
Disciplines of a Wise Teacher

**How to Preach So People
Can Understand & Apply
God's Word**

***A study of Ecclesiastes 5:1-5 for Pastors & Teachers and the People
Who Listen to Them***

Disciplines of a Wise Teacher

I remember one day when I was a junior at the University. I saw a man walk into the free speech area carrying a large banner atop a 10' pole. The banner was of white flannel with red scissor-cut letters which spelled out a Bible verse on hell, something like "These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction..." II Thess 1:9. The man proceeded to call out condemnation upon passer's by. Soon a crowd of 50 to 100 students were gathered around the perimeter of the lawn calling out condemnation on this man. His communication was Biblical, but perhaps, not too effective.

I also remember the night I held a few dozen teenagers in wrapt attention as I delivered a 10 point explanation of how to glorify Jesus all based upon one phrase of Mark 4:1 which reads "Jesus got into a boat and sat down"...I suggested that we should be like that humble little boat, serving Jesus without complaining, sinking, or getting in the way. My communication was "effective"--after all, they listened devoutly. But what I taught had nothing to do with that biblical text. It was a million miles from what that verse was written to communicate.

So what is "effective biblical communication"? How is it achieved? How can we as Christian leaders hope to penetrate the high walls of apathy, and make a difference in the growing Ghetto of Biblical ignorance? This applies to all of us, whether we're preachers, Jr. High teachers, counselors, musicians, missionaries, or

just trusted friends. To some degree everyone who leaves this school will be looked to as a spokesman for God.

Well, you and I are by no means the first to struggle with the task of effective Biblical communication. One of the greatest models of effective Biblical communication is Solomon, whom the Bible says was the wisest man in the world. For his day he was the rough equivalent of James Dobson, Billy Graham, and Francis Schafer all rolled into one. Though he was incredibly wise, Solomon still had to work hard to communicate God's truth effectively. And in Ecclesiastes 12:9-10, we're given a rare treat. Here, no less an authority than Solomon himself, gives us a glimpse into his private study. Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 (turn) Solomon, the wise teacher shares with us 5 disciplines of an effective Biblical communicator

Verse 9, 'In addition to being a wise man, the preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs.' Discipline #1..."

I. The Wise Teacher Weighs Ideas to Separate Truth from Error.

The word here is "Ponders", it carries the idea of weighing ideas on a scale.

Solomon was a perpetual learner. In his time collected wisdom writings from around the world. He evaluated them to see which ones to incorporate into his ownteaching. And part of his task as a

learner was to separate true wisdom from error.

Are you and I learners? You bet! Seminary isn't the finish line, its only the starting block. The effective communicator continually learns and evaluates ideas. He seeks to understand God and His world, all the while sifting ideas to separate truth from mere opinion. You and I must sift the ideas we learn through the grid of the scriptures.

Illustration: Now this learning process is like panning for gold, the soiled miner sifts through tons of gravel to find a few ounces of real gold. It takes a careful eye to discard the gravel without losing the gold. To make matters worse there is something called fools gold. Fools gold is a common mineral named PYRITE which looks alot like real gold, actually it's closer to iron. Many a miner has wasted days digging out what he thought was the mother load, only to find out he'd been fooled. We don't want to do that. [HERE'S SOME FOOLS GOLD An inspiring devotional book "God Calling". I got alot out of it until I read the preface and learned that it was written by an ancient occult method known as automatic writing. Two women say a spirit guide came daily and possessed their hands.] We need to beware fools gold...doctrinal fads and pop trends. Of course you can also find some fools gold passing a "cutting edge" music ministry. Several years ago a pastor friend and his family took a vacation trip to Northern California. On Sunday they pulled into a big evangelical to worship. My friend says he could hardly believe his eyes when he read the words to their opening song,it

started like this "Jesus gives us warm and gentle fuzzies..." You think that's beetle-headed you should've seen the motions! With friends like that who needs heretics. The wise teacher weighs ideas.

Trans: Discipline #2,

II. The wise teacher explores truth for personal application.

That next word in verse 9 Solomon says "He Searched out" The Idea here is, He Searched out its moral implications. He followed the truth through to see what it meant for life. He put feet on it.

Solomon was not content merely to build a museum collection of abstract truth .Howard Hendricks says interpretation without application is abortion. Jim Andrews has taught us to ask applicational questions when we study the word: How does this truth provide comfort to God's people? How does it collide with our values, our attitudes, our practices? To do less aborts the truth. Wesley said this "Orthodoxy, or right opinion, is, at best, a very slender part of religion. There may be a right opinion of God without either love or one right attitude toward Him. Satan is proof of this."

Illustration: It's one thing to collect gold ore. But it would be quite absurd display raw gold stones proudly on the mantle and all the flat surfaces in my home. Come see my gold collection! Isn't it great! Raw gold has to be refined so it can be made into jewelry and works of art. So truth has to be applied to our lives. Jesus said "Blessed is the man who not only hears, but heeds these words".

Classic biblical illustration: The classic biblical illustration of this is the story of the Good Samaritan. Of all the people passing the dying man that day the Jewish Rabbi more than anyone should have known much better. Yet, in spite of his bulging cognitive storage he failed morally. Why? He thought knowing truth was enough. [Dr. Smith tells the story of a missionary doctor who held the local people in such contempt that he refused to treat a wounded man who crawled to his door step because he had violated local ordinances. A lost man bleed to death on their doorstep. Yet these missionaries would yearly sign a doctrinal statement that would match yours or mine...are we inclined to similar behavior?] We must avoid mere head knowledge like the plague because that's just what it is. That's how the church in Germany slept on its Lutheran laurels in the 30's as Hitler warped the minds of a generation with the glitter of fools gold.

Ill: And, lest we feel to far removed, in a 1986 survey of college students, Inter Varsity researchers found that the most common response to the question "What comes to mind when you hear the word 'Christian'?" was the word "hypocrite".

Internal Summary: The wise teacher weighs ideas to separate truth from error...and explores truth for application. Number 3...

III. The Wise Teacher Organizes Truth for Optimum Reception.

Phrase: "he arranged many proverbs"
Idea: Just as the artisan fashions gold into beautiful shapes so Solomon took

time to organize the truths he presented. (Optional Ill: Our rings shaped by an artist). Solomon took time to organize his message. We don't know all of his organizing methods, but we do know he loved to use the PROVERB. In that day, the proverb was a popular and well known literary format. This was a medium commonly used by wise teachers of that day.

Key idea for us is that he chose a format that allowed both creativity and clarity. He took a format that people were familiar with and used it creatively. He organized truth so it was easy for people to learn & remember.

This is Too Often Lacking Today: I've heard alot of preaching growing up. Not many preachers do their listeners this favor. I've observed that most listeners are very forgiving. In fact, they enjoy almost any message that they can follow from beginning to end without falling of the train. One reasons this is tough is because we think we're clear. When I put my ideas on paper they're inherently clear to me--(hold up) isn't that clear? But not to our listeners. Ill: NAPOLEAN/We need some junior highers to go over our outlines.

Illustration: L.A. Assistant police chief Bob Vernon tells a story that highlights the power of organization to affect peoples thinking. During the late 60's he and 15 officers became trapped in a fire station in the middle of a massive riot in the Watts district. Several hundred angry people were rioting outside and going out of control. They had to do something to prevent a disaster. Bob Vernon lined his men up in two columns of 7 men with himself in the lead. At his

command they burst out the door marching in perfect formation without a jitter. Now, that crowd could have torn them to pieces, but they didn't. In fact, they dispersed immediately. The organization of those 15 men had a psychological impact that put several hundred people to flight.

Well organized ideas have a similar effect. The secret of many of the classics of literature and sermons is their clear organizations. One preacher said "You know a sermon is clear enough when after hearing it, the people in the audience say 'I could have preached that'". Our hard work shows when it seems so simple.

Transition: So the wise teacher organizes truth for optimum reception. Next...

IV. He Chooses his LANGUAGE for Maximum Impact.

Phrase: "The preacher sought to find delightful words" (V10). Idea: Pleasing words. He worked to find ways to express truth that were pleasing to listen to. This is art. Just as people enjoy looking at visual art, so people enjoy listening to good spoken art. It impacts them and compels them. Proverbs 16:21 Solomon says "Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness". It's easier to use "any-old" words to express truth, but not nearly so effective.

I'm sure Solomon just pounded out these famous words without any effort...

Eccl 3:1 - "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, a time

to die, a time to plant, a time to uproot, a time to kill, a time to heal..." on it goes.

Try doing that in five minutes. (I probably would have said something like "The theological evidence indicates clearly that God retains providential control at all times.")

Here are a few famous quotes that wouldn't even have been reported, much less remembered in history, if worded in the ordinary ways...

Winston Churchill thanked the men of the British air force for their great sacrifice in defending the nation. He said it this way "Never has so much been owed by so many to so few"...He could have said "The Air Force deserves a note of thanks."

JFK said "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." He could have said "Stop being so selfish, be patriotic you bums, join the peace corp."

Look too at the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5...Jesus said "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ...Blessed are the mourners, Blessed are Gentle..." He could have just as easily said what I would have "OK, get out your spiral notebooks, I'm going to tell you who's gonna be blessed, you ready? OK I'll run through 'em first and then we'll go back and fill in the details #1-The Poor in Spirit, #2-Mourners, #3-Gentle People, #4-Merciful People..."

No, our Lord is an incredible artist with words. Oh, we can't all be Junior Shakespear's, but we can grow. We

need to pay attention to our language. It develops through reading good literature, and disciplining ourselves to write more thoughtfully & more often.

I remember the boring engineering status meetings at Boeing Aerospace in Seattle. Believe me the beaurocratic drone provided the greatest course in power napping anyone could devise. Many of the people in our churches spend 50 hours a week with that & they're starving for a non-beauracratc word from God.

Transition: The wise teacher chooses his language for maximum impact...and lastly...

V. The Wise Teacher Constructs His Message For Maximum INTEGRITY

Solomon says: "he sought to write words of truth correctly".

In point #1 we spoke of weighing ideas on a scale, there Solomon spoke of the INPUT side where you & I take in new ideas and evaluate them. Here Solomon points directly at our OUTPUT as teachers. He uses two key words which blend together to paint a graphic picture; Solomon says he wanted his message to be "straight& true", "upright & reliable", "noble and trustworthy" this carries the idea of words that stand up on their own.

