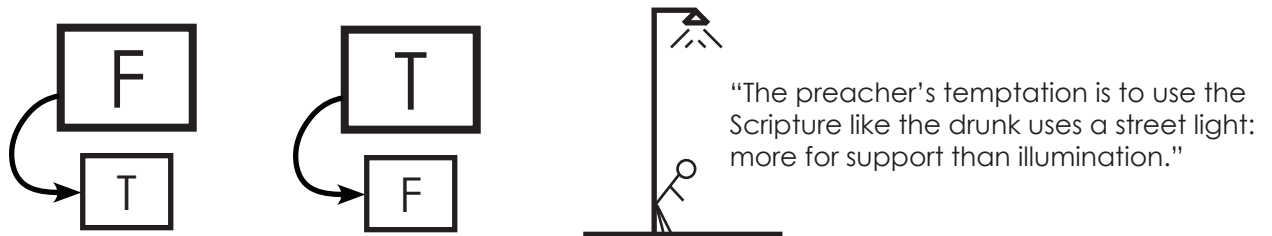


TEXT AND FRAMEWORK

Principle: We must let the Bible shape our frameworks rather than letting our frameworks shape our 'interpretations' of the Bible.



Explanation: Some people are Calvinists and others are Wesleyans. Some are neither. Many lean to the left. Many others lean to the right. We all have frameworks. And frameworks can often be very helpful. But in order to get at the meaning of a text, we must begin by suspending our frameworks and, instead, let the text be sovereign. Where there is discrepancy, we must adjust the framework rather than fall into the traps of ignoring or bending the text until it says "what we want it to say." We must hear it for "what it says."

Strategies: identify your own frameworks (political, theological, health and wealth gospel, etc.), constantly approach the text with fresh eyes, consult many translations of the Bible (both conservative and liberal, dynamic and literal)

Practice Texts: Mark 2.1-12 or 8.22-33, Hebrews 6.1-8, James 2.14-26

LINE OF SCRIPTURE

Principle: We must stay on the line of Scripture, never straying above it or below it.

Phariseeism
conservatism
legalism

licentiousness
liberalism
antinomianism

Explanation: We are often tempted to venture above the line of Scripture into fanaticism or pietism, expressing a zeal that may or may not hide legalism. In so doing, we add unto the Scriptures. We are also often tempted to dip below the line into liberalism and pragmatism, ignoring both the content and point of Scripture and appearing as subtle or even blatant antinomianism. In so doing, we subtract from the Scriptures. And so, we must consider the text in light of both extremes.

Strategies: consider the text in light of both extremes, anticipate how those who are the furthest above and the furthest below might treat the text, test consistency of your reading with the rest of Scripture

Practice Texts: Genesis 3.1-3 (who is above or below?), Mark 7.6-13, John 3.16-21

MELODIC LINE

Principle: We will preach from a particular passage better if we understand what the whole book is about.



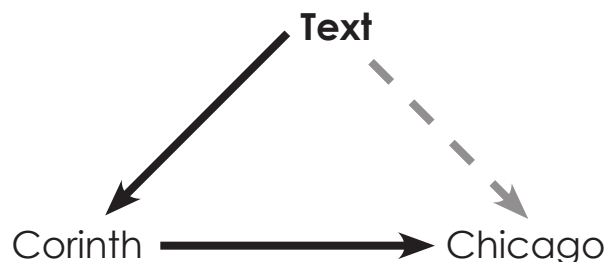
Explanation: Books of the Bible and the Bible (as a whole) have a coherent, sustained message similar to the unique melody of a song—waiting to be heard. It unites the whole book, concisely stating what the whole book is about. The theme of any passage will be related (directly or indirectly) to this theme or melodic line. In other words, the Bible does not need an interpreter (it is, itself, an interpretation). Our job is not to interpret the Bible, but to listen well enough and long enough to hear the melody.

Strategies: read and reread, identify a top and tail (e.g. Romans 1.5 and 15.26), find a purpose statement (e.g. Luke 1.1-4), find repeated words and phrases and ideas (e.g. “joy” and “fellowship” in Philippians), follow the Old Testament quotations

Practice Texts: John 2.1-11, 2 Corinthians 8.1-15, 2 Timothy 3.10-17

TRAVELING TO CORINTH

Principle: We must understand how the original audience understood the words in order to know how those words apply today. We must understand the context.



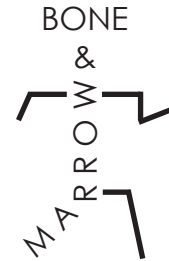
Explanation: In preaching, there is a great pressure to be relevant. This pressure often means that we are tempted to read what is written and then apply it directly. In other words, we go straight from the text to what we consider a relevant application. By understanding the text in its context, that is, understanding the verse as it would have been understood by the original audience, we can begin to understand the author’s intention in the passage for our congregation.

Strategies: read the entire book, if paired with another then read both books (e.g. 1 and 2 Corinthians), find references in other books to the people in your passage

Practice Texts: 1 Corinthians 13.1-7, 2 Corinthians 6.14-7.1

BONE & MARROW

Principle: A preacher cannot preach a text well without first apprehending the skeletal structure of the passage.



Explanation: Every text has a structure. We must find the organizing principle of the author. This organizing principle, or emphasis, must dictate the shape and emphasis of the sermon. This is the frame. In structural engineering—if you don't get the frame right, the house will never come out right. To use another metaphor, we must get the 'bones' straight in order for the sermon to be healthy.

Strategies: recognize that much of the material in the Bible was originally preached material and look for the outline the original preacher used, look at the text with x-ray eyes in order to see its skeletal structure, be familiar with different genres of Biblical literature as they will have correspondingly different shapes (e.g. in Old Testament narrative, look at major characters, crisis, resolution, chiasms, and God or narrator speech moments; in the Pauline epistles, diagram the sentences and find repetitions)

Practice Texts: Genesis 11.1-9, Amos 1.3-2.4, Luke 15-24, Ephesians 5, Philippians 2