

My Lesson Prep Process...Not the "Correct" Way, Just What I Do Allen Power

Everyone has their own process for developing a lesson. I've gleaned some ideas from teachers and preachers I respect. Here are two examples:

Alistair Begg summarizes his sermon prep process (see complete description below):

- Think yourself empty
- Read yourself full
- Write yourself clear
- Pray yourself hot

Chuck Swindoll recommends a simple Bible study method he learned from Howard Hendricks...three simple questions to ask of the text:

- What does it say?
- What does it mean?
- How does it work?

Observation, interpretation, application. That's it. That simple.

For further info on Hendricks' method see the link below.

Here's my process:

1. I start without commentaries. What does the text say, before what men say about it? I start early in the week reading, praying, and thinking about the text. It helps me to put it in the "crockpot" of my mind and let it simmer. Sometimes thoughts and illustrations come out of nowhere. In the shower; while doing other activities; I've occasionally awakened in the morning with a flood of thoughts or illustrations.
2. I look to see where the "Explore The Bible" material is going with the lesson...but I don't feel shackled by their points. Note: Sometimes ETB gives us a passage so involved, you have to make a choice rather than try to cover all of the text and points they recommend. For example, in the May 12, 2013 lesson in Titus 1:1-16, I covered all the verses quickly. However, I spent the last part of the lesson focused on just verses 1-3 which contain enough material for a whole lesson. You have to make a choice some weeks!
3. I try to determine what I call "The Takeaway"... the BIG idea and call to action.
4. Next, I do a ton of reading of commentaries to confirm or correct the soundness of my conclusions. Are they sound based on...other scripture (cross references, Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (free on the Internet), etc); based on trusted sources including commentaries and sermons? This raises the question: Whom can we trust? Everyone has to determine this with discernment. Experience and asking other solid teachers/preachers helps. See my attachment for some of my favorite sources. As for inductive study of other scripture I do text comparisons of several translations and paraphrases. I'm not afraid to use The Message or J.B. Phillips'

New Testament in Modern English to help enhance understanding. I DO make it clear it's NOT a translation but a PARAPHRASE and don't use these in place of scripture.

5. I do this step of CONFIRMING or CORRECTING both before, and AFTER I publish the notes. Even after publishing, I may flesh out a point when I teach based on this.
6. Next I start writing the lesson, hearing it in my head as I would teach it. Some teach from an outline, others from a manuscript. I favor lesson notes that are really a manuscript. I don't READ it like a speech, but it helps me to embed the lesson in my mind. My style is usually a hybrid between lecture and discussion questions. I should probably use other methods more often but that's the norm. I have learned the correct number of pages at 12 point font (including scripture) that works out to about 35-40 minutes of teaching and discussion. Your mileage may vary. By the way, I put scripture in the notes for the class and for me. I can pick up my Bible and read, but it's handy to be able to just glance down to the scripture in the notes. As I develop key points or statements I will sometimes use social media to try them out. Sometimes I will take a poll on Facebook to survey for material I plan to use. Example: "Why do most people not spend time in God's word?"
7. Advice about what elements to put in your lesson: I use discussion questions to try to engage the class. I also use other elements like quotations, cross reference verses, illustrations, etc. Caution - Don't get carried away with the "spices and sides" (quotations, cross references, the Greek/Hebrew), when preparing the dish (lesson). It's about the "meat" (the text) not the "spices and sides." Use in moderation and some weeks not at all. Don't force it.
8. I publish the notes on the class website and via email to give them some time to review what we'll cover and the questions I'll be asking.
9. I mark up the text with highlights of key words and underlining others to help me in recalling the key points at a glance as I teach. (See example page attached. For complete notes go to www.powersundayschool.com).
10. Throughout the process: PRAY!

References:

Alistair Begg's method. <http://www.crossway.org/blog/2011/04/practical-tips-for-expository-preachers/>

1. Think yourself empty. As strange as it may sound, we must be careful to ensure that we do not avoid sound thinking. The temptation to respond emotionally to a passage (this is how this makes me feel) is not unique to our listeners. If we are to have 'thinking' congregations it is incumbent upon us to be 'thinking' pastors! We do not want to be uncertain by the time our study ends, but it is surely right and proper to begin with the perspective, 'I must know what this says, and I must learn what this means.'

2. Read yourself full.

3. Write yourself clear. Aside from the essential empowering of the Holy Spirit, if there is one single aspect of sermon preparation that I would want to emphasise, it is this. Freedom of delivery in the pulpit depends upon careful organisation in the study. We may believe that we have a grasp of the text, only to stand up and discover that somewhere between our thinking and our speaking things have gone badly awry. The missing link can usually be traced back to the absence of putting our thoughts down clearly.

4. Pray yourself hot. There is no chance of fire in the pews if there is an iceberg in the pulpit! Without prayer and communion with God during the preparation stages, the pulpit will be cold. In 1752 John Shaw reminded the incumbent pastor beginning his charge in Cambridge, Massachusetts: 'All will be in vain, to no saving purpose, until God is pleased to give the increase. And in order to do this, God looks for prayers to come up to His ears. A praying minister is always the way to have a successful ministry.'

5. Be yourself, but don't preach yourself. A good teacher, like John the Baptist, clears the way, declares the way, and then gets out of the way."

Further info on Hendricks' method here including a 4th step, communication:

<http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/howard-hendricks-4-bible-study-steps.html?ps=0>

Some of My Trusted Sources for Commentaries and Internet Research

- John MacArthur (Study Bible; commentaries; and his collection of sermons indexed by scripture at www.gty.org)
- Chuck Swindoll's books and "Insights" commentaries
- Warren Wiersbe's "Wiersbe Bible Commentary Old and New Testament" - If I could buy only one set this is the two volume set I'd buy. His "Be" series is great as well as his the Bible guides and handbooks he has edited.
- Matthew Henry's Commentary - A little antiquated in style but still reliable and available for free on the internet at sites like www.Biblestudytools.com
- Various study Bibles - The Life Application Study Bible helps with developing applications and questions.
- Josh Hunt's GOOD QUESTIONS is a resource worth the small subscription fee: www.joshhunt.com
- Ray Stedman's sermons are solid and helpful at www.raystedman.org
- The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Other Trusted teachers and theologians:

- John Piper
- Tim Keller
- J. Vernon McGee
- Charles Stanley
- Alistair Begg
- James Dobson
- David Jeremiah
- J.I. Packer
- A.W. Tozer
- Charles Spurgeon
- R.C. Sproul
- John Stott
- C.S. Lewis
- Billy Graham

You can find some good quotes by these folks just Googling the text and their name but be careful to verify that it's really from them!

www.preceptaustin.org is a great source of commentaries and sermons by scripture reference as is www.blueletterbible.com

Finally, I have invested in the Logos Bible Software. It's not cheap but there are different levels of investment and I have found it to be revolutionary in helping me.

*Timothy 1 verse 12 and YOU know what it says. I'm **NOT ASHAMED...I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED...I'm CONVINCED** He's **GOT ME** and I'll spend eternity in Heaven with **HIM** and **NOT** in **HELL** with you! Somebody say **AMEN!**"*

- It's like the old song says that'll "...make me wanna SHOUT!" Not a Gospel song but you get picture
- **After we're done shouting and knowing what Christ did to provide our salvation...what **ELSE** should it **motivate** us to do?**

Tell somebody!

Paul says Timothy,

¹³ Follow the **pattern** of the **sound** words