



THE RELIABILITY AND USABILITY OF SCRIPTURE IN OUR PRESENT AGE

Session 8:

- From Text To Small Group Bible Study
 - From Text To Discerning God's Will
 - From Text to Liberty of Conscience and Church Governance:
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Carry Over: Brief Q&A and “Revelation”

- Genre Generally
- [Revelation Handout](#)



TEXT TO SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

Hook, Book, Look, Took



From Text To Small Group: The "Goal"

- Our Ultimate Goal Is that God would be glorified in the gospel of Jesus Christ! Applied!
- Every Bible Study ought to preach Christ and to challenge us in a pastoral way to consider our own relationship to Him and his saving work on our behalf. Every study then is Christ-centered You will want to carefully keep this in mind as you direct the discussion in a way that will ultimately exalt the doctrine of God's sovereign grace as accomplished and applied by Christ. Our goal is that every Bible Study be an Emmaus Road experience for the participants of the small group study.

From Text To Small Group: The “Liturgy”

- More than “learning” is going on in a small Group BS. Concerns the very way we approach and relate to God and one another. How then would the “liturgy” of a Small Group want to impact this?
 - *How would the liturgical context of the actually BS shape the experience?*
- **Four Movements of a Healthy Life Groups (C.F. SAMPLES)**
 - *God Centered Praise/Adoration*
 - *Grace Focused Confession/Absolution*
 - *Gospel Oriented Four Part Bible Study*
 - *Kingdom Focused Intercession And Thanksgiving*

From Text To Small Group: The Directed Discussion

- One of the great potential weaknesses of a small group Bible study is related to its greatest strength– its intimate size! By the very nature of a small group, it is intended to facilitate participation. But herein lies the great danger of what we have discussed as the subjectivization of Biblical Interpretation.
 - *how then should this participation be managed in a way as to not usurp the objectivity revelation albeit to allow for the principled subjectivity of illumination– both as driving under the Lordship of Christ speaking through scripture?*
 - *How would the kinds of questions we lead with shape the settled principles of a Biblically informed method of interpretation?*
- The Four Parts of A Healthy Bible Study Led by “Directed Discussion”
 - *Point Of Contact (“Hook”)*–
 - *Investigation (“Book”)*
 - *Discovery (“Look”)*
 - *So What? (“Took”)*

From Text To Small Group Bible Study



Point of Contact

Investigation

Discovery

So What?



From Text To Small Group: Asking Good Questions

- Guided Discussion is accomplished by asking good questions wherein each question should reflect the action of the particular section that you are teaching.
- While there is no hard and fast rule about asking good questions, you will discover that there is an art to giving enough information in the question but not too much information so that the participant will be led by it to discovery rather than confusion and embarrassment.
- The most important thing to remember is that you want to avoid making the scripture mean more than one thing at once such as to diminish the objectivity of revelation in and through scripture as our "only rule of faith and practice.:
- So, a question like, "what does this passage, sentence, word of scripture mean (vs. applied) to you" is never appropriate in the investigation section lest things get turned up-side-down and we become the talkers in revelation and God the hearer.

From Text To Small Group: “Hook” Questions

- You will want to engage the sympathy of the people in the group.
- The danger at this point is to say or do anything to get their attention. You might tell a joke, story or quote for instance that has nothing to do with the content of investigation. This will tend to undermine your credibility and encourage a license to make the scripture say something that it never intended to say.
- The study will be better served if you will reflect on the final inferences (“Took”) that are made in the “so what” section and introduce the lesson in a way that would help the participant begin thinking about that. Or perhaps to recognize the greater challenge one will have toward understanding or applying the passage such as to address it from the beginning—e.g. the “tension” such as to beg for its resolution.
- It is often helpful to begin a theme and return to it at the end such as to tie the whole lesson together.

From Text To Small Group: “Book” Questions

- The important thing to remember at this section is that we are not searching for our own opinions. Your lead questions will want to drive a person to the text, less our own thoughts and feelings. We are listening, God is speaking, and this must be kept in mind throughout this section especially lest the word become a window into our own hearts rather than God's revelation. That is, Observation type questions.

Example:

- *How does our text divide itself?*
 - *What words are repeated or emphasized that may be significant to understanding this passage?*
- You will want to keep your comments mostly to the comments to those borne out in careful Bible interpretation principles as with relying on the the curriculum and/or commentary of choice.

From Text To Small Group: “Look” Questions

- Having investigated the text of God's word, we are now ready to summarize the main point. The idea is to state as clearly and plainly as possible the "good news" that is presented by our passage in a summary fashion. You may want to help the participant see the "good news" represented by the main point- which will require some grasp of theology as a complete system. One good rule is to always locate the main point in a category of theology. You may want to consult with your church "Confession of Faith" to know what your church understands the scripture to generally teach about the topic. Example: What is the issue that this text addresses in our Christian life? (Issue of revelation, sin, acceptance with God, godly living, the future, the church, our relationships with the world and/or one another—all of which fall under a category in WCF)

From Text To Small Group: “Took” Questions

- If you have rightly divided the word of God in the investigation section, here is your second great opportunity to mess up– to move out of the “lane” that has been directed by the meaning (main=point) of the text.
- Therefore, the leader will want to be carefully draft the “significance” question as to be a good inference (if not a necessary inference) of the main point.
- To be sure, we want to distinguish between the “elements” of our faith (“rule of faith” as by good and necessary inference) and the manners in which that meaning applied to our life (“practice” as determined by “light of nature and circumstances common to man.” c.f. WCF 1.6)
 - *Example: Rom 3:21ff– If Christ’s death satisfies God’s law, both passively (by satisfying God’s curse against sin) and actively (by Christ’s righteousness applied to us) and received as grace offered by faith alone...*
 - “Took Question”– in what ways might this change our life with God and/or others?\
 - Answer– When I suffer, I don’t conclude that God is punishing me, but that God may be lovingly disciplining me, OR I can live without fear of God’s condemnation and/or rejection, OR “ I am now more comfortable acknowledging my sin, OR, I am more able to love others and give them grace given the grace I have been given by God, etc. etc –
 - all good inferences driven by a single “Meaning” of the passage.

From Text To Small Group: Making It Missional

- A 'missional' small group is not necessarily one which is doing some kind of specific 'evangelism' program. Rather,
 - *1) If its members love and talk affectionately about the city/neighborhood,*
 - *2) If they speak in language that is not filled with pious tribal or technical terms and phrases, nor disdainful and embattled language,*
 - *3) If in their Bible study they apply the gospel to the core concerns and stories of the people of the culture,*
 - *4) If they are interested in and engaged in the thoughts of the surrounding culture and can discuss it both appreciatively and yet critically,*
 - *5) Show respect with regard to opposite sex, and show humility toward people of other races, cultures and even religions,*
 - *6) If they do not bash other Christians and churches wherein seekers and non-believing people A) will be invited and B) will come and will stay as they explore spiritual issues.*
- If these marks are not there it will only be able to include believers or traditional, "Christianized" people.

From Text To Small Group: Discourse in the Vernacular

- In 'Christendom' there is little difference between the language inside and outside of the church. In post-Christendom, the missional church must explained explain Biblical-technical terms especially.
 - *The missional church avoids 'tribal' language, stylized prayer language, unnecessary evangelical pious 'jargon', and archaic language that seeks to set a 'spiritual tone.'*
 - *The missional church avoids 'we-them' language, disdainful jokes that mock people of different politics and beliefs, and dismissive, disrespectful comments about those who differ with us*
 - *The missional church avoids ever talking as if non-believing people are not present. If you speak and discourse as if your whole neighborhood is present (not just scattered Christians), eventually more and more of your neighborhood will find their way in or be invited.*
 - *• Unless all of the above is the outflow of a truly humble- bold gospel-changed heart, it is all just 'marketing' and 'spin.'*

From Text To Bible Study: Missional Community

- In Christendom, 'fellowship' is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support and accountability. That is necessary, of course. In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a 'counter-culture,' showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.
 - *In sex. We avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life patterns are different.*
 - *In money. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the economically and physically weak.*
 - *In power. We are committed to power-sharing and relationship-building between races and classes that are alienated outside of the Body of Christ.*

From Text To Discerning God's Will: Blueprint or Divine Wisdom?

■ The Sufficiency of Scripture:

2Tim. 3:1 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty... 15 from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the person of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

■ How is it sufficient?

- *By good and necessary inference (“g&n”) does it speak to every issue needing decisions?*
- *Doesn't is by g&n direct us to other/new “revelations” (signs, dreams, etc)?*
- *DOE'S by g&n provide wisdom*

■ What have we learned about Biblical Interpretation that informs how we discern God's will utilizing scripture?

From Text To Discerning God's Will:

3 Views

- Option 1: By Discerning A Divine Blue Print Revealed in Scripture Plus Providential Clues: E.g. Modern Evangelical View-- God has a specific and detailed plan for each Christian's life (blueprint) such that knowing God's will (guidance) involves discerning that specific plan...
 - *Method: reading scripture often out of context (prooftexting) such as to go beyond original intent of scripture..*
 - *The assumption is that God's sovereign plan for each life is intended to be the source and pattern of guidance for the individual. It all depends on whether or not you read the providential clues coupled with selective reading of scripture correctly. (Note the kinds of clues looked for-- open/closed door, signs, coincidence, etc)*
- Option 2. By Divine Blue Print Plus Additional Revelation: e.g. Charismatic View-- Not contrary to Bible but beside the Bible plus guidance by direct communications from God.
 - *Revelation based on special prophecies (Word from The Lord), dreams, strong intuition, etc.*
- Option 3: By Divine Wisdom-- e.g. Traditional View-- e.g. There is a Divine Blue Print in the Mind of God, and yet this Divine Blue Print is not revealed, wisdom to discern Godly Wisdom is, albeit fallibly this side of heaven.
 - *Assumption: Sufficiency of Scripture interpreted according to original intent-- Guidance comes by God making us wise... there is no seeking for the clues or signs, there is no need for a direct word... e.g. step by step--God is in the system therefore we trust that he is in the system and that in due course, as we need, it, we will be wise unto wise decisions.*
 - *Method: Biblical Interp applied to biblically informed values, purposes, morals, etc. unto "Wisdom"*

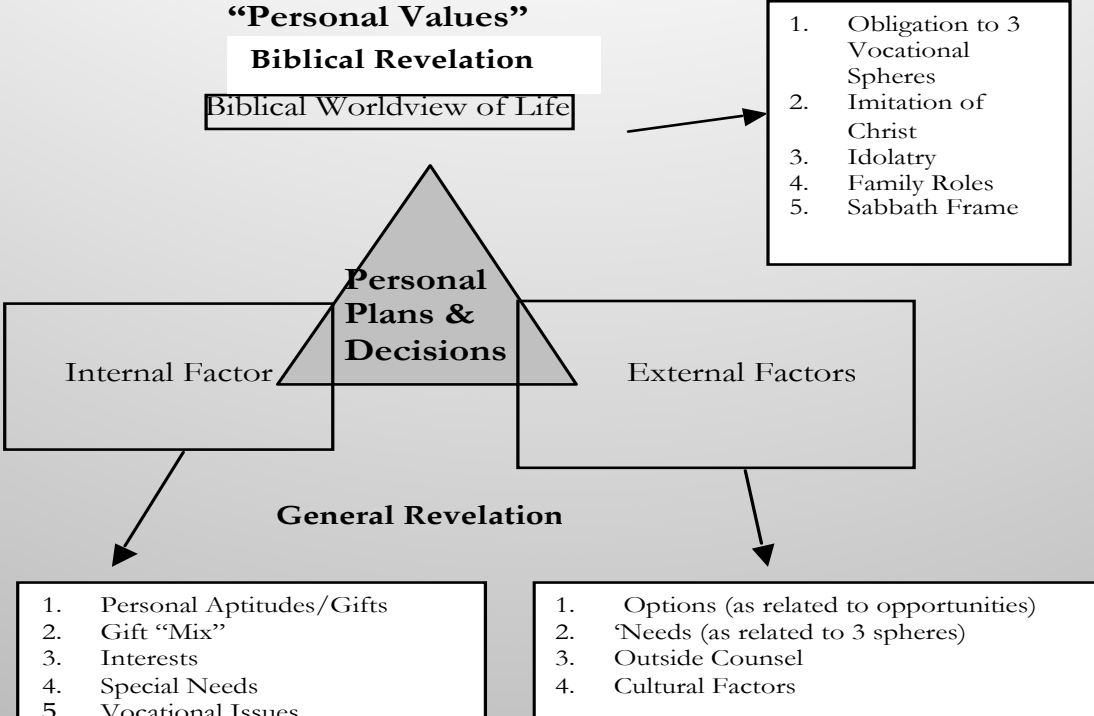
Three Views Illustrated– Three "Landscaper-Housekeepers"

- Landscaper # 1: The Christian house-sitter prays about being a good house-sitter– Without any specific instruction—goes to garage and finds specific tools laid out, a particular type of fertilizer and photos of some plants at a local store... from these and other such “clues” puts together what she hopes is a reconstruction of their plan intended by owners.
- Landscaper #2: The Christian house-sitter prays about being a good housekeeper. Upon
- Landscaper #3: The Christian house-sitter prays about being a good housekeeper., knows the owners are wanting to landscape, and has made it her ambition to study the art of landscaping. watches videos on Landscaping, reads journals, goes to school and has a degree in landscaping... and also knows something about the personalities and tastes of the owner and comes up with a plan based on the information available and his/her knowledge of the owner... As it happens, the homeowners chose this sitter because they trusted his knowledge of both landscaping and themselves....
- Or something like that 😊

From Text To Discerning God's Will:

From Text To Personal Discipleship

Three Dynamics in Personal Decision Making (Work the Triangle)



Resources:

- James Petty, Step By Step, Divine Guidance For Ordinary Christians
- Paul Helm, The Callings