

Tools and Skills of a Preacher

Part 1: Resources and Skills

Psalm 78:72: So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

Every good worker will have a specific set of skills and tools which enables them to labor prosperously in their field. The woodsman has his axe, properly sharpened (Ecclesiastes 10:10); the builder his hammer, properly wielded (Judges 5:26); and the fisher his net, properly mended (Mark 1:19). The preacher has his words, “acceptable words,” “even words of truth” (Ecclesiastes 10:10), likened unto “nails” that are “fastened by the *masters* of assemblies” (Ecclesiastes 10:11). They must be *powerful*—he speaks with boldness and authority (see Matthew 7:29; **Luke 4:32**; Acts 28:31)—and *profitable*—he speaks with wisdom and applicability (I Timothy 4:15; II Timothy 2:14). One never wastes time by taking time to gather arrows of knowledge for their quiver, or by laying their sword to the whetstone of study.

Research Resources

II Timothy 2:15: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The mature Christian will be cognizant of the differences between the 3 main Bible-learning practices: Bible *reading*, Bible *memorization*, and Bible *studying*. This last practice (of studying the Bible) is required for one to produce effective Biblical teaching material (e.g., sermons). Casual and aimless thoughts concerning the meaning and application of scripture is not studying—focused, determined, and wide-ranging investigation, which often results in “a weariness of the flesh” (Ecclesiastes 12:12), is a proper study of the Bible. Here are three important Bible studying practices which will help you in rightly harvesting wisdom from the word of God:

1. **Ponder over verses/passages** of the Bible within their immediate and larger context.

Because the Bible’s main message is generally perspicuous, one often only has to “meditate” on a given verse/passage (Psalm 119:23, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148) to understand it’s primary message: “I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways” (Psalm 119:15). Ask yourself questions like the following:

- Who is the author and the immediate audience?
- What is the over-arching theme/intent to this text?
- How does this idea of this verse fit into the immediate context and progress the train of thought or the plot?
- What does this particular word/phrase in this text mean?

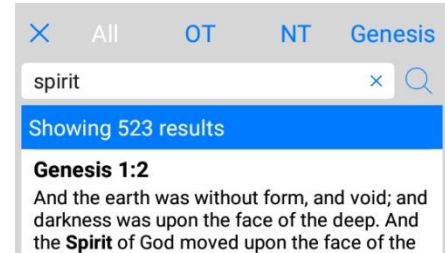
2. **Perform word studies/searches.**

Biblical authors will, at times, cling onto particularities of words to make a point (see **Hebrews 12:27**; Galatians 3:16). One effective means we have of gleaning both Biblical breadth and depth on a given subject/scripture is to engage in word searches/studies. This is where we *isolate words/phrases and perform searches in a Bible database for their occurrences*. There are essentially two kinds of word-

searches: Simple (inclusive vs. restrictive) and Boolean. There are a multitude of softwares which can do such searches, such as the Tecarta Bible App, the University of Michigan KJV search-system, eSword, or BibleGateway's search-system. Simple searches will find occurrences of the word(s)/phrase(s):

Word or phrase:

Restrict by testament: ▼



Boolean searches are more complex (in some cases, *extremely* complex), and can be used to find occurrences of intricately requested matches:

(Search:)

Restrict by testament: ▼

Another way to ascertain information from the linguistic dimension to scripture is to take note of etymological (word-origin) considerations. Knowing where words come from, as well having a comprehensive knowledge of how such words function in a panoply of literary contexts, teaches us well. Some contend that to fully understand the Bible, we must do research and word-studies in the original languages the scriptures were penned in (Hebrews, Aramaic, and Greek). While it is true that some important information is exclusive to knowledge (either firsthand or secondhand) of these Biblical languages (e.g., see Genesis 26:20-22; Micah 1:10-15), we should not “exercise” ourselves in “things too high for me” (Psalm 131:1), meaning we ought not to have a pretense of, say, Greek erudition when we cannot even so much as read the Greek alphabet! The overwhelming majority of information which some suppose they ascertained by study in the original languages can, in fact, be discerned by the careful study of the KJV, which is a very literal and word-for-word translation. Indeed, the marginal notes of the original KJV have much which can help us confidently see some of these Hebrew/Greek nuances. That is to say, *reading the KJV* (reading just English) *is roughly equivalent to reading in the original languages.*

3. Listen to and/or read the thoughts and insights of others concerning the Biblical verse/passage or Biblical topic you are seeking to learn about.

When we restrict our study of the scripture or Biblical subject at hand to the confines of our own cogitations, we cut ourselves off from many a profound insight and helpful perspective that would otherwise have shed much light on our study. We can learn much from others (see I Corinthians 4:15; 14:31). What may seem correct in our own understanding may, indeed, be pure heresy (see Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). On the other hand, we, who are in the right way of truth, may be poisoned and misled by the teachings of a vain jangling fool (see I Timothy 1:6-7). Thus, the *safest* course of action is a **critical-thinking consultation** of the thoughts and preachments of others, listening to the opinions and expositions

of others (“the multitude of counsellors,” Proverbs 14:11; 15:22) while testing everything heard/read by scripture (Proverbs 14:15; Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This course of action strikes a balance between two extremes, the one of being wholly taken by one’s own thoughts (be they true or false), and the other of being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. For the ripe and mature Christian, who has read the Bible over 10 times, reading Christian articles, theological books, and Biblical commentaries (as well as perhaps listening to teachings/sermons of potentially-unbelieving sources) can be tremendously helpful in developing oneself and one’s doctrine. Of course, some sources on certain subjects are hopelessly unprofitable, and we should avoid them (e.g., the Jewish commentary on the Old Testament, Titus 1:14; the Catholic teaching about salvation, Romans 16:17) (Proverbs 12:11; 14:7; **19:27**), but we should not *throw out the baby with the bath water* (see Proverbs 13:20), and should learn to *chew the meat, and spit out the bones*. It is advised, though, that a believer not engage in such external investigations unless and until they have sufficiently grounded and strengthened themselves in a deep, first-hand knowledge of the Bible. And even then, such perusals into the thought of others must be done with caution and wit, and should be done *sequentially*, after one’s own investigation has been well under-way. One should never *first* go to others, but always to God’s word, with prayer.

Literary Skills

Psalm 45:1: My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Godly men down through the ages have been literate: Moses (Exodus 24:7), Joshua (Joshua 8:34), Ezra (Nehemiah 8:3), and Jesus (Luke 4:16). God expects linguistic acumen from us by exhorting us with these words: “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read” (Isaiah 34:16). The preacher ought to have wisdom “fitted” within his lips (Proverbs 22:17-18), and be graced with the blessing of Naphtali, who “giveth goodly words” (Genesis 49:21). It is essential, then, that if one pursues the teacher’s desk or the

pulpit, he has a command of the language which he will preach and teach in. To be a teacher/preacher in English, at the very least, one ought to have (1) a basic knowledge of English grammar, (2) proper pronunciation capability of English words (most notably, of those in the Bible), and (3) an expanding vocabulary.

Basic Knowledge of English Grammar.

Grammar is the systematic study of a language, important both in learning from written/spoken information, as well as in constructing and giving expression to one’s own thoughts. You should be able to recognize the different parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) in a given text of scripture, for instance, as well as be sensitive to perceiving,

PARTS OF SPEECH		
<p>Noun</p> <p>A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing.</p> <p>Person Place Thing girl school pencil boy home jacket teacher store dog</p>	<p>Adjective</p> <p>An adjective describes a noun or a pronoun. An adjective tells what kind, how many, or which one.</p> <p>What How Which Kind Many One happy more this brave two that</p>	<p>Verb</p> <p>A verb can tell what action someone or something is doing. A verb can also express a state of being.</p> <p>Action State of Being run jump am is sit ask are was think talk were</p>
<p>Pronoun</p> <p>A pronoun is used in place of a noun in a sentence. A pronoun may take the place of the name of a person, place, or thing.</p> <p>I she it they you he we me</p>	<p>Article</p> <p>The words <i>a, an, and the</i> belong to a special group of adjectives called articles. An article can be used before a noun in a sentence.</p> <p>a an the a dog an apple the boy a rabbit an ant the bird</p>	<p>Adverb</p> <p>An adverb describes a verb, adjective, or another adverb. An adverb tells how, when, where, or to what degree.</p> <p>How When quickly today Where To What Degree outside barely</p>
<p>Preposition</p> <p>A preposition combines with a noun or pronoun to form a phrase that tells something about another word in a sentence.</p> <p>from to until over with after</p>	<p>Conjunction</p> <p>A conjunction joins together single words or groups of words in a sentence.</p> <p>and but or nor</p>	<p>Interjection</p> <p>An interjection expresses strong feeling or emotion. An interjection can be a single word or a phrase.</p> <p>Help! Oh! Ouch! Ugh! Whew! Ah! Wow! Look out! Oh dear!</p>

in speech or text, tense (e.g., past, present, future), number (e.g., singular, plural), mood (e.g., imperative, indicative), case (e.g., subject, object), and so on.

Proper Pronunciation Capability. One of the most amateur and distracting of errors we can make as preachers is the mispronunciation of our words generally, and of God’s words particularly. We must not be “sibboleth” preachers (see Judges 12:6), who are unable to frame the pronunciations right, especially concerning Biblical words (e.g., Kibroth-hattaavah, Numbers 11:34; Maher-shalal-hash-baz, Isaiah 8:1; Nebuchadnezzar, II Kings 24:1). There are three ways we can improve our pronunciation:

1. Listen to the audio Bible (preferably by Alexander Scourby, or someone in a similar style to him) as you read through the Bible, at least once or twice.
2. Read the Bible aloud as you read through the Bible, giving you regular practice on pronunciation.
3. If you have access to one, you can consult a KJV Bible with pronunciation marks in the text.

An Expanding Vocabulary. You should continuously be adding words to your English repertoire. English is a vast and highly expressive language, having between 175,000-200,000 words on record. There are three ways you can increase your vocabulary: (1) *contextual addition*, where you note and learn new words you hear/see in speeches/writings; (2) *utilitarian addition*, where you purposely seek out new words to express an idea you are speaking/writing; (3) *artificial addition*, where you sift through a dictionary and select words you will incorporate into your knowledge. The most natural and firmest way to learn new words is through method (1)—contextual learning is more meaningful. Though one can buy a dictionary, the easy access to them online has made physical dictionaries practically useless. Probably the best and most trusted ones for regular use are Merriam-Webster’s and Dictionary.com.

Sharpen your proficiency in spelling, learning the proper manner in which words ought to be written. Slowly remove mistakes in this area by consciously correcting yourself whenever you notice an error (e.g., judgment vs. judgement; acknowledge vs. acknowlege; believe vs. beleive). The best way to notice one’s errors in spelling is to have a habit of reading a range of wise and beneficial literature, more than just the Bible. The best books to read apart from the Bible are informative/academic books (e.g., history, philosophy, science, classics), books that will *teach* one new things (see **I Kings 4:32-33**), giving you wisdom or skills. Books to avoid include literature which is worldly (e.g., most modern novels), purely entertainment (e.g., comics/magazines), sensational (e.g., current news), or theologically poisonous (e.g., the Catholic catechism).

Technical Skills

Exodus 35:10: And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded.

The modern work of the ministry requires the minister to be experienced in and possess a medley of skills for operating effectually in our day. With the advent of the technological age, the possibilities and opportunities available for evangelism and preaching the word of God have exceedingly multiplied, and if we will just take hold of the power of, for instance, the computer and printer, we can have a world-wide effect for Christ. It is not necessary that the preacher be on par with, say, a computer programmer, but certain basic skills become the man of God ministering in the 21st century.