Elder Training Series

Session 24 - Job Duty of 'Extensively Use The Scriptures Comprehensively' - PART 2 (NIV based)

(Repeating) NOTE: Again perhaps it would be prudent for you to mark or highlight the items in this document that you need to work on or improve.

[Note: The discussion in this document continues onward the discussion from the previous document, 'Session 23', in this 'Elder Training Series' about 'Extensively Use The Scriptures Comprehensively - PART 1'.]

READ: **"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."** (2 Timothy 3:16), and **"...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching."** (1 Timothy 4:13)

(Continuing) SECTION POINT: Elders, overseers, and pastors have the job duty before God to ensure that the Scriptures are prominently presented, explained, and applied in the messages of their church or ministry.

-- Job Duty: Extensively Use The Scriptures Comprehensively (continued)

CONSTRUCT A MESSAGE ON THAT (selected) SCRIPTURE:
- - The (sermon, Bible lesson, or devotional) message needs to be intentionally structured and designed to expose and present the meaning, the implications, and the applications of the featured verse, its phrases, and its key words.
- - A major challenge here is to present this information in a manner that the audience people readily absorb, therein necessitating that optimally the presentation is devoid of creating any confusion, or misunderstanding, or periods of tuning-out by the audience people.
- - Therefore, a primary requisite in constructing a message is that it needs to consist of a logical flow of information and reasoning, in which the statements, definitions, descriptions, explanations, implications, conclusions, and etcetera naturally flow from one to the next, and thereby they naturally fit together, which for the listeners makes the information easier to follow, easier to understand, easier to determine correctly, and easier to remember.
-- Other benefits of utilizing a logical flow in the message are that:
- - - - the logical flow contributes to reducing the possibility of confusion and misunderstanding;
- - - - the logical flow contributes to capturing the interest of the audience people;
- - - - the logical flow contributes to engaging each listener personally;
- - - - the logical flow contributes to holding the attention of the audience people throughout the entire message;
- - - - and thereby the logical flow contributes to deterring periods of tuning-out by the audience people during the presentation of the message.
- - Most of the time, the logical flow of information and reasoning can use and follow the flow that is within the (selected) Scripture verse and its surrounding verses - its context.
- - However, for some verses, presenting explanations of the (selected) verse can become difficult and confusing when the flow in the (selected) verse is followed strictly.

- - So, some variation from following the flow in the verse is warranted in order to facilitate proper understanding and clarity of presentation of the (selected) verse.
- - But, care and re-checking need to be exercised to ensure that no phrases or key words in the verse are accidentally ignored or skipped in the construction of the message.

- - When technical theological words and phrases are used in a message, even though that particular audience may have heard the definitions of those theological words and phrases in the past, generally it is wise and necessary to briefly summarily repeat their definitions in each message that they are used in, in order to foster clarity of understanding and assist the listeners in firmly planting those definitions into their permanent memory.
- - Likewise to improve learning, the message can be structured and composed of usually three sub-point sections that support and build to a main point for that message.
- - The main point is the most important concept from the (selected) verse, which the preacher / teacher prayerfully thinks God wants the audience persons to learn and retain from that (selected) verse - to go home with that main point concept being profoundly present in their mind and firmly planted in their spiritual heart.
- - So the objective is for the audience persons to learn and retain in memory both the (selected) verse and its derived main point concept.

- - Understandability and memorability of the (selected) verse and its derived main point concept can be enhanced through the use of illustrations, word pictures (pictures or scenes created by the use of words), or picture words (individual words that incite thinking of a picture or image).
- - Of course, illustrations, word pictures, or picture words that are supplied in the (selected) Scripture verse or its surrounding context should rightly have priority in being used in the message, over or rather than any that the preacher/teacher can generate.
- - When using preacher/teacher-generated illustrations, they should be kept short so that too much time for the message is not consumed by the telling of the illustration story instead of teaching the (selected) Scripture verse.
- - Furthermore, the preacher/teacher-generated illustrations should not distract from nor draw emphasis away from the presenting of the (selected) verse and its derived main point.
- - In fact, wandering from the focus on the (selected) verse in any manner risks violating, or distorting, or diffusing, or confusing the meaning and the presenting of the (selected) verse and its derived main point.
- - Likewise, stringing along too many quotes from other Scripture verses to comprise a significant portion of the message diminishes focus on the (selected) verse by essentially flooding the minds of the audience persons with all this quoted Scripture content wherein they now have no focus or grasp on any specific scriptural concept, which includes the (selected) verse and its derived main point in the message.

- - A similar counter-effective approach is 'surfing', wherein a section of multiple verses is selected to be featured in the message, but the section is too long to adequately expose the meanings in fullness.
- - So the message essentially surfs the top of the waves - briefly and slightly touching part of the meaning of only a few of the high points or obvious concepts in the (selected)

section of multiple verses, and thereby skipping over almost all of the depth of meaning and other important content in those Scripture verses.

- - This 'surfing' approach hinders the listeners from progressing to spiritual maturity, and instead promotes and sustains the listeners in remaining "mere infants in Christ" because they are receiving only "milk" or simple and "elementary truths of God's Word", and <u>not</u> receiving "solid food" or "teaching about righteousness" that leads to becoming "mature" in the faith. (vv.1,2 in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; vv.12,13,14 in Hebrews 5:11-14)

- - The content of each message should always try to nudge and move the audience listeners a step forward towards spiritual maturity. (v.13 in Ephesians 4:11-13)

- - If there are 'infants in Christ' in the audience, then some of the message should contain and present 'elementary truths of God's Word' for them.

- - If there are persons in the audience who have made progress towards becoming 'spiritual' or 'mature', then some of the message should contain and present 'solid food' 'of God's Word' for them.

- - When the audience has a mixture of some persons who are at a level of spiritual <u>im</u>maturity and some persons who are at a level towards spiritual maturity, then rightly the message should contain content for both the immature and for the mature. (v.2 in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; vv.12,14 in Hebrews 5:11-14)

- - But to be forthright and realistic here, it is difficult, labor-intensive, and time-consuming to generate content and construct a message that is expository in fullness.

- - And to the contrary, it is simple, easy, and quick to generate content and construct a message that briefly touches on an obvious 'elementary truth of God's Word' and then fills in the remainder of the message with essentially fluff and prattle.

- - Therein, most messages consist of an easy-to-produce brief mention of an 'elementary truth' supplemented with fluff and prattle (2 Timothy 4:2a), and contain very little, if any, difficult-to-produce expository content of 'solid food' or 'teaching about righteousness' that leads to becoming 'mature' in the faith.

- - So the challenge for each preacher/teacher is to invert and modify that trend, wherein their messages are comprised <u>only minimally</u> of 'milk' or simple and 'elementary truths of God's Word' for the immature, and instead are comprised <u>mostly</u> of 'solid food' or 'teaching about righteousness', with <u>no</u> fluff and prattle, so that the message "spurs on" or "incites" each audience person to becoming more 'mature' in the faith than whatever level he/she is currently at. (adapted from Hebrews 10:24, Strong's #3948)

- - Each message should also integrate some content for <u>un</u>believers when they are in the audience.

- - This content should be designed to (in essence) inform the unbelievers about how God says He will eternally punish people for the sins they commit during their life, but yet He has provided and now in this present life offers a way for people to be redeemed from ever experiencing any of that eternal punishment.

- - So basically this content integrated into the message points the unbelievers in the audience to their need for a savior, who is Jesus Christ, and what He did on the cross to provide that redemption for sins.

- - And the other content (for believers) in each particular message can be expanded upon to highlight benefits for <u>un</u>believers that they would inherit and enjoy if they became a true believer.

- - For elders, overseers, and pastors, by means of holding a position of leadership authority in a church or ministry, they each have been "appointed" by God, like Paul

was, to "herald" and "teach" this "gospel" "good news" information about Jesus Christ to unbelievers. (2 Timothy 1:8,11; Strong's #2098 in v.1:10)

APPLY THAT (selected) SCRIPTURE TO THE LIVES OF THE AUDIENCE PEOPLE:
- - Every message produced by the church or ministry (such as sermons, Bible lessons, devotionals, and etcetera) should present plentiful content that clearly and distinctly states ways in which the featured Scripture of that message is applied to the life of the audience persons.
- - Typically, average persons in the audience struggle or outright fail to adequately comprehend and apply how a Scripture doctrine or concept should be put into effect in their own life.
- - They sit and somewhat listen to the message, with their thinking wandering back and forth from paying attention to what is being said, to at times wandering off onto some other thought that essentially mutes them from paying attention to what is being said.
- - In this kind of drifting back and forth of their attention, they are in an 'intake' mode, wherein they are operating within the easy low-effort mind-functioning of listening and generally receiving or taking in information regarding God, and they are not operating within the difficult high-effort mind-functioning of listening and simultaneously figuring out how they are going to put into effect that information in their own life and daily living.
- - So there is a crucial necessity for the message to profoundly shift their mind-functioning into not only receiving, but also considering, processing, adopting, and personalizing how they them-self are going to put into effect that information in their own life and daily living.

- - In order to be caught by the audience persons, applications in a message need to be directly and clearly and distinctly stated - not vaguely stated nor hinted at.
- - In order to be relevant, applications need to directly relate to or naturally stem from the contents of the message, which of course should be solidly based on the (selected) Scripture verse.
- - In order to provoke consideration, applications can be interrogative - "Are you doing... (this or that) in your life which God instructs here in this verse, or instead are you doing... (this or that wayward or sinful)... in your life?".
- - In order to provoke consideration, applications also can be consequential - "God says that failing to do... (this or that) will result in incurring... (this or that) consequence".
- - In order to facilitate acceptance, applications can be contemplative - "Think about this, whether you are going to submit to God in this... (way), or instead you are going to continue in your present ways of...".
- - In order to be accepted, applications need to be authoritative - "God says that every true believer is to do... (this or that)".
- - In order to be adopted, applications need to be directed specifically at them personally, using the pronoun "you".
- - In order to motivate to take action, applications need to use and exhort imperatives, and especially to quote, emphasize, and repeat frequently those imperatives that are present or supported in the (selected) Scripture verse.
- - In order to be readily put into effect in their life, applications need to be practical - a 'what specifically to do', or a 'how to do this', or a 'list of steps to take to do this'.

- - To deliver a message that is weak or devoid of applications is to essentially neutralize the power within that (selected) Scripture to transform lives. (Romans 12:2a)

- - Failing to include substantial applications of the (selected) Scripture in a message is to reduce the message from being transformative to instead being <u>merely</u> and <u>only</u> informative.
- - The message should be invoking a response of 'hear and then take corresponding corrective action'. But <u>without</u> substantial applications, the message instead is promoting a response of 'hear and continue onward with your life as you have been'.

APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS:
- - As an elder, overseer, or pastor with the God-assigned job duty of "preaching" or "teaching" the "Scriptures" (1 Timothy 4:13), are you seeing from the study in this document that there are some improvements that you need to make in constructing a preaching or teaching message?
- - Do you recognize and appreciate the value of creating your preaching and/or teaching messages in a manner that maximizes effectiveness for God's purposes in the lives of your audience persons?
- - If so, then, are you willing to thoroughly review this document, carefully re-examine each assertion and recommendation in it, and then incorporate the improvement changes into your message construction process, in order to make your messages more effective for God's purposes?

- - In 2 Timothy 4:2a, elders, overseers, and pastors (like Timothy) are ordered by God to "**<u>Preach the Word</u>**", which unquestionably implies that everyone else who preaches or teaches in their church or ministry is likewise to be preaching or teaching "<u>the Word</u>" - the Scriptures, and not fluff or prattle.
- - As an elder, overseer, or pastor, are you willing to teach, coach, and promote this type of message construction to the other persons in your church or ministry who preach or teach?
- - Are you going to ensure that preaching or teaching "<u>the Word</u>" is always being done in your church or ministry? To its fullest? Or instead, are you going to by default acquiesce to the preaching and teaching of very little of or dilution of "<u>the Word</u>" in your church or ministry?

<u>Works Cited</u>:
Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.