.... Its goal is to discover the God-inspired meaning through historical-grammatical-theological investigation and interpretation.... The [teacher] explains, illustrates and applies the meaning of the biblical text in submission to and in the power of the Holy Spirit, [teaching] Christ for a verdict of changed lives” (*Engaging Exposition*, p2).
- Expository teaching occurs when the “main point of the biblical text...becomes the main point of the [message]” (*Preach: Theology Meets Practice*).

Characteristics of Expository Teaching

- It is based on one passage of Scripture.
- It is based on a complete unit of Scripture.
- It is built around the primary truth in a passage of Scripture.
- It follows the general grammatical or literary structure of the passage of Scripture.
- It is consistent with the context of the passage of Scripture.
- It explains words, phrases, and theological concepts that are significant or hard to understand.
- It reflects understanding of the Scripture passage’s literary genre.

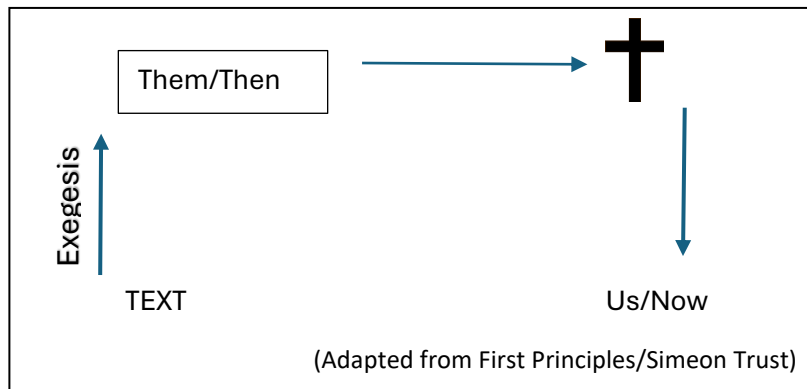
- It represents the author’s intent for the audience to whom he wrote it.
- It includes application to the present-day audience.

The Failure to Teach Expositionally

- We often practice hasty contextualization.



- We need to practice exegesis.
 - “To lead out”
 - A critical interpretation of the text—seeking to discover the author’s intended meaning



Process Overview

PREPARE

- **Pray.**
 - Bathe the process in prayer.
 - Psalm 119:18 - *Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*
- **Make a Commitment.**
 - To handle the Word of God as accurately as possible.
 - To stay on the line (Deut 4:2; 1 Cor 4:1, 6).
- **Know Your Goal.**

- Your goal is to discover, explain, and apply the author's intended meaning.
- Your goal is to be the conduit of God's Word with the goal of transformed lives.

OBSERVE

- **Observe the Text.**
 - Read the text at least ten times, preferably comparing a few translations.
 - Record observations. (Your observations will vary depending on the genre of Scripture you are teaching from and will be covered in each genre-specific session.
 - Note key words: repeated words, unfamiliar words, word pictures, connectors, and theological terms.

INTERPRET

- **Define Key Words.**
 - Use a Bible dictionary such as blueletterbible.com.
- **Explore the Literary Context (the *words* around the text).**
 - Read the passages immediately before and after your text, looking for repeated ideas or words or for teaching that sheds light on your text.
- **Investigate the Historical Context (the *world* around the text).**
 - Discover what was going on in the lives of the readers to further clarify the meaning as they would have understood it.
 - Resources: A study Bible, contemporaneous books of the Bible, *Nelson's Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias, or Old or New Testament introductions.
- **Interpret the Meaning of Phrases and Key Ideas.**
 - Consult commentaries: <https://bestcommentaries.com>.
 - Attempt to summarize the key ideas in your own words.
- **State the Main Idea of the Text.**
 - Determine the subject of the text: What is the author talking about?
 - Determine the complement of the text: What is the author saying about what he's talking about?
 - State the big idea in one historical third person sentence.

- **Develop a Passage (Exegetical) Outline.**
 - (This process varies depending on the genre of Scripture and will be covered in each genre-specific session.)

DEVELOP

- **State the Main Idea of the Message.**
 - This is a current-day expression of the main idea of the text.
- **Structure the Message Outline.**
 - The message points should be current-day expressions of the main ideas of the text.
 - Each message point should be logically related to the main idea of the message.
 - Each message point should come directly from the text (not from secondary texts).
- **Develop the Body of the Message.**
 - This step includes the elements of Explanation, Argumentation, Illustration, and Application.
 - (This process varies depending on the genre of Scripture and will be covered in each genre-specific session.)
- **Prepare an Introduction.**
 - Establish rapport.
 - Arrest attention.
 - Create a need.
 - Offer an answer.
 - Direct to the text.
- **Craft a Conclusion.**
 - Restate the message idea.
 - Review the main points.
 - Exhort your listeners to a response of obedience, trust, or gratitude.

Illustrations

Definition of Illustrations

- The word *illustrate* comes from the Latin word that means “to illuminate.”
- To illustrate is to make clear or intelligible, as by examples or analogies, so illustrations make truth understandable.
- Illustrations take a theological concept and picture it through a “natural analogy” (*12 Essential Skills*). This makes the truth memorable.
- Illustrations bring the message down to life, making truth livable.

Developing Illustrations

- Determine the key idea from the message division that you want to illustrate.
- Generalize the concept: Move from the specific idea to the general idea.
- Brainstorm natural analogies (everyday experiences that picture the concept).

Guidelines for Using Illustrations

- Tell the illustration well.
 - Be familiar with the details – do not read it.
 - Be accurate with the facts.
 - Include relevant details to set the scene.
- Tell it in a way that listeners can identify with the experience.
- Relate the illustration back to the key idea: “In the same way...” or “Just as....”

Applications

The Definition of Application

- Application is showing the listener how to respond to the truth in the text.
- “The process whereby the expositor takes a biblical truth of the text and applies it to the lives of [her] audience, proclaiming why it is relevant for their lives, and passionately encouraging them to make necessary changes in their lives in a manner congruent with the original intent of the author” (*Engaging Exposition*, p171, quoting from “Is Application Necessary in the Expository Sermon?” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*).

The Need for and Aim of Application

- Too often preachers and teachers assume that the listener will make the connection between scriptural truth and her everyday life.
- Application focuses Scripture on the needs of the listener.
- The audience needs help asking and answering “so what?” and “now what?”
- Text-based application requires a decision on the part of the listener.
 - Salvation requires a personal decision to believe.
 - Sanctification requires personal choices of obedience and growth.
- Application facilitates a change of heart and life.

The Development of Application

- Formulate and state a specific instruction that is derived from the text and that is contained in the message division.
- Weave application into the flow of the message, making an application at the end of each point.
- Make the application specific to the ages, stages of life, and challenges of your audience.
- Think of one life situation in which your listeners can or should follow the instruction.
 - Be as specific and true-to-life as possible.

- Describe how a person in this situation will—
 - Believe the truth in the text.
 - Choose to follow the truth of the text.
 - Act according to the truth of the text.
 - Change to conform to the text.
- Add several more real-life situations in which the truth applies. Refer to them briefly, not in detail.

Material adapted from the following sources:

Akin, Daniel A., Bill Curtis, and Stephen Rummage. *Engaging Exposition*.

Dever, Mark. *Preach: Theology Meets Practice*.

Guthrie, George, H. and J. Scott Duvall. *Biblical Greek Exegesis*.

McDill, Wayne. *12 Essential Skills for Great Preaching*.

The Charles Simeon Trust First Principles Curriculum