

COMMUNICATING WITH PLAINNESS

Communicating the Bible plainly means to make use of words that don't confuse people or complicate the subject. Some people feel the need to make use of sophisticated speech as they seem to think that this is more profound or impressive. But by making use of simplicity in speech is far more effective. We must not fear that using simple or plain language is somehow inferior. Iain Murray has noted, "simplicity is a very different thing from superficiality".¹ Speaking plainly is the skill of taking all the hard work you have done in the study and present it in a clear manner. Spurgeon has helpfully stated, "Brethren, the whole process of interpretation is to be carried on in your study; you are not to show your congregation the process, but to give them the result; like a good cook who would never think of bringing up dishes, and pans, and rolling pin, and spice box into the dining hall, but without ostentation sends up the feast."²

I. The Case for Plainness

We should strive to communicate plainly for at least two reasons. Firstly, we should communicate plainly because the Scripture is clear. God has revealed it to us clearly and it is interesting to note that the New Testament was first written in *koine Greek* which was the common language spoken by most people during that time. God did not chose a sophisticated language to reveal His Word to us. Secondly, we should communicate plainly because we want people to know the message of the Scriptures. Our goal in communicating God's Word is not to make ourselves look good. We are to desire for those listening to understand the message of the Bible with clarity. Iain Murray wisely wrote, "When preaching loses confidence in the plain word of God it tends to be dressed up in fine phrases or telling anecdotes".³

II. The Components of Plainness

Stated simply, your sermon, Bible talk, or presentation ought to be made up of three parts. An introduction, the body, and the conclusion. It has been said that in your introduction, you tell people what you are going to tell them. In the body, you tell them. And in the conclusion, you tell them why you told them.

¹ Iain H. Murray, *Lloyd-Jones Messenger of Grace*, Banner of Truth, 2008, p. 92

² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, Reprint, Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1954, p 30.

³ Iain H. Murray, *Lloyd-Jones Messenger of Grace*, Banner of Truth, 2008, p. 93

My focus in this section is on the structure of the main body. I want to consider the use of an outline and how to form it. Why is it helpful to have an outline? An outline is helpful because it is a logical framework of the passage's structure and message. On a practical level, an outline prompts you on what you are going to say next, and it helps keep you focussed on the main issues of the passage. Before I walk through how to form an outline, there are two points I think are worthy of consideration. Firstly, your outline must be governed by the passage. Don't create a clever outline and then force it onto the passage. Work out what the passage is saying (previous steps), and then allow the passage to determine the structure of your outline. Secondly, the outline should be simple. Don't write long sentences and try to avoid using words with lots of syllables. A clear outline is easy to memorise.

Below is the process and format I use in preparing a sermon outline. First of all, I answer the question, "What is the main message?" In my previous step I wrote that as a brief sentence. Now I try to take that sentence and try to reword it so that it conveys significance to the present. My second question is, "What are the main points?" Using the work I did on identifying the passage's structure, I now simplify the sentences. Take for example the following sentence: "In this section Peter writes about the Christians responsibility to live a holy life while they wait for the Lord's return". In my outline it simply becomes "The Duty of the Believer". What points support the main sections? If there are any, they become my sub points.

Below is an example of going from structure to outline.

2 Peter 3:10-13	2 Peter 3:10-13
<p><i>In this passage Peter continues the theme of the judgment that will come when the Lord returns and he highlights how the Christians should live now in the light of this reality.</i></p> <p>I. In this section Peter writes about the coming day of the Lord.</p> <p>II. In this section Peter writes about the Christians responsibility to live a holy life while they wait for the Lord's return.</p>	<p><i>In this message we will learn that the Lord is going to return and that the believer has a responsibility in present while they wait.</i></p> <p>I. The Day of the Lord A. It is Certain (3:10a) B. It is Catastrophic (3:10b)</p> <p>II. The Duty of the Believer A. Honourable Living (3:11) B. Hopeful Looking (3:12-13)</p>

On the next few pages are some sermon summaries and outlines from 1 Timothy and 2 Peter.