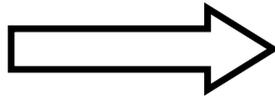


## Basics of Faithful Bible Teaching

### What is the Big Point?



#### What do you think is 'good preaching'?

Now let's look at the Bible's model of good preaching

Read Acts 17:1-15

- What was the *method* of Paul's preaching?
- What was the *content* of Paul's preaching?
- What is good about the Bereans?
- What was it about Paul's method of preaching that allowed the Bereans to check it? Can you think of preaching styles which are very hard to check against the Scriptures?
- Can you imagine how the churches of our country would be different if we had preachers like Paul and hearers like the Bereans?
- What was the response (positive and negative) to Paul's preaching? (v4-9)

This is what we mean by Faithful Bible Teaching (sometimes called Expository Preaching) – it is *reasoning from the Scriptures* (Careful with the text) and it is all about Jesus (Christ-centred).

*Watumishi wa Neno* – Because this kind of preaching is reasoning *from the Scriptures* and proclaiming *Christ* as Lord, it is clear that the Master (*mkubwa*) is not preacher but Word of Christ.

Now we look at the letter Paul wrote to the Thessalonians – the people he first spoke to in Acts 17...

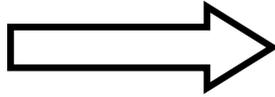
Read 1 Thessalonians 1

- What was the content of Paul's preaching? (1:5, 9-10)
- How did the Thessalonians receive this preaching? (1:3,6-10)
- What did that prove about them? (1:4)
- So, in light of the whole passage, what might "Power... Spirit... Conviction" (1:5) mean?
- Why do you think Paul prays for the Thessalonians faith, love and hope? What do these 3 things mean? Why might they have been difficult in the circumstances they are in?
- How would we preach and minister the Word differently if our aims were to produce and increase faith, hope and love? What sort of preaching turns people from idols to serve the living God and wait for his Son?

*What do you think is 'powerful ministry' on the basis of what we've seen from 1 Thess. 1 (and Acts 17)?*

Despite what we might think is powerful preaching (loud, charismatic, emotionalistic, spontaneous rhema words, accompanied by signs and wonders), we find here that genuinely powerful ministry is simply opening the Bible and pointing to Jesus (Acts 17) while the Lord God simultaneously does the great miracle of giving his Spirit, giving a turning from God to idols, giving a longing faith in the Son, giving supernatural joy in the midst of affliction (1 Thess. 1).

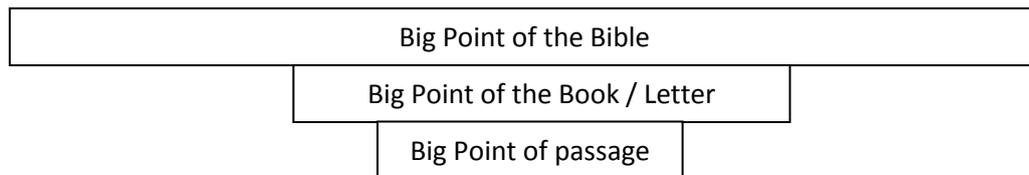
## The Big Point



One of the most helpful things you can do in FBT is look for the Big Point of a passage - What is it really all about? What is it driving at? What is the big punch, the impact this text is supposed to have?

Each book and chunk of the Bible is saying *something*. Mark starts his Gospel, "The good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God." That is what his whole book is about. In the middle of the letter to the Hebrews the author very helpfully says, "Now the point of what we are saying is this..." (Hebrews 8:1). There is a *big point* to his whole letter. Our task is to find this for whatever passage we are preaching.

You can look at finding the Big Point on different levels:



The Big Point of the Bible is that we find salvation in Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15; John 5:39-40). Each book of the Bible fits within that – it is still about the gospel but it is more specific – emphasising some aspect of Christ’s salvation or applying the gospel to a particularly situation. (So the big point of 1 Thessalonians might be something like “Be reassured in the gospel and press on in living it out, despite opposition, until Jesus returns.”)<sup>1</sup> And each passage of each book/letter fits within that – serving the purpose of the book, feeding into its central point.

In some ways this is not very far away from topical preaching. In a sense there *should* be a topic for each sermon. It should not be a disconnected collection of thoughts. It is a message. However the difference between the kind of preaching we are advocating and topical preaching as it is normally done, is that in our contexts, more often, the topic is coming from the preacher’s head whereas with FBT the topic is *coming out of the passage itself*, from God himself; it is what the Holy Spirit wants to say.

Another slight difference from topical preaching is that a ‘topic’ sounds quite broad and descriptive and static (e.g. ‘holiness’) whereas a ‘point’ has direction and force (e.g. ‘Be holy because God is holy’).

Searching for the big point of a passage is:

- Going to be hard work. We will have to read, read, read, pray, pray, pray for hours. Lots and lots of labour with our knees on the floor and our noses in the text. It will mean looking for the surprises, the flow of the argument, the repeated phrases, being aware of the context. And that hard work is good for us – it takes us very deep into the Word and allows the Word to get deep into us.
- Going to help us be Careful and Faithful with the text. Looking for the Big Point will keep us from majoring on the minors. It is possible to preach on the minor things in a passage which, while not untrue, are not central. For example, you could preach from Luke 24 and make your central message 'It's good to go out two-by-two' or 'It's good to meet for church on a Sunday' or 'We are allowed to eat fish'. The sermon is not wrong it's just missing the point (that the chapter is about knowing the risen Jesus through the Word). There is a danger that we see something that reminds us of our favourite theme and off we go on that. If we work to find the big point of the passage and preach that we will feel the full force of the Word and keep all things in their proper proportion. **We want the main point of the passage to be the main point of our talk.** That is FBT.
- Going to help us to be Clear in communication. It is very difficult for listeners to remember more than one thing. This is very true of children but quite true for all of us. The great thing about finding the Big Point of the story is that once you’ve got the Big Thing you can then preach it for 5 minutes or 1 hour, to small children or university professors, to the unchurched or Bible students.

---

<sup>1</sup> Graham Beynon in the Proclamation Study Bible.

Once you have a grip on the core message of the text you can then expand or contract your material and include as much detail as is helpful and necessary but in all cases faithfully representing the whole story.

### **Some practical pointers on the “Big Point”**

- Don't make it just descriptive – It shouldn't sound like the headings in your Bible (e.g. “Jesus heals a paralysed man”). It should carry the force, the point of the passage.
- Don't make it too short – “Trust God” could come from anywhere in the Bible – It needs to be specific to this passage – what is it that sums up the message of *this* passage and not any other.
- Don't make it too long – If it becomes a very long sentence then you lose the sharpness – keep it as short and punchy as possible. Roughly 10 words is usually about right.
- See if there is a key verse. There may not be but sometimes there will be a particular phrase that opens up or sums up the whole passage. N.B. this is not your *favourite* verse! It is the *key* verse which unlocks the passage.
- **Think Jesus** – *Above all* remember that the big point of the whole Bible story is finding salvation in Jesus – so the big point of the passage you are looking at will have something to do with Him. If your Big Point is man-centred then keep working until it is about the beauty of Christ. The big question is: How do I know Christ better because of this text?

Be **Christ**-centred

Think GOSPEL

### **Go back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1**

- Pray for the Spirit's help as you come to his word
- Read the passage again
- Divide the passage into three or four portions/paragraphs (be aware that your Bible's paragraphs might or might not be the right breaks and that the breaks might be within verses). Then try to summarise each chunk in one sentence.
- Notice the major logic words in the passage – ‘Therefore’, ‘For’, ‘So’, ‘Because’ etc. How do these help us to see the *connections* between (or within) the different portions. What is the logic or flow? E.g. Why does the third paragraph follow the second?
- Is there a key verse in the passage?
- What is the Big Point? Come up with a sentence that pulls all this together and expresses the theme and force of the passage as simply as possible.
- Check that it fits within the big point of the letter and the Bible as a whole (i.e. check it is Christ-exalting).

### **Pray**

- Thank God who loved us, who sent Jesus to die and rise to rescue us from the coming wrath, who gave us opportunity to hear the gospel and sent his Spirit to convict us of our sin and unite us with Christ.
- Pray that we would have a faith that works, a love that labours and a hope that produces endurance and joy even in suffering.
- Pray that our Bible preaching and teaching would be Careful in handling the text, Christ-Centred and Cutting to the heart.