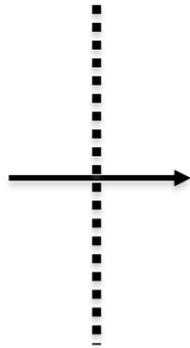
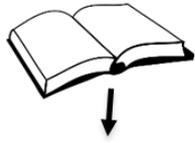


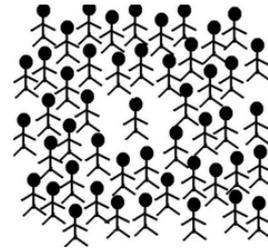
## Sermon Preparation Toolkit

There are 2 parts to preaching that are both very important:

### GETTING IT RIGHT



### GETTING IT ACROSS



**Getting it right:** Listening very carefully, sitting under the Bible, sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening so that I know what it says. If I don't do this well then I will have nothing to say. To preach the Word I have to listen carefully to the Word.

**Getting it across:** I need to think how to communicate the Word that I have heard so that people really hear the message. This is very important too. I could understand the passage well but if I don't preach it in a language people understand then I'm wasting my breath.

### Getting it Right: Tools for listening well

#### 1. "Knees on the floor, nose in the text" (2 Timothy 2:7)

It's not really a tool but it's the most important thing about getting it right.

"Reflecting/thinking over" – nose in the text – the Lord is not going to pop the message into my head as I look into space. It is *as we study* that He will reveal it.

"...the Lord will give you" – it is the Lord who reveals himself, he hides himself from the wise and proud and reveals himself to little children. We mustn't turn this into a technical thing that I do my applying various tools to a text and out pops a sermon. No, we are to have our knees on the floor, in desperate prayer that God would open our eyes and minds and hearts as we study his Word.

#### 2. The Read-Read-Read Tool

So obvious that it's easy to miss. To know what the Bible says we need to read it. Easy to see a passage like Luke 15 and think, "I know that one. I've got some great illustrations for that one." But do we really know Luke 15?

The younger son squanders his money with prostitutes. Did he really? Or is that just what the older brother says?

He finds himself in the pigsty and he repents and turns back to the Father. Does he really repent and change or does he just make a financial decision?

Does the father in the parable represent God the Father or Jesus?

Perhaps we need to read the story again.

- Whole book – we need to find out where we are in the conversation, in the story. If we got a letter we wouldn't just read one paragraph we'd read it from the beginning. if we're preaching from a passage from Ephesians or Philippians or 1 Peter, surely we can spare 15 min to just read the whole letter? Even Mark's Gospel = 1 hour. The Proclaim Africa (Uganda) ministry encourages people to read Romans 10 times in one sitting each time, and Colossians 30 times.
- Passage many times – our brother reads a passage 30 times before he preaches from it.

As we're reading we're finding out:

- What sort of text?
- What does it actually say?
- What does the author want to get across?
- How does it flow?

### 3. The Question Tool

Ask as many questions as you possibly can of the passage:

- What? Who? Why? When? How? Where?
- What do I not understand?

Write down all the questions you have – answered and unanswered.

Read the passage with other people – especially children – and see what questions they ask.

### 4. The Surprise Tool

Hopefully you are surprised when you read your Bible. We should be. But we can get into a sleepiness and dullness where we just shrug and say, "Yes, that what I was expecting."

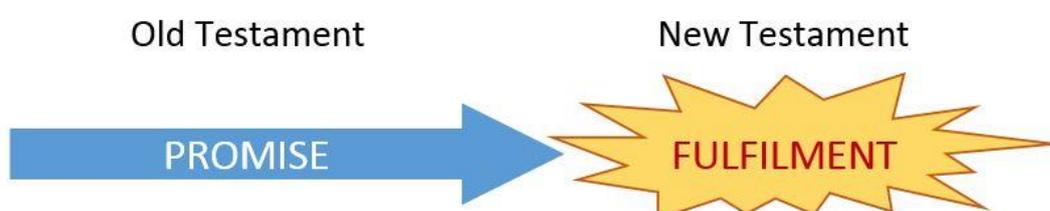
When Jesus was walking around he constantly shocked and surprised people. He did things which made people say, "Who is this man?!" He spoke and people had never heard anything like it. Luke 14:26 – unless you hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters, and your own life, you cannot be my disciple.

We must cultivate a surprise at the Bible where we say, "I would never have written it like that. That is crazy! That is completely upside down!"

If we find the surprise then often we will be close to the main point of the passage.

### 5. The Bible Storyline Tool

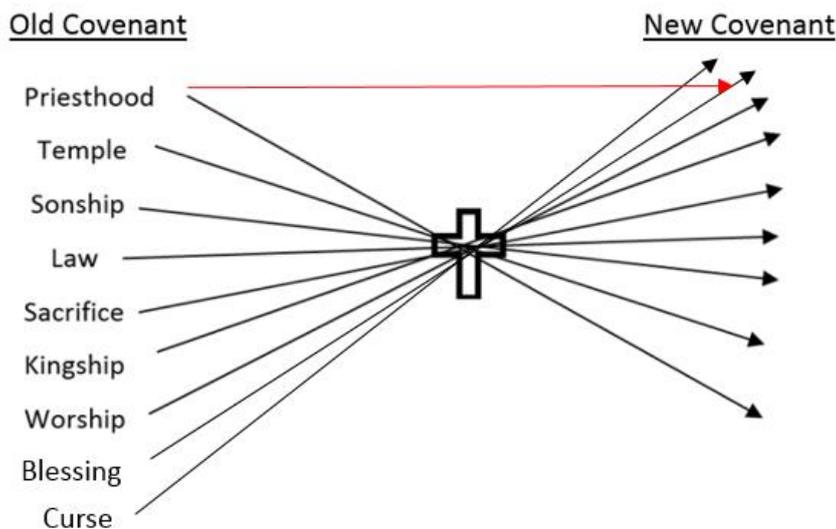
Luke 24:44-47 – OT = promise of Christ suffering, rising, preached; NT = fulfilment, actually happens, Christ suffers, rises and is preached to the nations



So if we're reading the OT we need to remember the end of the story and where it is all going. Need to remember that is PROMISE. E.g. Psalm 16 is a lovely Psalm for us to enjoy but remember that the NT says that is fulfilled by Jesus who did not see corruption. The whole Psalm is first and foremost about Him.

And if we're reading the NT we need to remember that it is FULFILMENT. Eg. Luke's Gospel all about Jesus coming as the answer to all the hopes and promises of the OT. It is a very Jewish story.

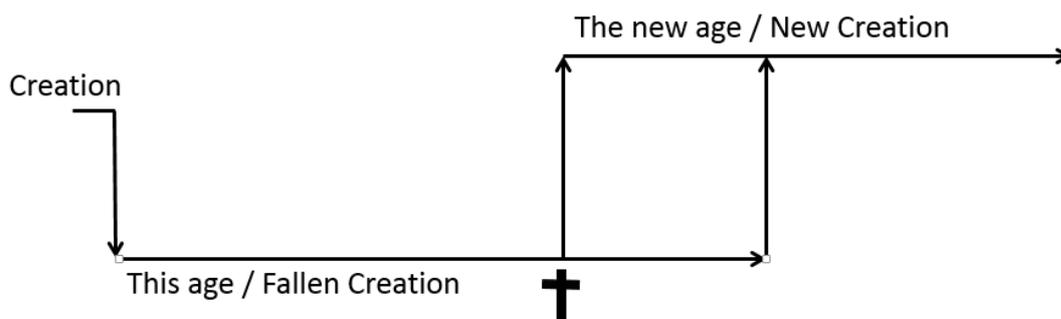
We must see that everything goes through the Cross of Christ:



E.g. we mustn't look at priesthood in the OT and think that is like our pastors in the church so they need to have the same kind of clothing and status. That would be to ignore Christ and jump over the Cross. If we take priesthood through the Cross we find that there Jesus was the great High Priest, offering himself as the perfect once for all sacrifice. He was the fulfilment of all the OT says about priesthood. But the line does continue out the other side into the NT era in the sense that we are all priests – a priesthood of all believers.

E.g. blessings and curses – we mustn't jump the Cross and start threatening people from Malachi 3. The OT blessings and curses find their fulfilment in Christ as he is our curse and our blessing on the Cross (Galatians 3). There are blessings and curses out the other side in the NT but they are now the blessing of eternal life with Christ in the New Creation versus the curse of the lake of fire.

A very simple way to draw the Bible timeline is like this:



Creation, garden of Eden, perfect. Fall into an age of death and decay and sin.

Jesus rises to be the first fruit of the New Creation. So the New Age starts at his resurrection.

But the old fallen age continues. Still death, sin, decay, illness, accidents.

In this NT age we are in a tension, groaning (Romans 8). In one sense we are in the New Age, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm, we are seated with Christ, we are new creations in him. But we do not yet have our resurrection bodies. We still sin, we still get ill. The NT is written to help us live in this age of tension and groaning.

Finally Christ will return, the fallen age will end completely and there will be only the new age.

## **6. The Section Tool**

How do you eat an elephant? In pieces.

Break the passage into chunks. E.g. Luke 15 – 1 parable, 3 stories, split the last story into scenes – at home, in the far country, coming home etc.

## **7. The Connections Tool**

- For, so that, therefore, because, but, if

The fire is in the logic.

E.g. Heb. 7:23-25 – the reason we can have assurance of our salvation is Jesus has risen and lives forever. Your salvation is as secure as Jesus' indestructible life. If he could die then maybe you could lose your salvation but he lives forever, he is in the most holy place showing the Father his hands and feet and saying, "I died for him, I died for her" – and he will never ever stop doing that.

## **8. The Repetition Tool**

The Bible came out of an oral culture. Way you highlight things in oral culture is by repetition.

- Words and ideas

*Read Mark 10:46-52 – What are the repeated words or phrases or ideas you see there?*

## **9. The Key Verse Tool**

Not your favourite verse but the Key verse – the one that unlocks the passage or which everything else in the passage hangs from.

Sometimes it will be obvious because the narrator tells you, "The point of what I am saying is..."

In stories it may be in the middle. The turning point is the teaching point.

## **10. The Big Point Tool**

- The big thing that the passage is saying – that the Holy Spirit is saying, that God is saying. With a forest we can look at the leaves and twigs but we can also stand back and see the shape of the whole forest. That's what we're doing here. It'll come out of looking carefully at the 'leaves', reading and reading and reading, looking for repetitions, looking for surprises, looking for a key verse. And gradually getting a sense of what the whole thing is about.

You could say this is the 'Topic' of the passage. So in that sense topical preaching is not wrong. It is good to have a big point / big idea / topic for the sermon. The question is whether we chose the topic first and then use the Bible to support it or whether the topic arises naturally out of the Bible.

- The punch of the passage – we want to get a sense of what this passage is driving at, what its impact is supposed to be
- It will be something about Jesus – that’s who the whole Bible is about
- 10 to 15 words – very hard to do but very helpful to write down the Big Idea as a short sentence, roughly 10 to 15 words. If it is too short (e.g. “Have faith”) it could come from anywhere in the Bible and we want it to capture what this specific passage says. E.g. for Mark 10:46-52 it might be something like, “Faith is seeing Jesus as the Servant King and throwing ourselves on his mercy”

### Getting it Across: Tools for communicating well

#### 1. “Please God and Love the Flock” (1 Thessalonians 2:2-8)

Not a tool but the most important thing about getting it across.

v4..... Our great temptation will be to please men, to flatter, to entertain, to pump egos. Either because we want to be praised (“Powerful sermon pastor!”) or because we are concerned about the sadaka and we don’t want to offend the good givers.

v5.....

v4..... We have been entrusted with the gospel by God, we are accountable to Him, we seek to please him [Vertical] and we love the flock – v7b-8..... [Horizontal]

Love will mean we will:

- say the hard things, in love
- pray (the hidden work)
- prepare hard
- particularly work hard at how to get the message across as clearly and helpfully as possible

#### 2. The One Thing Tool

Best way to communicate – say one thing. (Not what I’m doing right now!)

This One Thing = the Big Point of the text

To get the whole message saying this One Thing clearly I’m going to have to sharpen it:

#### 3. The Sharpening Tool

Broom stick – blunt end - can’t stick in ground. Sharpen it – sticks into the ground.

Need to cut away everything that is not necessary to get the one thing across.

- "the sermon is not a container to contain everything you have discovered about the text" (Mike Bullmore)

So will need to leave a lot of interesting things in the study. Ruthlessly sharpen so that everything is serving the One Thing.

#### 4. The Glued-to-the-Passage Tool

- Scriptures in hand (Acts 17:2-3) – Paul reasoned *from the Scriptures*. Saying, “Do you see? Do you see what it says here?” That meant the Bereans could check it.
- Preach Word not ourselves – May be ok to have an occasional personal testimony (particularly one showing our *weakness*) but we really want people to go away with the Word of God ringing in their ears not our story.

- Stay in passage and cross reference only where necessary – there's plenty there in the passage. May need to cross reference from OT to NT or vice versa to show promise/fulfilment but make it rare. Much harder to follow a preacher who is getting you to jump from one passage to another to another.

#### 5. The Simple Language Tool

- Aim for the 12 year old – If professionals and graduates in the congregation are not impressed and don't think I know any long words I don't care just so long as the 12 year old is understanding.
- Style, Language, Words – Simple, blunt style. Strong words but not long words.
- No complicated illustrations or quotations – especially don't quote from commentaries
- No Greek or Hebrew – if you can use it in your study - great – but don't bring it into the pulpit (unless preaching in Greece or Israel!)

#### 6. The I-Don't-Mean Tool

Avoid misunderstanding. Whenever we preach we can guarantee people will think the passage means the opposite of what it means or that we are saying the opposite of what we are trying to communicate. Often sobering when you ask people after you preached what they heard!

**“The gospel heard is different from the Gospel preached”,** said Freytag.

How do our listeners understand key terms such as God, Spirit, Sin, Grace, Redemption etc. E.g. The blood of Jesus Christ (Have you stopped to consider the popular prayer of covering food, persons and property with the blood of Christ?)

As we preach and teach, we must keep asking ourselves how the Christian key words and phrases are understood by our African listeners. We should bring into confrontation the authentic Biblical meaning and the possible local re-interpretation. This will help our listeners filter out pagan and animistic concepts which many Africans sitting in our pews still hold very firmly.

(Steven Musa-Kormayea, Servants of the Word, The Gambia)

So we may need to say, “When I say X, I don't mean A, I don't mean B, I mean...”

#### 7. The Structure Tool

“Ramble” = an aimless walk or an aimless talk

We don't want to ramble! We want to get (and to take people with us) on a journey from here to there.

- Stages on a journey – like on a matatu/taxi/daladala – you get on Route 46 because you know it is going from here to town and you know it will probably stop at this stage and then that stage and then that stage. In the same way it is good for our passengers (hearers) to know at the beginning, we are doing to this place and we will be stopping here, here and here.

#### 8. The SPEG Tool

- SAY what you want to say in a nutshell – e.g. “Faith is taking God at his word”
- POINT to the Scriptures – like Paul (Acts 17) – “This is where I am getting this point from. Look at verse 4. Let's read it again...”

- EXPLAIN as necessary – as necessary! – this might mean you have to use the I-don't-mean tool; it might mean you illustrate – use simple everyday things – e.g. faith is like sitting on a chair
- GROUND in practical life – “What’s next?” “So what?”
  - not vague – e.g. “Have more faith” – what does that mean??
  - work hard and prayerfully and with others to think what this passage is saying to out church, different groups of people, us as individuals
  - how should this passage change our thinking, feeling, behaviour?
  - don't avoid the difficult issues – e.g. how should this text change the way we view ethnicity, death, what we most want for our children?
  - most of all we want to give people Jesus – whether they are saved or unsaved – we want our preaching to be holding out Jesus to people as their Lord, their comfort, their strength, their joy, their life

### 9. The Introduction Tool

Often neglected.

Serves a social and cultural function – introducing ourselves, greeting people, establishing a connection between us and our hearers

Persuading people not to go to sleep! Persuading hearers that this is going to be relevant, going to be worth their time and energy to listen to.

Can raise a question which the passage will answer. E.g. “What is God does not answer your prayer?” or “What do you do when your life falls apart?” or “How do we deal with suffering?”

Get quickly to the Bible.

### 10. The Conclusion Tool

Also needs thought so that it doesn't ramble on endlessly or stop with an abrupt bang.

Answer the question raised at the beginning.

Make sure we are all really clear on the One Thing (about Jesus) we need to go away with.