

Teaching Acts – 2 of 3

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[0 : 00] ...portion, and then in the last half hour, hopefully, we'll prepare a sermon together, which there might be time for me to preach tomorrow.

So that's what we're going to do between now and a quarter to 11, and I will try and slow down. Pastoral implications. Yesterday, we looked at the whole issue of there being no false triumphalism in Acts, how Luke has portioned one-third of his narrative to Paul's trials and sufferings. And we finished off by looking at chapter 14, verse 22, where the apostle encouraged those at Lystra and Derbe, Iconium, by saying it is through many hardships that we must enter the kingdom of God.

A similar theme, which is also good for giving us pastoral implications, comes out in chapter 17. So if you'd like to open to Acts 17, at the conclusion of Paul's address to the Areopagus, in verse 32, it says, When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, which was really the issue that fascinated them most, some of them at the Areopagus sneered.

But others said, We want to hear you again on this subject. At that, Paul left the council. A few men became followers of Paul and believed, among them Dionysius and a woman named Damaris. So what you see in Acts is a consistent pattern.

[1 : 22] Whenever the gospel is presented, it is a divided response. Here it is sneering. We want to know more. Some came to faith. And you can say, if you've read Melvin Bragg's book, 12 Books That Changed the Course of History, I think it's an excellent book.

He writes there about Newton, Isaac Newton. And he particularly develops Isaac Newton's third law of motion, that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Now, is there an equivalent spiritual law for that?

I'd say there is, that every forward movement of the gospel has a reaction which is unequal, but it is opposite. And so every time the gospel goes forward beyond the fringe, there is opposition to push it back, but that opposition is never successful.

But don't expect that there will not be opposition. You will not be loved universally. You don't need me to tell you that. And so here, you've got this first, an indication in Acts of the divided response. There is always a mixture in response to the gospel, wherever it goes. However, Luke chooses his last words well. If you go over to the very last word of Acts in chapter 28 and verse 31, in the Greek text, this is how the text is ordered.

[2 : 40] Verse 30. For two whole years, Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ boldly and unhinderedly.

The last word in Acts is an adverb, qualifying a verb, unhinderedly. There it is. The gospel is open-ended.

It has come to Rome, but it doesn't stay at Rome. God will see his purposes triumph. And so therefore, in Acts, we see the gospel starting in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and going to the ends of the earth.

But it will not be without a divided response along the way. The Holy Spirit. Do we need to develop more confidence in the Holy Spirit to empower us?

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up and spoke. Now, there may well be that we need to challenge in our congregations Evangelifish. The Christian who is soft, always wanting to take the middle ground.

[3 : 45] What we call in Australia the neo-evangelical. What is a neo-evangelical? A person always wanting to give ground, always looking to give ground. Acts challenges us.

Are we apostolic? Are we apostolic in our message? Are we apostolic in our lifestyle? Just about five years ago now, we had a visit to Sydney by Bishop Stephen Bradley, who went to South Africa as the Bishop of the Church of England in South Africa, ten years before I was born in 1937. And here he is visiting us in Sydney, an old man in his 90s. He came to principals at our college and he heard me preach. He went away and he spent six weeks in Sydney.

At the end of six weeks, I got a letter from him. I've been in Sydney now for six weeks. I'm grateful having heard you preach, and I've heard a number of other Sydney preachers preach. It's all been good, but I have not heard one word of warning from any of you.

Not one word of warning. And he said the church in Sydney needs to be warned, because the church in Sydney can become like any church anywhere, parochial. We need to evangelise or perish.

[4 : 58] And I think that was the motto of the old Methodist college, Cliff College here in England. Evangelise or perish. Now, that's similar to Acts. Move out. Take the gospel out.

And in the midst of a despairing world, where someone wrote recently in the Sydney Morning Herald, Life is a sexually transmitted terminal disease. That's it. Is that all we've got to say? And yet in Australia, we have never been better off. Our unemployment is low. Our inflation is low. We've never been wealthier. We have no foreign debt.

We have record budget surpluses. And just before the last election, I went on election day to my neighbour, whose name is Vince. He's from Italy. Came to Australia in 1952.

And I said to Vince, who are you going to vote for today, Vince? And he said in broken English, I vote for Johnny Howard. I said, why? And he just went like that. Good for money.

[5 : 56] That's all that matters. Money. So he votes for it. And Johnny Howard romps in. Because we're wealthy. But we have never as a nation been more desperate. We are in despair.

We have no hope. And it's incredible to me how we look around and we think, where is hope coming from? I remember sitting down with a man in Mongolia who had been trained by the Russians.

And he was telling me what a great man Joseph Stalin was. And I thought, oh man, you know, I'm not going to enlighten him on that in my broken Mongolian.

And I said, what do you think of Jesus? Oh, he said, Stalin couldn't change the heart. Jesus changes the heart. I love Jesus, he said. And that's it, isn't it? Jesus changes the heart.

In the midst of despair, where is hope to be found? Did you watch the American results this morning on television? And the Democrats romped in. And you had all these American Democrats up there saying, hey, this is a new step for the nation.

[6 : 55] We're going to be transparent. We're going to be open. We're going to link hands with the Republicans. And everything's going to be good. Is it the Australian cynic in me or what? You know. Come on.

It's all desperate. We're in despair. We change government. Is this one going to make any difference? And it never does. Young man, do you have any hope? Aren't they the words of Churchill to Billy Graham?

Young man, do you have any hope? Well, Luke says, Jesus. Jesus is the hope. Not the church, but it's Jesus. That is our message.

Well, let's just some pastoral implications. Let's now get into the text. So if you have that sheet before you, which has the outline of the series, series one, a great tonic.

If you just follow that on, well, I'm going to work through each of those preaching portions this morning. And hopefully we'll get to the end of chapter 12 today. So you need to open your Bibles up and you need to keep moving with me.

[7 : 53] I'm not going to say a lot about each one. I'm going to try and say the point of contact that I might use in each sermon and probably what the big idea of the sermon is. Well, you will know that Martin Lloyd-Jones on Friday nights for 13 years preached his way through Romans.

In fact, his sermons on Romans, and even at the end of 13 years he didn't finish, but his sermons on Romans are now printed and they're dedicated to the keen Friday nighters who turned up every Friday night for 13 years to listen to him.

So listen to this quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones. I know of no greater tonic in the realm of the spirit than the, and you would expect, he would say, the letter to the Romans. But he doesn't.

I know of no greater tonic in the realm of the spirit, he says, than the book of Acts. The book of Acts. Now here is a tonic. I might start a series and say, friends, here is a tonic. When you're a child, were you given Scots emulsion, milk of magnesia, cod liver oil, all these tonics that are good for you? Well, here is a series of why this, and this is a series which will do you good. [8 : 58] And we start in Luke chapter 24, verses 46 and 47. And as you see there on your outline, we go to Acts 1.8. Now in this series, I will make the point, as I made yesterday, that it is written that God's purpose is that his son should suffer, die and rise, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should reach the ends of the earth.

And Acts is the record of how God takes the gospel and superintends it and sees it carried out by spirit-empowered messengers. God is the sovereign evangelist who equips messengers, and everything happens, happens day, in order to fulfill.

It must happen. And so that's where the emphasis will be. And in that first sermon, I might look at two servants in the book of Acts who were bold preachers of the gospel.

I might look at Stephen in chapter 7 and Peter in chapter 4, both filled with the spirit and with extraordinary boldness. And what will this do for you, this book?

It will strengthen your trust in God. It will weaken your pride and trust in yourself. It will widen your vision for the whole world. And it will revitalize your memory, reminding you why you are here.

[10 : 19] And one point of contact may be that when I come to this nation, I notice that there are a lot of things which are ancient. I go to the British Library and I see autographs of precious documents under soft light.

And if I want to touch them, I must have gloved hand, but they will fade. Do you know the oldest artifact we have in Australia is our Aboriginal rock art paintings?

And yet they are fading. The rocks are depreciating. You see, things which are precious depreciate. But here is a word from God which will never fade.

Jesus says, it is written. This is the purpose of God and that will never be depreciated. So that may well be my point of contact. And I will talk about the tonic and I will talk about God's great purpose.

And then I'll conclude by saying why a series on Acts will be good for you. Well, let's get into the text. Let's go to week two and we look at Acts chapter one. I've entitled this sermon.

[11 : 24] Will things be different? Answer? Yes and no. Acts chapter one introduces us to the ascension. We have seen in Luke's gospel, the transfiguration where Jesus is lifted up into heaven for a brief moment.

But now that becomes a permanent state. It is the coronation of the Lord Jesus. And I want to enter into the emotions of the apostles. At the cross, there was gloom.

There was exhilaration at the resurrection. What do they feel now at the ascension? Now, notice here in Acts one, what we are seeing is that Jesus says the Holy Spirit will come down and you will go out and he has taken up.

So there are these directional elements which may give me the structure of my sermon. He will come down so that you will go out. I'm going up. And here you notice that what Luke is concerned to show us that though the Lord Jesus has ascended.

He continues to be his active involvement in the church. Verse two. Until the day he was taken up into heaven after giving us instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

[12 : 41] And if you go down to verse 24 with regard to Matthias, then they prayed, Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen.

And for the last time in scripture, you see the use of the lot to determine the mind of God. Jesus chose the twelve. And though he has ascended to the father's right hand, he now chooses as well Matthias to replace Judas.

Jesus continues his active involvement in the church. Will things be different therefore now that Jesus has ascended? Yes, he will no longer be here in bodily form.

But no, he will actively direct through the ministry of his spirit. Yes and no. So Augustine said in the ascension, he has departed.

And yet he is here. And that is what the disciples must come to terms with. Jesus is gone. His bodily presence is gone. But Jesus has not gone.

[13 : 44] So the point of contact here might be yes and no is a very Irish response, isn't it? I remember being on a bus in Dublin recently last year. And a man went up to the bus driver and said, do you know where, let's say Foley Street is?

Do you know where Foley Street is? And the driver said, well, yes and no. No, I don't know where Foley Street is, but I know a man who does. I thought that was brilliant.

That was great. How would you know about a man that he knows where a street is that you don't know? Anyway, that might be the point of contact here. Will things be different now? Jesus has ascended. Yes and no.

It's a very Irish response, isn't it? But it's quite an appropriate response at this point. Yes, things will be different. No, things will be no different. He has departed. Behold, he is here.

All right, over to chapter 2. 1 to 13. And in this sermon, you'll notice on your outline, I'm also going to preach on Acts 8, 14 to 17.

[14 : 44] Because the Pentecostals will always be with us. As you English say, bless them. I like that. Bless them.

And in Acts 8, 14 to 17, you have the occasion in which the Holy Spirit comes down on the Samaritans.

Now, let's keep our finger there and go back to 2, 1 to 13. So I'm going to preach one sermon and it will cover those two sections. The occasion is Pentecost, 50 days after Easter.

Literally means 50. It was originally a festival to cover the completion of the barley harvest. But then it became a festival to celebrate the giving of the law.

Pentecost, in other words, was all about completion, fulfillment. And so here is the complete gospel. Jesus pours out his spirit on his people. Now, what you're witnessing here is a reversal of the effects of the Tower of Babel.

[15 : 44] People are now enabled to jump over the language barrier. I want you to notice that in verse 4, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other glossa, glossolalia, in other tongues.

Now, that word is repeated for us in verse 11. We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own glossa, in our own glossolalia, in our own tongues. However, notice that this is used synonymously with what is said in verse 6, because each one heard them speaking in his own language, literally dialectos.

So a glossa here, a tongue, is a formed, structured language. So I gather here we have a miracle when the Spirit comes upon these people so that the Christians speak, it's a miracle of speaking rather than hearing, in 15 language groups without having to go to a language laboratory to learn the language.

Now, this means that the apostles, of course, are believers. Jesus has assured them that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And then subsequent to their belief, being in the Lamb's Book of Life, they receive the Holy Spirit.

Now, therefore, should the believer today expect our experience to be a two-stage experience? Because, as you know, this is classic doctrine of the assemblies of God.

[17 : 08] Now, go over to Acts chapter 8, verses 14 to 17, and this is perhaps the passage which is used mostly in talking about how our experience is to be two-stage.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they arrived, they preached for them that they might receive the... They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them, they had simply been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. It's a fascinating verse, that. Whose name should they have been baptised into?

Should they have been baptised, for example, into the Trinitarian name, Father, Son, and Spirit?

Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Why was there a delay in their reception of the Holy Spirit?

Probably because, as Samaritan believers, they had to know that there was to be no ongoing rift in the relationship between the Samaritan church and the Jewish church. And so, by receiving the Holy Spirit through the Jerusalem apostles, they would know that there was to be no continuing rift.

[18 : 14] And it was important as well for the Jerusalem church to recognise that the Spirit had come on the Samaritans. So Peter and John's coming down, and the Spirit being given after they prayed for them, they could report back to the brethren in Jerusalem that the Samaritan believers had become believers just as we are.

So, therefore, there were valid historic reasons why there should be a two-stage experience for them. And, of course, there were valid historical reasons for those who walked with Jesus in the flesh and then, after his ascension, received the Spirit.

But for us, what should our experience be? Probably, chapter 2, verse 41, our experience should be that which is set out there. Those who accepted his message were baptised and 3,000 were added to their number that day.

That is, we repent and are baptised, we have forgiveness of our sins, and we receive the Holy Spirit. But the emphasis here on Pentecost is this, not just maintaining what we believe to be the truth here, but being on the front foot.

Everything that Jesus did, he did in the power of the Holy Spirit. Everything the apostles did, he did in the power of the Holy Spirit. How do we think that we should not walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and be totally dependent upon him?

[19 : 29] Now, that has got to be the import of the sermon. All right? What is going to be the point of contact? You're looking always for a point of contact. Just remember that if I take you to the Holy Land, I do not start in the Holy Land.

If I take you to the Holy Land from here, I take you to Heathrow. Then we go to the Holy Land, then we come back to Heathrow. If we go anywhere from Sydney, we start at the International Airport and go to Rome, go to Thessalonica, go to Ephesus, then come back to Sydney.

Every sermon I preach, therefore I never want to start in the first century in the Holy Land. I always want to start for me in Sydney or in London or somewhere like that and take you to the Holy Land, take you to the Bible, then bring you back where you are.

So I'm always looking for a contact, a point of contact with the audience that may well not be, that's not going to simply direct them and say this morning we come to Acts chapter two, yesterday we dealt, last week we dealt with Acts chapter one.

That is not an engaging introduction. I must start with you somewhere in the world where we are now and take you to the scriptures and then come back and deliver you and apply you back to the world where we are now.

[20 : 39] I might start with the words of Cameron Townsend who was the founder of the Wycliffe Bible Translator. He said, I'll tell you the very best missionary, the missionary which never takes a furlough and the missionary who never sleeps.

That is the best furlough. Where is that missionary to be found? The missionary which never takes a furlough and the missionary which never sleeps is the Bible in the mother tongue of the people. It never needs a furlough and it never takes a sleep. Friends, there is nothing like when you are in a foreign land hearing your mother tongue, hearing Dinky Di Ozzy say, G'day mate.

There's nothing like it, I tell you. And just being there, the mother tongue ministers to you. What a remarkable thing that these pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem in the middle of Jerusalem hear these apostles and others speaking their mother tongue.

No wonder they sat up and listened to what was saying, the great acts of God. The mother tongue was the point of contact. How gracious of God to give this sign. So you might start with the mother tongue.

[21 : 47] All right, let's move to the next passage. Chapter 2 verses 14 to 47. It's all about Jesus. Peter stands up opportunistically and preaches.

He immediately refers them to the prophet Joel. And if you just look at your passage there, you'll see there's indentations everywhere. He's referring to the Old Testament, to the Psalms, because Peter is speaking to a Jewish audience.

Who is he speaking about? He is speaking about Jesus. Verse 23. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold. Death couldn't get a grip on Jesus, because he never sinned. And therefore, because he never sinned, death could not hold him down.

Death had no power over him, because he never sinned. And he says there, David said about him, I saw the Lord always before me. My heart is glad. My tongue rejoices, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

[22 : 54] And yet David died. Who was he talking about? Himself or someone else? He was talking about Jesus, he says. Verse 30. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on

oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

Verse 32. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and he has poured out what you now see and hear.

This Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is the proof that Jesus is at the Father's right hand. He is where he said he would be. And in conviction, the people say, what should we do?

And Peter says, you should repent and give public recognition of your repentance. And two things will happen. Take and give. God will take your sins and deal with them, and God will give you the Holy Spirit.

And the prototype community is then mentioned. They devoted themselves. Verse 42 to 47. When you become a Christian, you do not become an isolated person. You become part of a community which is common in its devotions to the apostolic teaching.

[24 : 01] I went to preach one day last May to a church which was a liturgical church. When I turned up, I noticed that the pastor was all dressed up in white.

And when I went into the church, they had windmills all through the church. And I realised that it was Pentecost Sunday. It hadn't occurred to me that it was Pentecost Sunday, and I hadn't prepared a sermon on the Holy Spirit at all.

And then I thought rather cleverly, oh well, the Pentecostal sermon wasn't about the Holy Spirit either. The Pentecostal sermon was all about Jesus. Do you notice that? It's all about Jesus.

And of course, in the front of my Bible, when I'm away, I like to look at the front of my Bible. I've got my family photo. I've got my favourite letter to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald.

I've got a great saying, and I've got my favourite hymn. Let me just read this great hymn. I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down, O weary one, lay down, your head upon my breast.

[25 : 03] I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad. I heard the voice of Jesus say, behold, I freely give, the living water-thirsty one, stooped down and drink.

I came to Jesus. I heard the voice of Jesus say, I am this dark world's light. I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun. You know that old hymn that says, I sighed for rest and happiness. I yearned for them, not thee. But while I passed my saviour by, looking for rest and happiness, his love laid hold on thee. Now none but Christ can satisfy none other name for me.

And it's a great reminder to us that people are very interested to talk to you about the spirit. We are spiritually aware. But when Paul comes to the disciples of John the Baptist in Acts chapter 19, who'd never heard of the Holy Spirit, he sits them down, and he tells them about Jesus, so that they will receive the Holy Spirit.

We're not evangelists for the spirit. What we do is in the power of the spirit. But we're telling people about Jesus. Right, well that would be the sermon on the sermon of Pentecost.

[26 : 19] Let's go now over to Acts chapter 3. And in a minute I'll just stop. But let's look at this great sign, what Acts chapter 4 tells us is an outstanding sign.

Again, the passage breaks itself into two sections, verses 1 to 10 is the sign, and verse 11 through to 26 is the sermon. So it's a very clear structure here.

Again, Peter is the opportunistic witness. He doesn't hesitate. When he sees the sign, he jumps up and gives the sermon to interpret the sign. We have irony here at the very beginning.

The very first miracle in the book of Acts, if you like, the first miracle of healing, is of a man who is totally immobile. But Acts is all about mobility. The gospel is always on its way.

But the very first person with a problem is a person who's not on his way anywhere. He can't move. He's sitting by a beautiful gate, and yet he's anything but beautiful.

[27 : 16] He's a paralyzed beggar. He's a forgotten person. Old Testament makes it quite clear that Israel was to have no beggars. You were to look after the paralyzed person.

You were to have welfare towards the person without much. But this man was forgotten. Sitting outside the temple, the irony of ironies, where they should have remembered their obligations, and yet he is a discard, and the old covenant can do nothing for him.

And just as Jesus has healed a paralytic, and now Peter is to heal a paralytic, and later Paul, near a pagan temple, is to heal a paralytic, so here Peter, in the name of Jesus, tells this man to stand up.

And he went walking and leaping and praising God. Peter jumps to his feet, verse 11, and he preaches the sermon. And what does he say in this sermon? He makes a clear distinction between what you did to the Lord Jesus and what God did.

You handed him over. You killed him. You disowned him. What did God do? God glorified him. God raised him. Therefore, he says, you must repent now, because the one you have rejected, verse 23, is the one who is the prophet like Moses.

[28 : 29] Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people. Do you realize what you have done in rejecting him? Now, here, I've called this sermon the triumphant indicative because we have another reminder in apostolic preaching that the imperative follows the indicative.

Let me just show you this over here. I don't know if you've got one of these on your computer, but it's a graph of moods in the New Testament. Just have a look at this, for example. Here is the letter to the Romans, 1 to 16.

And you'll see here that the key, the blue is the indicative, but the red is the imperative. Now, notice, I don't know if you can see that very clearly, but the imperative here, the first imperative in Romans after all the indicative comes here at chapter 6.

It's amazing, isn't it? Before you're told what you should do, the apostle tells you what God has done exhaustively. And when you are told what to do, what you are to do is to do what God has done.

You are to see yourself as God sees you, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. I think this is really telling because if you look at the Quran, the Quran starts with red.

[29 : 45] It starts with imperative and it never lets up. You look at the Buddhist book, the Hindu books, they all start red and they're solidly in the red. Now, if you look at Ephesians, now look at here, it's even starker here.

What you've got here is you've got subjunctives and optatives, but look, your imperatives come in chapter 4. I think it's an amazing thing. And what you find in the sermon at Pentecost is you find indicative, indicative, indicative, and it's not until verse 38 that you find an imperative.

And similarly, in the sermon here, you find indicative, indicative, indicative, and then you find the imperative. Now, I'm sorry, I haven't got this on overhead, but just have a look at this. This is Acts chapter 3 with its moods.

Now, notice, it's basically all indicative, except here, where the paralyzed man is told to get up and walk, that's imperative. Then you've got the explanation of the gospel, and then here, the people are told, verse 19, to repent.

Now, I think it's quite telling. It is the triumphant indicative. Christianity, Gresham Machen said, begins with a triumphant indicative. This is what God has done. Now, this is what you must do.

[31 : 01] There is the response. And apostolic preaching is always like that. Indicative, imperative, not imperative, without the indicative.

Chapter 4, verses 1 to 4, I will simply allude to it to show that the response is a divided response. The priests and captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter.

They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day.

But many who heard the message believed and the number of men grew to about 5,000, just men, 5,000 of them. So there is opposition, there's a divided response, but the word goes on.

And this is called an outstanding sign, the healing of this paralytic. And so the point of contact in this sermon might be that a sign here is like a warranty. When you buy a car, you get a guarantee.

[32 : 01] When you buy a substantial consumable, you get a guarantee, a warranty. The sign is a warranty about the Lord Jesus. It is God's seal of approval on Peter the Apostle, on his gospel, and on the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

All those most intimately involved with the healing of this crippled beggar tell us that they had nothing to do with it. It was Jesus who did it.

Now, I think, don't overlook, therefore, the great apologetic value of taking people back to the healing of the crippled beggar and say, well, look, how do you account for that? He's not psychosomatic.

He's over 40 years of age. I mean, medical science today couldn't have done this. They couldn't have helped him. So how do you think this man got healed? Well, Peter, no, Peter says he didn't do it.

None of the apostles did it. The opponents just didn't have any idea how it was done. The only explanation we're given here is that the living Lord Jesus, ascended to the right hand of God, did it. [33 : 04] How do you account for that? Well, it's not true. How do you account for that, that it's not true? When there's more manuscript evidence to back this up than any other piece of ancient history, how do you account for that? In other words, I'm urging you, get on the front foot.

Justin Langer, Matthew Hayden, they get on the front foot. And I think we should never get onto the back foot because we've got the credentials there. So get on the front foot with our opponents. Right, handling hostility. Chapter 4, verses 1 to 31. Notice here, there are three cycles in Chapter 4. So you've got to get the movements. How do we handle hostility?

First, the cycle is the opponents speak, Peter speaks, the opponents speak, Peter speaks, the opponents speak, Peter speaks. So you've got three cycles, opponent, church.

The opponents, verse 5, by what power did you do this miracle? Peter, verse 8, filled with the Holy Spirit. Here is Peter.

[34 : 07] Just take the congregation back. Here is Peter, the night of the betrayal of Jesus. The high priest servant says, you're one of his. No, I'm not. Someone in the high priest household, you're one of his. No, I'm not.

Do you think that this man who denies Christ to the servants three times is going to be the man of courage not only to stand up but to stand up before the high priest himself and the Sanhedrin? It's an amazing transformation, isn't it? He cowers away from the servants but now he's on the front foot to the Sanhedrin and he tells them exactly why this has come about.

He's filled with the Holy Spirit and he said, no, this salvation is found in no one else than this Jesus. There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Totally unacceptable in our postmodern age.

It goes to the opponents again. Verse 13, and they notice that these men are men of great courage. They've been with Jesus and they've heard this before the Sanhedrin. They've heard people speak like this before and they say, look, just be silent.

[35 : 11] Peter, verse 19, the movement comes back to him but Peter and John replied when they said, be silent, judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God for we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Young upstarts, no theological education. We've used that argument as Jews against the Romans. We've told the Romans we must obey Yahweh rather than you. Now they're using that with us. This is news to us. Young upstarts never been to theological college. Don't they realise that to listen to the voice of God is to listen to us? And now they're saying that they're listening to the voice of God apart from us.

We are the voice of God. It's a remarkable thing, isn't it? You can draw your own links to denominational structures wherever you are. Here it is.

We should not obey you but obey God. Now, opposition, the threats, verse 21, non-engagement. After further threats they let them go.

[36 : 09] They didn't engage them. They could not decide how to punish them because all the people were praising God for what had happened. For the man who was miraculously healed was over 40 years old.

I don't know if you've ever had a problem. I got acute septic arthritis one time in this knee and I was in hospital for two weeks. When I got out of hospital I could not walk. It was like a block of wood and it took me six months before I could actually make this leg do one cycle on a bicycle because it makes you realise that when you don't use your limbs they just become solid like a block of wood or they shrink to nothing.

40 years old. He had never walked. It's a creative miracle, isn't it? It's a remarkable miracle. It is outstanding and don't forget it when you come for apologetics.

Well it goes back to the church. They hear of all this and what do the church do? Well they pray, they remind themselves of scripture and they remind themselves of God's sovereignty. Notice how they pray sovereign Lord you're in control here the Sanhedrin are not.

And they quote the scriptures why do the nations rage? In this case the nations are our own Jewish brethren and why do the peoples plot in vain? And they do not ask for safety.

[37 : 26] What they ask for in the light of God's sovereign care and keeping is that verse 29 Lord consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

And the summary after they prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and God spoke the word of God boldly.

God was active amongst them whereas the religious superstructure of the day that looked so impressive was so desperately empty. But God shakes the place where they're meeting.

Well that brings us to the end of that first section. You might want to make comments or ask a question please feel free to do that. Yes.

How would you respond to those who say that you're happy to use verse 29 as a model for today and pray for God that you're not using verse 30 here? Ah yes.

[38 : 29] Well I'd simply say I'm happy to pray both those prayers today but the gospel that we do have is an accredited gospel and so the gospel I'm preaching to you is the gospel of the risen ascended Lord Jesus who healed this crippled beggar.

And therefore throughout Acts God is adding signs and wonders as his seal of approval his accreditation of the apostles and of their gospel and that's the gospel I'm bringing to you.

It is already replete with accreditation. And no room for any more? Ah well I'm not going to say no there's no room for any more. Whenever I'm pastorally praying with someone who is sick I'll always pray in God's goodness for their healing.

But I also recognise that healing may not come and I don't believe I've got any right to claim that is a right but I think that I'll always pray something like that.

How about you? Yeah. Yeah. But I'll pray for strength through whatever the future has for them.

Yeah. Someone else? Okay.

[39 : 38] No one else? All right. Let's move on. Hypocrisy. Chapter 4 verse 32 to chapter 5 verse 11. This is a remarkable section.

The other day we went down to the Canary Wharf and we saw some nice apartments down on the Canary Wharf. What if you were planting a church and someone came along and said to you my wife and I live in Canary Wharf in an apartment and we also as an investment bought the apartment next door and we've decided to sell it and we've decided to give the money entirely to you for the church plant.

It should keep us going for about another five or six years don't you think? Do they have a serious attitude to giving? Most of us give from our revenue stream. Most of us give from our income.

Here is giving from capital and when people start giving capital like a block of land or a home unit or an apartment or a house it's pretty serious giving isn't it?

And that is exactly what Barnabas does here. He sold the field verse 37 he owned the field and he brought the money from the sale of the capital item the field and put it at the apostles feet.

[40 : 48] It's the real thing. It is if you like a voluntary socialism. Verse 32 all the believers were one in heart and mind no one claimed any of his possessions was his own but they shared everything they had.

Friends the gospel has economic implications. You would think in our nation that there were no other implications which were important at all apart from economic implications.

There are other implications that are important but one important implication of the gospel is its economic implications. Then we have two people Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5 who are fakes. They are inspired by the devil. Verse 3 Ananias how is it that Satan has filled your heart? He is the liar and father of lies so that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and kept for yourself some of the money you receive from the land.

Sweetheart did you hear that the people have sold their unit in Canary Wharf and have given the rector the whole amount of money to fund the church plant for the next five or six years?

[41 : 57] Everybody's saying how generous. Why don't we sell our little investment property as well and then we'll take let's just take part of it and give that to the rector should be grateful for that but we'll create the impression that we likewise are giving him the whole lot but we'll actually keep back some for ourselves.

So we'll have the reputation like they do for generosity but we'll also have some of the money from our capital realisation for ourselves. It's a lie.

It's a fake. Verse 9 How could you agree to test the spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door and they will carry you out also.

Not a terribly sympathetic pastoral way of breaking news to her that she's a widow. They're about to take you. And the strange thing here is that they get a reputation Ananias and Sapphira and they've had it for centuries.

A reputation for hypocrisy. The first sin in the old covenant community Achan it related to wealth.

The sin here in the new covenant community also relates to wealth to money.

[43 : 11] It is the most common idol amongst us. All idolatry substitutes something for God. Paul said to Timothy and to Timothy they substitute pleasure for God.

Be careful. Friends of ours and I might start like this missionaries in Niger. They said a new pastor has come to our church they said and they said the church in Niger is riddled with fear of the spirits and this man seems to know what the big needs are of the church in Niger so we're very thankful that he has come.

When I read that I thought isn't it sad that the African church is riddled with a fear of the spirits I mean none of the churches in Australia are riddled with a fear of the spirits. Typical isn't it? That's Africa.

But the sentence didn't finish there. The church in Africa is riddled with a fear of the spirits in much the same way as the church in the west is addicted to materialism.

We're addicted. This passage tells us that we can smash the idol of wealth by giving it. There's danger in hoarding but this passage also tells you that there is danger in giving it as well because you can give it in order to get yourself a reputation so that everybody knows so that when I write out my check for one million pounds I want it noted.

[44 : 38] Be careful. Be careful of the fake. Be careful of the giving that attracts. But the gospel has economic implications.

Be careful of wearing the mask. Chapter 6 1-7 The Word of God spread. On this occasion I'm going to preach three passages in one sermon because this is a smaller passage I think I've got more time to move around and I'm going to take verse 7 as a key verse chapter 6-7 So the Word of God spread.

The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Keep your finger there and go to 19 chapter 19 20 and you've got that verse repeated three times throughout Acts the last repetition is 19 20 in this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power if you keep your finger there and go back to Acts chapter 12 verse 24 the word of God continued to increase and spread so here you've got three verses throughout the narrative in which Luke tells us of the healthy the health of the word of God now notice in chapter 19 let's deal with the last one first in chapter 19 the contrast with the health of the word is with the superstitious fakery of the sons of Sceva now it's interesting that wherever Luke talks about Jesus he talks verse 13 some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who are demon possessed they would say now notice they would say in the name of Jesus they wouldn't say in the name of the Lord Jesus whom Paul preaches I command you to come out seven sons of Sceva a Jewish chief priest were doing this one day the evil spirit answered them Jesus the evil spirit says Jesus as well not

Lord Jesus Jesus I know and I know about Paul but who are you then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on and overpowered them he gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding when the this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus they were all seized with fear and the name of the Lord Jesus was honored so Luke is talking about the Lord Jesus the evil spirits and the sons of Sceva can only say Jesus did the superstitious fakery prosper no it did not they burnt their mystical scrolls but they didn't burn the word of God it grew on strongly back to chapter 12 what's happening here Herod this indomitable political power Herod the brute things are happening well for him he cuts off the food supply to the people of Tyre and Sidon and so because they're going hungry they want to have reconciliation with him verse 20 having secured the support of

Blastus a trusted personal servant of the king they asked for peace because they depended on the king's country for their food supply on the appointed day Herod wearing his royal robes sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people they shouted this is the voice of a god not of a

man I don't know when the last political speech you heard that you were you attempted to say something like that but unless you're really starving hungry you need this bloke to restore your food supply you're not likely to do it immediately because Herod did not give praise to God an angel of the Lord struck him down and the man who denied food to the Tyre and Sidonians becomes food for worms he was eaten by worms and died now it's almost it's Monty Python-esque isn't it this man's eaten by worms and died but look over here it's really healthy here the word of God continued to increase and spread see naked political power it will not prosper superstitious fakery will not prosper but the word will chapter chapter six and here in chapter six we've got an internal problem and the problem is that in those days when the number of disciples was increasing Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food it's a lovely word it's an onomatopoeic word the word complained in Greek it is the word gone goose moss they were gone goose mossaing and you know you know what that's like gone goose moss gone goose moss you can just see them gone goose mossaing it's a great word um onomatopoeic now now verse two what happens verse two it would not be right the disciples say for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables verse four you vote and choose seven men and we will give our attention to prayer and to the ministry of the word you see dissension disunity can sap evangelistic vigor it will sap evangelistic vigor so it needs to be dealt with dissension stops when it is handled openly and clearly and the apostles recognize the priority of what they are to be doing the election is held in our synod if you held an election in this circumstance you might get four Hebrews three Greeks or four [49 : 51] Greeks three Hebrews here it is seven to nil seven Greek names no Hebrew names the church is showing its great respect for unity and the word of God as a result of this single-minded leadership the word of God spread and grew it's amazing that in a book called Acts the focus is so much on the word and its growth every failure in the history of Israel constituted a failure of its leadership here the apostles are showing clear leadership we will do this this is what God calls us to do and we will not get involved in other things not putting them down they are to be done but not by us the lesson the main is that great old lesson the main thing is that the main thing remain the main thing I'll never forget when I first read that just started out in ministry a busy parish one graze you told me a lesson I'll never forget mate if you come through my gate and it's open leave it open if you come through my gate and it's closed come through and close it you're welcome on my property but leave the gate as you find it when I left school and went and worked in a motor mechanic shop he said mate time is money take a tool down put it back I never want to come looking for it great lessons the main thing is that the main thing remain the main thing a great lesson single-minded leadership we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word it would not be right for us to neglect the main thing the word of God in order to wait on tables okay then we have Stephen the Sanhedrin or Stephen I think we're going to break at this point and I'm going to come over and we're going to prepare our sermon is that all right we're just running out of time so we're going to prepare a sermon now is that okay all right what I want to do is I'll come back and look briefly at Stephen tomorrow but I want to take you over to Acts chapter 8 and we're going to now prepare a sermon together on 26 to 40 and I just want to walk you through how I prepare a sermon now the way you prepare a sermon is as individual to you as your fingerprint and so therefore all I'm encouraging you to do is just you work it your way you've got to realize with me that

I am totally computer illiterate and therefore when I prepare a sermon I do it with a pencil or a pen in my hand and all my notes are written like that all right there's nothing printed I write all my notes out because I don't trust computers I don't like computers I'm scared of computers basically now if you'd like to take one of these and just pass them around please I use one of these and this is how we teach students to preach as well I'm sorry I don't have it on the overhead I trained at Moore College I trained at SMBC first and then I went to Moore College and I trained there as an independent candidate because I was suppressed I am a Presbyterian and in those days back in the early 1970s the Presbyterians were voting to enter into a uniting church in Australia and but the significant portion of the Presbyterians decided to continue and so the Presbyterians were desperate to get ministers and they knew that there were some of us in Moore College there were three of us and so they agreed to ordain the men who were in Moore College there's some more there if you just want to pass them back you might like to take a couple um so so they knew that there were three Presbyterians in Moore College and the powers that be in the Presbyterian church said well we're happy to accept these men in Moore College as Presbyterian candidates but we

know that Anglicans cannot prepare Presbyterians for ministry we don't trust the Anglicans so they appointed a Presbyterian minister to sit down with us one day each week to rid us of all that Anglican influence that papist influence you see to make us real Presbyterians it was a terrific day and every it was it was all good it was all good but this is this is the point of the story there is a point to the story what we did is they appointed a senior man to us not once did he mention Presbyterianism to us not much did he mention the laws of the church or anything what he did he sat down and he read the Bible with us that's all he did and he showed us how to read the Bible and how to summarize the passage now I think the workbook the work in the work engine room here is the part that says summarize the passage in your own words you sit down with the passage and you summarize what the passage says with verse reference just to make sure that you're actually saying what the passage says and it's getting it into your brain two you then summarize your summary by looking for the movements in the passage so if you look here you probably find a number of movements let's let's just look at John 3 16 God so loved the world that he gave his son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life you could clump your movements around your verbs God loved

God gave we are to believe Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after movements they went up there was an incident they came down three movements he did say they went up they came down so I'm looking for the movements in the passage now I'm moving up the page I now come I generally do it in this order what is the writer talking about that is the subject what is the writer talking about here subject what is he saying about what he is talking about that is the compliment then I take the subject and the compliment that is what is he talking about what is he saying about what he is talking about and I put them together into one succinct sentence the melody line the big idea now then I think about the passage is there a picture here uh in his book Wisby talks about in his book preaching and teaching with imagination he quotes a man by the name of McNeil Dixon who says that the human brain is much more a picture gallery than a debating hall

I think mostly I preach into the debating hall and I think I need to preach more into the picture gallery you know the the idea the person comes to Jesus and says who are you and Jesus says I'm the eschatological manifestation of the ground of your being I'm the kerygma in which you will find a fulfillment of your deep interpersonal needs and the bloke says what Jesus says I'm the good shepherd I'm the living water I'm the resurrection and the life I'm the bread of life pictures here's a man he's like wheat here's another one sorry he's a man he's like a strong healthy tree here's another one he's like chaff it's a picture and therefore I'm looking for the picture either in the text or a picture that comes up in my mind and and very often what will happen with these things now these whatever you call those things up there um what are they no that thing that thing there yeah that powerpoint right sorry about that powerpoint very often what you can do is if you've got a picture in your mind that you want to impose on the congregation out of your sermon you can throw up a powerpoint image people come into church and they look up there and there's a powerpoint image of something it might be a strong beautiful tree no mention is made of it uh when we have the interlude in the service where people are talking to each other or the collection or whatever up comes the picture again no mention no interpretation is given then you preach and it is obvious what the picture is referring to and then as we're about having coffee in the church afterwards up comes the picture again so you've got a picture in the mind of the people which should be a picture which springs from the text that reminds them in the picture gallery of their brain what you've been talking about okay then I go to the big question and the big question basically is who what where why when and I'm looking for I'm putting the big idea statement into a question form so that every sermon I'm preaching seeks to answer the question of the passage I'm concerned about context I want to put this in the context of the bible where does it fit in the whole salvation history network and where does it fit in the book of acts and then below the line I'm working on application the two unchangeables of application what does it teach me about God what does it teach me about me what must it how must it always apply to everyone how may it apply to people and how does it apply to me and how the passage cannot possibly be applied I think that's important because I think over half your congregation are living consistently with the very opposite of your faithful preaching now you test that out I reckon that is true if you take Matthew chapter 6 verse 24 where Jesus says no one can you cannot serve both God and money most of us sit and listen to that and say oh yes but I'm the exception

[59 : 34] I can the impossible understanding of that passage is that you can serve both God and wealth and Jesus says you can't do it now I really think therefore it's important to think about the impossible application of the passage and point that out to people if you're thinking this that is not what this passage is saying now I used to test this where we used to go to church I'd get there about 20 minutes before the service but there were three old ladies who sat behind us they always sat behind us because they were always there an hour before the service started so I knew where we sat and I'd turn around to Betty and Joyce and Robin and I'd say after hearing the sermon which is a good sermon always a good sermon what what do you reckon about the sermon today and they would generally understand the preacher to have said the very opposite of what he actually said now I don't know how we overcome that but I think if you point out to people what the passage can the very opposite of the necessary then I think you'll scoop a number of people up in your application all right now I'm going to pass out the pyramid now on Acts 8 26 to 40 so you can see my workings all right now we're going to preach on this section so when you've got that let's start on the pyramid side first let me read the passage first of all so if you've got your bibles there Acts chapter 8 verse 26 now an angel of the Lord said to Philip go south to the road the desert road that goes down from

Jerusalem to Gaza so he started out and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace queen of the Ethiopians this man had gone to Jerusalem to worship and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet the spirit told Philip go to that chariot and stay near it then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet do you understand what you're reading Philip asked how can I he said unless someone explains it to me so he invited Philip to come up and sit with him the eunuch was reading this passage of scripture he was led like a sheep to the slaughter and as a lamb before the shearer is silent so he did not open his mouth in his humiliation he was deprived of justice who can speak of his descendants for his life was taken from the earth the eunuch asked Philip tell me please who is the prophet talking about himself or someone else then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus as they traveled along the road they came to some water and the eunuch said look here is water why shouldn't I be baptized and he gave orders to stop the chariot then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him when they came up out of the water the spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away and the eunuch did not see him again but went on his way rejoicing Philip however appeared at Azotus and traveled about preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea now if you just look at summarize the passage in your own words one the angel directs Philip to the Gaza road verse 26 two he meets an Ethiopian who had been worshiping in Jerusalem verse 27 three he is the Ethiopian is reading Isaiah the scroll verse 29 four Philip asks if he understands what he's reading verse 30 Philip is invited to explain verse 31 six Philip gospel him about Jesus from Isaiah 53 verses 32 to 35 and seven the eunuch is baptized and Philip is taken away verse 36 to 40 now I want to summarize that more therefore I'll summarize it in three sections and if I have three movements that probably means that I'll have a three-point structure direction 26 to 29 go out intersection with the Ethiopian and the response verse 36 to 40 so direction intersection and response and therefore because there is no obvious picture here apart from the narrative itself I may use as a dominant picture and intersection God brings about this intersection here is Philip here is the Ethiopian and they cross over now I gather you have intersections that you call circuses and I know why you call them circuses having seen them but really as circuses you've got Oxford Circus Piccadilly Circus but they go round and round and they just seem a jumble but they're not they seem to work and they clear traffic in a very organized way that's a bit like a grand parade in the circus ring it looks packed it looks complex it looks jumbled but no it's actually a way of facilitating people's movement and this is an intersection an interaction something that God sets up this Ethiopian is going down the Gaza Road he's been to Jerusalem he's going back to Ethiopia he's the chancellor of the exchequer he's reading the scroll and just at that moment someone says do you understand what you're reading and he looks up and says how can I is the prophet talking about himself or someone else how can I understand and then in comes Philip and preaches the gospel to him what is the subject here is it the Ethiopian is it Philip I believe it is God God is the great evangelist and what does it tell us about God the evangelist it tells us that he brings about the intersection of the messenger Philip and the receptor the Ethiopian with life so I put the two together God is the sovereign evangelist bringing about the intersection of Philip and the

Ethiopian and safely depositing the Ethiopian with Jesus and so I'm left with the question how God deals with one because at this point there's three thousand there's four thousand there's five thousand there's huge people movements but Luke says no he's just one person just one so don't get lost in the numbers in the Bible the top left hand corner this is found in Acts it's found in post-ascension post-gospel the absent Lord no he's very much involved here and secondly notice in the book itself it's found after Philip goes after the martyrdom of Stephen he goes out to Samaria and here is the first Gentile if you like the conversion of one outsider because Luke tells us that he's an Ethiopian well that's significant but he also tells us that he's a eunuch and I want to know why Luke's giving me that detail now then it comes to application down the foot of the page what does it teach me about God that he is sovereign that he is concerned for the lost secondly it tells us about us that we need the gospel explained we can't see what now appears obvious to us or we are to be opportunistic with messengers what is the necessary application we need to have a heart for the lost as God has a heart for the lost and beyond the search God uses the obedient human instrument to bring people to life to bring his elect to life possible application am I sensitive enough like Philip is to the divine intersections of life how does God's character challenge me a heart for the lost how does Philip challenge me he is a self-effacing opportunistic witness how does the Ethiopian challenge me that he had no contribution to make whatsoever what is impossible here it's impossible to believe that God does his own work he saves his own elect in his own way the response to William Carey sit down young man if God wants to save the lost he'll do it without your help or mine it's impossible to see that God is sovereign God is the active evangelist but he uses people okay over the page the bible study I think it's a good it is it's a very good uh discipline to prepare a bible study about the passage you're dealing with um and I use the book search the scriptures uh I'm sure you know a.m. stibbs edited by a.m. stibbs it's an excellent book because it just takes you through the bible and ask questions it's that model so here is the bible study the bible study is going to be in four parts introduce the issue study the passage think it through and live it out and so this is helpful if you're preparing the sermon you might as well it doesn't take much more to prepare the bible study and you can get the congregation studying the portion of the scripture that you're going to be preaching on the following Sunday in their small groups the week before is life full of haphazard coincidences or divinely established intersections do we recognize that there are no accidents in life but that the sovereign God establishes events to lead us to Christ and then having led us to Christ to make us more and more like him that is Romans 8 28 29 now study the passage we're talking about sovereignty here do what you can to find a the Gaza road on a map b the place of the eunuch in God's economy and c who was Candace queen of the Ethiopians 2 the Ethiopian was not a Jew why then do you think he'd been to Jerusalem to worship how do you think Philip understood that he was being directed by the angel in verses 26 and 29 according to verse 35 Philip evangelized the Ethiopian from Isaiah 53 7 and 8 what are the points Philip would have explained in response to the Ethiopian's question in verse 34 who is the prophet talking about himself or someone else who is in charge of this evangelistic encounter do you think God's oversight ended before the Ethiopian's response that is that God brought them together and just left it to human free will at that point see 11 18 where God has granted the Gentiles repentance under life Philip like Peter apparently called on the Ethiopian repent and be baptized see chapter 2 verse 38 what Peter said why do you think baptism is an important companion to repentance why don't we give baptism the emphasis it seemed to have in the early church now that's a good question for John to take back to Dublin it's good for your congregation hey John give give the baptists a go here and give the rest of us think yeah what let's think about baptism a bit because I think generally in Sydney we tend to put the sacraments down a bit so why not talk about baptism in this setting think it through are we willing to be directed like [70 : 16] Philip and take the gospel where the Lord Jesus the Lord of the harvest directs us that was Philip ambitious for a ministry on the Gaza road or we don't know live it out do we recognize the divine intersections in our lives the evangelistic opportunities that come our way in the train bus the dentist or doctor's surgery often passes by are we too silent do we let our lives do the talking how are you challenged by the scriptures link of heart and mouth how can we begin can you begin conversations which God may take up and lead to opportunities for gospeling I noticed this morning on the news they had the man who last year was voted the secondary school teacher of the year here in the in Britain and he was in a brand new science laboratory which which is just being built at one of the universities for 30 million pounds and this science laboratory is large enough to take 270 people it is the vice chancellor of university the lady who was interviewing said it's the biggest in

Europe he said no it is the biggest in the world 270 in order to bring science back onto the agenda of young people and this teacher of the year was asked the question he was a science teacher why aren't more people taking on science as a discipline he said because people get scared they see the laboratory they see bottles they see instruments and they think it's not for me and I have to teach them it is for them if you're an average person science is for you and I think that when we urge our congregation to get out there and share the gospel with people they think oh how can I talk how can I understand all those points I've got to remember how can I be a cross-cultural facilitator how can I bring apologetics into it and I think we just get overwhelmed by the task and we've got to say it is for average people you don't have to be particularly clever you just have to be warm-hearted and outgoing with people you have to be able to start a conversation have a testimony and have some sort of outline of what the gospel is Jesus Christ is Lord by his resurrection from the dead but start the conversation up and God will direct and God will lead and I think it's a great word for us and so this is a great passage and encouraging passage to bring to our people because you're not urging them to get out there and witness you're urging them to get out there and open up a conversation see where it goes it may well be you won't meet anybody who says hey I'm just reading yeah matter of fact I'm reading Isaiah can you tell me who he's talking about here it may not be like that but you never know you just never know I was talking to a lady in Sydney the other day and I thought well you don't talk generally in Sydney to people and she was sitting on the next table diagonally from me and there's about that much room between my table in this food mall and her table and my friend's sitting here I'm sitting here and she's sitting over there my friend gets up to go and get our coffee and I'm sitting here and she's sitting over there well you just don't talk I just said what sort of a day you're having she said oh you wouldn't believe

I'm having the most nerve-wracking day that I have ever had in my life and I thought oh great here we go but I asked the question I asked the question I tell you only once have I have had anybody on a plane not want to know me when I've opened up a conversation they you know this bloke I no matter what I did he didn't want to talk so I left him but it's only ever happened once so we need to be opportunistic okay well that's that's how I would prepare a sermon on a passage like this now anybody got any comments or questions on this I've rushed through that do you want to ask any questions about yes right up the back yes that's right yeah well this comes if you were here yesterday we talked about this being in the transitional period and this is the this is the next step from Jerusalem Judea the gospel has come to Samaria

Philip's been evangelizing there and now here in Samaria on the Gaza Road you've got an outsider who not only is an Ethiopian racial outsider but he is actually a man who is a eunuch as well so that makes him even more yeah I'd show that God's concern is for this man that even though he's out of the assembly of the Lord according to the law God's not disinterested in him God's working in his life and there's it's no it's no accident that he's reading where he's reading yeah yes yeah well when I preach the sermon therefore I will basically tell the story because the narrative is there to be told and then I will focus on God the evangelist and talk about his part in the story then I'll focus on the other characters I'll focus on Philip and I'll focus on the Ethiopian and I'll something say something about each of them no I won't no I won't because here in this case I'll tell the story without getting involved in the character then I'll talk about God the evangelist then I'll get involved with Peter Philip's character then I'll get involved with the Ethiopian's character and then in application

I will allow God's character Philip's activity and the Ethiopian's testimony I'll apply each of those things to the congregation okay yes that's right yeah what the intersection you mean yeah so in in in the opening part of the sermon which is quite substantial I'm describing what is happening in the picture itself so I'm not getting away from the narrative I'm making the narrative the foundation of what I'm going to say and I want to expound the narrative and I want to show the intersection by the way here a dominant picture my power point might be a circus the Oxford circus or an intersection and you just have it there without any comment yeah yes yes yes and I will raise that slightly at the beginning but I don't want to raise that as the point because if I raise that as the point too early then P I always have to do it and I will raise that slightly at the beginning but I don't want to raise that as the point because if I raise that as the point too early then P I always need to keep something up my sleeve

Haddon Robinson says that most preachers finish preaching 15 minutes before they stop talking and I've got to keep that in mind where my mother goes to church for example my mother is 90 and

she sits next to another lady called Sheila who is 80 my mother's called Sheila as well and my mother who is there to two Sheila's and my mother who is a lovely Christian lady and very affirming and positive will sit there and Sheila every Sunday will will will elbow my mother and say he should stop now but she said you know my mother said to me you know she's right he always should stop when he'll she elbows me but he goes on for another 15 or 20 minutes now if I tell you everything I want to tell you well let's sit down I want to keep something up my sleeve I will allude to the fact that there is something going on here but I'm not going to tell you too much about what it is before we get into the sermon because I don't want you to lose interest okay now I think it's very hard for me to explain how I do how I try and do that sometimes I don't do it well but in this case I do it by an opening illustration and I don't want to tell you too much about that if I'm going to preach the sermon to you tomorrow but I'll do it by an opening illustration okay what do you do you fellas want to say something about dick do you want to say something about this could you elbow him please do you want to say something in answer to this do you want to say something in answer to this you don't you don't want to say anything you know okay at least it woke him up yes the passage will be answering that question so I've got to be very careful there because if I don't set the question that the passage answers people will come away confused and angry if I've said a brilliant question how to have a proper night's sleep for example and you know that everybody's battling to have a proper night's sleep and I choose a passage which has got nothing to do with I don't know a passage that's got it that answers that question but you get up there and you try and pushing the passage to answer the question the past the question must come from the passage so what I try and do here is I try and do give myself three or four possible questions and then rule out what I believe to be the not the core question that the passage is answering so hopefully my sermon will have a question how does God deal with the one how does God deal with the individual and that is the question which the passage is answering okay now the other thing I want to say about this is when I've done this see in parish I work when I'm when I'm preaching Sunday I work Monday to Sunday I start preparing my pyramid Monday

[80 : 39] Wednesday I do not look at a commentary till Thursday because for me once I look at the commentary I stop thinking I was raised when I became a Christian on the script union method read the passage pray sorry you pray you read the Bible passage you think you then read the script union notes and you pray now after a while I got to the point of praying reading the passage reading the script union notes and praying I skip the Bible I skip the Bible I skip the thinking if you know Don Carson's for the love of God he gives you four chapters of the Bible and he gives you a commentary on one he says if you if you stuck for time just read one of the chapters of the Bible I think what we do is we just read Don Carson's commentary and we don't get to read the Bible itself so I was really heartened when Kent said the other night that on Philippians he's read it 60 or 70 times I work work work I get an idea of what the questions are I need help from the commentary it would be foolish of me not to look at the commentary because it'll be corrective and it'll expand it but if I look at the commentary too early I stop thinking and so Thursday I've got my completed sheet like that I've got all sorts of scribbled marks here and then I have a look and read the commentary and I only read three of them on any one book as I said yesterday yeah yeah yes well you could do it though you could you could just summarize so how God deals with one you could say the narrative

God Philip the Ethiopian something like that you could just brush something up when I preached last Sunday someone said to me they were worried because I provided an outline of what I had to say and I was two thirds through the outline after five minutes and they thought this oh I'm gonna have to get up how am I gonna fill in the time but the last point I spent 20 minutes on and so my summaries can be good or they can be unhelpful you can reveal things in the summary perhaps that are best kept closed so I just have some doubt about the usefulness of summaries I guess they're good but but I think that most sermons you can sit down and you can basically get some sort of skeleton structure without revealing too much yes you use the same privilege for moments yeah anything yeah yeah I just adapt it to the genre that's all yeah yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes

And so when you look at the Psalms, for example, God is a rock, God is a fortress, God is a shepherd. The Holy Spirit is a parallel helper. The Lord Jesus, the church, the bride, the building, they're all there, see.

I'm just saying, try and recognise what's there, that's all. Okay, that's time. Sorry, yes, do you have one more question? When you're thinking about the big questions, there's quite often a random

question in the Bible.

Like, for instance, in this office, the question about whether it was an emergent baptism or... Yeah, that's right. Do you just ignore that and go to the big question? No, no.

[84 : 44] Leave the Baptists and fight it out. Yeah, yeah, just let them fight it out. Do you make some throwaway remarks, kind of? It's like the Baptist pastor who's preaching on Genesis 3.

I have three points this morning, the fall of Adam, the fall of Eve, and then some words about adult believers' baptism. I want to raise the issue.

I do want to raise the issue. And I do that in the Bible study in the week before, so they can be talking about that. But I'm not going to be waylaid on that when I get to preach the sermon. Yeah. Thank you.