



Communicating Christ

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Leader's Guide for Lecture #1

The Heart of a Christ-Centered Message

Goal of this lesson: To understand the unifying principle that binds all Scripture together.

Introduction: “The Thought for the Day”

I. “The Main Thing” Every Scripture Addresses

A. Introducing the Fallen Condition Focus (FCF)

2 Tim. 3:16, 17: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect [*artios=complete*] thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Rom. 15:4: “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

<> Therefore, all Scripture has a **FALLEN CONDITION FOCUS (FCF)** since everything written in Scripture has the *purpose* of giving us hope in our fallen condition.

B. Implications of the FCF (the “why” that reveals and delivers meaning).

[The Swiss Cheese Effect]

1. Until we have determined why a text was written, we do not know what it means (even if we can say many true things about it).
2. We are not ready to say what a passage means until we have determined why the Holy Spirit included the text in Scripture.

ROOTED IN GRACE FOR A LIFETIME OF MINISTRY

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<> **FCF Definition:** The FCF is the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to, or for whom, the text was written that requires the _____ **grace** _____ of the passage.

II. The Redemptive Purpose Every Passage Addresses:

Recognize that thus far we have only discussed the negative. If all Scripture focuses on some aspect of our fallen condition, why does it do so? The answer is clear: to supply the warrant and need for the _____ **redemptive elements** _____ it contains to be applied. Thus, just as every Scripture echoes our incompleteness, it is in some manner signaling the Savior's work which makes us _____ **whole** _____.

Our goal as readers and teachers of Scripture is to decipher the signals, for until we do so we do not truly understand the text. It is possible to say all the _____ **right** _____ words and yet send all the _____ **wrong** _____ signals.

III. Deciphering the Redemptive Design of Every Passage:

A. Magnifying Glass vs. Fish-eye Lens

_____ **Biblical** _____ **theology** _____ is that discipline of Bible interpretation that emphasizes the overarching themes that unite all of Scripture's particulars. Biblical theology is not simply asking what truth does this particular passage reveal but _____ **how** _____ is it related to the _____ **whole** _____ message of Scripture.

B. Consider the Acorn

Key thoughts from Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*:

1. The _____ **Progressive** _____ Principle

Biblical theology is that branch of exegetical theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible. Revelation is a noun of action relating to divine activity. Revelation is an historically progressive process—a long series of successive acts.

2. The Organic Principle

The progressive process is organic: revelation may be in seed form which yields later full growth accounting for diversity but not true difference because the earlier aspects of the truth are indispensable for understanding the true meanings of the later forms and vice-versa.

3. The Redemptive Principle

Revelation is inseparably linked to the activity of redemption. Revelation is the interpretation of redemption. To see revelation properly we must see it in its redemptive context. The context and content of some revelation may be in seed form as it relates to redemption but it is integrally related to the mature message and is not properly understood or communicated until this relationship is made clear.

THE ACORN LESSON

In the same sense (as trying to explain an acorn without mentioning the oak tree) we cannot properly explain any aspect of revelation, even if we say many true things about it, until we have in some way related it to redemption.

C. Pudding Lessons

God's imprinting of our incompleteness in Scripture does not merely show our fallenness, it reveals His nature and attributes which are necessary to fill us up and make us whole.

Key Principles

1. The Principle of Incompleteness

Because we are fallen, Scripture is not telling us what we must do to complete ourselves or make ourselves acceptable to God — for then we would not be truly fallen.

2. The Principle of Incapacity

No text in Scripture says what we can do, or should do, to make ourselves better or more acceptable to God, as though we could lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps. The Bible is *not* a “self-help” book.

3. The Principle of Integration

All the Scriptures are about one, consistent, organic message. They tell us how we must seek Christ who alone is our Savior and source of strength to do the things God says must be done. To proclaim these “musts” apart from the source that enables their accomplishment is to warp the Biblical message. **Christ is integral to every passage.**

Key Texts

1 Cor. 2:2: “I resolved to make nothing known among you but Jesus Christ *and him crucified*. . .” (cf. 1: 23: “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.”)—“atonement,” not example, is key.

Luke 24:27: “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

Matt. 17: The Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the prophets, appear to testify of Christ.

D. The Mark of Distinction

The Offense of the Cross vs. the Acceptance of Moralism in a Synagogue or Mosque (i.e., the pervading presence of Christ in all we communicate makes ours Christ - centered messages vs. Man -centered messages).

IV. Identifying Non-Redemptive Biblical Messages:

A. Nature of Non-Redemptive Messages: Sermons that are not Christ-centered (redemptively focused) are inevitably man-centered.

B. Marks of Non-Redemptive Messages: “the Deadly ‘Be’s”

1. Be like (follow this example)

(Daniel, Moses, David, Jesus, etc.)

2. Be good (save yourself)

(Don’t drink or smoke or chew, or ...)

(Hunker down and try harder.)

3. Be disciplined (sanctify yourself) . . .

(Pray more, read your Bible more, go to church more, etc.)

“Be” messages imply that *we* are able to change our fallen condition. “Our path to grace is made by us” is the implicit message. Listeners are left to assume our acceptance by God is determined by our actions. But such messages, stated or implied, make us no different than Unitarians, Buddhists, or Hindus. Romper Room taught us the difference between the “Do Bees” and “Don’t Bees”; the Bible has more to teach us.

Remember there is no merit in keeping God's commands (blessing, but no merit).
If we had to earn grace prior to or after our salvation it would not be grace.

Remember also "Be" messages are in Scripture, but identify their context. We cannot be anything of God without grace.

Recognize "Be" messages are not wrong in themselves, they are wrong messages by themselves.

A challenge to holiness must be accompanied by a Christ-focus or it is only man-centered religion.

What we communicate with the best of motives to help change damaging behaviors and attitudes actually hurts others if Christ is absent. People cannot do what they are told to do apart from Him, causing them either to despair of hope or to pretend to be holy.

Thus, if you wound — even unintentionally — you are obligated to heal.
Lead all instruction to Him who alone can provide holiness.

E.g., Eph. 6: 10: "Be strong in the power of His might."

Conclusion: Going out the door with whom?

How to Determine the FCF

3-Step Process: (Ask these things. . .)

1. What Does the Text Say (What's the Big Idea)?

2. What Concern(s) Did the Text Address?

3. What Do We Share in Common with:
 - those to (or about) whom it was written

 - or

 - the one by whom it was written?

How to Include Biblical Theology in Biblical Messages:

(i.e., How do you get redemptive truth in the message?)

A. Topical Approaches:

B. Textual Approaches:

analogy

illustration

or, addition

C. Expository Approaches:

1. Text

2. Type

3. Context

-Predictive of the Work of Christ

-Preparatory for the Work of Christ

-Reflective of the Work of Christ

-Resultant of the Work of Christ

The Deadly “Be’s”

1. Be Like . . .

2. Be Good . . .

3. Be More Disciplined in . . .

<> Not wrong “in themselves,”

but wrong “by themselves.”