

10 Steps To Reading, Understanding, and Teaching the Bible

1. **Pray** - ask God to speak to you in the passage... ask Him that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened to see what He would have for you to see.
2. **Read the text multiple times and in different versions.** Consider the following versions: NASB (More formal - word for word translation), ESV, NIV, NLT (more dynamic - thought for thought translations). What do you observe? Any repeated words? Are there any actions that the author of Scripture has given? Are there questions that you have? Is there anything in the passage that might require a greater depth of study?
3. **What is the context of the passage?** Think about the following...a) the *literary context* (passages before and after the passage), b) the *historical context* (circumstances of the author's audience), c) the *cultural context* (details relevant to life as it was lived in this place at this time), and d) the *biblical context* (citations/allusions or historical connections to other books that the author is making). (Adapted from Charles Simeon Trust *Sermon Preparation Worksheet*)
4. **What is the main idea of the passage?** The main idea of the passage will be your main idea. Go through an exercise called subject, complement, main idea. The subject is what the author is talking about. The complement is what you are saying about what you are talking about. Determine the main idea from there. You can craft the language later.
5. **How does this main idea connect to Jesus?** We must preach the gospel. We must preach the cross and the resurrection. How does your passage connect to the heart of the gospel? How can you help deepen one's understanding of the gospel through this text? We do not want to miss here.
6. **Determine the shape your message will take.** Will it be inductive or deductive? Inductive is where you build upon supporting points and then land with the main idea. Deductive is where you communicate the main idea up front, support the main idea, and then communicate the main idea to close. This answer should be determined on how the author of Scripture outlines the particular text. Determining the shape of a message helps it to flow - this is really important for both the communicator and the listener.
7. **Think of illustrations and applications.** Preach to the mind (biblical exposition), preach to the will (application), preach to the heart (illustration). This also can help with dynamics within a message.
8. **Write yourself clear.** Everyone has a different process but this works for me. I write out every word that I am going to say about the text. I need to have a level of clarity before teaching it. Whatever your process might be to get clear, do so. Write your introduction and conclusion last. The very last thing I write is my introduction. It's hard to begin when I am unsure of where I am taking people. This is why I write this part last. Your introduction should orient people to the subject matter at hand.
9. **Finalize the message, review it, and make any final edits.**
10. **Pray, trust God, and trust your preparation.**