Lighthouse Bible Institute

Week 4

BIBLICAL PREACHING & TEACHING:
Bridging the Gap from Text to Message

Lesson Goal:

- Move from what the biblical author communicated to the original audience to the enduring truth of the passage and its faithful application to people today. Students will analyze their exegetical idea, formulate a theological idea, and identify a specific audience response supported by the text.
- **We bridge the gap by preserving the meaning of the text while showing how its truth addresses people today.**

Term	Meaning	Example: James 1:2-8
Topic	The broad area being discussed; not a complete thought.	Responding to _____
Subject	What is the author talking about? Put into the form of a question.	How should believers respond to trials?
Complement	What is the author saying about the subject? This answers the subject question.	With joy by recognizing that tests produce endurance and maturity as one asks God for wisdom with an unwavering faith.
Big Idea	Combine the _____ and complement into one complete sentence.	Believers should respond to trials with joy, recognizing their maturing purpose and asking God for wisdom in unwavering faith.
Exegetical Idea	The passage's Big Idea stated in terms of what the author communicated to the _____ audience.	James urged his readers to welcome trials with joy because testing produced endurance leading to maturity, and to ask the generous God for needed wisdom without doubting.
Theological Idea	The enduring _____ of that message, expressed beyond its original setting.	God uses the testing of faith to develop spiritual maturity and generously gives wisdom to believers who ask in unwavering faith; therefore, believers should meet trials with joy and dependence on Him.

I. Analyze the Exegetical Idea

- Discovering the author's idea is essential, but it does not finish preparation. We must determine what listeners need explained, what doubts need answered, and what response the truth calls for. **Robinson develops this work through three questions**.

A. What does this text mean?

1. Before people can apply a passage, they must understand what it says. Our task is to explain the author's meaning in words our listeners can understand.
2. How can a misunderstanding affect a proper application of a text?
3. Consider the passage through the lens of one who has not read much of the Bible.
   a. What words or expressions in the text might be unfamiliar or misunderstood?
   b. What background information is necessary to understand the passage?

c. How do the author's commands, reasons, illustrations, or contrasts help explain his main point?

4. Class Exercise – Read Luke 18:9-14

a. Write down at least 2 words or expressions that might be unfamiliar or misunderstood that would need to be explained: _____

_____

b. What background information is necessary to understand the passage?

i. Why is Jesus' comparison between a Pharisee and a tax collector surprising?

ii. What does going to the temple to pray tell us about the setting?

iii. How do the author's reasons, illustrations, or contrasts help explain his main point?

a) According to verse 9, whom was Jesus addressing?

b) What does the Pharisee emphasize in his prayer?

c) What does the tax collector emphasize in his prayer?

d) How do the men's actions reinforce this contrast?

e) What conclusion does Jesus give in verse 14?

iv. State the main point of the passage in one complete sentence. _____

_____

v. Before teaching this passage, what would you need to explain so your listeners understand its message?

5. Note: not every fact you learned about the passage needs to be shared, only that which helps the listener understand the author's message (Ex. Diving so deep into a word study that it ends up diverting from the message).

B. Is it true Do I believe it- Help Listeners Believe the Truth

1. People may understand what a passage says and still struggle to believe it. Explain the reasons the text gives and answer questions that could keep listeners from accepting its message.

a. What reasons, comparisons, or arguments does the author give?

b. What might listeners naturally question; what may be a truth they could resist or struggle to accept?

c. How does the passage and its biblical context answer those concerns?

2. In Class Practice — Luke 18:9–14

a. Read the passage and consider what someone might question about Jesus' conclusion.

i. What truth does Jesus expect His listeners to believe?

ii. What objection might a listener raise?

iii. How does the passage answer that objection?

iv. Does Jesus' conclusion mean that fasting, giving, and righteous conduct are wrong?

b. What other Scripture could help answer the belief that we can earn acceptance with God? _____

c. What personal belief might this passage challenge?

C. What Difference Does It Make? — Help Listeners Respond to the Truth

1. Once listeners understand the truth and believe it, we must help them see how it should affect their lives.
2. Consider the question: *Because this is true, what changes should I make in my life?*
   - **a.** What specific response does this passage call for?
   - **b.** How should this passage affect a listener's attitudes, desires, words, or actions?
3. Application may involve repentance, faith, obedience, worship, hope, or endurance. Sometimes listeners need to act; sometimes they need to abandon a wrong belief or rest in God's promise.
4. **In Class Practice (Luke 18:9-14)**
   - **a.** What wrong belief does this passage call people to reject?
   - **b.** What should someone trusting in their own personal goodness or religious achievement do in response to what they have learned?
   - **c.** What attitude toward others does this passage challenge?
   - **d.** How could a believer apply this truth during the coming week?
   - **e.** How could this passage encourage someone who thinks their sin makes them beyond God's mercy?
   - **f.** How can we avoid applying this passage incorrectly?
5. **Review the Three Questions**
   - **a. What does this mean?** Understand the contrast between self-righteousness and humble dependence on God's mercy.
   - **b. Is it true? Do I believe it?** Accept Jesus' verdict rather than assuming religious accomplishments establish righteousness before God.

c. **What difference does it make?** Turn from self-righteousness, seek God's mercy, and stop looking down on others. Those burdened by sin should recognize that they are not beyond God's mercy.

II. Form the Theological Idea — Identify the Enduring Truth

A. What Is the Theological Idea?

1. The exegetical idea states what the author communicated to the **original audience**. The theological idea expresses the _____ _____ of the text for people today.
2. We are still communicating the same biblical truth. We move from its original setting to a statement that applies beyond that setting.
   a. **Exegetical idea:** What did the author communicate then?
   b. **Theological idea:** What enduring truth does that message teach?
   c. **Preaching/teaching:** How will I communicate that truth to these listeners?
   d. **Application:** How should these listeners respond?

B. Ask Questions That Connect Then and Now

1. What truth about God does this passage reveal?
2. What truth about the human condition does it address?
3. What truths about God and man remain true beyond the original setting?
4. Are any details, commands, or promises specific to the original audience or situation?

C. Test the Theological Idea

1. **Biblical:** Can I show where this passage teaches it?
2. **Complete:** Does it account for the passage's major parts?
3. **Faithful:** Does it preserve the author's emphasis without expanding a promise beyond its intended scope?
4. **Consistent:** Does it agree with the teaching of the whole Bible?
   a. **Robinson:** *Because the Bible stands entire and complete, no passage should be interpreted or applied in isolation from all that God has spoken.*[1]
5. **Clear:** Does it state a complete truth rather than merely name a topic?

D. Note:

1. **The theological idea must come from the passage being studied rather than simply being a true statement about God.** The goal is to let the Scripture speak about God and His will and not impose onto the text one's own ideas, even if those ideas are biblical.
   a. This matters because faithful exposition communicates the message God gave through the biblical author. We must teach not only biblical truth, but the particular truth this passage communicates. This doesn't mean you don't expand on it, but rather that you keep the emphasis on what the text is saying.
   b. For example, "God created all things" is true, but it is not the theological idea of Luke 18:9–14. That passage addresses self-righteousness, humility, and God's mercy. Making creation its central message would replace Jesus' emphasis with our own.
2. **Preserve the limits of promises.** For example, read the following verse, should this be applied to every believer?

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[1] Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, Fourth Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2025), 60.

   a. **Acts 18:9–10 —** [9] Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; [10] for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."
   b. God's assurance of protection to Paul here does not guarantee that every Christian witness will escape physical harm.
3. **Some passages already state an enduring truth directly.** Their exegetical and theological ideas may therefore sound very similar.
   a. **Example: Proverbs 15:1** — [1] *A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.*
      i. **Exegetical idea:** A gentle response calms anger, while harsh speech provokes it.
      ii. **Theological idea:** A gentle response calms anger, while harsh speech provokes it.
   b. **Why are they the same?** The proverb already expresses an enduring truth without tying it to a particular person or historical situation. We still explain and apply it, but one does not need to rewrite it.

E. In Class Practice (Luke 18:9–14)

1. **What is the exegetical idea? What did Jesus communicate to His original audience?** _____
   _____
   _____
2. **Identify two truths about God and His work that remain true beyond the original setting:**
   a. _____
   b. _____
3. **Identify two truths about people or the human condition that remain true today.**
   a. _____
   b. _____
4. **Which details belong to the original setting?** _____
   _____
   _____
5. **State the theological idea in one complete sentence.**
6. **Can you show that this theological idea comes from the passage?**
7. **State a possible preaching or teaching idea for today's listeners.**
8. **What are possible misunderstandings that need to be avoided when presenting these truths?**
   a. Do not present humility as a good work that earns salvation. The tax collector appeals to God's mercy rather than claiming that his humility makes him deserving.
   b. Do not teach that works have no importance to God; they are not the "root" of salvation, but they are "fruit" from salvation.

III. Begin Faithful Application — Connect the Truth to Your Listeners

A. Identify the Audience

1. Identify the people you will teach: a youth class, a Life Group, new believers, ministry workers, or the congregation.

2. Consider how the passage addresses their understanding, beliefs, attitudes, and circumstances.
    a. What do they need to understand?
    b. What truth might they struggle to believe or accept?
    c. Where do the attitudes or problems addressed in the passage appear in their lives?

B. Connect how they should respond to the text.

1. Show why the passage calls for this response. Keep the application connected to what the text reveals about God and His work.
2. **It is not, "You should respond this way because it's the right thing to do"; rather, "You should respond this way because Scripture says…"**
    a. **Example: Luke 18:9–14:** We should reject self-righteousness because Jesus declares the humble sinner justified rather than the man who trusts in his accomplishments.
    b. Teaching only "be more humble" misses the central point: our need for God's mercy rather than confidence in our own righteousness.
3. Help listeners respond with dependence on God. Do not turn application into self-improvement or suggest that obedience earns His grace.

C. Make the Response Specific

1. Help listeners recognize what a faithful response could look like in their circumstances.
    a. **General:** *Do not be self-righteous*.
    b. **Specific:** *When you catch yourself thinking that church attendance or moral behavior makes you more deserving of God's acceptance, acknowledge your sin and turn your confidence to His mercy.*
    c. **Textual basis:** Luke 18:9 identifies trust in personal righteousness as the problem; verses 13–14 contrast that trust with an appeal for mercy.
2. Application may also address how we treat others: *When tempted to look down on someone, remember your own need for mercy and treat that person with humility.*
3. Distinguish **what Scripture actually requires** from **a suggested way you say someone should respond.**
    a. **Biblical response:** Reject self-righteousness and contempt for others.
    b. **Suggested practice:** Write down a recent instance of looking down on someone and use it to guide confession and prayer.
4. Do not present your suggested practice as the only acceptable way to obey the passage.

D. Avoid Common Application Errors

1. **Overstating the application and losing biblical balance**
    a. **Example — Luke 18:9–14:** Regular church attenders may need to examine whether they are trusting in religious activity or personal goodness rather than God's mercy. However, we must not belittle faithful church attendance, giving, or service. **Jesus condemns trusting in these practices as the basis of acceptance before God, not the practices themselves.**
    b. Those burdened by their sin need to hear that God's mercy is available to sinners who humbly seek Him. However, we must not imply that forgiveness makes repentance and a changed life unnecessary. **Good works do not earn salvation, but they are the fruit of God's saving work** (Eph. 2:8–10).
    c. **Teacher emphasis:** Preserve the passage's emphasis while remaining consistent with the whole Bible. **Do not weaken the call to depend on God's mercy, and do not turn that mercy into permission to continue in sin.**

2. **Unrelated application:** Addressing a worthwhile concern that does not follow from this passage's meaning.
    a. **Example – David & Goliath – 1 Samuel 17:**
        i. **Wrong:** "Identify your giant, whether a financial problem, a weight issue, or personal goal, and defeat it like David. Pick up the stone of God's Word and slay it."
        ii. **Better:** "Trust the Lord rather than human strength." David's victory demonstrates that *"the battle is the LORD's"* (v. 47); the passage does not teach a method for overcoming every personal obstacle.
3. **Invented symbolism:** Assigning spiritual meanings to details that the author does not establish. Considering 1 Samuel 17:40:
    a. **Wrong:** "David's five stones were for Goliath and his brothers, representing five giants you must defeat in your life."
    b. **Better:** "David trusted the Lord to deliver him" (vv. 45–47). The text neither explains why he chose five stones nor assigns a spiritual meaning to each one.
4. **Overpromising:** Promising outcomes the passage does not guarantee. Considering Acts 18:9-10:
    a. **Wrong:** "If you boldly witness, God will prevent anyone from harming you."
    b. **Better:** Recognize this assurance as specific to Paul in Corinth. Encourage faithful witness without promising freedom from persecution.
5. **Ignoring differences among listeners:** Assuming everyone needs the same response. Considering Luke 18:9-14:
    a. **Wrong:** Assume everyone merely needs to become less judgmental.
    b. **Better:** Call unbelievers to abandon self-righteous confidence and seek God's saving mercy; call believers to repent of contempt toward others. An unbeliever may need to turn to Christ for salvation; a believer may need to repent of pride toward others.
6. **Losing the main point:** Allowing a secondary detail to replace the passage's central message. Considering John 6:1–14 (Jesus feeding 5,000 with boys 5 loaves and 2 fish):
    a. **Wrong:** Make "be willing to share, like the boy who brought his lunch" the main lesson.
    b. **Better:** Emphasize Jesus' power to supply and abundantly provide where human resources are insufficient. The boy's food contributes to the event, but Jesus and His power and provision are the focus.

SUMMARY

- Biblical preaching moves from what the author communicated then to the enduring truth of the passage and how listeners should respond today.
- Ask three questions:
    - **What does this mean? Is it true/do I believe it? What difference does it make?**
    - Help listeners understand the truth, believe it, and respond to it.
- The theological idea and application must arise from the passage's meaning, preserving its emphasis and the limits of its promises. Faithful exposition explains God's Word clearly and applies it specifically, without replacing His message with our own.

- **Today's Assignments:**
    - Quiz 4 — Over Robinson, Chapter 4, and the Week 4 handout
    - Turn in your Week 3 Biblical Message Project worksheet.

- **Due for next class: (Saturday, October 17th, 9:30 a.m.)**
    - Complete the assigned Robinson reading for Week 5.
    - Complete the Week 4 Biblical Message Project worksheet: refine your exegetical idea, develop your theological idea, and begin applying the passage to your intended audience.

Bibliography

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 4th ed. Revised by Scott Wenig. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2025.