

STAYING ON THE LINE

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



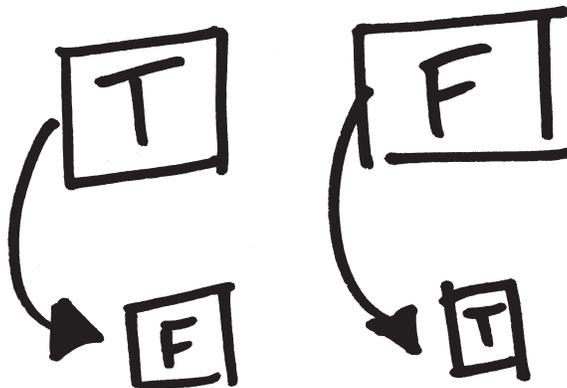
EXPLANATION: We are often tempted to say more than the Scriptures, zealously venturing into religious pietism, which becomes a kind of legalism. We judge others who do not maintain our extra-Biblical traditions and standards. In so doing, we add to the Scriptures. We can also be tempted to dip below the line into liberalism and pragmatism, ignoring both the content and point of Scripture. In so doing, we subtract from the Scriptures. As teachers of God's Word, we must commit ourselves to saying nothing more or less than the Scriptures say. It is a matter of obedience (Deuteronomy 4:2, Revelation 22:18-19).

STRATEGIES: be aware of both extremes, anticipate how those who farthest above and the farthest below might treat the text, test consistency of your reading with the rest of Scripture

PRACTICE TEXTS: Genesis 3:1-3, 1 Samuel 3:1 - 4:1, Mark 7:6-13, John 3:16-21

TEXT & FRAMEWORK

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



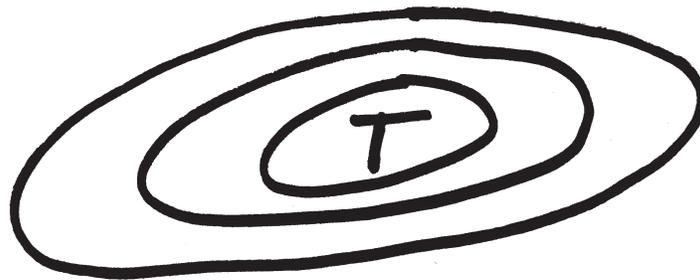
EXPLANATION: We all have frameworks. Whether theological (e.g., Calvinism or Arminianism), political, therapeutic or prosperity-driven, cultural and social—we all bring our own ideas to the Bible. Our own experiences, training, and desires emerge each time we sit down to study a text. In order to get at the meaning of a text, we must let the text be sovereign. We must be aware of our frameworks and then adjust them, rather than bending the text until it says “what we want it to say.” We must hear it for “what it says.” Otherwise, we are inebriated preachers, using the Bible like a drunk uses a lamppost: more for support than illumination.

STRATEGIES: identify your own frameworks (ideological, political, theological, etc.), constantly approach the text with fresh eyes, consult many different translations of the Bible (e.g. dynamic, literal, paraphrase)

PRACTICE TEXTS: Obadiah 4, Philippians 4:13, Mark 2:1-12, James 2:14-26

CONTEXT

PRINCIPLE: We must *understand the context* in order to see how the original audience understood the text.



EXPLANATION: In handling God's Word, it is tempting to isolate our text. When we do, we rip it from its context and we run the risk of missing the point or even getting the text wrong. But, by understanding the text in its context or how it would have been understood by the original audience (to *them/then*), we can be better prepared to understand the right application of the text (to *us/now*).

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *Why has the author put this passage here (at this place) in the book?*

STRATEGIES: read the chapter on both sides of your text, read the entire book, if paired with another book, then read both books (e.g., 1 and 2 Corinthians), know where your passage is specifically in historical context and read any corresponding passages (e.g., read 1 or 2 Samuel for some Psalms, read Acts for some Pauline epistles)

PRACTICE TEXTS: 1 Corinthians 13, 1 Samuel 2:1-11, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Mark 8:22-30

STRUCTURE

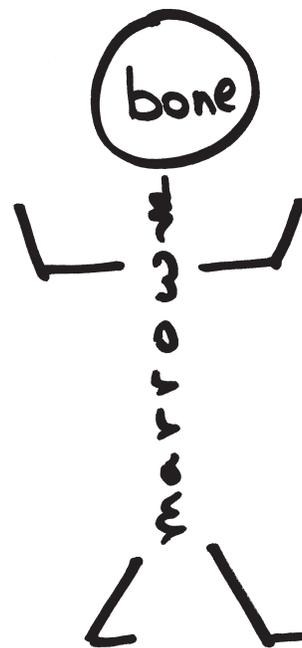
PRINCIPLE: *Every text has a structure. This structure will reveal an emphasis. The emphasis must shape our message.*

EXPLANATION: We must apprehend how the author has organized the text and let his organizing principle dictate the shape and emphasis of our sermon. We might think of this as the skeleton of the text. We must get the *bones* straight in order for the body of our message to be healthy. And when we have apprehended the structure, we must find and teach the emphasis that the structure reveals. Only then will we see the *life* of the passage. Look at the text with x-ray eyes in order to see its skeletal structure.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *How has the author organized this text?*

STRATEGIES: use a literal translation of the Bible, read and reread and read out loud, look for repetitions or clear thesis statements (sometimes in the form of a rhetorical question), identify your text type as *discourse* (look for grammar, key words, transitional words, chiasmus, verbs), *narrative* (look for plot, surprises, setting, characters, comparisons and contrast), or *poetry* (look for grammar, comparisons and contrasts, imagery, changes in who is speaking, parallelism)

PRACTICE TEXTS: Genesis 11:1-9, Amos 1:3-2:4, Mark 5, Luke 15, Ephesians 5



MELODIC LINE

PRINCIPLE: We will handle a specific text better *if we understand what the whole book is about.*



EXPLANATION: Books of the Bible have a coherent, sustained message—or big idea—similar to the unique melody of a song. It is waiting to be heard. It unites the whole book, macro-theme and macro-aim, concisely stating what the whole book is about. Every passage will, in some way, be related (directly or indirectly, as support or even contrast) to the melodic line. Our task is to listen well enough and long enough to hear the melody.

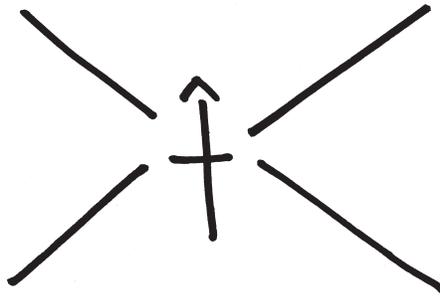
DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *How does my passage relate to the theme of the whole book?*

STRATEGIES: read and reread, identify a top and tail (e.g. Romans 1:5 and 16:26), find a purpose statement (e.g. Luke 1:1-4, John 20:30-31) or thesis statement, find repeated words and phrases and ideas (e.g. “joy” and “fellowship” in Philippians), follow the Old Testament quotations

PRACTICE TEXTS: John 2:1-12, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 1 Samuel 8

TRAVELING THROUGH THE CROSS

PRINCIPLE: If we are to teach the Bible as Christians, *we must show a legitimate connection from our text to the gospel of Jesus Christ.*



EXPLANATION: After the resurrection, in Luke 24, Jesus shows the disciples how the Old Testament Scriptures point to him. He also declares that they will be (apostolic) witnesses of this gospel to the end of the earth. And the content of those Scriptures and that witness specifically point to two things: his suffering/death and resurrection (which anticipate the intended response of repentance and the result of forgiveness). In other words, the text of the Old and New Testaments points to the cross and the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. If we are to faithfully teach God’s Word in light of the gospel, we must find the legitimate relationship between our text and this gospel of Jesus Christ.

STRATEGIES: note any cross-references to the other Testament, develop a good sense of Biblical Theology, consider historical fulfillment and theological themes, use typology and analogy (including contrast and irony), know how key doctrines relate

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION: *How does my passage relate to the gospel (narrowly defined as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ)?*

PRACTICE TEXTS: Colossians 1:15-23, Psalm 2, John 13:1-17, 1 Samuel 2:1-11, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8