**PART ONE: SHARING SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT**

**PART TWO: SHAPING IT INTO A SHORT TALK**

**Session Aims:**

**PART ONE**: To offer a framework to understand and interpret scripture for your context

**PART TWO:** To offer steps to take what you learn from scripture and shape it into a short talk

**Session Time:** 1.5 hours

**Session Materials:** Whiteboard, Whiteboard Markers, Data projector, Slides with questions

& example answers on

**Session Notes:**

**PART ONE: Understanding & Interpreting Scripture**

**Introduction**

The Bible is a God’s communication with us. It is applicable to all people everywhere no matter their culture/time/situation etc.

 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* 2 Timothy 3:16-19

Sometimes the Bible is really to understand and interpret into our everyday life.
But often it can be really hard to see how stories or words written thousands of years ago could have anything to say to us and be applicable to our lives at this point in time!

Being able to understand and interpret scripture is a really important skill!
**It helps us grow as disciples**, as we read the Bible and understand it, we come to know more of God and we are able to hear what he has to say to us in this time and space.

Being able to understand and interpret scripture **is also an important skill in leadership.** Because as Christian leaders, we often have the opportunity to teach from the Bible – whether that’s teaching a Sunday School lesson, leading a Bible Study at Youth Group, leading a devotion, preaching or doing a short talk!

So if we are going to teach from the Bible then we want to be able to understand a passage and interpret it well… **So that we can be confident to pull the actual truth out of a text and not just develop something that sounds nice but might not actually be correct!**

Today we want to offer you a tool that you can use to help you read, understand and interpret scripture for our context today – that will help you as you grow as a disciple, and will also better equip you as a leader

Interpreting the Bible is similar to embarking on a **JOURNEY**…we journey from the town of the Biblical audience (for whom the scripture was originally written for) to our town today! In that journey we think about what the passage meant to the original audience, what differences we have to the original audience, and what underlying principles are in the passage that apply to all people no matter what their time or space, how this relates to the wider story of the bible and how it relates to our life today!

This session is done with Philippians 2 as an example – you are welcome to replace this with any other passage you want your group to focus on.

**Read PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11 together**

Draw ‘their town’ on the top of the white board and write answers to the questions in section 1 in it

1. **The Text in Their Town**
What did the text mean to the biblical audience?

**Here we think about the original context of when the Bible passage was written, and observe what it says to the original audience…**

Think about:

* **What** kind of writing is it? (Letter, History, Poetry, Prophecy, Gospel etc.)
* **Who** is the author? **Who** is it written for?
* **Where** are they? **Why** is this being written?
* **When** was it written?/**Where** does it sit in the Biblical Story? (before/after Jesus? what is happening with the people of God at that time?)
* **What** is happening? /**What** is being said?

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**

**Letter** written by **Paul**, to the **Philippian Church** (Church that Paul began when he visited Philippi)
Written while Paul is **in prison**. (During the time of the Early Church, After Jesus.)
Paul is writing to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him.

**Summarise of the meaning of the passage for the biblical audience in one or two sentences** (be specific, use past-tense verbs, don’t generalise or develop theological principles yet!)

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**Because the Church is united together in Christs love, Paul is encouraging the Philippians to live in unity with one another, being of one Spirit and one Mind. He wants them to follow the example of Jesus in their relationships with one another, and adopt an attitude of humility not looking out for their own interests, but to the interests of others.

Draw the River across the middle of the whiteboard and write answers to the questions in section 2 in it

1. **The Width of the River**What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?

**This is when we think about the differences between us and the biblical audience**

We are separated by all sorts of differences – culture, language, situation, time and often covenant (OT vs NT) from the Biblical Audience.

That is why we can’t just move straight from the meaning in the Biblical context to the meaning in our context…we need to identify these differences and see how far removed we are from the original audience

The width of the river will vary from passage to passage – sometimes there will be heaps of differences, sometimes there won’t be so many…

**So what is different between us and the biblical audience of Philippians 2?** (culture, language, situation, time, covenant)

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**
We are not living in Philippi, in the time of the Early Church
We don’t know Paul personally
We didn’t send a gift to Paul

In the middle of the river, draw a bridge and write answers to the questions in section 3 in it

1. **The Principlizing Bridge**

What is the theological principle of this text?

**This is probably the most tricky part of the process…It is when we try to uncover the meaning of the text**

Theological principles are principles that are applicable to all of God’s people at all times, no matter what their time/place/situation/culture/language.

So while the specifics of a particular passage may only apply to the particular situation of the biblical audience, the theological principles revealed in that text are applicable to all of God’s people at all times…

Basically we are looking for the ‘main theological point’ of the passage - that applies to both the original audience and us…

Step One

To determine what this is…we start by looking at the **SIMILARITIES** between the situation of the biblical audience and us..

**What are the similarities between us and the biblical audience of Philippians 2?**

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**
We also belong to the Church, we are also in relationship with Jesus
We also have to live in relationship with other Christians

Then we return to the meaning for the Biblical Audience that we developed in step one… Keeping in mind our similarities… Identify any broader principles reflected in the text that would apply to both them and us…

**Think about ‘What does this passage tell us about God?’ or ‘What does this passage tell us about who we are or how we are to live as God’s people?’**

**Theological Principles should be:**

* Reflected in the text
* Timeless
* Not culturally bound
* Correspond to the teaching of the rest of scripture
* Revelvant to both the biblical audience and us today

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**As members of Christ’s body, the Church, we are called to live in unity with one another, and follow Jesus’ example of humility looking to the interests of others rather than our own.

At the end of the bridge, draw a ‘map’ with the Bible on it, and write answers to the questions in section 4 in it

1. **The Biblical Map**How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?

**Is your theological principle consistent with the rest of scripture?
How does the rest of scripture add to the principle?
What does New Testament insight add to this? (if looking at an OT passage)**

Fine tune your principle if needed

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**

Throughout the Bible, the people of God are encouraged to live in humility with one another. Jesus talks of how he came to ‘serve rather than be served’ and the Church is often encouraged to live in humility with one another.

OT Verses
Micah 6:8
Proverbs 3:34

NT Verses
Luke 14:11
Ephesians 4:2
Colossians 3:12
1 Peter 5:5
Romans 12:3

On the bottom of the whiteboard, draw ‘our town’ and write answers to the questions in section 5 in it

1. **The Text in Our Town**

How should individual Christians today live out the theological principles?

**How does this apply in a real-life situations today?**

For most passages there will usually only be a few (often only one) theological principle that is relevant to all Christians today.
However there will be lots of ways that principle could be applied!

This is because we are all different and will all find ourselves in different life situations!

**So what are some ways that this could be applied?**

**EXAMPLE – Philippians 2**

What would it look like for our group to live in unity and humility with one another, following the example of Jesus?

* Making sure other people have been served before serving yourself
* Making sure other people are given opportunities, not just ourselves
* Being willing to do the jobs that no one else wants to do
* Not complaining when things don’t go our way
* Being willing to hang out with or work with others on the team (even if they annoy you)
* In a disagreement, being the first to say sorry and admit your wrong-doing (not holding grudges)
* Using your time to help others, not just focusing on your own needs

**Note: This is based on, ‘***The Interpretive Journey’ of ‘Grasping God’s Word’***, Chapter 2, by Duvall & Hays.**

**PART TWO: Steps for Preparing a Short Talk**

**1. PRAY!**

Ultimately, as we preach, we want God to speak to those who are listening. Therefore, it is essential that prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit be our number one strategy when it comes to preparing to speak. Ask God to show you the topic he would have you speak on. He knows what is happening in the lives of those you are speaking to and what they need to hear, so ask God to show you what would be relevant to them.

**2. STATEMENT of Purpose**

The most common mistake people make in preaching is to cram as much information as they can possibly come up with into their sermon! The result can be confusing or hard to follow. Therefore, once you have settled on a theme or a passage to speak on, try and summarise your message in a single statement of purpose (this is a statement that will sum up everything you are trying to say)

Your Statement of Purpose should be:

* **Precise** – focusing on just one thing
* **Practical** – encouraging your listeners to do something (not just understand something)

**3. SUBSTANCE**

Once you have written your statement of purpose, you need to come up with some relevant and creative ideas you can use to illustrate your point (Jesus was a master at this – he told stories and used illustrations based on sights familiar to his listeners to help them understand what he was saying). You could illustrate your point in a variety of ways:

* **Personal Testimony** – something that has happened to you or something that you have seen/read
* **Current Events** – something that has happened in the world recently that relates to the topic
* **Stories or Analogies** – other examples from day to day life
* **Biblical Story** – you could recap the Bible story/passage in your own words or refer to another passage that relates to the topic
* **Visual Aids** – look out for movie clips or pictures that connect to your statement of purpose
* **Object Lessons** - is there something that they can briefly do or participate in that makes the point such as a game or experiment that makes a point (e.g.game or experiment)
* **Facts & research** – tell these like a story (e.g. “Researchers were trying to figure out what makes a young person successful. They were surprised to find that every successful young adult had this in common…6 significant adults in their childhood and teenage years that weren’t their parents.”)

**4. STRUCTURE**

For a 5 minute talk you should have one point, expressed in three different ways (longer talks may have more points). To build your structure take your three best illustrations from the previous section and tell them one after another. As you present each illustration, end by stating your statement of purpose. So your structure goes like this:

* Illustration
* Statement of Purpose
* Illustration
* Statement of Purpose
* Illustration
* Statement of Purpose

***For example:*** *If you were talking about loneliness, You might tell a personal story of how someone helped you when you were lonely. You conclude your account by saying, “Through what that person did I came to see that God loves lonely people, and calls us to love them to.” You then move on to your second illustration and once more conclude with the words of your statement of purpose: “God loves lonely people, and call us to love them too.” By the time you finish your message you will have repeated your statement of purpose at least three times.*

**5. SPEECH**

I recommend you write your talk out **word for word**, and use your notes as you are presenting it. Practice saying it **out loud**, a few times so that you become familiar with it. As you practice, **time yourself** – if you are too long, cut the content down.
This will elevate any worries you might have about forgetting what you were going to say, or going too long.

Some other things to remember:

* We can say roughly 160 words per minute
* Remember to **speak slowly** (your listeners won’t be used to your accent, and we tend to speak faster when we are nervous!)
* Look at your audience as you speak (not just at your notes!)

Note: This comes from Murray Browns YouthTRAIN